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"TO THE EDITOR":  
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INDIVIDUALIST AND COLLECTIVIST NEWSPAPER LETTER WRITERS

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Dennis Roy Fox

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Ph. D. degree in Psychology

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"TO THE EDITOR":  
IDEOLOGICAL THEMES EXPRESSED BY  
INDIVIDUALIST AND COLLECTIVIST NEWSPAPER LETTER WRITERS

By

Dennis Roy Fox

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
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Department of Psychology

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **"TO THE EDITOR": IDEOLOGICAL THEMES EXPRESSED BY INDIVIDUALIST AND COLLECTIVIST NEWSPAPER LETTER WRITERS**

**By**

**Dennis Roy Fox**

Debates over potential solutions to societal problems often mask differences in underlying assumptions about "natural" behaviors and "appropriate" values. This study examined the relationship between political ideologies and basic assumptions, in the hope of aiding the search for comprehensive solutions.

Seven men and three women (including undergraduates, graduate students, and nonstudents) who had written letters to newspapers from nonmainstream perspectives (ranging from right-wing libertarian to left-wing revolutionary communist) participated in three or four intensive, openended, semistructured interviews directed by a flexible interview guide. Each series of interviews, which ranged from four and a half to seven and a half hours, included such topics as perceptions of widespread problems, views of human nature and utopia, political ideologies, and personal goals. Participants were encouraged to raise topics important to them. The interviews were taped, transcribed, coded, and analyzed through a qualitative content analysis.

Five general themes were identified: the Difficulty of Political Self-Definition; the Importance of Looking at Issues in Context; the Rejection of Mainstream Assumptions; the Belief That the United States is

a Sick Society; and the Desire to Influence Others. Three additional themes differentiated between two subgroups: Individualism versus Collectivism; Personal Consequences of the Sick Society (Personal Immunity versus Personal Susceptibility); and the Prospect of Technological Solutions (Technological Enthusiasm versus Technological Caution). Individualists and Collectivists were not diametric opposites; Individualists placed primary personal and political emphasis on values associated with personal autonomy, while Collectivists simultaneously emphasized both personal autonomy and a psychological sense of community. Although Individualists were generally more optimistic and enthusiastic than Collectivists, participants routinely displayed idiosyncratic patterns that require any categorization and generalization to be done cautiously.

Although this nonquantitative, nonexperimental approach goes against the grain of mainstream social-psychological research, a thematic content analysis allows increased understanding of the way the world looks to individuals. Such phenomenological understanding complements the traditional positivist emphasis on determining causality. Institutional change within the field of psychology is recommended so that studies using qualitative methods, as well as studies of important but controversial political topics, are more likely to be undertaken.

Dedicated to my students,  
many of them now my friends,  
in appreciation for all they have given me.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was almost three years ago that I wrote down "Some thoughts upon contemplating a dissertation." My passage from those tentative musings to this temporary plateau has been accompanied by discovery and agony, excitement and tedium, growth and resistance--and also, fortunately, by a lot of help. Whatever merit this dissertation might contain would not exist without the advice, encouragement, distractions, and practical assistance provided by those who have made my journey through the perils of qualitative research somewhat easier. Writing these acknowledgments is one academic norm with which I am happy to comply.

The chairperson of my dissertation committee, Charles Wrigley, trusted me to pursue my varied interests in my own idiosyncratic way, despite my stubborn disregard of too much of his excellent advice. If I had been able to pursue more of the countless leads he gave me, this dissertation would no doubt be improved. During the past few years, as during my first bout with graduate school a decade earlier, I have been grateful for his scholarly and practical advice, his broad knowledge, his concern for my academic progress, and, I want to add, his adventurous approach to classroom teaching, an approach I have tried to emulate.

Larry Messé and Norb Kerr's willingness to serve on the committee of someone determined to leave behind many of the traditional practices of mainstream social psychology puts the lie to many of the harsher criticisms of the field I cite in later chapters. Their many comments on my written work and their suggestions, at crucial points, of books to read and options to consider, were consistently constructive and challenging.

Vince Hoffman, the fourth member of my committee, provided help in so many different ways that it's difficult to acknowledge them all. He uncomplainingly provided the extremely unreasonable amount of feedback and advice I requested of him. More important, he consistently told me that everything would work out, demonstrating a degree of confidence that I didn't always share, getting me moving and calming me down and always knowing which it was I needed. Most important of all, Vince's interest in my wellbeing went far beyond my life as an apprentice academic. He became one of those rarest of treasures: a caring friend.

Many other friends and colleagues have influenced this dissertation. Joel Aronoff, though not on my committee, demonstrated the ability--and the willingness--to find the weaknesses in several of my papers. Mary Ann Reinhart provided feedback on an early draft of the article that became Chapter II (which is reprinted by permission of the American Psychological Association). Jeff Vancouver, teaching assistant extraordinaire, provided rapid feedback after reading almost the entire first draft. Joe Bornstein, in addition to helping me cope with the vagaries of the computer system, long ago remarked that I might be interested in Patton's book on qualitative methodology, thus leading me to a literature I didn't yet know existed.

My attempt to make sense of the interviews was aided by several undergraduates who read the 500 pages of transcripts, wrote down their impressions, and discussed the material with me. Some of the many comments of Barbara Bandurski, Julie Barnhart, Carl Casterline, and Ernie Richards are included in Chapter VI. Johanna Gotts made a series of insightful suggestions before other obligations made it impossible for her to continue.

Barbara Rademacher has my thanks for the long hours she spent transcribing half the interviews (for much lower wages than that massive task deserved) and for her feedback on early drafts of related papers; she especially has my thanks for the many years of our friendship. Other friends new and old, near and far, in addition to those already mentioned, each in his or her own way listened to my problems and told me theirs, encouraged me to keep forging ahead but kept me from working all the time, and provided the warmth, support, and sense of community that prevented my academic life from being totally academic. I'd particularly like to thank Isidore Flores, Carole Rankin, Wes Novak, Leah Brown, Betsy Bahrenburg, Frank Jenkins, Jeaneen Porco, Anne Bogat, Ann-Marie Scheerbaum, Dan Stults, Beth Woodard, and Nili Gayer for being who they are.

My two sons, Milo and Avram, just eight and ten when I returned to school, have rarely complained that, for four years in a row, academic necessity shortened our summer routine of camping, visiting friends, hanging out on the farm, and watching the jugglers at Harvard Square. In addition to their patience and their willingness to go to day camp, last summer they spent several days filing piles of coded transcript segments, without charging me very much. During this past year, their repeated question at the beginning of our many phone calls--"Did you get much writing done this week?"--helped keep me at my desk. Milo occasionally said it would be okay to go to a movie, for which I thank him.

Also showing remarkable patience with me over the years have been my parents, Albert Fox and Lillian Fox. They provided more moral and financial support than I had a right to expect, whenever it was needed. It wouldn't have been possible to return to school without their help, and I'm fortunate they have been willing to put up with me.

Most of all, I would like to thank the ten people who agreed to be participants in this study. The interviews were not always easy for them, and I admire their willingness to answer unhesitatingly my endless, repetitive, muddled questions about their beliefs, their values, and their lives. They exposed themselves to scrutiny, exposed me to new perspectives in philosophy and history and religion and politics, and, most satisfying of all, became people I cared about. That they all believe they gained something from the interviews is gratifying; that I too gained something far beyond the credentials that accompany this dissertation is more gratifying still. I wish them well, and am sorry I cannot thank them publicly by name. I do hope that when they read this final research report, they do not react too often in disbelief at the many ways I have doubtlessly, though unintentionally, distorted their views.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES. . . . .	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .	xiv
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II PSYCHOLOGY, IDEOLOGY, UTOPIA, AND THE COMMONS. . . . .	7
Societal Problems and the Search for Solutions . . . . .	8
Problems of Global Ecology . . . . .	8
Problems of Individual Needs and Values. . . . .	9
Toward Comprehensive Solutions . . . . .	10
The Tragedy of the Tragedy . . . . .	10
Dissent on the Common. . . . .	10
Resistance to the Dissent. . . . .	11
Anarchists and the Commons . . . . .	12
Practicality and Utopian Speculation . . . . .	14
Conclusions. . . . .	15
III VALUE PRIORITIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN NATURE . . . . .	16
A Tentative Two-Value Approach to Political Ideology . . . . .	20
I High Autonomy--High Psychological Sense of Community .	24
II High Autonomy--Low Psychological Sense of Community. .	25
III Low Autonomy--High Psychological Sense of Community. .	26
IV Low Autonomy--Low Psychological Sense of Community . .	27
IV ON QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY . . . . .	29
Background . . . . .	33
The "Exploratory" Dismissal. . . . .	33
Across Disciplines . . . . .	34
Phenomenology. . . . .	34

Social Psychology. . . . .	35
Related Political Perspectives . . . . .	36
Feminist methodology . . . . .	37
Critical social psychology . . . . .	37
Anarchistic methodology. . . . .	38
Qualitative Tone . . . . .	39
The Notion of "Subjects" . . . . .	39
General Flexibility. . . . .	41
Hypotheses and Statistics. . . . .	42
Objectivity, Bias, and Mutual Benefit. . . . .	43
Acknowledging bias . . . . .	43
Experimental bias. . . . .	44
The virtues of subjectivity. . . . .	45
Mutual benefit . . . . .	45
Personal research. . . . .	46
The Qualitative Interview. . . . .	47
Focused Interviewing . . . . .	47
Interview guide. . . . .	47
Small Sample Size. . . . .	49
Heterogeneity and Sample Selection . . . . .	50
Note-Taking. . . . .	52
Analysis . . . . .	53
Continuous . . . . .	53
Analytic description . . . . .	54
Thematic content analysis. . . . .	54
Coding . . . . .	55
Conclusion . . . . .	56
V   METHOD . . . . .	59
Participant Selection. . . . .	61
Initial Intentions . . . . .	61
Sampling Strategy. . . . .	62
Letter writers . . . . .	63
Selection criteria . . . . .	63
Contact Procedures . . . . .	65
Request Letter . . . . .	66
Participant Response . . . . .	67
Initial mailing. . . . .	67
Second mailing . . . . .	67
Final Sample . . . . .	67
Subsequent Contacts. . . . .	68
Interview arrangements . . . . .	68
Informal interactions. . . . .	69
Follow-up contacts . . . . .	69

Interview Process. . . . .	70
General Context. . . . .	70
Interview length and number. . . . .	70
Taping . . . . .	70
Tone . . . . .	71
Consent form and confidentiality . . . . .	72
Interview Guide. . . . .	72
Scenarios. . . . .	74
Preparation. . . . .	74
Note-Taking. . . . .	75
Pre-Interview Notes. . . . .	75
Cover sheet. . . . .	75
Letter photocopies . . . . .	75
Notes During Interviews. . . . .	75
Post-Interview Notes . . . . .	76
Tape Transcription . . . . .	76
Analysis and Observation Notes . . . . .	78
Dissertation Diary . . . . .	79
Coding and Analysis. . . . .	79
Development of Coding Categories . . . . .	79
Individual participant codes . . . . .	81
Coding Procedures. . . . .	82
Preparation. . . . .	82
Process. . . . .	83
Copy, Cut, and File. . . . .	83
Themes . . . . .	84
Analysis Assistance. . . . .	86
Participant Feedback Option. . . . .	88
<b>VI PARTICIPANT PROFILES . . . . .</b>	<b>90</b>
Participants Generally Supportive of the Major Aspects of Capitalism. . . . .	95
1. Allen . . . . .	95
2. Bill. . . . .	100
3. Christine . . . . .	106
4. David . . . . .	110
5. Eve . . . . .	115
Participants Generally Opposed to the Major Aspects of Capitalism. . . . .	120
6. Paul. . . . .	120
7. Roberta . . . . .	125
8. Scott . . . . .	130

9. Timothy . . . . .	136
10. Victor. . . . .	141
 VII GENERAL THEMES . . . . .	 148
General Theme 1:	
The Difficulty of Political Self-Definition. . . . .	151
Ambivalent Attraction of the Term "Liberal". . . . .	153
Circuitous Reasoning on Voting Decisions . . . . .	154
A Note on Religious Self-Definition. . . . .	156
General Theme 2:	
The Importance of Looking at Issues in Context . . . . .	157
Complexity of Political Issues . . . . .	158
Search for Multidisciplinary Knowledge . . . . .	161
Confidence in Own Analytical Ability . . . . .	163
Interview Process as Self-Clarification. . . . .	171
General Theme 3:	
The Rejection of Mainstream Assumptions. . . . .	175
Suspicion of Hidden Public Sympathy. . . . .	178
Gradual Attainment of Current Beliefs. . . . .	181
General Theme 4:	
The Belief That the United States is a Sick Society. . . . .	190
Negative View of Television's Place in American Life . . . . .	199
General Theme 5:	
The Desire to Influence Others . . . . .	203
Interest in Writing, Teaching, and Political Activity. . . . .	203
Lack of Interest in a Conventional Political Career. . . . .	207
 VIII INDIVIDUALISTS AND COLLECTIVISTS: DIFFERENTIATING THEMES . . . . .	 210
Differentiating Theme 1:	
Individualism versus Collectivism. . . . .	212
Individualism. . . . .	212
Collectivism . . . . .	219
Differentiating Theme 2:	
Personal Consequences of the Sick Society. . . . .	224
Personal Immunity. . . . .	225
Personal Susceptibility. . . . .	229

Differentiating Theme 3:	
The Prospect of Technological Solutions. . . . .	235
Technological Enthusiasm . . . . .	236
Technological Caution. . . . .	240
IX DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	245
A Comment on Political Psychology. . . . .	245
Personal Autonomy, Psychological Sense of Community, and Political Values . . . . .	250
Cautions in Categorizing Individuals . . . . .	254
Directions for Future Research . . . . .	255
Speculations on General Themes . . . . .	257
Speculations on Differentiating Themes . . . . .	260
Implications For Qualitative Methodology . . . . .	264
Implications For Political Psychology and Political Change . . . . .	268
APPENDICES	
A. Sample Request Letter. . . . .	271
B. Response Form--"Public Issues Study" . . . . .	272
C. Research Consent Form. . . . .	273
D. Interview Guide. . . . .	274
E. Scenarios. . . . .	282
F. Participant Information Cover Sheet. . . . .	286
G. General Coding Categories. . . . .	287
H. Additional Individual Coding Categories. . . . .	290
I. Sample Follow-Up Letters . . . . .	291
LIST OF REFERENCES. . . . .	295

## LIST OF TABLES

### TABLE

1. Selected Background Characteristics . . . . .	92
2. Political Self-Descriptions and Concerns. . . . .	93

## LIST OF FIGURES

### FIGURE

1. Autonomy-Psychological Sense of Community Needs Continuum . . . 21
2. Autonomy-Psychological Sense of Community Value Dimensions. . . 22

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This dissertation represents a blending of two areas in which I have long been interested, both academically and nonacademically. On the one hand, I would like to contribute to the search for long-term political solutions to global problems such as the depletion of resources, the threat of war, and the spreading of poverty, exploitation, and government repression. On the other hand, I want to help ensure that the lives of individuals are not made even worse by ill-conceived attempts to impose wideranging "solutions" that actually make more complicated the fulfillment of psychological needs and values.

Public debate over proposed solutions to potential global crises is generally as acrimonious as it is unproductive, illustrating the often-intense psychological investment of the debaters. Such ego involvement is not surprising when one considers the many widely varying perspectives on topics ranging from the role of technology to the political relevance of personal ethics. My hope throughout this research has been to shed some light on what goes on beneath the surface of political debate, so that future discussion of these issues can be more productive.

As I make clear in the next chapter, I too have my own evolving political perspective, developed over a number of years, which has motivated this research. In brief, I do believe that the possibility exists of eventually creating a society better able to resolve a number of global problems while simultaneously enhancing the ability of individuals



to meet their psychological needs. I believe, in fact, that a world radically transformed in accordance with many of the social-psychological insights found in the literature of decentralist-anarchist political theory would be a world in which most people would live lives characterized by a greater degree of mutuality and self-fulfillment than is currently the case; at the same time, such a world of federated, autonomous communities could significantly improve the ability to preserve natural resources and protect the environment. That the transition to such a world would be difficult, and not fully possible in every respect, goes without saying, but I have believed for some time that the basic outline of such a society should be, at the least, a theoretical goal readily acceptable to those who seriously consider the issues that are involved.

Despite the fact that many of my views on these matters are in general accord with those of a number of psychologists, political scientists, and other scholars (e.g., Chomsky, 1973; Falk, 1978; Fromm, 1955; Goodman, in Stoehr, 1979; Maslow, 1971; Sarason, 1976/1982), it is clear that most people reject out of hand the political solutions I see as worth pursuing. The point that is most relevant here is that awareness of such widespread mainstream rejection has not led me to abandon my views. Rather, it has led me to consider the relationship between an individual's political ideology and psychological functioning, partly to satisfy my own curiosity about the nature of my own values and partly to get a handle on how best to approach those whose views are very much different from mine. As I considered possible dissertation topics, I soon realized that one way to begin was to talk to a small number of individuals who seemed to be struggling with some of the same issues that had been of concern to me, to try to get at how their dissatisfactions

with the status quo and their proposed political solutions might be connected to their individual psychological makeups. This jump from my own personal concerns to a dissertation topic is an example of what Lofland and Lofland (1984) approvingly referred to as the tendency (among many sociologists) to "'make problematic' in our own research matters that are problematic in our lives" (p. 8).

By means of a limited number of intensive, semistructured, openended interviews I hoped to begin seeking an answer to a social-psychological question that is crucial for effective decisionmaking: How are people's basic assumptions about human nature and their primary values related to their political ideologies, particularly in terms of how they assess the desirability and practicality of competing solutions to global problems? Political debates over the relative merits of one solution or another often mask significant underlying differences in the motivations and behaviors that people consider to be "natural." The social sciences have the potential to uncover these differences, to demonstrate the effect such assumptions have on decisionmaking, and perhaps ultimately to provide data to help correct widespread misconceptions. Social science, at least in theory, thus can contribute to the development of comprehensive approaches that take into account many more relevant factors than do the solutions often proposed in the normal course of political activity.

Although I am concerned here with a social-psychological approach that focuses primarily on individual views and experiences, and although I do think that examining people's basic assumptions is of value both for academics concerned with theoretical understanding and for activists concerned with stimulating social change, I do not think that an individual-oriented psychological approach explains everything. I agree with the

view that psychologists too often assume a "person-blame" orientation that stands in the way of social change (Caplan & Nelson, 1973). Those who are serious about social change as well as those seeking intellectually satisfying theoretical explanations of social phenomena will of necessity combine the perspectives of different disciplines.

The ten people who participated in this research project met with me for an average of six hours each, over the course of three or four interviews. They are people whose views represent a fairly wide spectrum of political opinion, from the right-wing of libertarianism to the left-wing of Marxism (although "spectrum" is not quite the right word, as will be made clear later). What most of them have in common is a general dissatisfaction with late 20th Century life in the United States, along with a varying degree of certainty about what changes should be made in order to improve things. They disagree sharply among themselves, however, in what they see as the sources of society's problems and in the solutions they propose. The ten participants, who were asked to take part after they wrote letters to newspapers expressing their opinions on controversial issues, welcomed the chance to explain their views at greater length.

My interest in examining the nature of values, of basic assumptions, and of approaches to the status quo has extended not only to the subject matter of this research but to its method and purpose as well. I have been much influenced by the qualitative methodology literature, discussed in Chapter IV, and have become convinced that a nonexperimental, nonquantitative approach was the appropriate way to begin the long-range study of complicated political and social-psychological issues, using a number of different methods. Although such an approach goes against the grain of mainstream social-psychological research, a modified case-study method

and thematic descriptive analysis seemed to offer the best framework within which to come to understand people as individuals, to gain some insight into my own thoughts on the subject, and to provide food for thought for others who are interested in these matters as well. This study obviously is not meant to "prove causality" in the mainstream experimental sense, and the absence of statistical analysis will be puzzling to many. I hope to demonstrate, however, that this kind of research has value for the researcher, for the participants, and for the field as a whole. As such, it has much in common with work done by

a growing number of scholars in anthropology, economics, history, political science, and sociology [who] are questioning just how scientific the social sciences can and should be. They are using words such as "interpretation," "hermeneutics," and "rhetoric" in calling for a new mode of inquiry that draws as much from the humanities as from the natural sciences, if not more. (Winkler, 1985, p. 5)

Despite my adoption of qualitative methodology, the presentation of the thematic value analysis departs from a strict qualitative approach in a manner somewhat similar to that of Bennett Berger (1981). Berger, who examined childrearing and personal relations in a rural commune, noted that he had two aims: a partial ethnography of a commune on the one hand, and a sociology of knowledge on the other. The result, he wrote, is that he didn't expect

to satisfy either audience fully. Ethnography fans will probably find too little descriptive detail. . . . Sociologists of knowledge will probably wonder why I bother with as much humble detail as I do. . . . Ethnographers will find me too abstract and too ambitious; sociologists of knowledge will find me too unambitious and not abstract enough. (p. xii)

My own objectives here are to view the political landscape from the perspectives of ten very different individuals and, to an important but secondary degree, to tentatively place those perspectives in a larger framework. My hope is that readers with either of these different

interests will find at least some of their concerns adequately met.

Related to the growing willingness to accept qualitative methods and to question many of the assumptions of "research as usual" has been the recognition that the investigator's own values and biases cannot be separated from the research. Rather than hide their own ideologies and values behind a mask of objectivity, many qualitative researchers seek to plainly specify their perspectives so that their readers will be better able to take those values into account in drawing their own conclusions. Similarly, there is increased advocacy of a less formal, more personal style of presentation and of incorporating into the research report some indication of the way the researcher affected, and was affected by, the research. My use of the word "I" and my relating this research to my own views and experiences are steps in this direction, as is my inclusion in the next chapter of a previously published article (Fox, 1985b) that presents my own way of approaching many of these issues. Although its discussion of psychology and ideology goes somewhat beyond the immediate concerns of the interviews to follow, I do think it important that my own views be made explicit, because my own perspective, reflecting years of observation of, and participation in, a variety of change-oriented social movements as well as more academic analysis, is inevitably as much a part of this dissertation as are the themes that emerged from the interviews.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **PSYCHOLOGY, IDEOLOGY, UTOPIA, AND THE COMMONS**

# Psychology, Ideology, Utopia, and the Commons

Dennis R. Fox *Michigan State University*

**ABSTRACT:** *The failure of social scientists to seriously question their own ideological and methodological assumptions contributes to the complex interrelationship between global ecological and individual psychological problems. Much of the literature on the tragedy of the commons focuses on saving the global commons through increased centralization and regulation, at the expense of the individual's autonomy and psychological sense of community. "Utopian" speculation in general and anarchist political analysis in particular are necessary correctives to misplaced attempts to merely rearrange the elements of the status quo rather than to radically alter it in a direction more in keeping with both survival and human dignity.*

Psychologists who turn their energies toward the solution of societal and global problems frequently find themselves in exasperated agreement with M. B. Smith's (1972) exclamation that "in social policy, how often it turns out that to make headway on one problem, another equally difficult one must be attacked!" (p. 13). Thus, not surprisingly, over the years there have been a number of calls to "attempt to understand social problems in their entirety, from a more systemic, holistic viewpoint, rather than concentrating on only a single dimension of the problem and proposing piecemeal solutions" (Nelson & Caplan, 1983, p. 505). Unfortunately, such calls all too often are ignored by investigators who fail to question the single-issue approach that typifies research on a number of human dilemmas. Even more distressing, though, is that many of those who do consciously advocate more radical, comprehensive solutions similarly fail to examine their own basic assumptions, and as a result, their proposals all too often point in the wrong direction.

In one sense, of course, even the liberal "tinkerer" approach is an improvement over the conservative "pure scientist" insistence that scientists striving for objectivity should not advocate change at all. Yet, although many psychologists do agree with Bevan's (1982) urging of a moral commitment to help resolve national problems, most do not seem to follow through on the logic of his point (originally expressed by Miller, 1969) that these "human problems, if taken seriously, will surely require human-kind to change its behavior, both individually and

collectively, and, more likely than not, its social institutions as well" (Bevan, 1982, p. 1316). Psychologists who have urged their peers to seriously challenge, rather than strengthen, the status quo remain a minority, and those in the moderate-to-liberal mainstream generally act on the belief that social change is possible—and desirable—only within a narrow, "realistic" range of options.

Academics who do suggest radical change in order to cope with environmental degradation, resource scarcity, economic and political disorder, and personal distress are found more often in the other social sciences than in psychology (a situation that should in itself stimulate some thought among psychologists concerning their own place in society). Unfortunately, such radical proposals generally come either from the Marxist left, advocating the transformation of the capitalist state into a centralized socialist one, or from the Hobbesian right, advocating the abandonment of equality and individual freedom in order to preserve the global environment. These proposals are on the surface far-reaching. However, because their faith in centralized state power channels their research questions, methods, and conclusions, the radical centralists actually stand in the way of the kinds of approaches that are needed just as surely as do the liberal tinkers who are committed to maintaining the social system essentially in its current form.

For present purposes, the dilemmas of modern society may usefully be divided into two broad categories: (a) problems of global ecology and (b) problems of individual needs and values. These two categories are intertwined; central to my argument is the view that only solutions capable of solving both sets of problems can solve either set in the long run. As a consequence of this interrelatedness, attempts to solve global or individual problems in isolation not only fail, but even worse, they frequently result in further complicating problems of the other type. What I am suggesting here is that psychologists must place greater emphasis on seeking comprehensive solutions that foster not liberal reform or radical centralization but, rather, radical *decentralization*. Only by such a process can we avert major global crises while we simultaneously expand human dignity and meet human needs.

This argument—that we seriously consider the utopian goal of a decentralized, federated society of

smaller, autonomous communities—combines several lines of thought generally pursued independently, including Moos and Brownstein's (1977) insistence that some form of *political ecological utopia* is necessary in order to preserve the environment; the suggestion that decentralization in one form or another would in fact help resolve global dilemmas (e.g., Edney, 1980, 1981a; Harris, 1981; Tax, 1977; Taylor, 1976); and Sarason's (1976/1982) acknowledgment of what he called the *anarchist insight* that the centralized state has compounded individual problems related to both autonomy and a psychological sense of community. It should be clear that this argument is in part an ideological one (explicitly based on anarchist analyses, which most fully combine the separate components into a comprehensive whole) rather than simply an empirical one. What should also be clear is that any opposing arguments are similarly ideological. Decisions about which human needs and values are most important to fulfill, what form an alternative society should take, or which methods of transition are preferred cannot be based solely on "objective" criteria. Social science is not—and cannot be—value free (Rein, 1976).

It is not my goal here to spell out the details of a decentralized world. Working out such details will take many years of speculation, imaginative investigation, and actual attempts to bring such a society about. My goals, rather, are to point out the necessity of getting on with that working-out process now; to urge psychologists to recognize the importance of "develop[ing] the habit of mind that could see alternatives" (Stoeck, 1979, p. xxviii); and to participate in the crucial process of exposing our own basic assumptions to constructive peer criticism.

There is, of course, no guarantee that even a significantly decentralized society would be able to resolve the entire multidimensional complex of global and individual problems, because the obstacles are immense, and no single approach will be totally successful. What I am arguing, however, is that only a decentralized society has any chance at all of surviving in a form that is fully acceptable to most human beings because only in such a society can solutions to both sets of problems be consistent rather than contradictory.

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## Societal Problems and the Search for Solutions

### *Problems of Global Ecology*

Social scientists have reacted in a number of ways to the existence of global crises and potential crises. Their responses, of course, have been consistent with their ideological assumptions, resulting in the unfortunate avoidance of several possibly productive avenues of research and speculation.

As an example, one major emphasis within psychology and other fields has been a growing literature that is in large part an outgrowth of Hardin's 1968 article entitled "The Tragedy of the Commons." Hardin, a biologist, described a situation in which "rational" individuals looking out only for their own self-interest will inevitably destroy what they use in common, so long as they each get the full benefit of their individual use of the commons but only have to pay a small percentage of the costs (note the assumptions behind Hardin's definition of rationality, which comes directly from similar treatments in the economics literature, e.g., Olson, 1965). Hardin advocated the public acceptance of stringent controls on the right to have children and to consume resources, in the belief that people will not voluntarily cooperate for the good of all in a large global commons. He later went on to urge the adoption of "lifeboat ethics" as a means of ensuring human survival in an overpopulated world (Hardin, 1972; Hardin & Baden, 1977).

Hardin's thesis has been echoed by many who have accepted his assumption of scarcity, his profit-maximization view of human nature, and his call for a stronger, more coercive, centralized state capable of saving the commons. Heilbroner (1980), for example, wrote that "as I examine the prospect ahead, I not only predict but I prescribe a centralization of power as the only means by which our threatened and dangerous civilization will make way for its successor" (p. 175). True, Heilbroner indicated a measure of discomfort with his prescription and with his view that survival depends on our "susceptibility to appeals to national identity" and our "willingness to accept authority" (p. 175), but he saw little hope of any alternative.

Research in social psychology has focused on prisoner's dilemma games, market simulations, bystander intervention, and related areas in an attempt to identify the conditions under which the tragedy of the commons comes into play. Researchers often agree, explicitly or implicitly, with the conclusions of Hardin and Heilbroner: In our modern, technological, complicated world, a tragedy of monumental scope is inevitable unless we resort to increased centralized governmental power (see the examination



of this view by Orbell & Dawes, 1981, as well as the review by Stroebe & Frey, 1982). This seemingly obvious centralist conclusion, however, is convincing largely because it has what A. Roberts (1979) called "the advantage of simplicity" (p. 159), an advantage that leads to the "largely uncritical acceptance of . . . false assumptions" and to "a search for salvation along paths which all unwittingly lead to destruction. We might call it 'the tragedy of "The Tragedy of the Commons"'" (p. 161).

### *Problems of Individual Needs and Values*

We see the problems of global ecology as problems because at least in the long run they threaten individuals. Regardless of whether widespread world hunger, for example, is primarily the result of too many people, inefficient resource distribution, the unnecessarily exalted place of protein-wasteful meat in the industrialized world's diet, capitalist exploitation of the third world by multinational corporations, or some combination of these and other factors (Lappé & Collins, 1978), the fact remains that people die as a consequence of large-scale societal processes not under their own immediate control. At the same time, the combined actions of millions of individuals shape those same global events. This obvious link between developments in the larger society and attempts by individuals to satisfy their survival needs stands at the core of modern ecological thought on global dilemmas.

Perhaps less obvious is the fact that our ability to satisfy our *psychological* needs, values, goals, and so on is similarly affected by (just as it affects) events at the global level. Yet understanding this aspect of the interaction is crucial in order to evaluate proposed solutions to problems at either level.

Determining what our needs and values actually are (or should be), how they are formed (at least given our particular social, economic, and historical context), whether they can be changed, and how individuals can best satisfy them has been a preoccupation, understandably, of large numbers of psychologists from a variety of theoretical perspectives, many of whom have filled bookstore shelves with advice to troubled individuals about how to relate to others, be creative, establish priorities, avoid shyness, escape depression, act assertively, and cope with the seemingly inevitable stresses of modern life. Examining the plethora of individual motives can be simplified somewhat by the common procedure of separating them into those related to *autonomy* (such as agency, individuality, assertiveness, achievement, and freedom) and those related to what Sarason (1974) called a *psychological sense of community* (such as communion, interdependence, cooperation, affiliation, intimacy, and belongingness). There are other needs and values, of course, that

cannot easily be placed in either category, but this distinction, which has been considered central by a large number of theorists (e.g., Bakan, 1966; Hogan, 1983), remains particularly useful.

Stone (1974) pointed out that it is especially in the work of psychologists such as Adler, Dewey, and Fromm that there is a central focus on "the theme of self in community [which] stresses the interdependence of individual people" (p. 263). Within social psychology, this fundamental individual-group distinction often dictates a two-part structure to introductory textbooks. Variations of the autonomy and psychological sense of community themes come into Milgram's (1974) assumption that a "potential for obedience is the prerequisite of . . . [hierarchical] social organization" (p. 125); into Rokeach's (1973, 1979) model of political ideology based upon the relative importance of freedom and equality in individual value systems; and of course into the tragedy of the commons literature's frequent emphasis on inducing people to cooperate for the common good. Topics such as equity, androgyny, group size and satisfaction, leadership styles, psychological reactance, and workers' control of their jobs relate in one way or another to conceptions of the most satisfying (or legitimate, productive, or moral) balance between the two.

Aronson (1980, p. 13) noted that the "tension between values associated with individuality and values associated with conformity" has been a focus of philosophical debate and political activity from Aristotle through Hobbes and Rousseau to the present. Too often, however, sole philosophical consideration has been given to the conflict between the community's "right" to insist on individual participation and the individual's "right" to be autonomous. What has been relatively neglected within both philosophy and psychology has been consideration of the importance to the individual not only of autonomy but also of a positive sense of belonging and mutuality. Also neglected, it should be added, are the benefits for the society as a whole of having members who are in control of the important areas of their lives.

Bakan (1966) urged psychologists to place more of an emphasis on balancing agency with the equally important "communion feature of the psyche" (p. 56). His point has been repeated in one form or another by a number of psychologists in recent years who have criticized their peers for being preoccupied with a liberal concern for "self-contained individualism," for promoting selfishness at the expense of interdependence and community, or for assuming that all human motivation can adequately be explained by reference to maximization of profits or other self-oriented needs (e.g., Hogan, 1973, 1975; Kanfer, 1979; Lerner, 1982; Sampson, 1977, 1978,

1981; Wallach & Wallach, 1983; Yankelovich, 1982; however, see Waterman, 1981). Although some of these criticisms come from an essentially conservative direction, others do not; see, for example, Chomsky (1969), who noted that "surely this concept of economic man is a psychological absurdity which leads to untold suffering for those who try to mold themselves to this pattern, as well as for their victims" (p. 41). Regardless of its ideological origins, however, the essential point—that psychological health requires a balance between individual autonomy and a psychological sense of community—must be taken seriously by those who advocate radical solutions to societal problems as well as by those who cling to their preference for liberal reform.

### *Toward Comprehensive Solutions*

The question remains: How can we preserve the global commons while at the same time facilitating the individual's attainment of both autonomy and a psychological sense of community?

The difficulty with most proposed solutions for ecological crises is that although they sometimes appear to be efficient ways of dealing with a deteriorating ecosystem, they treat only the symptoms and fail to cure the underlying disease. In addition, the common call for increased coercive centralization would, if enacted, contribute to a further increase in individual psychological problems by reducing both autonomy and interdependence within communities and by increasing alienation, routinization, and competition. It is not surprising that popular resistance to such state-coercive solutions is widespread.

On the other hand, attempts to deal with the problems of individuals solely through one-to-one therapy, general education, the establishment of support networks, or minor institutional change do not go far enough. As Albee (1982, p. 1044) pointed out, "more widespread and expensive social reform" is needed to prevent rather than just treat the "emotional distress and mental disturbance in our society [which] is due to dehumanizing social influences" such as oppression, meaningless work, racism, and sexism. The American "person-blame" ideology (Caplan & Nelson, 1973) deflects concern away from the political, economic, and social status quo and often results, for those not simply struggling to survive, in the single-minded pursuit of power, career, and material goods. Such a pursuit directly interferes with the attainment of interdependence. To make matters worse, the resulting overemphasis on materialism puts further strain on scarce resources, thus actually contributing to the more rapid depletion of the commons and, in turn, to still more problems for individuals.

The general reluctance among social scientists to advocate, or even investigate, comprehensive solutions of the kind that are needed is illustrated within the literature on the tragedy of the commons. The treatment received by the few exceptions is instructive. When they have not been ignored, they have generally been relegated to short footnotes; only rarely have they been directly and fully disputed.

## **The Tragedy of the Tragedy**

### *Dissent on the Commons*

Shortly after Hardin's (1968) original article, Crowe (1969) claimed that several of Hardin's crucial assumptions were unsupportable. Briefly, he argued that in large, modern states there can realistically be no general agreement about which values to fulfill and which interests to pursue. Consequently, coercive force will always be inadequate and unable to ensure full compliance with centralized policies, and any probable centralized bureaucracy is likely to be subject to interest-group pressures that would open the commons to differential exploitation. Crowe (1969) suggested that "emerging forms of tribal behavior" may be "the last hope of reducing political and social institutions to a level" (p. 1106) where problems might be resolved, and he argued that

we might well assume that the departure from the tribal experience is a short-run deviant experiment that failed. As we stand "on the eve of destruction," it may well be that the return to the face-to-face life in the small community unmediated by the electronic media is a very functional response in terms of the perpetuation of the species. (p. 1106)

Hardin and Baden (1977) reprinted Crowe's article, along with a response to it by Ostrom (1977). But, with only occasional exceptions, the sporadic reaction has been limited to little more than passing reference to Crowe's pessimistic attitude. For example, although Hardin (1972) noted that Crowe convinced him he had "grossly underestimated" the difficulty of the *quis custodiet* problem ("Who shall watch the watchers themselves?"), he added that "if I differ at all from Crowe, I think it is in my optimism" (p. 247; see also M. B. Smith, 1972).

Taylor's (1976) critical analysis of the mathematical assumptions of prisoner's dilemma games and of the logical and historical assumptions of Hardin's arguments has been cited more often than Crowe's, but also usually in lists of citations or in footnotes that do not adequately raise, let alone respond to, the points he made (e.g., Orbell & Dawes, 1981, p. 45; Orbell & Wilson, 1978, p. 412, footnote 3, and p. 413, footnote 5; for one of the few exceptions, see Laver, 1980). Taylor pointed out that the lowered level of voluntary cooperation typically found in large groups and nations does not

necessarily mean that the state has to be strengthened; just as logical is the conclusion that society should be reorganized as a network of smaller groups that would encourage a sense of belonging and enhance cooperation. Taylor argued that people who come to rely on the state to control their affairs lose the ability to function autonomously and that in the absence of a centralized state people would eventually regain that ability as well as their motivation to protect the commons.

Edney (1980, 1981a) also argued that long-term solutions will require, among a number of other approaches, breaking down the commons into smaller segments. He reviewed experimental data showing that cooperative behavior is indeed more common in smaller groups. After estimating that "the upper limit for a simple, self-contained, sustaining, well-functioning commons may be as low as 150 people" (1981a, p. 27), he listed the following "functional benefits" of reducing group size: Improved communication helps sustain necessary feedback; greater visibility of member distress during scarcity enhances the probability of remedial action; individual responsibilities are harder to avoid; alienation is reduced; and the role of money is reduced. Also, with many small commons instead of one large one, shortages in one cannot endanger the whole, and free riders have limited impact. "The improved focus on the group itself, the greater ease of monitoring exploitative power, and the opportunities for trust to develop among individuals with face-to-face contact are also enhanced" (1981a, p. 28).

Some of these points bring to mind the distinction between *communal* and *exchange* relationships (Clark & Mills, 1979). As the size of the group decreases, as trust increases along with the development of a sense of family or *we*, the self-oriented exchange relationships taken for granted in the commons literature should be minimized. As Hyde (1983) pointed out,

It remains an unsolved dilemma of the modern world, one to which anarchists have repeatedly addressed themselves, as to how we are to preserve true community in a mass society, one whose dominant value is exchange value and whose morality has been codified into law. (p. 89)

Other areas of research that touch on many of these same points include the literature on empathy and altruism (e.g., Batson & Coke, 1981; Hornstein, 1976), the long-standing evidence that people are more likely to remain committed to decisions they have had a part in making (Lewin, 1947), and the view that levels of cooperation and competition are dependent on variable cultural values (e.g., Boulding, 1979; McClintock, 1974).

Cultural values are also important in the very creation of scarcity in the first place. Referring to

the work of Calabresi and Bobbitt (1978), Edney (1981a) noted that much of the depletion of the commons is the result of production and distribution priorities established by individuals; such priorities need not be taken for granted. The implication is that in a smaller, less alienating community, materialistic values would change. Cooperation, joint consumption, and less individual accumulation would go a long way toward reducing scarcity now seen as inevitable, especially as people in the individualistic "overdeveloped" world reduce their disproportionate use of natural resources and recognize the benefits—not only for the rest of humanity but for themselves as well—of a simpler life-style (Barbour, 1980).

### *Resistance to the Dissent*

Many of the criticisms raised by Crowe, Taylor, Edney, and others (e.g., A. Roberts, 1979; R. Routley & V. Routley, 1982; V. Routley & R. Routley, 1980) have been supported by experimental evidence. People in groups do tend to cooperate more when the groups are small, when the group members have interacted repeatedly over time and expect to continue doing so in the future, and when the members can communicate with one another about their decisions. Cooperation enhances continued cooperation as trust increases. So why do most social scientists not even discuss the conclusions drawn by those dissenting from the centralized-state approach?

Most people apparently assume that a decentralist approach is either impossible or unappealing. The dismissal of radical decentralization as impossible, however, may have more to do with unquestioned preferences for the status quo or for centralist alternatives, perhaps based on a pessimistic view of human nature, than it does with an open-minded exploration of the evidence. (The debate over this issue can get quite heated; see Shippee's, 1981, response to Edney, 1980, and Edney's, 1981b, rejoinder.) Even though Hardin and Baden (1977) included an article that clearly demonstrated the ability of over 200 Hutterite communities in the United States and Canada to resolve commons dilemmas (Bullock & Baden, 1977) and even though they acknowledged the higher level of cooperation in small groups, they just did not consider such small-scale communal efforts to be useful models (Baden, 1977, p. 138; Hardin, 1977a, p. 71).

Adding to the problem is that researchers generally do not even take decentralist autonomous-community solutions into account. As an example, although Messick et al. (1983) cited both Crowe (1969) and Edney (1980), their research goal was to discover only

when or under what circumstances individuals will voluntarily relinquish their freedom of access to a commons

by turning the management of the commons over to a centralized authority. Specifically, we are interested in the conditions under which users of a commons will prefer to elect an individual who will have absolute authority to allocate a common resource in preference to allowing all individuals in a group free access to the resource. (p. 296)

Certainly in the real world, however (the real commons), people have many more options than totally free individual access and dictatorial "absolute authority." Unlike the real world, Messick et al.'s subjects had no face-to-face communication; they were assigned to six-person groups that were in fact composed of six individuals (isolated in semiprivate booths) whose only (perceived) contact with one another was by computer. Significantly, these groups were not given the option of choosing an actual group meeting where an optimal strategy could be worked out by all members through discussion and mutual agreement. It is not surprising, therefore, that the subjects tended to opt for a leader to save their dwindling resources, considering the only alternative they were allowed. Research that is limited to these two choices forecloses the possibility that other arrangements will be selected and contributes to the widespread assumption that centralized authority is the sole rational solution.

The view that a society of small, autonomous communities would be unappealing is also a factor in the failure to take decentralization seriously. Significant decentralization and increased within-community interdependence would undoubtedly lead to a decrease in the individualistic pursuit of careers and material comfort that is now a staple of American culture. Decentralized society would be very different, and there are many who like things the way they are—including many psychologists who have a stake in preserving the status quo (Sarason, 1981). Young (1980) noted that some objections to deurbanization might be met by the creation of worthwhile alternatives; in the meantime, though, it should not be surprising that research along the lines suggested here is so scarce.

What many people find unappealing about decentralization is what they call the "mindless conformity" of the "small-town mentality." It is important to note that advocates of a decentralized society of smaller autonomous communities are usually not thinking in terms of small towns as they exist today. Such towns are hardly autonomous, and they provide few opportunities for the face-to-face intimacy and cultural variety possible in the kibbutz, in the commune, and occasionally in the old ethnic neighborhood:

Aronson (1980) pointed out that "it's easier for an individual who is securely ensconced in a group to deviate from that group" (p. 24); he also speculated that people are more likely to help others when

there is a feeling of "common fate," when there is mutuality and not merely common residence in the same area. Much of the supposedly mindless conformity ascribed to small towns—and, of course, present in similar forms in the universities, corporations, and other bureaucracies in the big cities as well—may be a reflection of the fact that many people do not feel "securely ensconced" in *any* group. Even in small towns, mutuality is often missing from the lives of the residents. The value structure of modern American society (Williams, 1970) and the disruptions caused by long-term societal trends hardly encourage the sense of security and commonality that may be needed for people to become more open to the idiosyncrasies of their neighbors.

### *Anarchists and the Commons*

Aronson's point about the possibility of increased independence within the context of an accepting group has been echoed by the anarchist Bookchin (1982), who argued that individual freedom is only possible within the interdependence of a "free community." In fact, this view that community and individuality must be merged in "communal individuality" (Ritter, 1980) has traditionally been emphasized by the anarchists on the political left considered here, sometimes known as libertarian socialists or anarchocommunists (though not, it should be noted, by anarchocapitalists or libertarians on the political right).

Although the term *anarchy* is generally used by the media to mean chaotic or violent, bringing to the public mind images of bomb-throwing psychopaths, and even though some people who refer to themselves as anarchists seem to use the term primarily for its shock value or as a way of labeling their personal rejection of all societal order, the truth is somewhat more complex. As Barclay (1982) noted, anarchism as a political philosophy is

not opposed to structure, to order or to society. . . . The issue for anarchists is not whether there should be structure or order, but what kind there should be and what its sources ought to be. The individual or group which has sufficient liberty to be self-regulating will have the highest degree of order; the imposition of order from above and outside induces resentment and rebellion where it does not encourage childlike dependence and impotence, and so becomes a force for disorder. (p. 17)

The anarchist view that competition and violence are not inevitable parts of human nature was developed by, among others, Kropotkin (1902/1955), whose book, *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*, is still cited in the psychological literature as evidence of natural tendencies toward cooperation that have great survival value among both humans and other animals (e.g., Aronson, 1980, p. 167). Although, of

course, there have been violent anarchists, anarchist philosophy is clearly compatible with the creation of a nonviolent and cooperative world, as many pacifist anarchists have insisted.

The typical anarchist view of human nature, it should be clear, is in direct contrast to Hardin's (1977b), who wrote that "as Leo Durocher said: 'Nice guys finish last.' Our ancestors did not finish last" (p. 126). Most anarchists would disagree with the reasons for our ancestors' success, though some have argued that even if human nature is indeed as hopelessly greedy, competitive, and power oriented as many people assume, then "the beauty of the decentralist, anarchist position is that nobody can do much harm. . . . [If] people are corrupt as hell, therefore don't give anybody any power. . . . because the people who have power are not going to be any better" (Goodman, 1972/1979, p. 271).

In pointing out to community psychologists the need to take into account the effect of the centralized state on the individual, Sarason (1976/1982) described what he called the essential two-part "anarchist insight." First, he noted that

the central state (and its governmental apparatus), by its very nature and dynamics, inevitably becomes a force alien to the interests of its people, and the stronger the state becomes, the more it enslaves people in the sense that they are required, they are forced, to do things they do not want to do; i.e., there is a dilution in personal autonomy. The rhetoric of the state is one thing; its actual operations are something else again. (p. 140)

At the same time, according to Sarason, paralleling Taylor's (1976) argument discussed above,

The more powerful the state becomes, the more its people look to it as the fount of initiative and succor, the more is the psychological sense of community diluted. That is to say, the more the lives of people are a consequence of decisions made by Kafkaesque officialdom, the more they are robbed of those communal bonds and responsibility upon which the sense of rootedness is built. (p. 140)

Sarason's statement clarifies the traditional anarchist position that the creation of a decentralized society of small self-managed communities not subject to the dictates of a centralized state—though federated with other communities for necessary coordination—would be psychologically healthier. It would enhance cooperation and help transform individualistic, materialistic values into values that are less damaging for individuals as well as for the community as a whole. By definition, anarchists oppose solutions that lead to greater state power; Bookchin (1980), for example, bluntly criticized what he called Hardin's "ecofascist ethics" (p. 277). Many anarchists also look approvingly at societies where both autonomy and interdependence are simultaneously emphasized, such as those of the Hopi

(Bookchin, 1980) and the Eskimo (Barclay, 1982). Goodman (1966/1979, p. 176) pointed out that what he called the "anarchist principle," which holds "that valuable behavior occurs only by the free and direct response of individuals or voluntary groups to the conditions presented by the historical environment," is "a social-psychological hypothesis with obvious political implications" (see also Chomsky, 1973, 1981).

Although Sarason did not directly relate the anarchist insight to problems of global ecology, the connection is one that anarchists themselves have often made. Kropotkin, it should be remembered, was a biologist; Comfort (1982) in fact called him the founder of ecology. Bookchin (1971), who referred to himself as a social ecologist, has long insisted that only an anarchist society can be ecological. Anarchist proposals for dealing with the environment form the core of many of the dissents from the centralist tendency in the commons literature, whether those arguments are couched in explicitly anarchist terminology (Taylor, 1976) or not (Edney, 1980, 1981a). Similarly, Ophuls (1977) noted that the environmental question "is so close to the central problem of anarchism that it is perhaps the most directly relevant body of theory for many of the critical issues" (p. 235).

Maslow (1971) too approved of the anarchist emphasis on an ecological relationship with nature; its stress on decentralization, local autonomy, and personal responsibility; and its mistrust of force, large organizations, and large accumulations of power. Deploring the fact that "most intellectuals know little or nothing about philosophical anarchism" (p. 207), Maslow went on to identify anarchy as the level of organization in politics and economics for those who have "transcended" self-actualization (pp. 275-276).

Defenses of anarchism are not limited to the view that an anarchist society would be psychologically healthier for its members and more in tune with environmental realities. Anarchism, for example, has also been advocated on philosophical grounds (e.g., Ritter, 1980; Wolff, 1970). In addition, many anthropologists have contended that the small egalitarian anarchy is "the oldest type of polity and one which has characterized most of human history" (Barclay, 1982, p. 12; see also Fried, 1967, and Taylor, 1982). In contrast to the popular Hobbesian tone of much current thought, Barclay (1982) noted that "clearly, the anthropological record does not support Hobbes in any way. Stateless societies seem less violent and brutish than those with the state" (p. 28; see also Orbell & Rutherford, 1973).

Whether anarchism has anything to offer us today is both an empirical and an ideological question. Proposals by anarchist theorists, however, as

well as solutions offered by social scientists dissenting from the mainstream ideology, are most often dismissed, not because they are necessarily wrong, but because they are considered to be impractical, utopian, and impossible to implement in the modern world. Some anarchists, of course, simply reject these charges outright. Others assert that, based on their reading of history, the extent to which anarchism is practical remains an open but hopeful question and that, in any case, the adoption of an anarchist perspective in analyzing contemporary society provides the most meaningful yardstick with which to measure the ultimate value of proposed social changes (Chomsky, 1973; Comfort, 1982; Falk, 1978; Goodman, 1966/1979; Joll, 1979; Perlin, 1979; Taylor, 1982; Ward, 1973).

### Practicality and Utopian Speculation

Whether anarchist or some other kind of truly radical solutions—perhaps, for example, the partial decentralization advocated by Hawken, Ogilvy, and Schwartz (1982)—can ultimately be fully realized is of less immediate importance than is the usefulness of our engaging even in “impractical” speculation (Wrightsmann, 1974). The utopian label is often pinned on calls for comprehensive change as a means of dismissing them from serious consideration. However, utopia “seems unrealizable only from the point of view of a given social order which is already in existence” (Mannheim, 1936/1960, p. 190). Such social orders come and go, and those who indulge in utopian thinking may be more prepared for, and sympathetic to, the inevitability of widespread societal transformation.

A number of psychologists have explicitly recognized the importance of encouraging utopian speculation as a means of approaching social problems (for example, Maslow, 1965; Moos & Brownstein, 1977; Morawski, 1982; Wrightsmann, 1974). Maslow, for example, taught a course in “utopian social psychology” that was concerned with “the empirical and realistic questions: How good a society does human nature permit? How good a human nature does society permit? What is possible and feasible? What is not?” (Maslow, 1971, p. 203). Maslow also noted that “no Utopia can be constructed henceforth . . . without making peace with the concept of synergy” (p. 200), referring to Ruth Benedict’s notion of a society in which the social structure “provides for acts which are mutually reinforcing” (p. 194). According to Stokols (1978), this emphasis on synergy is clearly related to recent analyses of how people’s well-being is directly affected by the degree of congruence or “fit” between them and their environment.

There is at least the possibility that those environmental constraints on our behavior that we

ourselves have created can in the future be altered. Although, of course, we will never have a perfect society, increased utopian speculation on the part of social scientists would enhance the possibility of seeking, and perhaps finding, more effective solutions to complex problems. Without the *goal* of a synergistic ecological utopia, we are likely to continue floundering, perhaps making progress on some fronts as we retreat on others. Keeping utopia in mind can prevent our settling for minor reforms when more significant change might be possible.

Attempts to actually create alternative or utopian societies have been common throughout history (see Gardner, 1978; Manuel, 1966; Manuel & Manuel, 1979; Moment & Kraushaar, 1980). Even now there is a six-member Federation of Egalitarian Communities partly inspired by Skinner’s (1948/1962) *Walden Two*, with hundreds of other unaffiliated communes scattered across the United States. *Communities: Journal of Cooperation* has been published regularly, largely by members of several communes, for over a decade. In Israel, the kibbutz system, heavily influenced by socialist and anarchist utopians early in this century, is the most successful commune federation in the world. The network of North American Hutterite communities is also thriving (Bullock & Baden, 1977).

Alternative communities have their problems, of course, as might be expected given the difficulties faced by people attempting to radically alter their own behavior. Shey (1977), for example, discussed communes that failed partly because of interpersonal conflict growing out of strong individualistic values (see also Kanter, 1973). Still, Taylor (1982) noted that “the secular family commune is probably unique in the degree to which community and autonomy are *together* valued, sought after, and in some instances successfully achieved in practice” (p. 162). What we now need is increased interest among social scientists in stimulating more practice, as well as increased institutional support for such experiments.

What a decentralized society would look like, and how members of different autonomous communities would end up defining for themselves the appropriate balance between individual autonomy and psychological sense of community, remains to be worked out in the future. According to Moos and Brownstein (1977), it is only *after* utopia is made a goal that

the long and difficult undertaking of defining the content for a new society can begin. . . . Through a variety of mechanisms—traditional and innovative—utopian frameworks must be presented, debated, and advocated. In the parlance of contemporary media, utopia must become an issue and, as an issue, receive a place on the political agenda of our society. (p. 277)

## Conclusions

Edney (1981a) discussed the necessity of including both social values and social structures in any analysis of social problems. He also wrote that the most effective solutions must come through a two-part process: first, "basic investigations of the nature of behavior" of individuals within their social settings and, only as a second step, "technical questions of how to effect changes and what parameters to employ" (Edney, 1980, p. 148). Unfortunately, social science solutions all too often do not adequately take into account the first step; consequently, answers to the "technical questions" are essentially limited by largely unquestioned preconceived notions.

Similarly, basic assumptions about the proper methods of social science research stand in the way of more creative approaches to the study of social change. Fortunately, there has been some movement in recent years away from a strict insistence on the "carefully controlled quantitative approach of the physical science laboratory" toward approaches that preserve the "richness of our observations" (Bevan, 1982, p. 1310). Bevan's complaint about "self-limiting" specialization, "the most serious question facing organized psychology today" (p. 1311), brings to mind Buss's (1975) call for psychology to become holistic and humanistic. Academic overspecialization and rigid adherence to the dominant experimental paradigm are not likely to lead to comprehensive social change.

As the traditional quantitative research methods are balanced by qualitative ones (Agar, 1980; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Ginsburg, 1979; Morgan, 1983; Patton, 1980; H. Roberts, 1981; Sanford, 1982) and as long-held assumptions about the nature of social science and about the connection between psychology and the status quo are questioned on a number of grounds (Caplan & Nelson, 1973; Harré, 1980; Harré & Secord, 1972; Kendler, 1981; Manicas & Secord, 1983; Reason & Rowan, 1981; Rosnow, 1981; Sarason, 1981; K. K. Smith & White, 1983; Staats, 1983; Wexler, 1983), perhaps psychologists will become more willing to question their own personal ideologies, values, and goals. Such a development is necessary if psychologists are to make a real contribution toward the resolution of global commons dilemmas without sacrificing the individual's autonomy and psychological sense of community in the name of the survival of the species. Survival is crucial, of course, but it cannot be our only goal. After all, "other animals may obey the simple dictum, 'Above all, survive!' but the human animal tends to ask, 'Survive as *what*?' " (A. Roberts, 1979, p. 10).

Utopian thought in general, and anarchist thought in particular, could be dismissed quite easily

were it not for two factors. For one thing, as Moos and Brownstein (1977) pointed out, utopian solutions are now a necessity rather than a luxury.

For another, traditional anarchist accounts of human motives and social organization happen to mesh surprisingly well with recent psychological theory and with the data at hand. Although most people assume the commune is impossible, the neighborhood dead, and the alienating existence of mass society here to stay, anarchists reasonably suggest as a long-range goal an "organized anarchy"—a decentralized society of federated autonomous communities that would be better able to deal simultaneously with both global and individual problems at their source. Refusing to consider anarchist perspectives and failing to question our own basic assumptions may ultimately lead to tragedies that could otherwise be avoided.

## CHAPTER III

## VALUE PRIORITIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN NATURE

I like to believe that the intensive study of . . . human psychology . . . may contribute to a humanistic social science that will serve, as well, as an instrument for social action. It must, needless to say, be stressed that social action cannot await a firmly established theory of man and society. . . . Speculation and action . . . must progress as best they can.

Noam Chomsky  
For Reasons of State (1973, p. 406)

Chomsky's optimism about the development of a humanistic social science is apparently based on his own expectation that, once all the data are in, there will be general agreement that the "truth" about human nature includes notions of freedom and decency, and a rejection of the view that people are "economic maximizers" (Chomsky, 1973, p. 353). But psychologists, anthropologists, biologists, economists, and others who have studied these matters more often than not disagree among themselves both within and across disciplines, and the mounting pile of empirical data does little to reduce the heat of the arguments. Conflicts over potential solutions to societal dilemmas still echo the differences between Hobbes and Rousseau, with those who think of life as a "war of all against all" likely to advocate somewhat different solutions than do those who view people as inherently cooperative (though the literature on cooperation and interpersonal trust illustrates the complexity of determining when expectations affect behavior and when behavior affects expectations--e.g., Dawes, McTavish, & Shaklee, 1977; Kelley & Stahelski, 1970; Messé & Sivacek, 1979; Rotter, 1980). In the final analysis,



although more data on the truth about human nature may eventually be of use in effectively advocating and implementing particular strategies, of more immediate relevance to political decisionmaking is what people think is the truth.

What's fascinated me throughout my consideration of the connections between individual psychology, political ideology, and perceptions of human nature is the degree to which intelligent, concerned, creative people who have intensively studied these matters can disagree among themselves in drawing conclusions from "the data." Among academics and political partisans alike, advocates of one position or another are generally well armed with more than enough facts to prove their points and more than enough experts to back them up. The general public may be excused for often holding the somewhat cynical view that experts can be called upon to defend just about anything. After all, what is one to make of the debate over the "naturalness" of human aggression, for example, with Desmond Morris (1967) on one side and Ashley Montagu (1976) on the other, or of disputes about the safety of nuclear power plants, the prospects for global disarmament, or the appropriate way to reduce inflation? How does the public respond to disagreement among specialists who supposedly are interpreting the same facts? And what do the experts themselves make of their inability to persuade experts on the other side?

Perhaps partly as a result of this failure of any one ideology to resolve the loose ends to everyone's satisfaction, there is a tendency for mainstream social scientists (and members of the general public as well) to stick to the ideological middle and dismiss all radical perspectives as wrong or utopian, and to dismiss all proponents of such views as either naive, stupid, neurotic, or cognitively simple. (See, in this

regard, the discussion by historians Nelson & Olin, 1979, who place academic social-psychological theories of war, revolution, and conflict resolution within the liberal view of human nature, in contrast to alternative conservative or radical perspectives.) Thus, the early social movement literature generally portrayed movement participants as having something wrong with them, and, predictably, the research in the Sixties and early Seventies that found that many student activists were characterized by positive mental health has come under attack in a more conservative era (e.g., Rothman & Lichter, 1978, 1982).

My own history of social movement involvement and observation and my continuing advocacy of an ideology sharply discrepant from that of the majority has made me more sympathetic to others who challenge the status quo, even to those whose analyses and proposed solutions I reject. Partly, I assume, there is the need to justify my own views. But beyond that is my perception that most social movements include participants who are cognitively complex as well as those who are more dogmatic "true believers" (Hoffer, 1951), that there are openminded, honest people who become Marxists or libertarians or anarchists or fundamentalists because they have considered what they think are the relevant issues and have reached conclusions that are defensible given their own values and their knowledge of the facts. I have also seen many confirmed "centrists" who are as dogmatic, in their refusal to seriously consider calls for social change, as are the most fanatical of political partisans.

As discussed in the previous chapter, those social scientists who attempt to maintain a value-free objective stance generally insist that "the data are not yet in" and that calls for social change--and calls for radical change in particular--are premature. Those who do agree with

Chomsky, however, that social change must proceed before our knowledge of human nature is "firmly established," must of necessity act upon the basis of their own understanding, however faulty they acknowledge that might be. Unfortunately, the widespread failure on the part of most political partisans to consider the nature of their underlying assumptions tends to make more confusing the resulting public posturing. For example, in his examination of efforts to prevent nuclear war, Kimmel (1985) noted that the two common, opposing policy approaches--"peace through strength" and "peace through cooperation"--"reflect different Weltanschauungs: world views based on different assumptions about human nature and society that come to different conclusions not only about the prevention of nuclear war, but also about relations among people, institutions, and nations" (p. 536). Debates over seemingly technical issues such as numbers and types of missiles often mask two very different conceptions of whether people are naturally--and inevitably--aggressive or cooperative, rational or irrational, selfish or altruistic.

In addition to investigating what people themselves think about human nature and political issues, also of importance to advocates of social change must be more investigation of what people think other people think. By a process of false consensus (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977), it might be true that most people assume that their own views are shared by the majority. However, some consideration should be given to the possibility that people who are dissatisfied with, or at least ambivalent about, the whole of modern life may be incorrectly assuming that their views are held only by a minority, through the somewhat opposite process of pluralistic ignorance (Newcomb, 1950), a process that ensures that "people will stay in line because their fellows do, yet, if they

only knew that their comrades wanted to kick over the traces too, the institutional conformity of the group would quickly vanish" (Katz & Schanck, 1938, p. 174). In other words, there may be more underlying support for fundamental social change than even its advocates think, a situation that would improve the prospects of social action if that underlying dissatisfaction could be tapped. As Hochschild (1981) pointed out, public opinion polls do not usually deal in depth with such questions, and simple ratings of "happiness" or "life satisfaction" remain at a superficial level; Hochschild in fact found much ambivalence about the dominant United States pattern of distributive justice among her small sample of both rich and poor Americans.

#### A Tentative Two-Value Approach to Political Ideology

Although some psychologists have used the global term human nature in their work (e.g., Wrightsman's, 1964, Philosophy of Human Nature Scale, which measures trustworthiness, altruism, independence, strength of will, complexity, and variability), for the most part psychologists break human behavior into separate components for detailed study, leaving the broader questions to the philosophers. When looking at what the general public believes to be true for people in "general," though, human nature remains a useful concept in attempting to link individual assumptions about psychological functioning to political ideology. "It's only human nature" is often the final word in common explanations for a wide variety of behaviors.

One way of approaching the complicated links between views of human nature and political values is to go back to the two sets of needs discussed in the previous chapter: needs related to autonomy and needs

related to a psychological sense of community. These needs are often considered to be polar opposites, implying that an individual cannot maximally fulfill both sets at the same time. Thus, Bakan (1966) looked at agency and communion as constantly in conflict, and considered the attainment of a balance between them to mean less than total fulfillment of either one as individuals are necessarily faced with choices and trade-offs (Figure 1).

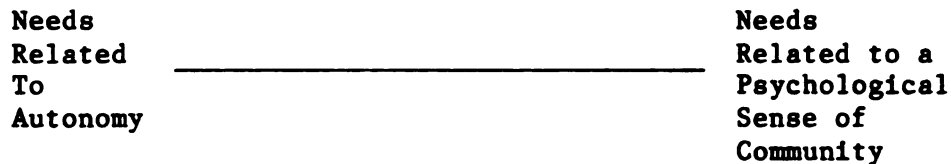


FIGURE 1. Autonomy-Psychological Sense of Community Needs Continuum

In moving from the level of psychological need to the level of the value consciously placed by individuals on fulfilling each set of needs, it's fruitful to think of two dimensions rather than one (Figure 2). Thus, individuals may differ in how important they consider autonomy to be, ranging from its being something that is highly valued to something to be avoided; similarly, a psychological sense of community may be seen as important, irrelevant, or, again, something to be avoided.

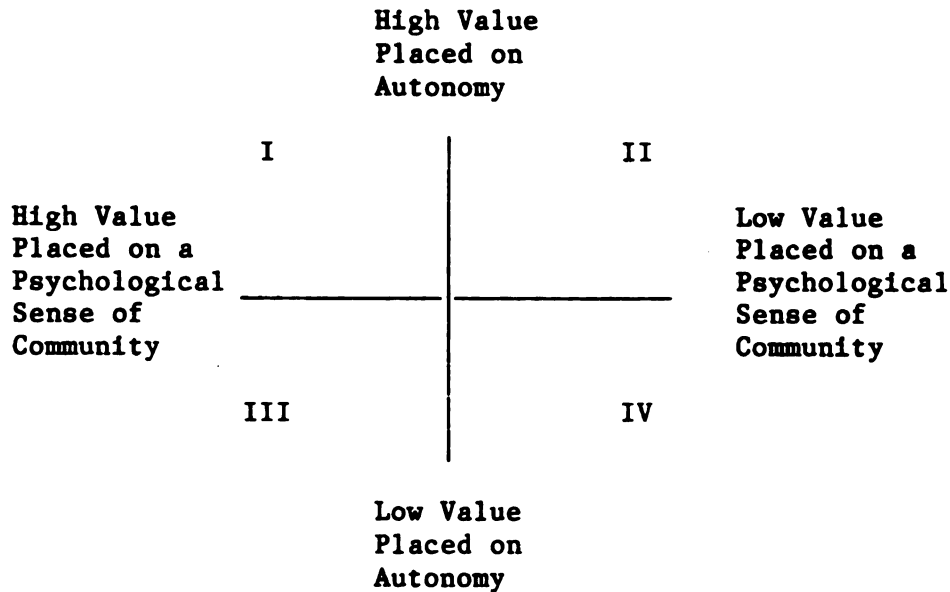


FIGURE 2. Autonomy-Psychological Sense of Community Value Dimensions

Such a two-factor model may of course also hold at the need level rather than the single continuum described above. Right now I'm more concerned with the value level, which implies more awareness on the part of the individuals involved. Needs and values are not the same thing, though social scientists, philosophers, and others have long disagreed about the relationship between them. There has also been much disagreement about what values actually are and how they differ from attitudes, interests, moral obligations, and so on. Are individuals who value autonomy actually autonomous in their own lives, thus valuing what they have, or are they people who have problems with becoming autonomous, thus valuing what they would like to have? Handy (1969) considered a value to be the thing that satisfies a need, but there is little consensus about these and other aspects. Still, despite the theoretical confusion, the value concept remains a useful one; a growing amount of research has been stimulated by the development of Rokeach's value-ranking procedure (1968,

1973, 1979), though Rokeach's view of values as preferred end-states of existence or modes of conduct is not universally accepted (see Smith, 1969; Williams, 1968, 1970).

Certainly such notions of value are relevant to political views. Rokeach (1973) emphasized the importance of looking at value systems rather than simply at single values. His model of political ideology--based on the relative importance placed by the individual on freedom and equality--provides a useful starting point. It should be clear, however, that the present focus on values is not meant to imply that values are the only relevant variable; also important are such factors as assumptions about human nature, personality traits, ego defenses, and rational object appraisal (Smith, 1974), all of which interact with larger social and historical forces in the formation of political ideologies.

The two-value model presented here has certain similarities to--and important differences from--Rokeach's model. I would consider Rokeach's notion of freedom to be much the same (with all the attendant confusion and complexity) as the autonomy I discuss here. However, equality is only one small part--certainly not the most important part, and perhaps not even a necessary part--of a psychological sense of community. Ignoring the difference between the two confuses the distinction between a small, cooperative, face-to-face community and the formal equality theoretically possible in a mass society, resulting in different placement of ideologies within the categories. Thus, Rokeach divides ideologies into those on the left and those on the right, while I include both sides of the political spectrum in at least some of the cells. Perhaps a three-dimensional model, simultaneously taking into account freedom (autonomy), formal equality, and psychological sense of community, will

in the end prove more useful. For now, however, I am limiting the focus of the discussion to the relative importance placed by individuals on autonomy and a psychological sense of community.

My suspicion is that individuals at opposing ends of the two continua would tend to differ in many important ways, including their conceptions of what people think is important, how people behave--in short, in their conceptions of human nature. I would also suspect that they might differ in their political values and ideologies, in their assessment of social problems, and in their views of how practical and ethical proposed solutions might be. Looking at the four cells formed by combining high and low values placed on each set of needs, I would speculate as follows (and I would consider such speculations more in the line of tentative hunches based on informal observation, rather than well-worked out hypotheses):

#### I High Autonomy--High Psychological Sense of Community

Individuals in this group, placing a high value on fulfilling needs in both areas of personal life, are likely to attempt a combination of individual pursuits and interaction with other people on a face-to-face, "community" level. They might not necessarily be more successful than others in fulfilling their needs; I would merely expect them to be trying to fulfill both, and perhaps to be inclined to view human nature as essentially or potentially cooperative and autonomous, and personal life as a sphere of repeated value choices. I would not be surprised if people in this category actually find it extremely difficult to satisfy both sets of needs at the same time; they might, consequently, exhibit a wide variety of individual problems stemming from an inability to make



trade-offs, problems that go well beyond the ideologically inconsistent reasoning exhibited by those whose political views include different values of equal importance (Tetlock, 1983, 1984a, 1984b).

In addition to the majority of people in this category who try to work out individual solutions to their conflicting needs, I would also expect many to be attracted to political or religious groups that make a conscious effort to deal with both sets of needs. Thus, for example, some might be decentralists or anarchists advocating a restructuring of society in the direction of autonomous noncompetitive communities; others might be activists who place a high priority on protesting, working, or living in a group context while retaining individual decisionmaking power (such as in some anti-nuclear affinity groups and Quaker political groups that operate on a consensus model); still others might be members of non-hierarchical communes. I would also include here people on the political right who emphasize the value of neighborhood, small-scale community, and local control. I would probably not include those state socialists who advocate centralized decision-making, who urge equality-based "community" at the national or class level rather than mutuality at the interpersonal local level.

## II High Autonomy--Low Psychological Sense of Community

In this category I would tentatively place the prototypical American "rugged individualist," the entrepreneur, the member of the Libertarian Party, the believer in individualistic anarchocapitalism. While there is nothing in libertarian philosophy that would prevent small groups from being an important focus of life, and while many individual libertarians are certainly concerned with community, friendship, intimacy, and so on, libertarian theory is based primarily--sometimes exclusively--on indivi-

dual rights, with an underlying implication that interdependence is suspect, or that it is, at least, much less important than freedom. Libertarians often hold the "economic maximizer" view of human nature, with individuals seen as primarily "selfish rationalists." The title of Ayn Rand's (1964) Virtue of Selfishness epitomizes the libertarian value system, which proposes as a general solution for social problems the "let free-enterprise capitalism take care of it" approach.

While the autonomy they seek is often difficult to obtain in today's society, libertarians should not have all that much difficulty in making trade-offs between values of autonomy and community. My impression, additionally, is that many libertarian activists do tend to be intelligent, capable individuals, often engaged in work related to computers, public relations, and the sciences as well as business. I suspect that many of them would do well in a libertarian society, at least in a financial sense.

### III Low Autonomy--High Psychological Sense of Community

Here I would include many members of groups popularly considered to be "cults" (such as the Unification Church) and of evangelical Christian groups such as the Maranatha Christian Fellowship, as well as many supporters of the Moral Majority and many members of the military. Individuals in this category, at least in the common stereotype, are much more interested in "the group" than in their own individuality; certainly there is a tendency within many cults to "lose oneself" in the group and follow the dictates of hierarchical authority. I suspect that many such individuals would view human nature as primarily evil, unless held in check by superior beings, either actual (in cults led by specific indivi-

dual leaders) or spiritual (as for some "born-again" Christians who have "given their lives to Christ"). On the other side of the political spectrum, members of many sectarian Marxist groups and groups such as the Weather Underground might also fall in this category. In general, I suspect many members of all these groups actually do get their community needs met through their activities, and that they might consider themselves to be fairly happy.

#### IV Low Autonomy--Low Psychological Sense of Community

I am tempted to speculate that large numbers of people are in this last category: people who are alienated, not connected with anyone else, lonely, people who avoid individualistic pursuits, decision-making, and personal achievement. Such individuals, who might see themselves more as "pawns" in life than as "origins" (De Charms, 1968), are unlikely to be affiliated with any organized groups, although they might be susceptible to short-term involvements in authoritarian movements of the right and the left, movements that often try to link individuals to the "mass" or the "class" rather than to the small face-to-face community. Those who are unaffiliated might find it difficult to come up with clear opinions on many issues; those who do identify with political movements might be very certain their opinions are correct. In Category I (high values placed on both sets of needs), individuals have difficulty making trade-offs between conflicting needs; in this low-low category, in contrast, individuals may primarily try to avoid making any decisions at all, "escaping from freedom" as well as from interdependence.

These speculations about a two-value model of political ideology are very general, very tentative, and very much in need of empirical data to help refine them. There are certain to be other relevant dimensions, and

it should be obvious that there are many exceptions to these generalizations. Many--perhaps most--people are in the midranges of the continua, not in the extremes I have been talking about; in addition, the emphasis placed on the different values may vary from situation to situation. For this research, however, the model was a useful starting point in ensuring a search for a wide variety of participants and in trying to make sense of some of the developing patterns. It was meant to facilitate the search for individual themes, not to circumscribe the boundaries of the research or to provide a set of hypotheses to be verified. The next chapter, on qualitative methods, should make clear the reasons behind the effort to avoid strong hypotheses, which sometimes act as a set of blinders. Hunches exist whether they are specified or not; the hope is that leaving them in the realm of hunch rather than formal hypothesis enables the researcher to avoid a commitment-to-hypotheses frame of mind.

# CHAPTER IV

## ON QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

And throughout it would have to be remembered that the participants were not giving simple information about themselves, subject merely to the limitations of their linguistic ability and their memory. The interviews were social encounters, necessarily sharing many features of interaction in everyday life. The tape recorded material should not be taken simplistically, at face value, but regarded as disclosures made to one who was to a large extent a stranger.

Tom Kitwood  
Disclosures To a Stranger (1980, p. 61)

It is not standard practice in traditional social science quantitative research to include a chapter specifically intended to justify the methodology. The use of experimental or survey procedures and statistical analysis is accepted as a matter of course, and there is little perceived need to spell out the assumptions behind the choice of procedures or to discuss the method's philosophical underpinnings. Qualitative researchers, however, and others who depart from the mainstream, often go to great lengths to explain their stance (e.g., Berger, 1981; Hochschild, 1981; Kitwood, 1980; Sennett & Cobb, 1972; Sullivan, 1984).

The visibility of qualitative methodology has increased in the past decade, certainly more rapidly than has its acceptability. This is apparent from a variety of signs: the growing number of books on the subject (e.g., Agar, 1980; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Lofland, 1971; Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Patton, 1980; H. Roberts, 1981); the inclusion of chapters on qualitative methods in general methods textbooks (e.g., H. Rubin, 1983); journals such as Qualitative Sociology and the Journal of

Phenomenological Psychology, and the occasional inclusion of qualitative reports in mainstream journals (e.g., Kroger, 1982; K. Smith & White, 1983); informal gatherings of qualitative researchers at annual meetings of the American Psychological Association; undergraduate and graduate courses that focus on nonquantitative approaches (e.g., Gail Hornstein's methods courses at Mount Holyoke College); and even the occasional job notices in the APA Monitor and the Chronicle of Higher Education specifying that a qualitative approach is desired. Despite all this, however, there remains a need to explain to a skeptical audience the choice of a methodology that still strikes some as fairly useless.

Part of the problem with presenting an alternative to traditional procedures is the tendency on both sides to see things in an all-or-nothing manner. Some qualitative researchers occasionally sound as if they seek to replace all quantitative research with their own methods, just as many experimentalists dismiss all qualitative work that is not explicitly labeled "exploratory." Fortunately, such extreme positions seem to be diminishing as qualitative methods become more widespread; there is increased recognition that both qualitative and quantitative methods have their strengths and weaknesses, and that the legitimacy of both approaches needs to be accepted. Agar (1980) noted that researchers in both traditions have much to learn from each other. In fact, Agar's book was written not only to demonstrate to adherents of the dominant paradigm the value of ethnographic methods; he was also attempting to convince ethnographers within anthropology to use hypothesis-tests and certain statistics when appropriate. When qualitative researchers do resort to a decidedly bitter tone, it should be remembered, as Agar indicated, that it is those in the mainstream who control research

grants. De Rivera (1984) also remarked that "it is difficult to get qualitative work published in the journals of the American Psychological Association, and all but impossible to get such work funded" (p. 682).

That qualitative research has gained at least some degree of acceptability is seen in the increasing number of qualitative dissertations approved by dissertation committees. Fifteen years ago, Blumer despaired over the fate of "exploratory" proposals:

See how far one gets in submitting proposals for exploratory studies to fund-granting agencies with their professional boards of consultants, or as doctoral dissertations in our advanced graduate departments of sociology and psychology! Witness the barrage of questions that arise: Where is your research design? What is your model? What is your guiding hypothesis? How are you operationalizing the hypothesis? What are your independent and dependent variables? What standard instruments are you going to use to get the data for your variables? What is your sample? What is your control group? And so on. Such questions presume in advance that the student has the firsthand knowledge that the exploratory study seeks to secure. Since he doesn't have it the protocolized research procedure becomes the substitute for getting it! (Blumer, 1970, p. 31, footnote 2)

The situation as described by Blumer is still more common than not, but there have been some changes. By 1982, Nevitt Sanford was expressing a qualitative-like point of view when he urged psychologists to pull away from traditional objective assumptions; he wrote that "I have often encouraged . . . students to proceed similarly when carrying out their dissertation research" (p. 899). The acceptance of my own qualitative research proposal by my dissertation committee reflects a similar willingness to move away from a monolithic view of what is appropriate.

Discussing qualitative methodology, H. Rubin (1983) noted that "The first problem is that qualitative research is often seen as being so easy that anyone can do it. After all, we all interview people and obtain information just about everyday" (p. 345). He went on to say "There is a danger in this kind of thinking. . . . Qualitative research properly

carried out is far from easy, and not just anyone is capable of doing it" (p. 346). De Rivera (1984) pointed out that "psychologists have usually admired the natural rather than the social sciences and have tended to feel that a true 'science' must necessarily rely on quantitative work" (pp. 681-682); he stressed the need to obtain adequate descriptions of phenomena (emotions, in his case) before beginning systematic quantitative approaches. "Unfortunately," he went on, "while most psychologists understand multivariate analysis, they do not understand the discipline of qualitative description" (p. 682).

There does seem to be increasing awareness that qualitative research is not simply an easy way out for those incapable of "real" science. Blanton (1983), for example, addressing himself to psychologists serving on dissertation committees, suggested that students who are "below par academically or intellectually" should be encouraged to pick a research topic that is limited in scope rather than "a theoretical or qualitative dissertation which requires a high level of analytic ability and fluent writing" (p. 76). The implication is that qualitative work has its own set of challenges, and should not be dismissed simply because of its unconventionality.

With the increasing--though still limited--acceptability of qualitative methods have come suggestions for how to maximize usefulness and minimize misunderstanding. There is no single, generally accepted way of doing qualitative research, no cookbook of "proper" techniques. There is, however, a growing literature concerned with qualitative goals and methods, which is the focus of this chapter.



### Background

Social psychology has become increasingly quantitative over the past few decades. Within psychology, the primary focus has been on laboratory experiments designed to determine causality; within sociology, on large representative samples studied through structured questionnaires. The research reported here, on the other hand, departs from both these traditions in that it is primarily concerned with the descriptive thematic analysis of open-ended material collected from a small nonrandom sample.

### The "Exploratory" Dismissal

Qualitative research has always existed in the social sciences, but social psychologists in particular have often relegated it to the subordinate role of preliminary, exploratory (and, thus, "less important") research and have generally not considered it to be especially legitimate or useful in its own right (Trend, 1978). In recent years, however, there has been a widespread, crossdisciplinary reexamination of research paradigms and the assumptions behind them. There is now a growing movement in defense of research that is nonexperimental, openended, and subject to nonstatistical analysis or to statistical manipulation that is less sophisticated than is the norm, and there are mainstream defenses of the importance of work that is explicitly labeled exploratory (e.g., Crano & Brewer, 1973). William Bevan, former president of the American Psychological Association, is one of many who have called on psychologists to be less "sanitary," less insistent on the "carefully controlled quantitative approach of the physical science laboratory," in order to retain the "richness of our observations" (1982, p. 1310). Bevan's complaint about "self-limiting" specialization ("the most serious question facing organized psychology today"--p. 1311) brings to mind Buss's

(1975) call for psychology to become "holistic and humanistic."

### Across Disciplines

Much of this new emphasis on qualitative research originates in other disciplines, and is related to "a new mode of inquiry that draws as much from the humanities as from the natural sciences, if not more" (Winkler, 1985, p. 5). Many anthropologists, understandably, have long been interested in research based on informal and formal interviews and on participant observation (Agar, 1980; Spradley, 1979). In sociology, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology have a distinct qualitative tone: Lofland (1971) emphasized learning how to "take the role of the other" in order to achieve understanding, and Bogdan and Taylor (1975) spoke of "going to the people." In the area of program evaluation, Patton (1980) also strongly defended the use of qualitative methods that look at individuals rather than at group averages; Oskamp (1984) included overlapping qualitative methods and naturalistic approaches among several new trends in evaluation research.

### Phenomenology

Common to all these approaches is a belief that the typical group-average hypothesis-testing paradigm often prevents accurate understanding of how real people see, and think about, the world around them. Even the usual nonexperimental questionnaire study typically imposes upon the respondent the particular questions and forced-choice responses predetermined by the investigator. It is more important, according to the qualitative researchers, to find out how individuals place themselves in categories that they see as relevant, and to uncover the "multiple interpretations of any given social phenomenon" that are assumed to exist by

those who see truth as "layered" (H. Rubin, 1983, p. 341) rather than as clear-cut and objectively determinable. This phenomenological approach has a long history in psychology, but there has been a clear tendency to minimize its value. Hogan (1976) noted that the analytical methodology of phenomenological psychology

is a major contribution whose importance American psychologists are now beginning to recognize. Phenomenology is an important antidote to the experimental methodology to which American psychology seems wedded. Moreover, in the hands of such investigators as Jean Piaget, Kurt Lewin, Gustav Ichheiser, and Fritz Heider, the phenomenological method has made and will continue to make substantive contributions to psychological knowledge. (pp. 163)

Bogdan and Taylor (1975), calling qualitative research "extremely humanistic" (p. 9), pointed out:

Since the positivists and the phenomenologists approach different problems and seek different answers, their research will typically demand different methodologies. The positivist searches for "facts" and "causes" through methods . . . which produce quantitative data and which allow him or her to statistically prove relationships. . . . The phenomenologist, on the other hand, seeks understanding through . . . qualitative methods. . . . These methods yield descriptive data which enable the phenomenologist to see the world as subjects see it. (p. 2)

### Social Psychology

The attempt by psychologists to be more "holistic and humanistic" in their research is part of the response to the "crisis of confidence" that social psychology has been going through in the past decade (Elms, 1975). There have been a variety of criticisms of the discipline (for example, Gergen, 1973, 1982; McGuire, 1973; Sampson, 1978, 1981, 1983), and many qualitative researchers consider their approach to be responsive to many of the overlapping attacks on the status quo. This trend, of course, is part of a wider movement. Kuhn's (1970) work, which stimulated much discussion of "paradigm shifts" in the natural sciences, has had a major

impact on the social sciences as well (Barnes, 1982), as part of the shift away from the "logico-empiricist tradition" and toward the "new philosophy of science" (Brown, 1977; see also Winkler, 1985).

Harre and Secord (1972) attacked in detail the philosophical underpinnings of much of experimental social psychology. They accused their peers of accepting without question certain assumptions incorrectly thought to be part of "science," and were particularly insistent that social psychologists learn to "treat people as if they were human beings" (p. 84) rather than as passive "subjects." Human beings, they say, think, plan, and create meaning, and experimenters too often fail to solicit personal accounts from subjects to find out what they thought about during the experiment. Harre (1980) has continued to advocate what he calls an "ethogenic" approach, and Harre and Secord together edit the Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior. Their influence on social psychology has been slowly increasing (see, for example, Kitwood, 1980; Kroger, 1982; Manicas & Secord, 1983; Sabini & Silver, 1982; and recent handbooks largely or partly devoted to "new paradigm" research using openended interviews, participant observation, assisted autobiographies, role playing, etc.: Brewer & Collins, 1981; Ginsburg, 1979; Reason & Rowan, 1981).

### Related Political Perspectives

Part of the controversy over nonmainstream research methods is undoubtedly related to the fact that some advocates of those approaches openly link their theory and research to particular political perspectives. These advocates, however, argue in turn that there is inevitably a similar, though often unmentioned, connection between the dominant positivist paradigm and the political status quo. Harre (1980), in fact,

insisted that "every writer on psychological theory owes an explicit account of the political consequences of his position to his readers," as part of a "general moral obligation which all students of the human sciences should accept" (p. iii). Of course, making "political consequences" explicit generally leads to criticism not only of the political perspective but of the method as well.

Feminist methodology. A number of researchers place their concern with nonhierarchical researcher-informant relationships and other aspects of qualitative research within the larger context of feminist or non-sexist methodology (e.g., Lott, 1985). There is a great deal of overlap between the general qualitative literature and the feminist research literature. A growing number of books (e.g., H. Roberts, 1981) and conferences (e.g., sessions on qualitative research and feminist interviewing at a 1984 conference on Alternatives For the 80's, sponsored by a number of women's groups as well as by the Michigan Psychological Association) have added to the perception by some that qualitative methods are primarily of interest to political feminists. Such a perception is understandable, though inaccurate; although many feminists are interested in a qualitative approach, for understandable reasons, most qualitative researchers probably do not view their work in an explicitly feminist context and, instead, apply it to a much wider range of concerns. The distinction between method and purpose is just as important to keep in mind as is the complicated connection between the two.

Critical social psychology. A different argument is made by those who urge a critical approach to social science research (e.g., Fay, 1975; Wexler, 1983; and many articles published in the journal Psychology and Social Theory). Coming from a generally Marxist direction, advocates of

a critical psychology reject both the dominant positivist approach as well as the alternative qualitative, phenomenological, or "interpretive" approach, arguing instead that the purpose of social science is not just to predict or to understand but to actively change society for the benefit of its members--that research must be, in the end, change oriented. Critical psychologists reject purely phenomenological approaches because, they say, attempts to merely understand the perspectives of individuals sometimes leads to passive acceptance of their interpretations rather than to efforts to create change, which occurs when phenomenologists fail to recognize that people's self-understanding may be distorted by, among other things, oppression (Ingleby, 1981). My own view, however, is that a cautious interpretive or qualitative approach can be useful in laying the groundwork for social change by increasing understanding of different perspectives without necessarily leading to acceptance of the status quo.

Anarchistic methodology. Feyerabend (1975, 1978) advocated what he called an anarchistic methodology in the natural sciences (though not anarchist politics); his work was extended to the social sciences by Orenstein and Luken (1978). Feyerabend argued that scientific progress comes not from simply replacing the dominant paradigm with a new one (as he accused Harre of attempting to do) but from rejecting as well any single alternative. The result, he said, should be a variety of methods that arise in response to need rather than dogma. Such an approach (and terminology) go beyond the concerns of most qualitative researchers, though it is similar to the qualitative focus on flexibility. Feyerabend's point, that advances in science have often come from those who have turned their backs entirely on the conventional wisdom, is not in itself controversial.

### Qualitative Tone

Qualitative research has a distinctive tone that stems from its roots in phenomenology and anthropology, its feminist and other anti-hierarchical influences, and its focus on the appropriate balance between objective methods and subjective acknowledgment of the way in which the researcher affects, and is affected by, the research. It is this qualitative tone, seen in the research itself as well as in the final written report, that often strikes quantitative researchers as "unscientific." Several elements are involved.

### The Notion of "Subjects"

Qualitative research extends from ethnographers who immerse themselves for months or even years in a particular culture, living with the people studied, to program evaluators working under much more limited constraints. In any event, it implies more than just an openended questionnaire or a long interview. It takes time to come to understand what people are like on their own terms. De Waele and Harre (1979), at one extreme, described a technique used to assess convicted murderers: a series of year-long interviews, observations, and so on, on the part of about a dozen investigators to fully understand one individual.

Agar (1980) discussed the typical "one-up" asymmetrical relationship that results from attempts to maintain scientific control (a relationship discussed in another context by Sieber, 1983, who noted "the powerlessness and dependency of typical subjects" in psychological research--p. 4). In contrast is the initial "one-down" relationship in anthropology, in which the ethnographer learns from the informants. Over time, according to Agar, the relationship can become more symmetrical as friendship

develops and as the investigator learns more about those being studied; any "one-up" relationship is transitory, as may happen during occasional formal interviews.

As Harre and Secord (1973) pointed out, there is much to be gained from treating people as people rather than as subjects. De Waele and Harre (1979) discussed, in connection with their assisted-autobiography approach, the enhancement of a personal "collaborative" relationship rather than the more typical "contractual" one (a distinction made by Carlson, 1971). Their method "benefits both the investigator and the participant: while the investigator learns about the dynamics and organization of personality, the participant learns about himself" (p. 180). The general approach is to take the interviewee seriously, as an expert or a teacher, rather than as a subject, a thing to be manipulated. Even the very term subject is avoided; qualitative researchers refer instead to collaborators, informants, participants, and so on.

It is true that most qualitative research does not match De Waele and Harre's year-long twelve-to-one interview technique. Nor do most go as far as Massarik (1981), who described a "phenomenal interview" as one characterized by "maximal mutuality of trust . . . and a commitment to joint search for shared understanding" not bound by artificial time constraints, with "little by way of simplistic question/answer exchange; rather free-form modes of communication . . . identify the process" (p. 203). Such totally open and extended processes are seen as a legitimate goal for certain circumstances, though researchers in most cases do come armed with a flexible interview guide, as discussed below, and try to work within ever-present time and financial constraints. It is generally accepted that participants should be interviewed more than a single



structured time; an ongoing process is seen as crucial to allow needed reflection, clarification, and trust. Many researchers also point out the value of interactions with the participants that go beyond the formal interview situation; informal discussions over a cup of coffee, attending group events, and other interactions are seen as strengthening, rather than contaminating, the research process.

### General Flexibility

In quantitative research the hypotheses, methods, and general analytic approach are detailed in advance. Departures from expectations are seen as contaminating factors, even as failures, which must be justified or, even, apologized for. In qualitative research, on the other hand, which has different goals, such specificity is neither possible nor desirable. Intentions and procedures are constantly modified in response to unexpected events and to new insights gained from earlier stages in the research.

This flexibility extends to the purpose of the research, to participant selection and number, to question content and type, to method of analysis, and to the specific form of the final report. There is an understanding that unforeseen events can be useful rather than disastrous. Kitwood (1980), for example, studying adolescent values, noted:

It soon became clear however that, whatever one's aim might be before carrying out a set of interviews in one place, the outcome would always be different from what had been anticipated. Our policy was to regard unforeseen contingencies, not so much as difficulties to be overcome by tighter forms of control, but as additional kinds of evidence. (p.55)

### Hypotheses and Statistics

Embracing, rather than rejecting, flexibility applies also to the development of hypotheses. Lofland (1971) contrasted the overlapping nature of "observation" and "analysis" in qualitative research with their sequential pattern in quantitative research. The same point has been made by Agar (1980), who talked about research strategy as a "narrowing funnel," and by Erickson (1977), who discussed "focused data collection." Observations and interactions lead to tentative analysis, which leads in turn to further observation and interaction; hunches become hypotheses, and are continually modified in response to new information; initial procedures are altered as new opportunities become available.

In experimental research, preestablished hypotheses must be tested in a rigorous manner; "prediction and control" is at least the theoretical goal. Determining causality is not the goal of qualitative research, however, so much as gaining increased understanding of the perspectives of the participants. As hypotheses develop, they are related to emerging themes and propositional sentences (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975) rather than to specified-in-advance causal statements:

Unlike practitioners of most other methodologies, the participant observer seeks merely to demonstrate the plausibility of his or her hypotheses and not to "test" or to "prove" them. The latter terms have more meaning in the context of quantitative research models. . . . And while the observer can perform such [statistical] procedures on data, the scores obtained will neither prove hypotheses nor greatly increase understanding. (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 80)

Agar (1980) argued that, while hypothesis-testing is useful in order to check the conclusions reached during ethnographic investigations, any formal test should at most be the final addition to the research, rather than the main point. Lofland (1971) noted that "even if the search for causes is not one's primary task, it can still be a tentative, qualified,

and subsidiary task" (p. 62) so long as the hypotheses are clearly placed in the realm of conjecture. Still, he concluded that researchers should in general avoid mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches, because including a quantitative component is likely to interfere with the qualitative one, an argument similar to that of Patton (1980), who suggested avoiding the use of statistics in most qualitative work and advocated instead the presentation of observed patterns with descriptions such as "weak" or "clear" (p. 343-344). Kitwood (1980) wrote of his own study:

In describing the data it is worth drawing attention to several features of the patterns that emerge: similarities, differences, gradations, and the simple characterization of content. Much of this is amenable to descriptive statistics, and the material can be pressed to yield its due extract of significant differences and correlations. Statistics have not been applied in this way, however, because the units of data are so far from being "pure" that the whole procedure would merely be obfuscating. (p. 90)

### Objectivity, Bias, and Mutual Benefit

Many mainstream researchers find much to criticize in qualitative methods: the failure to focus on causality, the emphasis on verbal reports, the relatively uncontrolled atmosphere of unstructured interviews and participant observation, the tendency to become personally involved in the lives of the people studied, the limited ability to generalize to a larger population, the potential for bias, and so on. Some of these factors qualitative researchers do not take to be problems at all, at least when the inherent risks are recognized. The question of bias is particularly important, though, and has been addressed in detail.

Acknowledging bias. Lofland (1971) discussed seven areas of potential distortion in participant observation and listed a series of questions for researchers to ask themselves, in the belief that a clear awareness of the sources of bias can help minimize it. Similarly, Bogdan

and Taylor (1975) suggested that since bias is unavoidable, researchers should keep a record of their own biases and thought processes, in order to help themselves and others evaluate the research. "An understanding of one's data requires some understanding of one's perspectives, logic, and assumptions" (p. 92). This suggestion to keep a personal diary, in which one can compare one's own views and prejudices to those of the participants, specify one's hunches and hypotheses, and vent one's emotional reaction to the participants and to the research process, is a common one (e.g., Agar, 1980; Denzin, 1978; Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Patton, 1980; Spradley, 1979). Such a diary is seen as distinct from other suggested forms of notes that are more descriptive or analytical.

It may be difficult for those trained in "objective research" to accept the researcher's own feelings as an important data source. Yet, . . . To stand back and deny one's feelings in the name of objectivity is to refuse to take the role of the other person. (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, pp. 66-67)

Experimental bias. Qualitative researchers often point out that the dominant paradigm contains its own unquestioned assumptions and built-in biases. Many consider openended questions in the context of an egalitarian researcher-participant relationship a way to prevent imposing upon individuals the biases of the investigator, biases that can affect the wording of questions and the choices given to the "subject." As Patton argued, in discussing charges that qualitative analysis is biased as a result of its lack of concern with advanced statistical methods, "numbers do not protect against bias; they merely disguise it" (1980, p. 333). Kitwood (1980), after discussing a number of precautions to take against "researchers' fantasy," concluded that in the end "the conventional notions of 'reliability' and 'validity' may be misleading" (p. 64).

The virtues of subjectivity. Some qualitative investigators have moved even further away from attempts to appear "detached" and "objective" in dealing with the people they study, attempts they consider to be doomed to failure in any case. Agar (1980) and Patton (1980) discussed the potential (but somewhat heretical) benefit of asking "leading questions" in a productive manner. When combined with the occasional inclusion of the researcher's own opinions, this moves the interview a long way toward becoming a real conversation that is likely to put both researcher and participant at ease and stimulate constructive interaction. Kitwood (1980) argued:

It is the distinctively human element in the interview that confers its particular authenticity. The more the interviewer is rational, calculating and detached, the less likely the encounter is to be perceived as a friendly transaction, and the more calculated the response will also probably be. (p. 63)

Mutual benefit. Similarly, Lofland (1971) noted that "successful interviewing is not unlike carrying on unthreatening, self-controlled, supportive, polite, and cordial interaction in everyday life" (p. 90); of course, as Lofland indicated, it's not always easy to be all of those things, and successful interviewing cannot be assumed to be easy. But when it is successful, it has benefits for both the researcher and the interviewee that go beyond the strict confines of the data:

Interviewing people can be invigorating and stimulating. . . . A good interview lays open thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experiences not only to the interviewer, but also to the interviewee. The process of being taken through a directed, reflective process affects the persons being interviewed and leaves them knowing things about themselves that they didn't know--or at least were not aware of--before the interview. (Patton, 1980, p. 252)

Sanford (1982), also discussing the potential benefits of the interview process for both interviewer and interviewee, wrote that his

own conception of action research starts with Freud. In his hands, psychoanalysis was a cooperative effort . . . to find out things in

order to do something to effect change, and likewise to do something in order to find out something. Both partners were emotionally involved in the interaction, and both learned. Freud's method, moreover, does not belong only in the consulting room. The people we see in the course of our social research and in the course of our efforts to educate are just as complicated, and often more interesting, than patients in psychoanalysis. (p. 897)

Personal research. Sanford went on to note that now, unlike in the past, he would not try to appear detached during interviews. He is inclined to talk more,

perhaps revealing some of our differences with our interviewee. . . . Instead of coolly extracting ethnocentric statements from a person and then counting them up, I would try to start a discussion of political issues and to carry on in a way that invited self-examination. (p. 899)

Sanford urged researchers to describe their own thoughts, feelings, and actions when they publish their findings. He pointed to Keniston's (1968) Young Radicals as an example, and described several studies in which the interviews became "essentially conversations" (p. 899). Similar points have been made by others. H. Rubin (1983) noted that it is important to "allow yourself to be human" (p. 366); Bogdan and Taylor (1975) spoke of the researcher expressing his or her own feelings during the interview, and especially during out-of-interview interactions; Oakley (1981) argued the importance of the participants being able to ask questions of an equal-status interviewer, and noted that she became friends with some of the people she interviewed. Such an approach has its risks even beyond the bias-related questions--Rubin (1983) discussed the stress that can come from building friendship-like relationships for data-collection purposes--but the general thrust of qualitative research is to accept the risks in return for the benefits:

This book is to some extent the record of a research experience; it is not only about communards, but about my relationship to them. . . . I was also in fact strongly affected by that research experience, and to write as if I had not been so affected would be a falsifica-

tion. . . . The book, in short, is a "personal" book, but not, I hope, less objective because of that. (Berger, 1981, p. 8)

### The Qualitative Interview

Qualitative research is generally considered to include both studies based on observational techniques (particularly participant observation) and studies based on open-ended interviews. It is the latter type that is of primary interest here, though the distinction between the two is not always that clear-cut.

### Focused Interviewing

There are many different kinds of interviews, for many different purposes. What qualitative researchers have in common is the rejection of standardized interview schedules and forced-choice responses as inconsistent with the goal of understanding on their own terms the particular individuals being interviewed, a goal that can be contrasted to the use of statistical precision to enable comparison of randomly selected, representative groups. De Rivera (1984), introducing a series of articles on the qualitative analysis of emotion, described five distinct types of qualitative methods used by psychologists, though in practice the types often overlap and can be used in combination. More generally, what is most typical is an approach that has been called "focused interviewing" (De Waele & Harre, 1979; Kidder, 1981; Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1956; H. Rubin, 1983).

Interview guide. In focused interviewing, the interview is open-ended but the interviewer comes prepared with a flexible interview guide that serves as a general framework of topics to be covered (Lofland, 1971; Patton, 1980). There is no attempt to follow the topics in order, to mandate that all topics be covered under all circumstances, or to

stick to the topic at all costs. The interviewee has the power to raise topics that he or she sees as relevant, not limited by preconceived notions of what "relevant" includes. The purpose of such interviewing is "to carry on a guided conversation and to elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis" (Lofland, 1971, p. 76); the guide serves as a reminder or checklist of important topics, not as a straitjacket. And although many qualitative researchers go to great lengths in discussing the kinds of questions to ask and the order in which to ask them, the important point here is the interview's flexible, developing, interactive nature.

As an example, Hochschild (1981) interviewed 28 individuals for six hours each in her investigation of attitudes toward the desirability of redistributing income in the United States. She used both openended and forced-choice questions, with detailed probes and space for "rambling anecdotes" and a detailed interview guide rather than a structured questionnaire. Hochschild felt compelled to note that, although she could not generalize from her small sample to the population at large, she could defend her primarily qualitative procedure on four increasingly "bold" grounds: (a) Intensive interviews are intrinsically interesting; (b) they can generate "insights, anomalies, and paradoxes, which later may be formalized into hypotheses to be tested by quantitative social science methods (p. 24); (c) "they can fill in gaps left by opinion research through providing data that surveys are unable to produce" (p. 24), offering different paths to identical conclusions (she adds here that, in opinion polls, the "researcher infers the links between variables; in intensive interviewing, the researcher induces the respondent to create the links between variables as he or she sees them"--p. 25); and



finally (d) intensive interviews can "generate findings that survey research does not. . . . Different conclusions may be reached by different paths and . . . the conclusions of intensive interviewing may more accurately capture reality" (p. 25).

Qualitative interviews, generally with an interview guide, have been central for a large number of other researchers, including Gilligan (1982), who compared the differing nature of morality among women and men; Sennett and Cobb (1972), who examined working class consciousness; Kelman (1983), who analyzed Yasser Arafat's cognitive style in two long conversational interviews; Wikler (1982), who studied the concerns of Vietnam veterans; and Kitwood (1980), who interviewed adolescents about a range of value issues.

#### Small Sample Size

Qualitative researchers typically emphasize the importance of "knowing" a small number of individuals well rather than superficially "knowing about" a larger number in terms of group averages (Lofland, 1971). For this reason, and also because of the time and expense of obtaining and analyzing massive amounts of material about individuals, qualitative sample size remains small; Lofland and Lofland (1984) noted that most qualitative research is based on 20 to 50 interviews. This is not, of course, something new in social science. Smith, Bruner, and White (1956), for example, wrote Opinions and Personality based on a series of interviews with ten men, although the 28 procedures they administered over a course of 15 two-hour sessions were more directive than those used by most qualitative investigators today.

Although small-sample studies have been common, they have not always

been considered worth doing. Pervin (1978), in a discussion of controversial issues in the field of personality, noted the declining interest in studying individuals:

I was not surprised when a colleague, referring to a piece of research involving the study of four subjects commented that he was not sure how much could be gained from the study of a few individuals. Though not surprised, I was left pondering how my colleague would view the works of Freud and, if not Freud, then, Piaget. (p. 247)

Allport (1965) also strongly defended the idiographic approach, which focuses on individual patterns, in contrast to a total reliance on nomothetic approaches designed to uncover general laws. Both are important, he insisted, and the effort to understand the particular event or person should not be discarded in the search for generalizations. Qualitative researchers agree with Lofland's (1971) remark that "one legitimately sacrifices breadth for depth" (p. 91). Agar (1980) added: "It is hardly your fault that dozens of variables are relevant to the issue. Better to understand their interrelationship in a few cases than to misunderstand three of them in a population of 500" (p. 123).

Although small samples are common among qualitative researchers, there is recognition that it is not always appropriate. Patton (1980) concluded that the choice among program evaluation methods must be made after examining the available resources, the time allotted, and the needs of those commissioning the research. "In brief, these are not choices between good and bad, but choices among alternatives, all of which have merit" (p. 99).

#### Heterogeneity and Sample Selection

With a small sample, it is crucial to take steps to ensure that the participants differ on the variables of interest. Smith, Bruner, and

White (1956), for example, deliberately sought a varied group. The criteria they used to select the opinion to be focused on--attitude toward the Soviet Union--were geared toward maximizing heterogeneity:

(a) The area of opinion should be one about which people have more or less crystallized views; (b) it should be a controversial area on which there is a substantial division of opinion; (c) it should be relatively independent of political party and not be a direct reflection of class membership; (d) it should be reasonably charged with anxiety or other forms of affect; (e) it should be on a socio-political level to parallel the problems normally met in opinion polling; (f) it should be a topic of continuing contemporary interest; (g) it should preferably be a topic of some social and political significance in and of itself. (p. 49)

These and related concerns are found within the recent qualitative literature. Kitwood (1980) noted:

With relatively small numbers . . . it is not, of course, correct to speak in strict terms of a "sampling" procedure. Statistical considerations are not applicable. I was looking, rather, for a set of what might be termed "limiting" and "distributive" devices: the former to set a boundary to the study, and the latter to give it an internal structure. (p. 55)

Although a random, representative sample is not the goal of most qualitative research, that does not mean that selecting just about anyone will do. From the anthropological literature comes the notion of key informants, "people who are particularly knowledgeable and articulate, people whose insights can prove particularly useful in helping an observer understand what is happening" (Patton, 1980, p. 182). The researcher may seek those who have the "ability and willingness to verbalize their past and present experiences and feelings. People simply do not have equal ability and willingness to make vivid the details and meanings of their lives" (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 102; see also Agar, 1980, p. 89). Lofland (1971) warned that researchers may be approached by marginal group members who may not be representative of the rest of the group, but he added that, "In being marginal, they are also most likely to have

novel views of the setting" (p. 111; in a related context, p. 97, Lofland noted that the researcher is also marginal when studying a group, and that such marginality can lead to creative insight).

From the sociological and ethnographic literature also comes the notion of theoretical sampling, where the researcher selects people to talk to based on comparisons that he or she wants to make with people who were interviewed earlier (Agar, 1980; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). "If we are interested in unique cases not widely distributed, . . . nonrandom sampling methods are in order" (Denzin, 1978, p. 235). The process continues, if possible, until "theoretical saturation," which "occurs when all available and relevant sources of data have been exhausted" (Denzin, 1978, p. 235).

Patton (1980) categorized several different sampling strategies. He advocated the use of purposeful sampling, where the researcher systematically selects particular kinds of cases. Depending on the purpose of the research project, the goal might be to select either extreme cases or typical cases. In a maximum variation sampling strategy the researcher seeks variety rather than representativeness; in a critical case analysis it is the single limiting, or exceptional, case that is important. All these methods are superior to mere "sampling by convenience."

### Note-Taking

Detailed notes are universally seen as essential even though interviews are usually taped (keeping in mind the possible alterations in behavior brought about by the presence of a tape recorder--Spradley, 1979--and subject to the participant's control--Patton, 1980) and later transcribed (either fully or in part, depending on the purpose and the available resources).

Spradley (1979) listed typical suggestions for five different types of notes: (a) a condensed account written during the interview, even if it is being taped, that consists of single words, phrases, and sentences of importance (Lofland, 1971, suggested writing "sparse notes" on the interview guide itself); (b) a detailed expanded account written out as soon after the interview as possible; (c) the tape transcriptions themselves, which can take anywhere from four (Patton, 1980) to eight (H. Rubin, 1983) hours for every hour of conversation, depending on factors such as tape quality and speed of speaking and typing; (d) an introspective field work journal in which the researcher writes of his or her own reactions, experiences, fears, mistakes, confusions, and so on; and (e) notes on the developing analysis and interpretation of the interview material. Although there is some dispute concerning the degree to which each of these kinds of notes is important, particularly when time is limited, there is agreement that careful, extended note-taking is both an aid in analysis and a precaution against inevitable researcher biases.

### Analysis

Continuous. The suggestion to keep a set of analysis and interpretation notes is related to the point, discussed earlier, that in qualitative research, analysis does not simply follow data collection but instead is carried on simultaneously throughout the research process; it is even sometimes suggested that the traditional literature review be done after, rather than before, the research is carried out (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Agar (1980) described ethnographic research as dialectic, in which data, analysis, more data, and refined analysis proceed interactively, as opposed to the more traditional linear model of saving the

analysis until after the data are collected so as not to "contaminate" them (see also Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After the "final" analysis, the researcher may again return to the participants to get their reactions--to see if it makes sense to them, in their terms. Their reactions, of course, are also of research interest and provide material for additional analysis.

Analytic description. In general, qualitative researchers present an analytic description (Lofland, 1971) that balances both concepts and examples, without an excess of either one (although some have advocated totally descriptive studies that provide no analysis at all). The usual result is a narrative description of themes that "emerge" from the data and of relationships between themes, with tentative hypotheses that seem to typify the participants. Extensive direct quotations are the primary evidence. The kinds of themes and hypotheses that are appropriate depend on the research goals, the theoretical approach, and the researcher's disciplinary background (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; De Rivera, 1984; Kitwood, 1980; Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Spradley, 1979; Patton, 1980).

Thematic content analysis. Although some researchers reject the terminology of content analysis because they associate it with merely counting frequencies (e.g., Kitwood, 1980), in general there is an effort to adapt standardized content analysis techniques for use in the more flexible analyses required by qualitative research. Holsti (1969), who discussed qualitative approaches in his classic work on content analysis, noted that thematic content analysis "presents the most serious [coding] problem because the theme is not a 'natural unit' for which physical guides exist. Many sentences contain more than one theme" (p. 136). Despite the difficulties, though, Holsti considered the theme, or "single

assertion about some subject" (rather than the sentence, say, or a particular number of lines), "the most useful unit" of analysis" (p. 116).

Crano and Brewer (1973) pointed out that content analysis is most valuable for exploratory research designed for the production of hypotheses rather than for their testing. They lamented the fact that "the common tendency within this field to neglect the exploratory phase of research" (p. 219) has resulted in the underuse of the technique, to the detriment of progress in social psychology. Another reason for its neglect, of course, is related to a comment by Holsti (1969, p. 150): "The most vivid impression in the mind of the reader may be that content analysis involves a certain amount of drudgery; nothing could be closer to the truth."

Coding. Suggested qualitative coding methods have little in common with frequency counts of preselected words or phrases. A composite approach includes developing a preliminary numerical coding scheme that focuses on topics and on themes that seem to be apparent in the interview material, with additional codes added as necessary after further interviews and analysis; coding the typed transcript theme by theme or paragraph by paragraph, generally giving each section more than one code because themes overlap, and forcing them into one category would be arbitrary and artificial; making as many photocopies of the transcript as necessary in order to place each section in the several categories that might be relevant; and cutting the photocopies along theme boundaries and placing the segments in category files (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Lofland, 1971; Patton, 1980). The result is a large number of categories that are then modified as the themes are refined. The original transcript segments are retained in each file as evidence for and against the existence

of the related themes.

This entire process is extremely lengthy, and cannot even begin until after the extended "immersion in the material" that comes with reading and re-reading the transcripts. Despite the time commitment required by this kind of coding and the potential for boredom, Bogdan and Taylor (1975) pointed out the importance of the researcher's coding and analyzing the data rather than using "hired hands" (p. 86), in order to gain a deeper understanding of the material in context. (In a related area, Lofland recommended that the researcher personally transcribe the interviews, because such an enormous "chore . . . requires one to study each interview" and stimulates analysis along the way--1971, pp. 90-91.) Recent attempts to make qualitative coding more manageable by adapting computer word-processing programs have had mixed results (Conrad & Reinhartz, 1984), but do hold promise for the future.

Kitwood's (1980) work typifies the flexible, openended nature of qualitative interviews and analysis. After rejecting more traditional approaches as inappropriate, he noted:

Fortunately, in this type of research there is no need to handle the material in such a relatively "mechanical" way, because the close texture of the accounts is so revealing. The substantial method of data-processing here was that of paying close attention to the accounts, determining what cases could be treated as being similar in certain respects, and going on to elucidate the relevant characteristics. The patterns that emerged in this way are very different from those that would have resulted from a detailed numerical analysis, followed by speculative comments on the causes of significant similarities and differences. (p. 120)

### Conclusion

If qualitative analysis seems less rigorous than its quantitative counterpart, it is important to remember that rigor is not the primary objective so much as broad understanding. Technical suggestions for



handling the data are meant to be used selectively. "Ethnography is both science and art," noted Spradley (1971, p. 150). "We seek to discover how informants conceptualize their world; at the same time we recognize that every ethnographer solves problems in ways that go beyond the data or on the basis of insufficient data." The result is intended to illuminate the particular, and must be judged on that basis, though qualitative researchers typically do make it clear that:

Some of the generalizations blandly presented in the later chapters as if they were "facts" may well be incorrect, even as first approximations, and important distinctions have probably been obscured. But at any rate a fair quantity of verbatim material has been included; if the interpretation given by those of us who carried out the research is not plausible, the reader is welcome to draw alternative conclusions. (Kitwood, 1980, pp. 6-7)

Both qualitative and quantitative methods can add to the multifaceted, "triangulated" search for understanding (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1980). Inflexible adherence to any one particular qualitative approach would be as self-defeating as the dogmatic application of any particular quantitative method. Qualitative researchers need to clarify that "The differences among approaches lie not in the presence or absence of quantification per se . . . but in the underlying assumptions of method and proof" (Erickson, 1977, p. 58). Perhaps different terminology would help clear the semantic haze; terms such as feminist research (H. Roberts, 1981), phenomenological methods (De Rivera, 1984), ethogeny (Harre & Secord, 1972), or anarchistic methodology (Feyerabend, 1975), though meaningful within their contexts, do little to reassure those who prefer the methods they are used to; neither do references to "hypothesis-testing fanatics" (Agar, 1980).

Alternatives to the central assumptions of mainstream social psychology used to be heard so infrequently that the failure of many psycholo-

gists to consider their validity may have come primarily from lack of exposure to them. Today, however, after more than a decade of published critiques of psychology's status quo, such lack of exposure is less justifiable. It is true that, because the several varieties of qualitative methodology have emerged from conceptions of science that differ markedly from the positivist assumptions of most social scientists, those who seek to understand the rationale for qualitative research are forced to seek out material in disciplines that have different--and thus difficult--modes of discourse. It is simpler to reject alternative methods, "based on the evidence," or to charge proponents of those approaches with ideological bias, particularly those whose methods seem linked to a specific political perspective such as feminism or Marxism. Such a reaction, however, ignores the countercharge, discussed in Chapter II, that adherents of the dominant paradigm are also embedded in their own ideology, one that limits the kind of "evidence" that can be taken into account.

Bardon (1983) expressed the essence of a qualitative approach when he noted that "The point is not to make less of scientific rigor, knowledge, and skill acquisition but to acknowledge that problem solving involves more than just the application of the known" (p. 188) and that much significant work in psychology has been done by those who have violated, rather than conformed to, traditional procedures. It is clear that striking new ground does not guarantee success. Neither, of course, does following the standard path. The real test must be whether research findings provide insight into important phenomena, and that judgment will always differ from person to person.

## CHAPTER V

## METHOD

Systematic descriptions of research procedures tend to oversimplify what often is, in reality, an evolving process. In quantitative research, the method is detailed in advance, with "contaminating" deviations not allowed; when they occur anyway, they must be explained in apologetic tones. As explained in the previous chapter, such is not the case in qualitative research, where the method develops along with the data collection and the analysis rather than in serial order. Procedures are routinely altered to take into account unforeseen circumstances and new insights.

Certainly, the research reported here is no exception. Revisions were commonplace throughout the period of two and a half years from the initial proposal to the final report. Some of these changes were a result of financial and time pressures; others grew out of preliminary analyses and further consideration of the process; still others reflected some of the inevitable strains of qualitative research, including those arising from personal interaction with the research participants. At times, changes were made fairly easily, particularly in the later stages of the research; at other times, they were made only after a great deal of reflection and, in some cases, agonized resistance. Despite my own commitment to qualitative flexibility, I did find myself wondering how "the experimentalists" (both real and mythic) would react to my decisions to deviate from my proposal. I also occasionally, and somewhat to my

surprise, found myself unsure about where to draw the line.

A disadvantage I had expected, but failed to consider seriously enough, was my general lack of contact with other qualitative researchers with whom I could discuss common problems and possible solutions. This had two major effects: I was isolated throughout the period of research, with little emotional support from others who had gone through the same process; and I was often ignorant of specific procedures that others had used in circumstances similar to mine, and thus had to rely primarily on methods books and common sense rather than personal advice and consultation. Although neither the lack of support nor my initial methodological ignorance proved to be fatal, they did contribute to my recurring realization that I was reinventing the wheel while others were already far down the road.

In keeping with the many suggestions in the literature to make a set of introspective notes and present a personalized report that reflects the interaction between the researcher and the research (as explained in the Chapter IV), I did keep a "Dissertation Diary." My very first entry makes it clear that, despite my belief in the benefits of qualitative research, my confidence in my ability to successfully carry it out was less than overwhelming:

Have finally made preliminary selection of people to get letters requesting participation. Still have to decide how many people to try now (3 or 4? all 29?) and how many to wait, until we see how it goes. . . .

Do I really know what I'm doing? I need to do a couple of interviews to see if I can really handle qualitative approach. I don't want to get lost. I think the more I read, the less sure I am.

(4/13/83)

This general theme of uncertainty repeatedly resurfaced, along with my initial resistance to making practical changes designed primarily to cut down on the massive amount of work:

I don't want to hurry it through just to get it done. I want to live up to what I think the promise of this method is, at least in my own eyes. But I don't know if I'll be able to, given money and other constraints and my own lack of direction with it and uncertainty. I guess I'll know more where I'm headed a week from now, if I really get into this [coding]. Of course, I could spend the next week reading the texts for W.'s course instead, which I do have to do, but which would be another stalling tactic at least in part. Just like typing this note is. (1/13/84)

Still, there were better moments:

Have finished coding! Still have to cut and file 5 through 10, but have reached a milestone. Feels great!  
So what do I do next? I guess I cut and file, but I'm not looking forward to it. It's long, backbreaking work. I had intended to try and not code things in so many categories, but I don't think I succeeded in that. It seems to have a life of its own. (6/20/84)

Have finished cutting the transcripts. . . Another milestone. . . .  
The major part of the totally boring drudgery seems to be over for a while. I've interviewed (interesting) and typed, coded, cut, and filed. . .  
And now the work begins. . . . What do I do next?. . . .  
Anyway, despite not being sure what to do next, I feel great about what I've done the past couple of weeks. . . .  
I guess I'm feeling optimistic right now. (6/27/84)

I did find writing the Dissertation Diary to be useful. Although it is somewhat unusual to read a researcher's private musings, my hope is that those who seek to evaluate this research, and those who are thinking about doing a qualitative research project themselves, will find the occasional entries to be useful.

### Participant Selection

#### Initial Intentions

My original intention, as I indicated in my research proposal, was to interview "approximately 20 individuals," people "who can be expected to differ on the relevant political values and assumptions about human nature." To achieve this, I planned to request participation from individuals who had written letters to the editor or Op-Ed articles in local

newspapers, a procedure that had been used successfully in the past (e.g., Elms, 1969). I did specify several backup procedures in case the letter writers declined to participate, such as asking members of local social movement organizations. I also hoped to interview several people who had not written to newspapers

### Sampling Strategy

Locating a heterogeneous sample of "key informants" was accomplished by means of a purposeful maximum variation sampling strategy (Patton, 1980), with a focus on extreme cases, as described in the last chapter. The goal was to select individuals who had the ability, the motivation, and the time to be interviewed on several occasions, points brought out in Agar's (1980) discussion of the importance of selecting articulate informants. Looking for individuals with relatively extreme views was designed to make it easier to identify variations in individual patterns.

There has long been an assumption that people in the "mass public" are less interested in (and less interested in talking about) political issues than are the minority in the "attentive public" (e.g., Rosenau, 1961). In this study, designed to gain insight into individual psychological processes and political perspectives rather than to be representative, it was important to find individuals who would willingly discuss their views at length. Although the resulting sample includes more academics than originally planned, one advantage is that the participants have much in common with many of those who will read reports of the research. This situation may help counter what Bogdan and Taylor (1975) referred to as the

tendency in the social sciences to view certain groups of people in distinct categories and to consequently devalue their perspectives.

"Deviant," for example, have been viewed as somehow different from all other people; their behavior has been explained by special theories, (p. 8)

rather than by applying the same theories to "them" as we apply to ourselves.

Letter writers. Soliciting participation from individuals who had written to newspapers seemed to be a reasonable way to locate people who were not only interested in political issues but who were likely to be willing and able to discuss their views in an interview. Elms (1969) had used this procedure to locate a number of right-wing sympathisers in Dallas, and although he later noted that "letters-to-the-editor writers as a whole differ in certain ways from the ordinary population," he concluded that "the differences did not seem crucial for my research" (Elms, 1972, p. 65).

Bogdan and Taylor (1975) referred to letters to editors as personal documents that show "how people understand issues and problems despite the fact that their authors are generally less spontaneous and more guarded than in other forms of correspondence" (p. 99). Although the actual letters were useful in initially identifying important themes and in serving as the first discussion topic with each participant, I did not use them as the main focus of analysis but, as Elms did, as the primary basis for participant selection.

Selection criteria. I began by reading every letter to the editor and Viewpoint (Op-Ed) column published in the Michigan State University State News (a large daily student newspaper), the Lansing State Journal, and several smaller weekly and monthly papers from January 1, 1983 to April 13, 1983, when I made my initial selection decisions. I continued to read letters and columns--daily in the case of the State News and

sporadically after May 8, 1983 in the case of the Lansing Journal--in order to identify subsequent material written by the participants.

By April 13, I had a file of over 200 letters and columns on a variety of topics, and developed flexible substantive and practical criteria for final selection:

1. Letters from both men and women.
2. Letters published in each of the two daily newspapers.
3. Letters from at least some individuals who had written more than once.
4. Letters that seemed to represent different parts of the political spectrum; thus, when possible, I informally categorized the letters both by general left and right orientations as well as by topic area (such as tax increases, abortion, pornography, welfare, foreign policy, and general political philosophy).
5. Letters that either advocated significant social change (regardless of the particular direction) or opposed current trends in society; I was specifically looking for people who went beyond short, simple statements on narrow issues.
6. Letters that made a statement about human nature.
7. Letters from people who lived close enough to MSU to be interviewed several times, and whose addresses were listed in the telephone book or were otherwise readily available.

Using these criteria, I selected 29 of the letter writers for initial consideration, though I continued to collect additional letters for possible later use. Because my expectation was that I would eventually interview 20 participants, and because I expected some refusals, I did not immediately narrow down the 29.



Examining the letter writers in the initial group of 29 reveals that in general--but not in all respects--the selection criteria were met. Sixteen had written to the State News, 12 to the State Journal, and 1 to both. Twelve could be placed tentatively somewhere on the political left, 13 on the right; 4 could not be categorized at all. About a third of the writers had written more than one letter.

Only 5 of the 29 writers, however, were women. Many of the women whose letters I had originally selected were, not surprisingly, not listed in the phone book. I also wondered, in the Dissertation Diary, "Why do men and women write on different topics? (Or, why am I more interested in men's topics?)" (4/13/83). My decision at that time, which turned out in hindsight to be a mistake, was to leave the initial sample unbalanced (in regard not only to gender but also to the over-representation of academics) and to reverse the discrepancy with the next selection; I intended to ask the editors of the two newspapers to forward my requests to women whose addresses were not public.

A second initial problem was that it looked as if the sample was closer to the political mainstream than I had hoped. As I put it in the Diary, there "may not be any libertarians, anarchists, cult-types, etc." in the group of 29. I had earlier considered such a situation to be a possible consequence of restricting myself to letters in the increasingly conservative MSU-Lansing area. Fortunately, as it turned out this did not remain a problem.

#### Contact Procedures

In an effort to keep the early interview stage manageable, I first selected only five men and two women, from among the 29 writers, to be sent letters requesting participation. A second selection of five men

and five women was made about three weeks later.

### Request Letter

Individually typed letters on Psychology Department letterhead were sent to potential participants (see Appendix A). Each request referred directly to the letter(s) or column(s) printed in the newspaper, and indicated directly and nondeceptively that "as a social psychologist studying the different reasons people have for their opinions on controversial issues. . . . I am hoping that you will agree to discuss with me your views on this and other topics in more detail." I pointed out the difficulty of interpreting public opinion polls because of time and other constraints, and expressed an interest in interviewing "a small number of people who have publicly expressed their views about different aspects of our society" in a series of two or three interviews adding up to five or six hours. Indicating my hope that their interest in presenting their views in the newspaper would extend to assisting me in my dissertation research, I noted that the interviews would allow them "to discuss a variety of issues fairly informally and in depth" and that they "should be interesting as well." I promised confidentiality, and enclosed my office and home telephone numbers, a response form labeled "Public Issues Study" (Appendix B), and a stamped addressed envelope.

Although I originally assumed I would pay participants for their assistance, my failure to obtain funding made that impossible. Subsequently, I became aware that some qualitative researchers specifically advise against paying research participants, partly in order to avoid a hierarchical employer-employee relationship (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 107). Of course, noted Bogdan and Taylor, if the research results in

monetary gain for the researcher, the participants should share in the royalties as equal research partners. Sennett and Cobb (1972) noted that they never offered money to those they interviewed "and we were never asked" (p. 41), an experience that proved identical to mine.

### Participant Response

Initial mailing. All seven initial request letters elicited a positive response. This 100% acceptance rate seemed startling, but it was in fact similar to that reported in similar qualitative work. Oakley (1981), for example, reported that only 2 of her 82 potential informants refused to take part.

Second mailing. Several weeks after the initial returns and the first interviews, I sent a second set of request letters to 10 more individuals, attempting to some extent to locate people who were dissimilar to those in the first group. Of the five men and five women sent letters, three men and two women agreed to take part; a third woman wrote back to say that she had not written the letter I had attributed to her; the remaining four did not respond.

Of the 16 letters apparently received by the intended recipients in the two mailings, 12 resulted in a positive response. Unfortunately, the last two acceptances came too late for scheduling purposes, and eventually were excluded when the decision was made to limit the study to 10 participants.

### Final Sample

The 10 final participants included seven men and three women. Six (all men) had written more than one letter or column during the preceding five months: Three had written two times, two had written three times,

and one had written four times. Five were undergraduates (juniors or seniors), 21 or 22 years old; two were current or very recent graduate students, aged 26 and 30; one was a 30-year old assistant professor; one, in his mid-30s, was a college graduate working as a writer and truck driver; and one, 68, was a semiretired professor. Three were married (two with children) and one was divorced.

Although further details about the 10 participants are provided in Chapter VI (see Tables 1 and 2 for summarizing information), it should be clear now that even among such a small sample, there were a wide variety of political perspectives. To oversimplify for the moment, the participants included, at different places on the left of the conventional political spectrum, two people who generally consider themselves to be democratic socialists (though with different interpretations of that term); a former member of a Communist revolutionary party; a "humanist liberal"; and a "disillusioned socialist Buddhist anarchist." On the political right were a member of the Libertarian Party; a moderately conservative born-again Christian; and three individuals who, with difficulty, describe themselves variously as a "liberal realist," a "liberal thinking conservative," or as "liberal politically, conservative economically." As will be discussed later, these and other labels are applied only with great difficulty by the participants themselves, none of whom embraces a simple liberal or conservative identification.

### Subsequent Contacts

Interview arrangements. Nine participants returned the response form indicating either definite interest in taking part or possible interest subject to further discussion (two of the women checked this second alternative); the tenth participant did not return the form but

called instead to say he was interested. In telephone conversations with each participant, I reviewed the purpose of the study and expanded upon the information in the request letter. I initially made it clear that there would be two or three interviews, though after the first few interviews I began to explain to new participants that it would probably be three or four interviews. Participants were given their choice of location for the interviews; three (all men) preferred that I come to their house, and the rest preferred an office on campus.

At the end of each interview, arrangements were made for subsequent interviews. Most of the interviews took place in the spring of 1983, on a weekly basis, though some requested either a more rapid or a less systematic schedule. Two participants, who had to leave town for the summer, completed the series in the fall.

Informal interactions. I had originally hoped to meet informally with at least some of the participants outside the interview situation. Such interactions turned out to be rare, limited mostly to occasional meetings in passing. I did run into about half the participants during the year and a half after the interviews--on the street, at meetings, in classroom situations, and so on--and I generally kept brief notes on such interactions. I also kept track of subsequent newspaper letters and of occasional references to participants made in news articles or other contexts. In the one case where an actual friendship began, some time after the interviews were completed, I made a conscious decision to stop taking notes on our informal interactions, sacrificing methodological purity for an honest relationship.

Follow-up contacts. During the winter and spring of 1984, I contacted all the participants by mail, by telephone, or in person to tell

them I had not yet finished the research report I had promised them (Appendix I). At this time I asked about possible changed addresses and other circumstances.

In January and March, 1985 I sent additional letters with further information, as explained in more detail at the end of this chapter in the section on the Participant Feedback Option.

### Interview Process

#### General Context

Interview length and number. Six participants were interviewed three times; four were interviewed four times. The individual interviews ranged from about an hour to over two and a half hours, depending on the schedules of the participants and their interest in completing the series in either three or four meetings.

The full series of interviews for five of the participants lasted between five and a half and six hours on tape (not counting preliminaries, breaks, and so on). The shortest series lasted for just over four and a half hours. Two lasted between six and a half and seven hours, and two for almost seven and a half hours. Thus, there were 34 interviews over about 60 hours, with the average interview series lasting more than six hours per person.

Taping. The participants, who were promised confidentiality, were asked for permission to tape record the interviews. They were told that the taping would be useful in analyzing the interviews but that I was more interested in their honest responses than in getting those responses on tape. They were shown how to turn off the tape recorder, and I told them they could turn it off at any time, for any reason.

All the participants agreed to be taped. One participant, during his first interview, asked me to turn off the recorder, which I did. He explained his reluctance to discuss a political affiliation that he did not want his employer to find out about (as discussed in the next chapter). He did tell me it was okay to take written notes on what he was saying; several related segments on the same topic were also not taped. With this one exception, all formal parts of the interviews were taped, but many informal discussions were not.

Tone. The interviews varied widely in their formality, from session to session and from person to person. With the recorder on, the participants generally waited for my direction, especially during the initial interview; it was quickly apparent that they had their own ideas about the appropriate role of a "subject," even though they were told that they could interrupt me, request clarifications, criticize the direction of the questions, suggest more important topics, and so on. This tendency itself occasionally became a topic of discussion, and gradually some of the participants did begin to be more directive, though for the most part they did not ask me too many questions while the tape was running. Especially during the later interviews, some participants did inquire about the research and about my own views, generally when the recorder was turned off for tape changes or coffee breaks, or before or after the taped session; interview-related material brought up during breaks was often, but not always, continued on the tape. As expected, interviews held in participants' houses tended to be less formal (and longer) than those held on campus.

It was sometimes difficult to determine where the "official" interviews ended and informal, friendly conversation began, a result that

follows from the qualitative emphases on seeing individuals in a variety of contexts and on encouraging less hierarchical interactions. This engagement in friendly conversation could be looked at as a manipulative tactic consciously designed solely to increase "rapport" (a motivation that Oakley, 1981, considered to be part of a masculine interviewing paradigm). I do feel, however, that my interest in informal interaction and my willingness (after the initial interviews) to exchange personal views and reactions with the participants were genuine, going far beyond self-disclosure's possible social control function (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979). I did enjoy most of the interviews, gaining much that went beyond "the data." As will be discussed later, the participants generally perceived a number of benefits arising from the interview content and style.

Consent form and confidentiality. At the the first interview, participants were asked to read and sign a consent form indicating, among other things, that they knew they could turn off the tape recorder and discontinue participation without penalty, that they would be given a chance to comment on the results, and that they would remain anonymous in written reports (see Appendix C).

Participants were told that I would retain the tapes for future analyses and that all identifying information would be removed from their files. In all my notes, I referred to the participants by number only, and I kept their names and addresses in a hidden file, separate from both the notes and the tapes.

### Interview Guide

In keeping with common qualitative practice, I developed a flexible interview guide. Examination of the guide (Appendix D), which I continued to modify during the course of the early interviews, reflects the



altered sequence of topics, the addition of questions, and the inter-relatedness of the different areas. The final version included:

1. Preliminary Discussion of the Participant's Letter-to-the-Editor
2. Perceptions of Social and Individual Problems and Solutions
3. Views of Human Nature
4. Political Values and Ideologies
5. Speculation About Utopia
6. Personal Background and Goals
7. Conception of Similarity to Others
8. Reactions to Interviewing

Listing the topics in order implies a more orderly process than the one that was actually carried out during the interviews. Although the guide included specific questions in each area, the interviews frequently dealt with material not in the guide; occasionally, parts of some areas were not covered at all. The order of topics varied somewhat from person to person, as did the specific wording of the questions. Frequently, a particular interview would deal with material from several topic areas within the space of just a few minutes.

Regardless of the specific topic, I encouraged the participants to bring up material that they considered relevant, to make links between different areas, and so on. Combined with the natural flow of conversation, this encouragement helped prevent a mechanical question-answer format totally directed by the interview guide, though the degree to which this was the case varied from interview to interview and from person to person. My own varying level of interest and alertness was also a factor; notes in the Dissertation Diary make it clear that I was sometimes keenly involved in the discussion, sometimes bored, sometimes tired, and that these states of mind prevented every interview from being equally satisfying.

Scenarios. I originally intended to begin discussion of different topic areas by describing short scenarios, in order to provide each participant with an identical, interest-arousing problem upon which to focus (Appendix E). The Lifeboat Scenario raised the question of a "lifeboat ethics"; the Commons Scenario presented a social dilemma situation; and the Constitutional Convention Scenario gave the participants an opportunity to specify the kinds of basic political changes they might like to see in the United States. As it turned out, the participants generally came to the interviews fully motivated, and my first few attempts to incorporate the scenarios seemed both artificial and unnecessary. Thus, for the most part, I abandoned the idea as inappropriate.

#### Preparation

Before the initial interview with each participant, I reviewed the letters or columns that he or she had written and made notes on points I wanted to ask about. Every initial interview began with a discussion of the participant's newspaper letter-writing history (including responses to the letters by friends and others), and continued with some preliminary discussion of the issues brought up in the letters.

Before each subsequent interview, I reviewed my notes from earlier interviews and listed points that were unclear or needed elaboration. I made tentative decisions about where to begin my questions in case the participant did not want to expand on anything from the previous week. I also made sure I was aware of which topic areas remained to be covered.

## Note-Taking

### Pre-Interview Notes

Cover sheet. A one-page cover sheet provided basic information for each person. Labeled Participant Information (Appendix F), the form had blank spaces to be filled in with the participant's code number, age, sex, occupation, and student status; interview dates and locations; and number and topics of letters to the editor. In addition, there were spaces for brief summary statements concerning the participant's political perspective, views about human nature and the purpose of government, and responses to the Commons Scenario. A larger space was devoted to a listing of the central themes that seemed to characterize the participant as they emerged during the interviews. The sheet served as a quick reminder of each participant's major concerns and also helped to keep track of interview scheduling.

Letter photocopies. Before each interview, I made notes and wrote down relevant questions on photocopies of the participant's letters.

### Notes During Interviews

Although the interviews were taped, it proved helpful to make brief notes during the interviews themselves. These notes consisted primarily of short phrases or words that seemed to capture the essence of the participant's comments, as well as my impressions of the participant's dress, manner, punctuality, and so on. The notes were written directly on the interview guide and, when necessary, on an extra pad of paper,

When interviews were held in a participant's home, I made note of the location, the types of books and magazines in the house, interactions with other people, and so on.

### Post-Interview Notes

Immediately after each interview (with a few unavoidable exceptions when there was a slight delay), I made a set of notes on my general impressions of the interview and the participant. I expanded the notes made during the interview, sometimes including my own reactions and my tentative speculations about motivating themes and personal qualities. I summarized in detail as much of the untaped material as I could remember (such as discussions during coffee breaks), and I also noted the place and time of the interview, the weather, and so on, all of which might be useful when examining the transcripts. These notes, typed single spaced, ranged from less than half a page when there was little off-tape material to summarize to about two pages, and varied greatly in the kind of material that was included.

### Tape Transcription

Although qualitative researchers do disagree about the necessity and practicality of completely transcribing open-ended interviews, full transcription is usually recommended, and that was my goal. For the most part, that goal was attained; however, in the case of two participants who repeatedly discussed details of particular topics to the point where no new information was provided, I decided that summary statements of several passages was acceptable. The transcripts, typed half by myself and half by a paid typist, include the actual words, hesitations, interruptions, and other components of normal conversation. Participant names and other identifying information were omitted.

The interviews, on 90-minute tapes--45 minutes per side--added up to 85 tape sides (64 hours, including about 4 hours of unused tape). A faulty transcribing machine that was used to make repeated passes over

the same tape portion in the early transcribing resulted in several tapes being torn, although all were repaired and only a few words lost forever. Missing sections, as well as occasional short unintelligible sections, were indicated on the transcripts with question marks.

The transcription process was exceedingly lengthy, ranging from four to six hours of typing for every hour of conversation, depending on tape quality, typist speed, conversational speed, and so on. With 60 hours of taped interviews, the typing took about 300 hours, spread out over many months because of other commitments. This was the single most time-consuming procedure of the research.

The typing itself was done on several electric and electronic typewriters because a computer was unavailable at the time. In an effort to save time and space, the 517 typed pages were single spaced with small margins, and extensively abbreviated; once an electronic typewriter was obtained, 15-point type rather than 12-point elite was used. The transcripts ranged in length from 36 pages to the equivalent of 63 pages per person, with a mean of about 51 pages.

The typing was generally the most boring and frustrating of the separate tasks, as typist comments inserted in brackets sometimes made clear. Listening to the tapes and typing them out did serve the useful purpose of forcing direct contact with the material. Thoughts that occurred while typing concerning analysis or related matters were also occasionally inserted directly into the transcripts (bracketed in capital letters) rather than saved for other forms of note-taking. Although I had considered doing all the typing myself, time constraints forced me to hire a typist for half the transcripts.

A typical comment from the Dissertation Diary:

The interviews are finished. . . . Really felt was losing momentum for past few months. Tapes still just sit there waiting to be transcribed, about 2/3 done. Too busy teaching, writing. . . . Will soon either get back to typing myself or will have money worked out for B. or someone else. HOPE to begin real theme analysis in January. (11/11/83)

### Analysis and Observation Notes

In addition to my notes on each participant, which were kept within separate participant folders, I kept a file for brief Analysis and Observation Notes in which I made comments about similarities and differences between participants, speculated about common themes, and so on. These notes, which came to a total of about nine single-spaced pages of type by the time preliminary coding began, generally consisted of short passages:

P's tend to be "born-again," converts to whatever it is they now believe rather than long-time believers. Did not grow up with it. Does this tie in to efforts at writing, trying to influence others? Converts as "more American than the Americans." (5/13/83)

P's don't generally live up to stereotype that is popular--"dogmatic" Communist, fundamentalist, etc. The Libertarian? Even he's not as nasty as the image. (7/29/83)

After several months of interviews and preliminary analyses, the Analysis and Observation file became more oriented around issues of autonomy and sense of community in each participant's life:

P-1--Autonomy: entrepreneurial interests; have an effect politically.

Community: volunteer work; "community oriented." Dem. Socialist.

P-2--A: adolescent rebellion. "Stir things up," have an effect.  
C: ? (2/7/84)

I also included in this file a variety of scribbled notes, preliminary charts comparing participants, and other material that seemed as if it might prove useful once the more formal analysis began.

### Dissertation Diary

As I described at the beginning of this chapter, I did keep a Dissertation Diary in which I recorded my own thoughts, feelings, and reactions, my fears, satisfactions, intentions, and disappointments. I included my subjective impressions of the research, the participants, the reactions of other people to the research, and so on. After five pages of handwritten notes, I began to type, and ended up with the equivalent of about 27 typed single-spaced pages.

The Diary notes were kept sporadically. They served sometimes as a stalling device, allowing me to avoid the boredom of transcribing or the uncertainty of coding; sometimes as a therapeutic outlet; sometimes as a catalyst for considering new possibilities. There were periods of time when I wrote in the Diary almost daily, especially in the early months; other times I went weeks and, occasionally, months without making notes, usually when I was unable to do any dissertation work at all because of other commitments. Although these notes took time, it was time well spent, not only for my peace of mind, but also because there were many times that writing in the Diary stimulated thoughts that later went into the Analysis and Observation file.

### Coding and Analysis

#### Development of Coding Categories

In developing the initial coding system, it quickly became apparent that most books on qualitative methodology offer more general goals than specific techniques. Traditional descriptions of content analysis (e.g., Holsti, 1969), although useful, are geared more appropriately to quantitative research than to the kind of flexibility required here.

The process of determining the coding categories was time consuming.

More troubling, it was filled with uncertainty. The knowledge that a feeling of uncertainty is common among qualitative researchers provided only a little comfort. Entries in the Dissertation Diary reflect some of the steps I went through, as well as some of my confusion:

I think . . . I've been stalling. I'm not exactly sure what to do first. I started reading through the index cards on methods and analysis, then decided to write this note down here first. Actually, looking through the cards just for a few minutes so far has helped me get into it. I'm feeling pretty optimistic though still with an underlying air of nervousness. What if nothing works? . . . I wish I'd had a course or two on qualitative methods, just to avoid the feeling of not knowing exactly what to do next. (1/13/84)

It's been over two weeks since I started getting into this coding business. I spent a week going over P-1's transcripts, coding into preliminary categories based on a combination of topic areas and themes, combination of things that seem to "come out of" the interviews and areas of basic topics such as "education background" and "foreign affairs." It was pretty slow going.

Now I've finished P-1, and have re-done the coding system, combining some categories and splitting a few others. Will still have to copy and put themes in several folders, per advice of qualitative methods people and against the criteria of Holsti for "mutually exclusive" categories.

We'll see if it goes any faster now that there's a simplified coding system. (1/26/84)

Have finished coding P-3. . . . This went much faster. (2/7/84)

It's beginning to drag. Now I know first-hand why they invented computers. (2/15/84)

Have finished coding! . . . Feels great! (6/20/84)

The final coding system (Appendix G) reflects repeated revisions, including category merging, elimination, expansion, and redefinition. Many of the topic codes were taken directly from the interview guide. The categories incorporated a variety of concerns, such as preliminary hunches about themes, based on my post-interview notes and the Analysis and Observation file (e.g., Code 35 was broadened to include references to the US as a sick society), general background information (70: Educa-



tion), general expressions of evaluation and motivation (14: Reference to--or apparent--motivating forces), and participant reactions to the interview process (81: New topics not thought about before/Changed mind). The 65 categories ranged from the specific (67: Views about utopia) to the broad (51: Nationalism, patriotism).

In accordance with the general approach of qualitative research, the coding categories were not mutually exclusive. A single paragraph--even a single sentence--might be placed in three or more categories, depending on its content. For example, a typical statement about people on welfare might be relevant to views on domestic economic policy (55), assumptions about human nature (60, 61, or 62), and the participant's own motivations (14). Although this process was time-consuming, it was designed to help determine which topics the participants themselves associated with one another. In keeping with this focus on the interconnections among categories, most of the category boundaries were only generally formulated in advance, and changes were common throughout the early stages of coding in response to the actual transcript material.

Individual participant codes. In addition to the general coding scheme, individual codes were assigned whenever a participant repeatedly focused on a specific issue or exhibited a particular trait not covered in the general categories, or when the sheer amount of material on a particular theme made combining it with the general categories impractical. Such individual codes were also flexible, and in actual practice they often duplicated other categories. In some cases, an individual code designed for one participant was later used to include material for other participants. Examples of codes include A: Campaign finance reform (Participant 1--"Victor"); J: Strength, power, ability to carry out

decisions (Participant 2--"Bill"); M: Reference to Communist revolutionary party (Participant 5--"Paul"); and S: Military, ROTC details (Participant 10--"Christine"). (See Appendix H for a complete list.)

After assigning five individual codes apiece to the first two participants, I revised the general coding system and from then on assigned the remainder either two individual codes (three participants), one code (three), or no codes (two).

### Coding Procedures

Preparation. The coding categories were typed on two sheets of paper. Category modifications were reflected by handwritten alterations on the original sheets, which were used as a guide during coding.

A third sheet of paper was used as a guide for coding each participant, in two ways. The participant's individual codes were listed. In addition, topics and themes identified in the preliminary notes as being important for that participant were also listed, along with the general codes that were most relevant to those concerns. For example, two individual codes were assigned to Participant 3 ("Timothy")--K: Work on Higher Education and other commissions, and L: Long historical examples, anecdotes, tangents. In addition, 27 statements were also listed, such as "Sweden as positive democratic socialist model--not Communist," which was coded in 55--Economic issues. This list, which was greatly expanded during the coding itself, was useful in assigning idiosyncratic statements to the general categories. During the later stages of analysis it served as a comprehensive summary of each individual's major concerns as well as a guide to the location in the voluminous category files where specific topics were addressed.

Process. With the two-page general coding sheet and the one-page individual coding sheet in front of me, I coded a photocopy of each participant's interview transcript and letters to the editor and, also, the notes I made after each interview. Code numbers and letters were written in the left margin, with lines drawn to separate topics and underline important phrases.

The coded segments were most typically paragraph length, but many were only a sentence or two. When one topic was discussed for a long period of time, the entire interview segment of several pages was placed in one category (with smaller sections placed in other applicable categories). Coded sections often overlapped, resulting in arrows and other ad hoc symbols to demonstrate where one code ended and the next began. Very few coded segments were coded in only one category; three or four categories were more common, and occasionally a single segment was given half a dozen codes.

The coding averaged 12 hours for the typical participant's 50 pages of interview transcripts, for a total of 120 hours for the entire sample. During the coding, I wrote brief notes on apparent themes, on similarities among participants, and so on, which I later added to the Analysis and Observation file.

#### Copy, Cut, and File

The coded material was photocopied to provide enough copies of each segment for multiple filing. I then cut the photocopies along segment boundaries, wrote on each segment the participant's identification number and the transcript page number so that the original location could be found if necessary, and physically placed the segments in the individual numbered category files. When segments began on one typed page and

continued onto the next, the cut sheets were taped together if they were short or stapled if they went on for more than a full page.

This entire mechanical post-coding process took about as long as the coding itself. Photocopying a single transcript page by page--with some pages needing only two or three copies but others up to six or seven because of overlapping segments--took about half an hour. Cutting, taping, and stapling the photocopies, sometimes into as many as 20 or 30 pieces of paper for each of the original transcript pages, took seven or eight hours per participant, for a total of 75 hours. Placing the cut segments into piles according to code number and then filing them in the category files took about four hours per participant (40 total). Thus, the entire process from coding through filing took about 240 hours.

When the 300 hours of typing are added to this total, what I referred to in the Dissertation Diary as "total grind work" took about 540 hours, or the equivalent of 13½ full-time weeks. I did have assistance with half the typing, and my two children (ages 11 and 12) helped me with the last half of the filing process, but I did the rest myself, spread out over a long period of time. And, in the somewhat related context of the unforeseen hazards of qualitative research, I made the mistake of using a mini-stapler for much of the cutting-and-filing work, resulting in tendonitis in my right thumb.

### Themes

By the time the coding and filing were completed, I had a fairly good idea of the themes that seemed to be emerging from the interviews. My next step was to write out a short descriptive account of the most common general themes and, also, of the themes that seemed to differen-

tiate subsets of participants. This preliminary theme summary included eight general categories of themes, a ninth miscellaneous grab-bag category, and an additional list of points that needed more investigation before the term "theme" could be applied even tentatively.

With this list of apparent themes as a guide, and using also the lists of individual participant coding categories discussed above, I went through the relevant coding files one by one. In each category file, I examined the transcript segments that had been placed there for each participant, seeking specific evidence for and against the existence of the theme. This process again resulted in a desktop covered by piles of papers, with relevant passages underlined, as well as another large time investment. The result was a revised description of general and subgroup themes, with a selection of direct quotes as illustrations. In most cases, I briefly summarized all ten participants' views related to each theme on one-page summary sheets, gathered in a new Theme Details File.

The final theme analysis, as discussed in the next few chapters, reflects a compromise between the desire to be complete and the awareness that reaching "completion," if such a state exists, could take forever. In addition, the final system of general themes, subthemes, and differentiating themes is somewhat arbitrary, and could easily be organized differently. It is likely that going through the category files yet again would result in modifications, just as a succession of different kinds of coding schemes could be used to look for different kinds of themes, particular traits or cognitive styles, and so on. The development of the coding system is necessarily subjective and incomplete; it is the more limited, "objective" use of such a coding scheme that may be a more realistic goal.

Such a state of affairs is common when analyzing open-ended interviews. No two researchers will find the same themes or focus on the same issues when each one devises an idiosyncratic coding system. I do think, however, that if other researchers were to apply the coding system developed here to the interview transcripts, they would find that the evidence for the themes presented in the next chapters is fairly clear.

### Analysis Assistance

I developed the coding system, coded the transcripts, letters, and notes, and arrived at the preliminary theme summary by myself, without using research assistants. My decision to avoid the use of undergraduate coders was not made because of financial reasons; undergraduates usually receive course credit rather than money for such assistance. Rather, I agreed with the prevailing view in the qualitative literature that the researcher must "immerse oneself in the material" in order to see what is there; the coding and analysis process is not comparable to the structured mechanical equivalents in quantitative research. Assistants would have been able to use a well-defined coding system; the coding system used here, however, was not well-defined, and it was changed repeatedly in a process that was itself affected by the material being coded. In addition, it was the very act of coding the transcripts that played the largest part in the development of the themes, a benefit that would have been lost if coders were used.

However, I did decide to use undergraduate assistants in a manner that was not planned at the beginning of the research, for two reasons: to provide a general, informal check on my own impressions of the participants, and to provide further input about possible theme-related material that I might have overlooked. While I was beginning to code the

first transcripts, I asked three undergraduates who had been students of mine in previous terms to assist me for course credit. Each student was asked to read the transcripts and to write down his or her general impressions of the participants. I purposely did not provide them with copies of the coding categories, as they were not coders. Rather, I simply asked them to comment on what they saw as prevailing concerns or traits of the participants, to indicate their own reactions to the participants' ideas and apparent personal characteristics, and so on. Each assistant was free to interpret the instructions and to focus on aspects of his or her own choosing.

After reviewing the material submitted by the research assistants, I recognized that their analyses were indeed useful on both accounts: They provided additional emotional reactions to the participants, and they provided insight. However, I also realized that all three undergraduates (one of whom could not complete the analyses for personal reasons) were on the left of the political spectrum, and I wondered if more conservative undergraduates would provide different perspectives. Consequently, I obtained the assistance of three undergraduates who responded to a notice specifying "politically conservative or libertarian" research assistants, and asked them to react to the material in the same manner; again, one failed to complete the task.

In the end, therefore, four undergraduates with backgrounds in psychology completed the analyses: two men, two women; two liberal, two conservative. Their approaches to their task differed markedly. Two of them summarized what they saw as participant concerns and traits in a fairly straightforward manner (one briefly, in half-page summary statements, the other at greater length); one of them added to her longer

analyses fairly blunt emotional reactions as well as cartoons that seemed to her to epitomize each participant; and the fourth submitted long essays that used the transcript material as starting points for his own philosophical and political views. The analyses varied in their usefulness, but they were generally quite interesting in themselves as documents illustrating different perspectives that could be brought to bear on the identical material they all looked at.

These different perspectives served as a reminder of the subjective nature of this kind of research, preventing any illusion that the analysis should be taken as universally agreed-upon. However, it was gratifying to find out that individuals at different points on the political spectrum often had similar emotional responses to the participants, regardless of their disagreement about the views expressed. Such a situation provides a degree of confidence that my own conclusions may in fact be representative of more than my own idiosyncratic reactions.

#### Participant Feedback Option

In January, 1985 I sent the participants a letter describing my progress, accompanied by the preliminary version of the Participant Profile section describing them and their concerns. I asked them several questions concerning their reactions to the description, their recent activities, and their vote in the 1984 presidential election, and I told them I would be interested in hearing their comments.

Two months later, I sent them a revised version of their Profile, as well as a preliminary paper I wrote describing the developing general and differentiating themes (Fox, 1985c). I thanked them for their help, and told them that, "Although I am interested in hearing from each of you,



please don't in any way feel obligated to respond."

Seven of the ten participants did respond to one or both of these letters (Appendix I). Five wrote fairly detailed comments and included updates on their lives. One wrote a brief note, saying she did not yet have time to respond in detail, but intended to do so. One told me verbally that he, too, planned to write when he had the time; he later apologized, and told me that unexpected circumstances had made it impossible to find the time to provide the feedback he had promised. Comments that were received were used to revise the Participant Profiles and to clarify participant perceptions of the themes.

I do intend to make the final draft of the dissertation available to each participant who wants to read it. Any comments they provide will be discussed in future reports.

## CHAPTER VI

### PARTICIPANT PROFILES

In the next two chapters, which describe a number of themes that either typify most of the participants in general or differentiate between two subgroups of participants, it is the commonality among the ten individuals that receives primary consideration. In this chapter, on the other hand, it is each participant's own life and views rather than his or her similarity to others that are described, in order to provide a framework for later discussion. The lengthy description of each participant may strike quantitatively oriented psychologists as unnecessary; those who are more clinically oriented, on the other hand, may object to the necessarily superficial treatment accorded each participant. My intention in these three chapters is to strike a balance between focusing on individuals and focusing on commonalities; the presentation of ten fully detailed case studies, although that would be useful, is beyond the scope of this research.

Although for ease of presentation the participants are placed in categories roughly corresponding to their general political approaches, their actual categorization is not an easy task, and somewhat misleading in any case; the differences among those within each category are at least as apparent as what they have in common. All but one of the participants find it difficult to accept any specific political label, and they often use different labels at different times. This difficulty, which emerged as one of the major general themes (discussed in the next

chapter), is related to the participants' near-uniform rejection of the traditional liberal-conservative spectrum as meaningful and to their tendency to offer fairly atypical reasons for their voting choices in presidential elections.

The participants are tentatively divided according to their views on economics, largely in terms of the relative priorities they give to individualism and collectivism; these views provide the most clear-cut differences between any participant subgroups--in this case, between those on "the right" and those on "the left." (These categories, and the caution with which they should be interpreted, are discussed in Chapter VIII.) Differences on American foreign policy and on social issues such as abortion, crime, and discrimination are less apparent--sometimes even nonexistent--than are differences on the benefits and drawbacks of capitalism and, especially, the appropriate policy toward welfare. Thus, the participants are listed in two groups: First, the five who are generally supportive of capitalism, despite varying degrees of misgiving about its actual practice in the United States (including four "Individualists" and one Nonindividualist); then, the five "Collectivists," who are generally opposed to the workings of capitalism to one degree or another. Table 1 summarizes several participant background characteristics; Table 2 gives a brief (and oversimplified) overview of the participants' political perspectives:

TABLE 1. Selected Background Characteristics

Partici- pant	Age	Family Status	Work/School	Religious Status
Allen	21	Single	Senior (Philosophy)	Jewish background; now "agnostic or atheist (probably the second)"
Bill	21	Single	Senior (Communica- tions); Store Manager	Presbyterian background; "confused agnostic", but "don't think about it much"
Christine	22	Single	Junior (Pre-med)	"Lost literal belief in Bible" but believes Jesus son of God; attends Church
David	36	Divorced	Writer; Driver (B.A. Education, Writing)	Methodist background; now "free-thinking, existen- tialist agnostic"; attends humanist church
Eve	21	Single	Junior (Community Health)	Born-again Christian funda- mentalists; member of campus religious group
Paul	30	Married; two children	Assistant Professor of Humanities	"Former" Catholic; God's existence a "pretty unimportant question"
Roberta	26	Single	Lab Worker (M.A. Chemistry)	"Religious," but only a Christian "culturally"; "spiritually, a pagan"
Scott	22	Single	Senior (Political Science)	Presbyterian background; now, "not a very good" Buddhist
Timothy	68	Married; two children	Semiretired History Professor	Practicing Catholic; chil- dren go to Catholic school; sees religion as civilizing
Victor	30	Married; no children	Graduate Student (Political Science)	Occasionally attends inter- denominational church; Jesus "could well have been a democratic socialist"

TABLE 2. Political Self-Descriptions and Concerns

Participant Self-Descriptions		Selected Concerns
Individualists		
Allen	Libertarian Party member; Individualist	"Almost like an evangelist or a missionary" for libertarianism; Live by own values
Bill	Liberal realist; Liberal	Government in too many life areas; Need strength, leadership to fix toxic wastes, overpopulation;
Christine	Liberal politically, conservative economically; Individualist	ROTC member; People are afraid to be individuals; Need world government for survival
David	Liberal thinking conservative; Realist; Liberal; Humanist	Concerned about overpopulation, health, pollution, values education; Sees life as an exciting adventure
Eve	"Generally in a conservative category" [Not Individualist]	Responsibility to work on hunger and other problems, but world will be much as it is now when Jesus returns
Collectivists		
Paul	Former member of a Communist revolutionary party	Individualism "useful attitude for a government to inculcate" to prevent change; Legitimate "core criticisms"
Roberta	Liberal; People-oriented humanist	Oppose US policy in Central America; Environmentalist; People insecure
Scott	Disillusioned socialist; Personal anarchy	Oppose coming "Fascist Age"; People scared, isolated, conforming
Timothy	Social democrat; Conservative on foreign policy	Anti-Communism, fanaticism; People are too doctrinaire; Sweden as positive socialist model
Victor	Democratic socialist; Out of mainstream	End political corruption caused by role of campaign contributions; People are politically uneducated

The participants are given (false) names in order to make it easier to think of them as people rather than solely as "subjects." To clarify things a bit further, those on the procapitalist right of the economic spectrum have names beginning with letters from the first half of the alphabet (Allen, Bill, Christine, David, Eve), those on the prosocialist left with letters from the second half (Paul, Roberta, Scott, Timothy, Victor). To ensure participant confidentiality, biographical information has been altered. In most cases, this does not significantly affect the overall context of the participant's life and views. In the few cases where relevant details could not be meaningfully disguised, I chose to omit them entirely, despite their importance, to protect the individuals concerned.

Included in each participant profile are brief excerpts of frank, subjective comments by the four undergraduate research assistants who were asked to read the interview transcripts and to give their honest, personal impressions. These excerpts, which are categorized according to the assistants' own gender and general political orientation (Left or Right), offer a wider glimpse at the participants than my own comments can provide. Also included are the reactions of those participants who commented on earlier versions of their profiles, which included the research assistants' comments. I do want to point out that I do not necessarily share the views of the assistants, who often disagreed among themselves in their assessments.

The quoted material is presented verbatim, including the normal hesitations, backtracking, and other nongrammatical components of everyday conversational speech. The only exception to this general rule is that, in the interest of readability, I have omitted my own sporadic

interjection of "uh-huh," signifying understanding and encouragement.

Participants Generally Supportive of the  
Major Aspects of Capitalism

1. Allen (P-7 in original classification system)

When I spoke to Allen on the phone to arrange the first interview, he said he was "tickled" that someone had noticed his most recent letter to The State News; he added that his political viewpoint had developed within the previous year or two away from what he had "learned at momma's knee." A 21-year old philosophy major about to graduate, a member of Phi Beta Kappa and a winner of a national scholarship competition, Allen had written two letters, both related to his recently accepted libertarian political philosophy; a third letter several months later presented a similar argument against the right of the state to regulate the lives of individuals who are not interfering in the affairs of others. Of six earlier letters Allen showed me, written over the previous three years to the campus paper or to a Detroit paper, three were on similar libertarian themes; the others dealt with campus issues or supported John Anderson's 1980 presidential candidacy.

With very little prompting, Allen speaks rapidly and in detail about the libertarian perspective on a wide range of political issues. He is the only one of the ten participants to clearly identify with a single political label; when he doesn't refer to himself simply as "a libertarian," he uses terms consistent with his philosophy (such as beginning a sentence with the phrase, "Being an individualist, I . . ."). He joined the Libertarian Party shortly before the interviews, and he acknowledges that he accepted the philosophy only after years of resistance to the idea, when "I found myself with fewer arguments to raise against" the

points made by a libertarian friend.

His memory of his earlier, pre-libertarian beliefs is more typical of the difficulty faced by the rest of the participants in categorizing themselves, particularly (but not only) in connection to the liberal-conservative spectrum. When asked about his earlier views, he responds:

I always had trouble--and you know, I never fit in there. I pretty much subscribed to the standard view of business, that they've got to be watched and you've got to be suspicious of them, but I was a lot more wary of government. I always pretty much saw myself as a conservative on economy, on economic matters and a liberal on social matters--you know, like civil liberties.

Allen came to the university partly in order to shape a philosophy of life, "to find out exactly where I fit and if there was a framework for these rag-tag collection of truths that I held." His cross-disciplinary course of study and his own reading have convinced him that the libertarian free-market philosophy provides a logical, consistent guide to many areas of political and social life, and he sees his frequent public letters and personal conversations with others on the topic as part of his being "almost like an evangelist or a missionary." Libertarianism is

just so appealing on so many levels. Politically, you know, everything I ever believed about politics--and the idea that integrity is one of the most vital things a person can have and, you know, to live according to your own values. . . . You hear about rugged individuals, and that you'd rather go off--you'd rather drink hemlock than, uh, stop saying the truth. I believe that's the right way for people to be. . . . Intellectually, you should be true to yourself, and to your mind, and to what you really do perceive as reality.

According to Allen, the United States has come closer than other nations in recognizing that individual rights are preeminent; this was especially true at the time of the American Revolution, when government power was minimized and centralized authority looked upon with suspicion.



Allen accepts the basic libertarian tenet that laissez-faire capitalism allows the greatest degree of freedom, and he cites in support of his individualist views a wide range of writers, including philosophers Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard and the science fiction writer Robert Heinlein.

Libertarians differ on whether there should be no government at all or a "minimal" government, an issue not yet settled for Allen at the time of the interviews. In his comments almost two years later, Allen writes that "our interview was about the last time I wavered toward minimalism--the minimal government. I am an anarcho-capitalist." In 1984,

I voted a straight ticket for the first time in my life--Libertarian (surprise!). But in the future, I'll be doing my best to keep myself from voting again--it'll be hard to do, but I will try to abstain from going along and being part of the political process.

Allen insists that, for people who have not been corrupted by living in a hierarchical political state that both interferes with the free market and allows people to evade personal responsibility for their actions, human nature is essentially positive. "Selfishness" reduces to valid self-interest, and the free market becomes the most efficient means of large-scale cooperation. He clarifies in writing that,

Where people are free and responsible for their use of freedom, enlightened self-interest (including cooperation, honesty, etc.) is the human "strategy" which leads to the best (happiest and most successful) life for the individual and his surrounding community.

Allen attributes recent enhancement of his own self-esteem to his developing philosophy, an outgrowth of coming to recognize the validity of meeting his own "selfish" needs. He believes that in a truly free society, honest, self-oriented people would voluntarily care for the needy, just as he himself has donated money to feed the hungry and just as he once returned to its owner over a hundred dollars he had found.

In the ideal libertarian society, Allen says he would live pretty

much the same kind of life he foresees living in the real world: Having his own apartment, working for a corporation, being an individual. He counts on technology to provide long-term solutions to many global problems, but only if the technology can be stimulated by the free-market system. He is opposed to government welfare programs, because they force people to use their own earnings to support others and also because they encourage dependency on the government, but he feels "that's not the place to start changing things." He is strongly opposed to any government intervention in foreign countries (but supportive of individuals who volunteer), and he is opposed to all laws that restrict the rights of individuals, such as drug laws, prostitution laws, and so on.

Allen's father was an inmate of a Nazi concentration camp, "a victim of one of government's darkest moments." A couple of Allen's friends were influential in his becoming exposed to, and eventually accepting of, libertarianism, and he now feels he is successfully influencing others in turn. He realizes that people have trouble breaking out of mainstream political views, but he thinks the effort is worth it, and that reason must be used to discover basic truths.

In the detailed feedback Allen provides in reaction to the material I sent him earlier, he makes several clarifying comments in addition to those already mentioned or incorporated, including an objection to my description of him as Jewish: "I'm not Jewish, I'm from a Jewish background. . . . It would be more accurate to consider me (now and when we talked) an agnostic or atheist (probably the second)." With the clarifications taken into account, Allen writes that the profile he read is "a fair portrayal." He also indicates that, more than a year after graduation, he is still looking for a full-time "banking or finance trainee

position," which is "difficult to get" with his Humanities degree. "If I haven't yet gotten a job by fall, I will be returning to school with fellowships or university jobs to get an MBA." He ends by saying that "I hope these comments are helpful," and adds that "I am VERY interested in being kept up-to-date on the progress of your project (I'd like to read the finished dissertation, too). So keep in touch when it's possible—I'll help out."

Comments by the four research assistants:

Left-Male: Very intelligent, verbose. Attempts to achieve reactions from Dennis. Quotes books frequently and not what goes on in his mind. Solid, confident about political assertiveness. This causes his view to appear narrowed.

Left-Female: Passive realist. An optimist but admits to insecurity, shyness. Intellectual. Seems unrealistic. Well-informed. Well-read, good references. Not always clear responses. Almost proselytizes. Deeply influenced by his friend. Blind faith in free market. Interview was boring.

Right-Male: He is even farther right than I am. Evidence that conservatives are divided in their camp. Has many aspects of liberalism too.

Right-Female: Likeable, consistent, and optimistic. Rambled a lot, and was very persistent about getting his point across, which I found annoying. Extremely idealistic, but he did have a lot of good points. Very honest with himself, admits his downfalls. Very well-meaning. Compassionate. Intelligent. Responsible. He may have too much confidence in people. Perhaps a little naive.

In his letter of clarification, Allen reacts to these comments and writes:

I was pleasantly surprised at their impartiality (no more negative from the left than the right). I was, of course, a little bothered at each negative comment at first--gut reaction. But, after a while, the only one to which I would like to respond is the left-female's comment that my faith in the free market is "blind." I do not ignore evidence in order to support my belief in its efficacy--it is the voluminous evidence of the harms within mixed economies, and their multiplication in less and less free ones, which leads me to accept the self-consistent theoretical construct of the free market. That phrase, "the free market," stands for nothing but a country or world's worth of individuals living by their own values so long as they do not initiate force or fraud to do so. If that is

a situation about which you have qualms, our disagreement is between seeing other people as potential allies or as deadly foes, and it's not just wishful thinking which makes me opt for the former.

## 2. Bill (P-2)

In his first two letters to The State News, Bill wrote that campus activists fail to recognize the complexity of problems related to human nature. More than a year later, he again wrote. A 21-year old senior majoring in communication, at the time of the interviews Bill was supporting himself through his full-time job as manager of a downtown store.

Raised as a Presbyterian, Bill now calls himself a confused agnostic for whom religious issues are not important. His immediate responses to questions about both religion and politics are often definite, but then, after further reflection, altered or made more qualified. Bill is the only one of the ten participants for whom political, religious, or philosophical issues are not a central focus of life.

Bill says at one point, "You know, it's not the popular opinion these days, but I kinda like the way Ronald Reagan is going right now," because of Reagan's willingness to "do something different" even if it might prove wrong. I ask him if he voted for Reagan in 1980:

I don't remember who I voted for. I really don't. I have this feeling that, as a joke, I voted for a friend of mine--and I don't think I would have done that, but for some reason I always think I voted for dumb P-- T--, that's his nickname. But uh, I couldn't bring myself to vote for Reagan at this time. And I know I couldn't bring myself to vote for Carter. I thought he was a good man, but I don't think he was a leader.

(Two years later, Bill writes that "I didn't vote in 84 cause I was in California. I see a very pronounced non-voting trend here. Hmmm.")

Q: What do you think it is about Reagan that you like?

A: I, well, I think he's seriously wrong in the whole defense spending thing. I think it's all part of the paranoia that comes with riding the political roller coaster . . . that high. I like the

idea of--I think the country, the way it was going, was becoming a little too socialist, you know. And I'm not a better-dead-than-redder, better-dead-than-red type person, but I think that the government was being asked to handle too much. And uh, I think he's wrong in a lot of respects. I think what he's doing to the EPA is a real tragedy. . . . But he's, I think that he's basically got the right idea as far as getting government out of a lot of areas the government was in. And it may not work. When you deregulate, then people might--and I think government was in it a lot to keep people from making a killing or looking out for themselves and their own interests, etcetera. But I think that government is involved in too much. And I think he's got the right idea in, in getting government out of a lot of things. I think a lot of his tactics are wrong. And I'm not sure I would vote for him in 84 or whatever. But more than anything, he's just doing something different, and I think something different had to be done.

Although he once joined the Democratic Party when someone soliciting membership asked him to fill out a card, Bill, like Allen, has trouble placing himself within the liberal-conservative spectrum:

I don't know. I'm liberal in how I'd like things to be, and uh, in how I think things should be. If anything, I would call myself a liberal realist, if that's--maybe I just coined that, take that and run with it. But you know, I'm liberal in how I think things should be, but I think I'm conservative in how I think things are, how I think I know things are. And . . . if I was in total power and had power to do anything, then I would be a liberal. But if I was in power like the president is and had all these different factions to take care of and this and that and the other thing, then I think I would, I would still have liberal leanings--I can't call myself a conservative because I'm not, you know, and I consider myself a liberal, but I think the liberals are off base.

The liberals are "off base," according to Bill, because even though they are educated and intelligent, they are naive and idealistic about human nature and political realities. It's human nature to be selfish ("and I'm not sure that's bad"), and conservatives--and, as a matter of fact, the leaders of the Soviet Union--are more aware of how to make things work. It's important to have strong political leadership capable of making and carrying out decisions even if, as with Reagan, some of the policies carried out are wrong. Issues that particularly concern Bill are toxic wastes, overpopulation, and the possibility of war, but he is

not politically active himself, and thinks most politicians are either power hungry or "liberal idealists" who "soon find out exactly what's going on and how far your liberal idealism's gonna take you."

Despite Bill's antipathy to naive liberalism, he has difficulty abandoning the liberal label, sometimes using it without the "realist" qualifier. At one point, he says "I've considered myself, well, is there a word between liberal and radical? Moderately radical?" The connection between liberalism/radicalism and both intelligence and naivety continues throughout his interviews: "I think that to a certain extent radicals are naive, in what they think they have the power to do and to change"; members of communes are described in similar terms, and when asked if he had known who his parents voted for when he was growing up, he responds, "Oh yeah. I would say they're liberal, they're both educated." But within seconds:

I would look at liberals as people who have a better idea of what should be done than conservatives, and I think that conservatives have a lot better way, or know better, how to get done what they want done. If that makes any sense. . . . And I think that liberals a lot of the time are very naive.

Q: Well, you said that you'd consider yourself a liberal. Say something nice about liberals, what do you like about them?

A: Oh no, I think that they know--they like to think things through, and I think that the world would be a whole lot better if everybody was a liberal than everybody was a conservative. I think that the liberals have a much better grasp of how things should be in an ideal society. And sometimes I think the conservatives have that same grasp, but they don't necessarily want that. . . . No, if I was sounding like I thought liberals were a bunch of jerks, I don't. . . . But at the same time the conservatives right now are making this world run. . . . I obviously like the liberal frame of mind better, the tolerant frame of mind, the idealistic frame of mind. But I don't think that a lot of liberals really realize what they're saying, what they're trying to do.

In one of his post-interview letters, Bill writes that "I think you're absolutely correct in the problems inherent in categorization by label,"

and he enclosed a newspaper column written by the editor of the Detroit Free Press, entitled "Political Labels Seldom Fit the Person."

Bill sees himself as a leader, and leadership ability is something he respects. He wants to have an impact on others, would like to be a writer, and says he likes to "stir up" those who take themselves too seriously, such as liberal idealists, fundamentalist preachers, and feminists protesting pornography on campus. He remembers "being a smartass" in high school during meetings of the Student Council. After a long job-hunting period after graduation, Bill is now working in advertising.

Although he is not opposed to all welfare, Bill believes abuse of the system is rampant and that people should be forced to support themselves and not be idle. He knows people who have lived off welfare rather than take minimum-wage jobs, and he thinks that many of the poor don't try to get ahead. Education is one answer to such problems, but people on welfare should also be forced to work or to enroll in school to get job skills. The government is involved in too many areas of life, Bill argues, and media images of "the good life" cause alienation and the desire to get ahead even when it's not earned.

Bill himself has obtained unemployment benefits when he wasn't actually looking for work; he thinks that most people would do the same, though he says he would vote to make such rule-breaking more difficult. He does think that people in general are hypocritical, seeking attention and power; political protesters are often motivated by a personal desire for media coverage. People are often manipulative; "I wouldn't say I manipulate people," he says, "but I think that I know how to do it, and uh, I don't like to say that in a bad context at all, but um, I think I understand human nature pretty well." He is suspicious about other

people's motives, and thinks he himself has more intelligence, insight, tolerance, and empathy than most people. He often uses phrases such as "I don't want to be callous, but. . . ." Bill missed several scheduled interviews and came late to two others; he explains once that although he is disciplined in terms of work, he is less responsible about things with no real immediate reward, such as the interview "blow-offs." As a teenager, Bill reports, he was involved in some thefts, and once spent a week selling "rip-off land deals."

Left-Male: Dogmatic Republican material dreams. Sees the government ruled by the social elite, no underemployed poor person would receive the slightest consideration. Frequent contradictions.

Left-Female: I liked both of his newspaper articles. Sarcastic tones. Generalizes. Likes attention. States that racism is a problem, still admits to racist jokes with vulgar language. Feels he is tolerant of differences, doesn't appear so. Wants more empathy [in society], shows little. Superior tone. Egotistical. Left me angry and frustrated. Sexist.

Right-Male: An elitist, deliberately making himself that way. Obviously motivated by self-interest. A person with opinions as coarse as his warrants very little sympathy any way.

Right-Female: At the beginning I liked this person. I found him egocentric yet honest about that. Towards the end I was really getting angry at him, finding him extremely hypocritical, disrespectful, and arrogant. His overconfidence bordered on obnoxious. He did not meet his own standards. One positive thing was his optimistic yet realistic view of the future. Puts himself on a pedestal. Uncompassionate. Self-contradictory. More conservative than he likes to admit.

In his reaction letter, Bill says that the paragraph preceding the comments of the research assistants "is worded a bit harsh." He says, also, that he is "fascinated" by the "strong reaction" on the part of the research assistants:

Theirs' are the only impressions based solely on the transcripts, and not on a face-to-face meeting. Their impressions are based on what I said on tape, not who I am in person. And the sad truth is they all seem to agree that I'm an egotistical dick.

That obviously is intriguing to me. Would it be at all possible for



me to get a copy of just my transcripts? As I think back on our talks, I told you things I've never told anybody, and probably never will. I recall saying things that surprised me, talking through situations and coming to conclusions that I had never considered before. I would love to sit down and read through them, have a look at how my mind was running then as opposed to how it is running now.

Bill continues, in reference to my asking for the participants' comments:

Don't let people change what they said. I obviously said some arrogant and stupid things, but the situation I said them in was very real. . . . In hindsight, subjects might want to modify what they said, alter it to fit their perceptions of themselves. . . . Realize that we were full of ourselves at the prospect of being interviewed, but also realize that most of what you got was truth. Again, that's why I'm curious to see my transcript. I'm as good at lying to myself as the next guy, but in recollection I was telling the truth back then. . . . What I'm saying is, stick to your impressions of what was said and done in the Spring of '83, and don't let any of us bullshit you now in an attempt to make ourselves look better.

In his next letter, after reading the transcript I sent him, Bill writes, "There's a lot of sarcasm that could have been taken wrongly":

Many statements of how I feel the majority thinks appear on paper to denote the way I think. A lot of the perceived intolerance on my part may stem from that, although I do make some pretty rash comments. For example--"Martin Luther King was overrated." How did you keep from punching me when I said that? Hoo-boy, I shudder to think what drug I was on that day!

Bill's overall reaction is that it's "fascinating stuff. Even more fascinating from your end, I imagine. I appreciate your contacting me, and really do want to be kept posted on your progress." "The whole interview process was an incredible ego-stroke." He says he objects to my initial effort to keep his past occupation a secret, believing that his being identified as a manager (rather than as a salesman, as I originally described him) "might give more credibility to views I express on problems of management, capitalism, whatever." (Despite his insistence that he "could care less about my anonymity" and his request that "if you left out anything important to try to protect my identity, for God's sake put it back in," he remains unidentifiable from the description.)

### 3. Christine (P-10)

Describing herself as "liberal politically," in terms of individual rights, and "conservative economically," many of Christine's views are similar to those of Allen and Bill. A 22-year old pre-med student at the time of the interviews, Christine was in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC). In her only letter to the campus newspaper, she referred to the importance of the military. Hoping to be accepted into the Medical Corps and sent to medical school, her next choices are Military Intelligence and Chemical Corps.

When asked why she wants a military career, Christine laughs:

My parents asked me the same question. Well, I pretty much always have been a leader among my peers, and I don't work well for somebody that I think I might well do a better job, so I wanted to become a leader. . . . And I also wanted a job with responsibility, which is partly the reason I want to become a doctor. . . . I wanted to travel for a while. . . . I wanted to do something for my country, which the more I think about it--and I've been thinking about it for about a year now--is an expression of my optimism. Because I think that the US, I think that a lot of people are selling out on the US and they're looking at everything that's wrong instead of looking at all the things that we do that are right, and I wanted to make a statement that I thought the US was right. So, that's part of the reason I joined. [And] job security.

In a number of contexts, Christine returns to the theme of seeing herself as a leader, an independent person, an individualist. She says she refused to join a sorority when asked, partly because she felt too much conformity would be demanded. During her first year in college, she became involved in a fundamentalist Christian group that she describes as "almost a cult," but dropped out when the leaders began to challenge her interest in an "unwomanly" career. She did retain a sporadic involvement with a less hierarchical religious organization throughout her years at MSU, although she says she has lost the belief in the literal interpreta-

tion of the Bible that she had when she began college (partly, she says, as a result of courses she took in religious studies). Chris expects to do well in the military because she is capable, but she is making a conscious effort to go into specialties where she thinks she will have a degree of autonomy.

Politically, Christine notes that "I used to be a bleeding-heart liberal. But I try to pay taxes (LAUGH). Um, I think I've swung from the far right to the far left and now I'm in the middle as far as politically goes." She supports the Equal Rights Amendment, legalized abortion (except perhaps for those women on welfare who are "too lazy for birth control"), and a range of other liberal social issues. She has, however, lost her past sympathy for labor unions.

I think I'm probably more liberal than conservative. . . . Economically, I'm more conservative. Politically, I'm more liberal. . . . Politically, I would say that liberals are more concerned with the individual, and conservatives seem to be more concerned with the group. The fact that I'm more politically liberal is perhaps due to the fact that I'm female and therefore considered a minority.

I'd have to say that political liberals are more willing to look at new facts than political conservatives. But political liberals can be just as closed minded as political conservatives if the way their opinions and emotions color the facts, make them closed-minded.

Christine opposes the Nuclear Freeze, although she says nuclear war is "stupid" and cannot be "limited," and she is in favor of increased defense spending to counter the Soviets. She thinks that both the US and the USSR are competing for world influence and domination; she would like to see the US win out because of what she describes as its greater concern for human rights. She thinks nations in general resort too quickly to the use of force, but she also thinks we have a moral responsibility to intervene in other parts of the world to help end or prevent dictatorship; in addition to supporting aid to countries such as El

Salvador, she would also be in favor of American intervention in South Africa to end white domination of the black majority. Ultimately, she supports the creation of a world government as the only alternative to total destruction, a government with strong, trained leaders capable of making decisions who would use power for good purposes and who would guarantee individual rights.

Domestically, Christine opposes what she considers to be government "overregulation," giving as examples mandatory seat belt laws and the linking of student financial aid to draft registration. She strongly supports capitalism, thinks the welfare system needs to be revamped, and wants to "return power to the people." Although she has some sympathy for Libertarian Party views, she thinks Libertarians are too extreme. Like Allen, she supported John Anderson in 1980.

Her support of capitalism, Christine says, is related to her view that it is the best system for her personally because she is an individualist, a capable person who would thrive in a "survival-of-the-fittest" atmosphere. She does think, however, that she herself would do well even under socialism, arguing that the US is "half socialist already . . . . I don't think [socialism] would be that radical a change from what we are right now." She realizes the world has changed and that there are now fewer opportunities for others, so she would not end welfare and social security entirely, but she does want to ensure that such programs are not used "as a support/retirement system."

The loneliness and conformity that Christine sees as rampant in the United States come, she believes, partly from a lack of self-confidence; too many people are "afraid" to be individuals. People are also too complacent and materialistic, and there needs to be better education in

order to make people aware of important issues. Civilization brings out the selfish side of human nature, according to Chris, because it makes accumulation of goods possible. She does see cause for optimism in the development of advanced technology, citing the greater democracy that will come with electronic voting and the solutions to global problems that will be possible once cities in space become practical.

Shortly before Christine graduated, she told me she was not yet sure where she would be assigned, although she preferred Korea, where she thought there would be better chances for advancement. She was hoping to get some time off first, in order to take part in a program she had just heard about that would mean going to Southeast Asia to organize local Christian groups. If that became possible, she said, she would like to go to "Red China" to see what it's like, but she thought her being in the army might prevent that. She later told me that she was being called up too soon to take part in the Christian group's organizing efforts. She has not yet responded to the post-interview letters asking for feedback.

Left-Male: Intelligent, self-assured. Opts for a fantasy of military workings, ideas contradict military thought patterns. Humanist (liberal-idealist). Surprised by religious response, perhaps my bias over her obvious intelligence.

Left-Female: Appears judgmental. Inconsistency in what she says and what she is doing. Still seems like a level-headed person. Strong religious convictions. Harsh generalizations concerning kids and moms on welfare. She seems to be two people, first a woman, . . . secondly ROTC. Very friendly, speaks well. Intelligent. Surprisingly, I didn't dislike her. This interview opened my mind because ROTC leaves a bad taste in my mouth and I found her pretty well educated and humanistic.

Right-Male: Political perspective was just as mixed up as some of the other participants.

Right-Female: I liked this person. Nice and pleasant. However, I don't know if I could ever be friends with her because she seems very strong-headed and stubborn. A real motivator, lots of direction in her life; knows what she wants and goes out and gets it. Self-confident, ambitious, achievement-oriented. Towards the end

she didn't seem to be tuned in with reality, she seemed to ramble a lot. Optimistic about the future, thinks people can change. I think she is really motivated by helping others. Extremely intelligent. She seems behind socially.

#### 4. David (P-8)

When David called to say he was interested in taking part in the research, he asked about the kinds of people I was interviewing. Were they "interesting and radical somewhat," or were they "mostly students who were young, naive, and still believing what their parents told them?" At 36, David is a frequent writer to the newspapers, and in fact is beginning to earn part of his living by writing on a variety of themes, ranging from children's stories emphasizing the importance of values such as self-reliance to magazine articles about his motorcycle trips to Alaska. Divorced, at the time of the interviews he lived with his girlfriend, brother, and another friend in an area he describes as a ghetto; since then, he and his girlfriend have moved to their own place in the same neighborhood. He has worked a variety of jobs, including public school teacher, drug counselor, and, most recently, truck driver. He has undergraduate degrees in writing and education, and he turned down an acceptance into a doctoral program.

In the period preceding the initial interview, David wrote three letters to The State News opposing the policies of liberal Democrats in Congress, and one letter to The State Journal. He wrote at least 12 additional letters in the next two years on a wide variety of topics, ranging from foreign affairs to domestic policy. Common to many of the letters is the view that society must replace idealism with realism.

Life for David is an adventure, one in which the individual is paramount. Political discussions often return to the themes of individu-

alism, survival of the fittest, and the wonders of nature and living naturally; he speaks often of the dangers of drugs to children and the developing fetus, and of the importance of proper child-rearing. Ayn Rand's (1957) Atlas Shrugged affected him greatly when he read it, long after finishing school, though David thinks he has more compassion than Rand did. Also influential was Aldous Huxley's (1932/1950) Brave New World; David tells me laughingly at one point, "I am the Savage," which he later explains:

Since my father took us biking and hiking all the time in our youth, biking and camping seemed . . . natural. . . . They spell freedom from too much comfort. When camping used to be camping, everyone set up their tents. They were rained on and sometimes suffered through a little cold weather, but that's what camping's all about, experiencing nature. Now they ride in motor homes, campers, trucks, or stay in motels. They're so comfortable, they have no idea what nature's all about. . . . Anyone can stay home without feeling any differently. Anyway, in [Brave New World] there is a guy who is a Savage. He grabs a mate and strikes out into the wilds. He suffers cold, wet, heat, pain, and danger. The gamut of human emotions, if you will. But he feels those sensations. He is aware of being alive.

Human nature, according to David, is clearly linked to notions of turf, instinct, and the will to survive; he refers to Desmond Morris, Robert Ardrey, and Robert Heinlein frequently, and speaks disparagingly of Ashley Montagu. Human nature is animal nature, and there are always going to be conflicts between those who want to be "the biggest, baddest dude in the valley." The human species is headed for ecological disaster because of overpopulation; the only solution is some sort of triage, with countries like the US closing off their borders to masses of immigrants from other countries that have refused to deal with their own problems. Even within the US, we must be careful not to allow the rampant growth of the welfare poor, who should be encouraged to have abortions and undergo sterilization. Controls should be put on smoking, drugs, and alcohol,

and a healthy diet and exercise should be encouraged; "there are no fat animals in nature."

Rather than bemoaning the competitive, animal nature of the human species, David approves of it, arguing that it provides for freedom as well as for sheer sensation and experience. A rational, realistic view of the world makes it clear that it is capitalism that allows for such freedom, though David criticizes the kind of immoral greed that leads to industrial pollution. He is somewhat sympathetic to Libertarianism, which he considers to be "the most in touch," but he says we need laws to limit the population, enforce child-support payments by absent fathers, and control the exposure of children to greed-inspired corporate ads for harmful products. People do have a personal responsibility to make others aware of what's going on around them, as well as to take part in making their own lives; "I have never been a spectator," he insists, and is proud that he is a "participant." An agnostic raised as a Methodist, he belongs to what he described as a "humanist church" composed of "a conglomeration of nothing but free-thinking people."

Writing letters is one way David tries to share his awareness with others, and he points out that his awareness came only after losing his early liberal-Democratic views in the Sixties once he began to pay taxes, when he began to think more about the immorality of refusing to take care of one's self. Everyone, according to David, can get an education and get ahead, and no-one should expect to be supported by others. About those who disagree with his views, David wonders "how intelligent are they?" He insists that many on the liberal left have had little real-world, nonacademic experience upon which to base their views.

In political terms, David at different points describes himself as



an independent, as "an educated liberal, a humanist," and as

A liberal thinking conservative. I'm a very aware, very liberal, whose actions are conservative. Who believes in paying my taxes to support the government, who believes in paying my bills, and who believes in getting a job whether its washing dishes, instead of going on welfare. . . . There is always a job to get, and I'll get it. If it's the lowest paying scum bag job in the street, I'll get it. . . . Because I really like this society. It is just the glorious, most glorious adventure in a society that has ever been known, and I'm very thankful for it. I guess I did that for my father in the service and all, and in my world travels I've seen so much poverty. I've seen what socialism does, or what communism does. And I've seen all the differences, the squalor, and uh, this is a tremendous opportunity. This thing called a democracy.

David opposed the presence of US Marines in Lebanon but supported the invasion of closer-to-home Grenada. He supports Common Cause, the Equal Rights Amendment, the Nuclear Freeze, racial equality, "and anything that makes rational sense." He voted for John Anderson in 1980 as the "least objectionable" choice, and although he dislikes Ronald Reagan, he later wrote that he voted for Reagan in 1984 "not because he's worth a damn, but he was the least objectionable alternative. Mondale simply was not a leader."

The Republicans are so out of touch, like they're against ERA, they're against women's rights, they're against abortion, they're against things that are so rational! And yet they're also more, they're more for do what you have to do, and quit giving away money, and get away from socialism and other things. Uh, so it's frustrating. Whereas Democrats, they're much more in touch, more educated, much more aware and all those things, and yet they're pushing us toward socialism. . . . And so I can't even deal with the Democrats, because they just are not, they do not strive for a society where people are are encouraged to participate.

A week later, David insists:

I'm more liberal than anything else. I'm more liberal, I am very liberal, actually. . . . I would like the advancement, not the--You know, I want to see ERA, and feminism should be advanced because if it went back to what the conservatives want, well shit, they want the old lady barefoot in the bedroom or or in the kitchen pregnant, you know. Goddamn brutality of Republicans is absolutely, it is absolute lunacy. . . . So I'm a liberal. I certainly am quite a liberal. It's just that my actions, I'm just uh, I'm not about to go out and break the laws and run around and raise hell.

Everybody makes a choice in the final analysis. They make a choice to get educated or not to get educated. You know, etcetera down the line. And yes, some of these folks have a harder time in one way or another. . . . So anyway, the liberal idea, as far as I can see, is just bend it away, let it fall apart, and just be undisciplined. A Teddy Kennedy. If that guy ever gets into the office of president, we are in deep trouble. He's a damned socialist.

When asked what a utopian society would be like, David says "This is utopia for those who can self-actualize," a view similar to that of the Libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick (1974), who considers utopia to be "the environment in which people are free to do their own thing" (p. 312). According to David, the personal freedom that comes with capitalism makes this "the greatest time to be alive."

Left-Male: Extremely self-confident. Racist. Altruistic in some ways. Enjoys writing. Intelligent, well-read, very forceful. Difficult to argue with. Despises welfare as well as recipients.

Left-Female: Initial letter was offensive. Even good points get buried in a racist, elitist, bigoted tone. Pro-abortion almost in a racist way, not really freedom of choice. Grrrrrrrrrr! Has some good points but sees humanity (other than himself) as stupid, brutal and power hungry. Not very compassionate.

Right-Male: [His] kind of thought is similar to the communist perspective where "the end justifies the means." Often condemns the mental health of people who are not like him.

Right-Female: A very likeable, good person. A tendency to ramble a little but intelligent and pretty realistic. In some areas he was openminded while in others he was narrow-minded and idealistic. Very opinionated and persistent; very excitable. Seemed like a doer and not just a talker. Stable, confident. Seems very happy and content with his life.

David wrote me in response to his initial participant profile, after "six months of traveling around to third world, communist and free world countries" in Asia and the Pacific. He writes that my "rendering of the dialogue" and "style" are "excellent," but--apparently thinking that the reactions of the research assistants were my own interpretations--he says they are "good at times, and completely off base, even out of the ball-

park at other times." He begins by denying he is a racist:

You might have misinterpreted the fact that I am an intellectual elitist to a degree, yet I know my mental limits, and everyone sees themselves somewhere in the human pecking order, if they possess enough of a mind to be aware of the mental differences of the human race. My elitism is harmless in that I know that no one is equal, that we all have a right to be here and each of us can fulfill his or her destiny in a free country according to our own abilities.

David responds to other points made by the research assistants:

I never argue. It's ludicrous. I refuse to argue. I choose dialectical exchange on a purely unemotional level to convey and reciprocate ideas. If anyone has a rational differing view, and they support it sufficiently, I am very adaptable.

I do not despise welfare. I despise the fraud that is endemic in the system which I consider over half of it fraud. I accept that we must assist those who simply are unable to maintain themselves. I despise the millions who fraud the system, when it's my money.

Maybe the letter was strong, but so few will admit to anything in black and white in this society.

I am extremely compassionate for those suffering under powerbrokers and governments where no chance is given to live freely. I give money to six different organizations, so I must be somewhat of a compassionate person, a rationally compassionate person. Example: let the people die in Ethiopia, because it's a fact that the more we feed this overpopulated area, the more will die in the future anyway. It's purely insane to feed them, so they can produce more offspring who will die in ever greater numbers. . . . Mother nature will deal with them brutally one day even more than 10,000 that she kills every day, presently.

I am not a communist by any stretch of the imagination. . . . I'm a Darwinist if anything.

I am definitely not narrow minded, nor idealistic. I'm a realistic optimist about myself in this life in this country at this time. And yes, I'm very, very happy with my life, very thankful and appreciative for this one grand opportunity to explore my being and the planet. Few are so fortunate. And after this recent journey, wow, my appreciations know no bounds. It's great to be alive when one possesses the abilities to fulfill one's life.

##### 5. Eve (P-4)

Eve wrote her only letter to The State News to defend Christian fundamentalist preachers on campus who had been ridiculed in previous

letters. A 21-year old junior majoring in a health field, Eve herself was a member of a fundamentalist group. Her Christian beliefs provide an encompassing framework for her view of the world.

Unlike the four Individualists already discussed, who are generally conservative on economic issues but liberal on a wide range of social and civil-libertarian issues, Eve considers herself to be "generally in a conservative category, but," she says, "some conservatives would say that I'm liberal," referring here to some members of the Moral Majority with whom she has strong disagreements.

Eve has mixed feelings about fundamentalist politicians who have tied their political decisions to their interpretation of Christian beliefs, specifically mentioning former Interior Secretary James Watt as a Christian politician with whom she disagrees. Even a government composed entirely of fundamentalists, she says, would still make mistakes, because Christians without experience are not necessarily good leaders. She tends to vote Republican ("and I don't know if that's based on, you know, my little categories that Republicans are generally conservative and I think of myself as a conservative"), but she would support Democrats who had her views. When asked whom she voted for in 1980, she answers "Reagan," but when asked why, she corrects herself:

Wait a minute--I didn't vote for Reagan, I voted for Anderson. At that time I was, I think, pretty disillusioned with Reagan and Carter, and I wanted to vote and say that I had voted. And I was in New England and there was a big Anderson movement.

Eve opposes the Nuclear Weapons Freeze, the Equal Rights Amendment, and abortion, but more frequently than not her responses to questions about politics are tentative and slow in coming. She considers herself relatively uninformed about political issues, a situation she says she would like to change, partly as a result of the interviews.

Elected to membership in a campus honor society, Eve has often worked with children in paid and volunteer settings, frequently related to her interest in health care. Her long-term goal is to work in her field, perhaps in a community health program; she has considered joining the Peace Corps after finishing school. She does think it's important to try to work toward ending world hunger and other widespread problems, as well as to raise people's awareness of such issues (and two years after the interviews, she writes, she is "in the middle of a very busy internship"). Despite her interest in working to help others, however, in the context of her Christian beliefs she does not think that such efforts at change will be significant. She believes that the world will be pretty much in its current state of crisis when Jesus returns, which she thinks will probably be in her lifetime.

Eve bases her belief in the imminent Second Coming of Christ on Biblical prophecy, although she acknowledges that such expectations have repeatedly been wrong in the past. The difference now, she says, is the development of particular events, such as the re-establishment of the State of Israel, which are considered to be necessary before Jesus returns; she believes that the generation that witnessed the 1948 rebirth of Israel will still be alive when Jesus returns, which leads her to think it will happen within the next thirty years or so. She is not sure exactly what will happen when Jesus comes back, but she does think that only true Christians will be saved, and that in general only born-again Christians can know for sure that they will go to Heaven.

Rather than attributing her religious beliefs to "blind faith," Eve argues that a reasoned analysis of the evidence makes it clear that the Bible is "the literally inspired word of God." She says that, although

she may be wrong, she believes the things she does because of what she has studied, and she considers the Bible to be the best authority and the best guide to life. She acknowledges that Christians can disagree among themselves on how to interpret the Bible; her fundamentalist group, in fact, allows for differences of opinion on such issues as whether the death penalty should be supported or opposed on the basis of Christian principles, unlike some other fundamentalist groups that hold a single interpretation. Although she "doesn't want to judge others," Eve does feel that some fundamentalist preachers seem to be preaching out of "legalistic requirements" rather than out of the love shown by those in her own group who publicly preach. "If you try to convince someone, you're not caring about them."

Despite her strong Christian beliefs, and her acknowledgement that she could be considered a fundamentalist and a "born-again" Christian, Eve prefers to refer to herself simply as a Christian, because

I think I'm, I'm a little bothered by the connotations that people have, um, because of bitter bad experience with any of them, and so, I want to let people know that I'm a Christian, I'm trying, I'm trying to live for Jesus Christ. . . . I would call myself a born-again Christian, because of a certain verse where Jesus said "You must be born again," but that isn't something that I . . . unless I can sit there and explain to a person what it is, that I won't use it? Fundamentalist--I guess if someone's trying to figure out where I am, they're gonna realize that, that I'm a fundamentalist, pretty quickly. If they want to call it that, then fine.

Changes in society over the years have brought about increased stress and anxiety, according to Eve, and being a Christian can help people deal with such problems ("Life's been easier for me since I've been a Christian"). Stress and anxiety, however, cannot be eliminated entirely, even for Christians. Problems such as sin and selfishness are inevitable because of the fall of Adam and Eve and the influence of the

Devil, but human nature also includes love and a sense of fairness that come from God even if their source is not acknowledged; people can be good without accepting Christ, but they cannot be saved. The purpose of life is to have a relationship with God, to follow God's will rather than to do one's own thing. People also have a responsibility to help others, to get involved in community affairs. "God," she says, "will accomplish what He wants through my life."

Left-Male: A conservative confused person. Does espouse beliefs of dogmatic religious thought; non-fanatical. A desire for honesty. Sees the world through her group's eyes.

Left-Female: She knows her views aren't typical; still feels superior. New transfer student--prime target! Requires lots of prompting. A lot of stress in her life. Not really a religious fanatic. Seems insecure. I still liked her.

Right-Male: An unusual degree of religious piety. A conservative; she is perhaps even more conservative than I am. Too concerned with what the Bible says about the future.

Right-Female: I liked her because I found her pleasant and warm. I think she believes in what she says but I think it is something someone else has said for her. Very insecure and doesn't really have any other beliefs of her own (ie., political beliefs). Very idealistic. Seems to be worrying a lot about saying the "right" thing. Lacks confidence in herself. Naive. Doesn't try to push her views on others. A positive realistic view of human nature. Is she using her Christianity as a crutch?

In response to the follow-up letters asking for feedback, Eve wrote a short note saying she would write in greater detail when she had more time. She indicates that "a lot has happened since then--don't know whether or not it's relevant to your dissertation, but even if I say so myself, it's pretty interesting." She adds: "Thanx--it was fun reading the comments part of your manuscript (also revealing)."

Participants Generally Opposed to the  
Major Aspects of Capitalism

6. Paul (P-5)

Expressing the most consistent leftist views of any of the Collectivists, at the time of the interviews Paul was a 30-year old assistant professor in the humanities. He and his wife were expecting their second child, an event that he thought would add to the intense level of stress he is experiencing as part of his effort to obtain tenure. He is unsure of his future in academic life, despite the fact that he likes both teaching and writing, both of which he thinks are important ways to reach students who arrive at the university with only a superficial level of political awareness.

Paul wrote to the campus newspaper in opposition to letters criticizing the welfare society. He had written two earlier letters to the editor, once about a local racial incident and once about university financial priorities. When asked why he writes, he responds:

I think I write the letters for the same reason that I became an academic. And that is, I think it's important that people know relationships and understand the context of larger issues, and don't see everything as discrete incidents, and know how to put things in perspective, and how to understand the specifics involved within a larger context. Um, and sometimes incidents, I think, are important enough that I spend my time writing a letter. . . . I've never really resolved whether it's a valuable use of time, whether people take them seriously, whether anything ever happens, but I think it's important enough that the attempt at least be made sometimes.

Again, later:

I'm not really sure inside why you do things like this, why I took the time. . . . It angered me so that, this man had infuriated me so, that I had to take time to (LAUGH) write a letter in response when I should be trying to figure out, you know, the ins and outs of the (ACADEMIC REFERENCE). Um, but, I guess it is important, if it, if it raises questions in people's minds at all, if it makes them think even a little bit. It's the same sort of thing that I've tried to do in class. It's not--for me, the importance is not the content knowledge that you get across, it's helping people to ask better



questions. Or to ask questions in the first place. Um, whether they ultimately agree with me or not is one thing, but you gotta start the process somewhere of ask--of asking them to think about issues.

Paul's movement leftward was, he says, "a very very long, very gradual process" that

began as an understanding of the things I was really against. And it took a long time to sort of figure out what I was for, or what I at least could give support to. And that really has only happened within the last three or four or five years.

During these past few years, Paul has continued to try to study things in context, though he says it's difficult to know all that is necessary to develop a coherent political perspective--there are no easy solutions, because the world is not composed of black and white but many shades of gray. He does think it's important to try to reach people who are caught up in traditional, individual-oriented, materialistic strivings, who might be attracted to simplistic right-wing views because of the widespread fears and insecurities brought about by what he sees as the "failing" capitalist system.

Paul's developing leftist perspective, which coincided with his gradual withdrawal from the Catholic Church, resulted in his year-long membership in the local chapter of what he describes as a national Communist revolutionary party. Although he dropped his membership about a year before the interviews, primarily for fear of endangering his job, he still considers himself to be in general support of the party's goals. The party he joined--which he would not name--keeps a low public profile, publishes a newspaper, and attempts to present a view of Marxism that American workers can relate to. The members avoid what Paul considers to be the dogmatism and sloganeering of many other leftist groups that use the word Communist in their title. They do advocate the eventual over-

throw of capitalism by force, but do not carry out illegal activities.

"The party is more into educating the working class, using leaflets, newspapers, etcetera, pointing out the issues in context" and showing the public Communists who are "nonviolent, rational, presenting readable arguments, not like the media portrayal."

Paul believes that the government should represent the working class rather than the capitalist class. He acknowledges the many failures of countries that consider themselves socialist, but argues that the socialist countries "at least try" to provide for all, something that capitalism "is not designed to do." He doesn't think capitalism and communism can be combined, and thus he rejects democratic socialism as a solution. Americans are beginning to see that capitalism can't meet all their needs, Paul believes, but so far they still "only grumble"; there remains a need for people who can "help make core criticisms legitimate."

Americans, Paul says, have accepted the ideal of individualism, which, he notes, is "a useful attitude for a government to inculcate" because it prevents social change. Even those on the left all too often are not willing to make the sacrifices that are necessary to have an effect; true Communists must sacrifice some of their own individuality for the sake of the party's eventual success, just as people in general must come to see themselves as part of a larger society and exhibit a "corporate consciousness."

Despite his general sympathy with the goals and methods of the party he used to belong to, when asked if he considers himself a Communist Paul says that use of the term in his case would not be completely accurate:

It's a term that I feel more comfortable than I did a year and a half or two ago, when I first became a member. Um, it's a term that, at a theoretical level I feel very comfortable with. It's a term that, when I look around the world and see how the term is used

in late 20th Century political societies, I don't feel very--real comfortable with. You pick up a newspaper and read about the Cambodian genocide or about, um, what the Soviet Union's doing here and there and everywhere, and they label themselves Communists. Um, it's more difficult. But, I do I guess feel comfortable with the term because I do--and I don't know if this is just my way of justifying it or not--I do try and separate what I think the potential for, for that ideology is and what the goals are, versus what is happening right now, what the reality is. And I think that's legitimate.

Q: Some people make a distinction between capital-C Communism and small-c communism. You know, people who say they're communists with a small c because capital C implies Communist Party and--

A: Those people are interesting. Um, my sense is that if you're gonna--That, it's almost like people that talk about themselves being small-c christian or large-C Christian. I always understood that term to mean--or my sense of what Christianity was, was that it could not, it could not be practiced on an individual level. It somehow necessitated some sort of communal service or worship or something like that. . . . It always struck me that small-c communists--I nev--It's like trying to take a little bit out of what Marx said and not take it all. . . . My sense is that it's a fairly holistic system in which you really destroy the system if you only buy a part of it, not all of it. And that, to be a Communist means you really have to accept some organization and structure. You can't . . . go running around as a small-c communist doing your own thing. That's not--I don't know what you are, but you're not a Communist. So right now, you know, I don't consider myself a Communist, because I'm not inside a political party. . . . I can believe in a political ideology . . . but I'm not out there as a member of a party so I don't think I am a Communist at the moment.

Q: Do you think--Well, I could ask what you think you are, but I'm not sure that--

A: Oh, I guess I'm a real disenchanted (LAUGH) individual. . . . To me, if you say you're a Communist, by definition it means that you are a member of a political party, a Communist Party, actively doing work, and doing the kinds of things that a Communist Party would be doing.

When asked about his voting history, Paul says he votes "inconsistently--sometimes I do and sometimes I don't. I didn't vote for a long time until, oddly enough, I joined the party." The party itself does not usually run political candidates; when it does, it is typically in a local race "to try and use the person as--not to use the person, that person would be a better mouthpiece for ideas and issues than would

otherwise be the case." But "to run a candidate to take over power" would be "running against the grain of what the party sees as the way that's gonna happen. You're not going to make revolution at the ballot box."

When I ask Paul about how he voted in the 1980 election, he responds slowly. "I voted for Reagan, believe it or not." He explains:

I thought that what needed to happen was, what has happened, and that is, um--you know, I thought Reagan would do what he did. He would create a situation in which there would be, things would be more black and white, things would be clearer. It would be economic hard times, and that's what needs to happen I think for people to realize what's going on in the system and how to make a decision. Um, and I think this party . . . understood that . . . American capitalism has reached . . . the point where someone had to get in there and really begin to squeeze the working class, begin to take away some of the benefits . . . because the post-war boom . . . was over. . . . If that party's analysis of current events is correct, um, Reagan won't be reelected, he's done what he was supposed to do, and this situation has moved now where you can go back to, you know, not sort of hitting the working class over the head with a stick, but you can go back to . . . using a little bit soft rubber glove.

Paul acknowledges the inconsistency between voting for Reagan to make things more "clear" and voting in the gubernatorial race for a Democrat favoring traditional liberal policies on taxes and abortion. He is not sure if he would vote again for Reagan, who, he says, has done more damage than he expected. (Paul did not provide feedback on the material I sent him, which would have included his 1984 vote.) Still,

fundamentally it was easy for me to do that because I don't really believe that my vote counts at all. And, in this kind of a system, the system is always going to produce candidates that are very very similar. . . . Both candidates and both parties are within that same context. They share the same ideas, they share the same goals, they just go about it a little bit differently. Um, so, in that sense it doesn't matter a whole lot who's elected. You're never going to have . . . a political candidate that really questions the system.

Paul is the only participant who asks me to turn off the tape recorder, when we first discuss his political affiliation. He does say

it is okay to take notes on, and write about, his comments as long as his identity is kept secret; his concern is for his job, and he jokes that he's sure the political authorities already know all about his party membership. I turned the tape recorder off several times after the initial time, to ask about such topics as the party's possible illegal activities; Paul later becomes more willing to have similar discussions recorded. Also unrecorded is one long discussion about personal and family problems, particularly concerns about his marriage; a year and a half later, he indicates that the problems had greatly eased.

Left-Male: Has obviously thought out his political ideology. Very knowledgeable. Home problems seem to cause disharmony in his mind. Paranoid over FBI files and I am sure for good reason. Altruistic motives. Sees reality of issues. Disillusioned with academia and marriage but feels guilt at both areas.

Left-Female: Sensitive. Good insight. Different tones when speaking of his own personal life. I really liked this interview a lot. This guy really has it together.

Right-Male: It takes a certain kind of mentality for someone to believe that they can, and should change the world. Chooses to dwell on unverifiable criticisms of the US system, such as his paranoid claim that he is being watched by the FBI.

Right-Female: I really liked this person. Even though I didn't necessarily agree with his political point of view I thought a lot of his beliefs had a lot of truth behind them. Friendly, personable, and intelligent. Very honest with himself. Objective, willing to listen. Extremely idealistic. Genuinely cares about and likes people.

## 7. Roberta (P-6)

Roberta's only letter (to the State Journal), written in response to an earlier letter, expressed her opposition to US policy in Central America. She originally became interested in events in Latin America as an outgrowth of her interest in environmental issues; her several visits to tropical areas on plant-seeking visits (she describes herself as a "plant person") have left her with positive views of Latin American

people and culture as well as with first-hand knowledge of events. The information she trusts the most about Central America, she says, comes from friends who work there in agricultural research, some of whom are politically involved and some of whom are not. At the time of the interviews, Roberta was in her mid-twenties, was unmarried, had recently received a graduate degree in chemistry, and was considering whether to pursue an academic career or whether to work on environmental or peace issues more intensively. She was doing volunteer work as a math tutor for a teenage immigrant girl while working in a laboratory.

Roberta's opposition to US policy had recently led her to decrease her primary interest in environmental issues and to join a local activist group centered on public education about Latin America:

I joined to try to educate more people about what's going on. I think people who take the time to read journals or newspapers which present both sides then can make a choice as to what to believe. Um, it's hard to know what to believe. I don't trust the media at all.

Roberta describes herself as having left her childhood Republican roots "as soon as I started thinking about things like . . . who should have power and who shouldn't have power, um, what kind of people should run the government. . . . I guess I've always been liberal." She also refers to herself as a "people-oriented" humanist and as a progressive who voted for Carter in 1980 "because it seemed that I wanted to vote against Reagan more than I wanted to vote for" her first choice, Citizen's Party Candidate Barry Commoner, an environmentalist and socialist.

When asked what the difference is between a conservative and a liberal, she responds:

The basic difference is that conservatives are more, um--it's hard, it's hard, you know, to make a distinction. I would, if I had to make a broad generalization, I would say that conservatives are more

money oriented and liberals are more people oriented, but that doesn't fit all conservatives and all the liberals, um, you know, like categories.

Q: What kinds of exceptions are there?

A: I'm trying to think of, um--It's hard to realize that there even are some exceptions. Everybody is, um--I would say that conservatives tend to be more, less accepting of other people, um, they may have more racist tendencies. I'm not saying all conservatives are racists, because I know they're not, but . . . if someone were classified to me as a conservative, I would tend to think that they would have a greater tendency to be unaccepting of different kinds of people.

In looking at the differences in economic philosophy, between liberals and conservatives, Roberta explains:

I think conservatives tend to be more oriented toward, um, big business, making a profit . . . where probably liberal is more . . . making sure that the poor people have enough to survive on. And unfortunately, you know, in cases that means taking money away from the people who make more money. Which I have trouble--I think that anybody who works for something, um, ought to be able to reap the benefits.

Acknowledging that her political views are moving more to the left, Roberta insists she is still within the mainstream of reform-oriented politics. When asked if she considers herself a Marxist, she replies, "Uh-uh, no. I consider myself a humanist, and that's about it," though a few minutes later, while discussing US policy in Central America, she laughs and says "I'm starting to sound like a Marxist more and more."

When [Marx] was talking about reform versus revolution, um, that's where he lost me totally. Um, I think reforms are a valid way of making progress and I don't think that you just have to drop everything and overthrow and totally different, because oftentimes when that happens things left in the wake are just as bad, and that's probably what happened in the Soviet Union. I don't think that's what happened in Nicaragua and that's why I think it's so special, that, um, it didn't become a different form of a bad government.

I think a lot of progress has been made through reforms in the US. If--at least, you've got to have money to do this, but uh, if there's something, if there's some way that your rights are infringed upon you can take it to the courts. And often the courts don't decide quite the way I think they ought to but, you know, that is part of the democratic process.

Also part of the democratic process, according to Roberta, is not forcing your own views on others. She says "I don't think that people should have to change their present lifestyle"; there are many things in the traditional American lifestyle "that I don't have a need for, but I'm not saying that everyone else should change just because of what I think." When it comes to problems such as world hunger, however, which Roberta considers to be largely a result of politically-determined production and distribution patterns, efforts by people around the world to take control of the forces affecting their own lives should be supported. She has mixed feelings about the nature of violent struggle.

I'm also a pacifist. I think, you know, forms of violence are necessary, but I wish that there were other ways to go about doing things. So I'm not an advocate of revolution when it's not necessary.

Q: How do you decide where it's necessary?

A: Um, well, it seems kind of obvious in Central America that it's necessary because people struggle for reforms, they get thrown in jail, they get shot or something like that. In cases like that, where the government has, um, there's no way the people can regulate the government . . . it seems like revolution is called for.

Q: There are pacifists who say that pacifism is no violence at all. Gandhi--

A: In that situation where India has so many people that you just couldn't go and kill them all. . . . Back in England people didn't like seeing people shot . . . In the colonial sort of situation, um, pacifism had a real strong effect. There, it doesn't seem that it would work in Central America.

Q: I'm not sure Gandhi would make that distinction.

A: I'm sure he wouldn't. Well, the movie wasn't quite as factual as it could have been, about how he felt about things, but um, it's probably true he wouldn't agree with that. I guess, it's only recently--like in the last year or so--that I've decided that justified violence is called for and necessary. Um, now is the struggle in me, just because, I felt like I really did want to support the Nicaraguan government because of, in a way, what they're doing. . . . When I hear about what they're doing I think it's really good. . . . I felt like I had to resolve--Well, you know, how can I say that



that's okay? And I guess I've moved enough away from pacifism at all costs to pacifism in, you know, every case except when it's totally necessary. I'm hedging a little bit because I haven't totally resolved it in myself. Um, when I--I would rather see a violent revolution than another hundred years of people being sick, exploited, things like that.

Many individual problems within the US, Roberta believes, are a result of the insecurity that accompanies attempts to fit in and belong; people should focus more on being themselves. Raised by a non-practicing Catholic father and a mother who took her to a Presbyterian church when young, Roberta now considers herself a religious person but "not necessarily" a Christian other than in a cultural sense; "spiritually I'm a pagan." She doesn't trust organized religion and thinks that different religions are "just different ways of expressing the same sort of force everywhere."

Roberta often hesitates in answering questions about her political views, and frequently gives "I don't know" as an answer. She often says she can see both sides of many issues. Several months after the interviews, during a chance meeting on the main street of East Lansing during which she asked about my progress with the dissertation, she told me that after doing a lot more reading on the subject over the summer, she now has more knowledge and is more active in the political group than before, though she has become more aware--and critical--of left-organizational infighting. Roberta left East Lansing several months later, and has not yet responded to the material I sent her.

Left-Male: Naive on political issues. When unsure does not fabricate. [Her activist group] seems to be the center of her life. Going through some changes emotionally, formulating from conservative to leftist oriented ideology.

Left-Female: More of a conservationist, ecologist than politician. Unsure of some of her opinions, she feels awkward at times. Well-educated, well-informed. Values truth and consistency (fairness) in government. Some contradictions and inconsistencies. Fails to back

up beliefs and statements with factual examples or specific instances.

Right-Male: Consistent in most of her thoughts about politics. I consistently disagree with her. Ideas about human nature appear to be somewhat confused. More concerned with her own problems, and unable to truly sympathize with the people who she claims to understand. Static support of revolution is immature.

Right-Female: Rambles when she talks. Boring and not very intelligent. Lacks self-confidence. Her views were idealistic, not even practical. Very self-contradictory. She says she is a very religious person yet does not go to church. A good, well-meaning person but she can't back up what she says with facts. I think she has gone through life naive and sheltered.

#### 8. Scott (P-9)

A 22-year old college senior majoring in political science partly because of a desire to help prevent nuclear war, Scott wrote two long letters to The State News before the interviews and one afterwards. Two were light-hearted, satiric political comments; one was an emotional argument against American support of right-wing governments. During the first interview, Scott talks about the moral responsibility "for the misdeeds that our country does overseas. It's staggering. It drives me into depression as well. All the time."

At the time of the interviews, Scott lived in what he calls an "anarchistic" house with five other students. He refers to himself as having been "a brain" who started reading Marx in the fourth grade, after being exposed to radical ideas by older siblings; throughout the interviews he repeatedly discusses his high school years, during which he graduated with honors despite heavy drug use. When asked if he understood Marx in the fourth grade, he says he did understand "the fundamentals, yeah, about class conflict and exploitation." At different times he describes himself as a disillusioned socialist, "sort of a socialist," a communist who once voted for Communist Party Presidential Candidate Gus

Hall in a junior high school mock election (along with about four other students), and a former radical who used to contribute to the Socialist Labor Party and "briefly" attended their conventions. Now, although "maybe other people would call me" a radical,

I say I'm not a radical because I don't think that you can reshape people as easily as some radicals do. Some people think that if you change government, you are going to change people. I don't think it's like that. I don't know how gradual, but it has to be just gradual enough so that you don't get people scared, because people are scared. That's the sort of thing that's dangerous.

Scott says his politics have become both more pragmatic and more personal ("and this sounds like a copout"). He worked for the reelection of Jimmy Carter in 1980, "though sometimes I've just voted Republican to break the pattern"; in his letters to me a year and a half later, he did not indicate whom he preferred in 1984. If he thought a democratic socialist party that he agreed with had a chance of winning, "I would probably vote for them"; the Libertarians, though, are "not a good third party." The terms liberal and conservative are "obviously relative":

Liberal, I think, is more open-minded, just in general, in the non-political sense. Um, in the political sense, like liberals try to be more idealistic, whatever, their fundamental characteristic. Conservatives trust tradition more, put more faith in it.

Q: How would you describe yourself?

A: Um, it's hard. I don't like putting labels, you know. But, between those two, in some ways I am a conservative liberal in the sense that I recognize the idealism of the liberals. I don't think that uh, I dunno, I think in some ways liberalism will always be insufficient as a political philosophy until it addresses the contradictions in the economy. You know, you have people, rich people (LAUGH), there are a lot of rich liberals. I dunno, I think they're liberals out of guilt or something. Um, they don't really want to change the system that much. They just want to make sure that no-one is starving to death. But it's because of the system that people have to get welfare.

Q: Well, what do you like about conservatives?

A: Oh, I don't—Well, I'm a conservative liberal. I'm not conserva-

tive at all. Um, well, I guess it's just that um, they--I dunno, they seem, they do have a healthy skepticism. I don't think liberals are skeptical enough.

Asked if he has another political label for himself he likes better than liberal or conservative, Scott laughs:

Um, I haven't given much thought to that, personally. . . . A disillusioned socialist maybe? Um, I'd say, well, sort of a socialist. A democratic socialist, I dunno, you used that phrase before. The problem with those things, as soon as you have a term, then it gets attached to somebody. . . . Social-Democrats in America, I wouldn't want to be tied to them, certainly, and the, uh, the Labor Party in Britain, I think they're sort of off the track.

Scott opposes what he sees as the increasing drift of US society toward a technologized "fascist age" of increased conformity, fear, and isolation; in this connection he mentions Bertram Gross's (1980) Friendly Fascism several times. (He often refers to a wide range of writers, in fields ranging from political theory and psychology to European fiction and poetry.) I ask why society is moving in that direction.

Sometimes I feel it's--I guess fundamentally I feel that it's, um, because of some impersonal forces, economic forces. It's not like, people that are moving it in a fascist direction. I'm sure that I don't think of it that way. Um, but that doesn't mean just because they're unaware, you know, they aren't, they aren't totally dealing with the consequences of what they do. Um, after studying this a lot last fall, for a while I thought that uh, well, I came up with this metaphor. . . . It's like a big beast, an incredibly ugly beast, a powerful beast which, there's no chance of you conquering him or even hurting him. But all you can do, whatever you can do to make the beast gag, make him, you know, at least stick in his throat. I guess that's what my own vision of personal anarchy comes down to, is that individual person sticking in the throat of that beast. . . . I can't tell the future. I don't know whether . . . we will be able to avoid it or not. Um, but I think we can. And I think that the way to do that, in a way, is to be, to have a sense of personal integrity, of not, not being swallowed. Even, even though maybe it means you may get chewed.

The stance of "personal anarchy" Scott sees as appropriate to oppose the fascist drift does not extend to the political system:

As far as having a whole system of anarchy, um, it would probably be destructive, if not counterproductive. . . . As something opposing um, more or less universal control, I think it's effective. If the

anarchists never come into power, they are always in the fringe, then I think they are constructive. But if actually, I mean, real anarchy--I mean, the thing is if people are not ready for anarchy. . . . People need rules right now. I mean anarchy is something that, I think if it was a goal, to work towards it, . . . getting people's ideas adjusted to it, then it could be, you know, then it could work maybe after a thousand years. . . . A state with a minimum of government control and where there really didn't need to be a government. Which is something that, I think, most people just can't imagine.

For Scott, anarchy means "fundamentally . . . an acceptance, a broad acceptance, of the goodness of other people. . . . If you didn't believe in the goodness of people, it wouldn't work." Scott has read a little about the life of the 19th Century anarchist Bakunin ("an interesting guy"), and he refers to Abbie Hoffman, whose politics "were immature, not realistic," as a modern anarchist, "maybe an anarchist in another sense, not totally what it means to me, but in another sense it also means a dissolving of most of the societal rules as opposed to human rules."

Scott's anarchist bent and political views are intertwined with his religious views. He has abandoned his Presbyterian upbringing and considers himself a Buddhist--though "not a very good one."

Basically, the thing that I thought Buddhism was, that it sort of fits into my ideal of--I think a religion, it's like, the truer a religion is, the less that you have of man, in a sense. Like Christianity has all of these impossible rules and intricate labyrinths of meaning that just don't seem like I--God, it can't be that complicated. I mean, complicated, but not as far as doctrine. That's ridiculous, you have all these contradictions. And this, but no, this but no. And you know, I think a lot of other religions are like that too. God is love. And Judaism with all its adherence to rules, these sort of arbitrary rules. So, it seems to me they all have a spark in them, you know, I wouldn't deny that. But it's the, um, you can see how . . . some are more influenced by man, have more rules. My God, in Buddhism you don't really have that much. It's almost like a philosophical system, you know. Has some precepts and then, and from there you deduce other things and you deduce how to live.

Q: So when you wrote about people's personal anarchy, getting rid of rules, it fits into this um--

A: I suppose, you know. Yeah, as far as that. . . . You see, those

things actually, to be successful and be carried out, there probably would have to be spiritual dealings behind them, I would think. People would need a reason for doing what they were doing. And especially the sacrifice, because a sacrifice is risk. Putting yourself up against a monolithic monster like that, you know, is risky, is an understatement. Um, and you need some sort of faith to face that sort of, I guess you could call it religious faith, spiritual faith. I dunno. Faith in man.

Scott's use of the term anarchist has much in common with the view of Gaus and Chapman (1978, p. xxxi), who note that anarchism has a "psychodynamic that leads to a mood of resentful rebellion against disciplined complexity. Somehow, it is felt, life should be both more receptive to individual impulse and more gratifyingly unitary."

Scott believes in reincarnation and is a vegetarian. He is similar to Roberta in that he considers himself to be a believer in nonviolence despite holding the "paradoxical" view that he "can sort of justify the use of violence" in El Salvador because of the inability to bring about peaceful reform. In general, he believes that change "does have to do with yourself. . . . You can't change somebody else's consciousness before you've got your own on some sort of stable ground." Scott has also tried to deal with "a real important question for me," whether to join either a Buddhist monastery ("I wanted to be a monk") or a commune, which he sees as something he would be doing for himself, or whether to work to help others through political or other means.

Decided somewhere along the line that that [becoming a monk] would be too selfish. And I still have the problem with communes right now. . . . A sense of urgency that I feel in the situation now. I mean the world. Of course it comes down to, well, can you do anything about it anyway, which is another—I mean, you must know that I don't have these things resolved.

"I can't think that we're doomed," Scott says at one point. "I believe very strongly, I feel very strongly—not just some abstract concept, within ourselves—God is alive within us," a God that is, he

believes, "fundamentally anarchistic."

Throughout all the interviews, Scott was extremely self-analytical, continually returning to discussion of his motivations, problems, and past. He is trying to cut down his drug use, which he sees as an escape, though at the time of the interviews he was still smoking marijuana frequently, "especially" when writing papers for school. He called before one interview to say he would arrive late, and when he arrived we spent the time discussing personal crises, without turning on the tape recorder; he said he had taken psychedelic mushrooms the night before with a friend, to celebrate his acceptance into a special summer program, but was no longer tripping. I encouraged him to talk to a therapist about what was going on in his life (a combination of problems relating to escapism, relationships, and goals). During the two interviews held after the summer break, he said he had cut down on his drug use somewhat, and his discussion of political and other issues was more focused than before the summer.

Left-Male: Space case, very unsure of self now, going through emotional trauma. Non-conformist. Wonders why we are put upon this earth.

Left-Female: I enjoyed the first letters--I thought this guy had it together, but by the time interview #2 was finished, I thought this guy was extremely confused. Full of emotion. Nihilistic. Philosophical. Painstakingly honest. Does see his weaknesses. Sensitive. His life is a soap opera: Lots of hard knocks: brother is gay, sister raped, parents divorced. Ninth grade magical thinking. Definitely unique, not your typical boy wanting to be a fireman.

Right-Male: Artistic person with a questioning mind. Nihilistic, but concerned with expressing the sentiments of the disadvantaged. An experimenter. Introspective, mentally gifted. Feels guilt.

Right-Female: Nice and pleasant. Does seem to hide a lot. Unstable. Way ahead of himself as a child. One of those people who never really fit in. Unusually intelligent. Hiding from reality. Self-destructive.

Scott sent me a postcard several months after leaving MSU, asking

about progress on the dissertation. 'After I sent him his participant profile, he responded with two letters and several poems. He has left Michigan, and has worked a variety of short-term jobs, including writing jobs related to his political interests, but has not yet found permanent work. "The bitter irony was inescapable. If I am intelligent, as your disinterested observers claim, why am I unemployed (because intelligence, and artistic intelligence in itself, is not particularly valued?)" He says he found the "preliminary summaries interesting and amusing."

More troubling, for me and for him, Scott writes that he didn't think the untaped interview in which he discussed his personal problems would be used in the research except as background material; he is sorry my notes were read by the research assistants, because "to a certain extent I voiced confidences which were not just my own." I wrote to Scott, apologizing for the misunderstanding, for which I take the responsibility; in the future, I will make sure to double-check participant assumptions as well as my own. Scott's profile does not contain any details from the untaped interview that were not also discussed at other times.

#### 9. Timothy (P-3)

In his late sixties, Timothy is a retired history professor. A married Italian-American whose two children attend Catholic schools, he spends much of his time working in his garden, reading current journals and newspapers in the library, working on a history book, and writing letters to newspapers.

During the three-month period before the initial interview, three of his letters were printed in the State Journal, all of which expressed



opposition to antinuclear activists who fail to clarify their position on Communism. Three subsequent letters, and 13 earlier letters dating back to 1978, which he brought in at my request, covered a number of issues in addition to his strong anti-Soviet stand. In addition, on four separate occasions, while I happened to be listening to a local news-oriented public radio talk show, I recognized Timothy's voice as among those who called the show to ask questions or present alternative views. In most of his letters and his phone-in comments, Timothy backs up his point of view with detailed historical references, and frequently warns against the dangers of one kind of "doctrinaire fanaticism" or another.

Timothy often refers to Sweden as a model of a democratic, socialist society along the lines of what he would like to see in the United States ("if," he writes, "not enough can be done to reduce unemployment and the persistent problems of poverty before too long" through "preliminary measures" such as a negative income tax). Timothy at different times describes himself as middle of the road politically; as a democratic socialist; as "liberal domestically, conservative on foreign policy." In the letter he sent after reading the initial description of his views, he writes:

It would probably be more accurate to describe me as a social democrat in domestic affairs rather than as a democratic socialist. If Iacocca had not done so well with Chrysler, I would have favored part ownership of it by the government (the West German government holds 40 percent of Volkswagen stock). If there needs to be a trend toward government ownership of basic industries, I would prefer a gradual and partial approach. . . . If necessary to minimize unemployment, it might be advisable for a government corporation to become the "employer of last resort."

Referring to himself at one point as an independent, Timothy says that

Either party is quite a disappointment, I think, in certain ways. I'd like to see a, a middle-of-the-road party come along. . . . I do

think that, in domestic policy, we do need reforms. I kind of like socialists like Mitterand of France and so forth, he was quite uh--well, I guess he's had to crack down, too.

Timothy says that "some who are left-wing Democrats . . . like to fool themselves" by confusing socialism with the brutality of communism. He sees both traditional liberals and traditional conservatives as too doctrinaire, and considers himself to be acting "against the prevailing view." He regrets the absence of a political party representing his views; although he acknowledges that such a party would not likely be very successful because most people are either doctrinaire Democrats or doctrinaire Republicans, he does think that examination of voting patterns suggests that "the people are a little afraid of Republicans in domestic affairs, a little afraid of the Democrats (LAUGH) in foreign affairs." Timothy shares these fears; when I first ask whether he considers himself to be in any political party, he responds:

I've shifted around so much, probably, probably not. For domestic things, I like the Democratic Party, and for foreign affairs, except for JFK, I usually tend toward the Republican. Again, I think they oughta have two presidents or something, one for one (LAUGH) and one for the other. So hard to find anyone who's good in either, in both.

"The worst combination," he notes, "is the Libertarians, who don't want to help anyone in other countries and want total capitalism in the US." Timothy himself advocates the nationalization of major industries but thinks small businesses should be allowed to remain private, and he argues that the Soviets have corrupted Marx's view of socialism. (He writes: "If Marx had lived longer, he might have favored something of a democratic approach rather than dictatorship. He once indicated that he was not a Marxist.") In response to a question about American neoconservatives, he says they are in general too conservative on domestic issues. At one point he laughingly refers to "bleeding-heart conservatives" who

are "upset about the people in the 90%, 89% tax bracket, or General Motors not making enough, or being too heavily taxed."

Timothy views liberals and pacifists as often well-meaning, but thinks that in general they are naively idealistic about Communism. He is optimistic about the ability of effective, rational leaders such as John Kennedy to steer a course between left and right extremism, noting approvingly Kennedy's remark that "domestic policy is very important, but foreign policy can kill you." Strong leaders can help Third World countries slowly move from authoritarianism to democracy; occasionally, military intervention is necessary as a defensive measure, and it should also be considered as a means of removing brutal right-wing as well as left-wing dictatorships and installing democratic governments.

In terms of his own voting history, Timothy is "rather unhappy with (LAUGH) what we've had to choose from" since 1964, but says "I guess I probably had to vote":

I felt I didn't have--too much of an activist not to vote. . . . Case of somewhat having to hold my nose. . . . Even with Humphrey. I felt he had been, I felt that Humphrey--I admired him quite a lot as a senator and so forth. I thought he was overly doctrinaire perhaps, but I never had too much problem with him in foreign affairs. I think he might've done quite well. But I was extremely disappointed that he could be so sycophantic as a vice-president. You know, the only constitutional duty of the vice-president is preside over the senate. And uh, he admitted later, or he said later on that he felt LBJ was paranoid on Vietnam. But he went along, whereas I think the country comes first, you know, before the president. I thought he was overly impressed with LBJ.

Timothy has never voted for a third party, though he might have "if there were a moment that the Norman Thomas, Eugene V. Debs . . . type Socialist Party would've come along." He voted for Dewey in 1944, and didn't vote in 1948 because he was out of the state; since then he's voted for Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Humphrey, McGovern, Ford, and

Reagan. He says he "even ended up voting" for McGovern in 1972 despite being "pretty disgusted with the Democrats for nominating" him, though "maybe if it had been closer I would have abstained." "Not that I would've minded his domestic policy, but his foreign policy was—I didn't have much faith in that. But I couldn't bring myself to vote for Nixon." His vote for Reagan in 1980, despite his opposition to Reagan's domestic policies, came "with some trepidation," but "I knew [Anderson] really didn't have a chance" and Carter's "weakness, or seeming weakness" was dangerous. Again, in 1984, "I voted for RR mainly, or almost entirely, on foreign policy and defense grounds. And so far his domestic policies have worked out, surprisingly, much better than most economists and I expected!"

A religious Catholic, Timothy stresses the importance of religion as a necessary civilizing factor. He thinks it is partly a belief in God that prevents savagery, and that the decline of religion in the US is one factor in what he sees as the current overemphasis on materialism. Too many people are selfish, he says, but over the centuries people have become more enlightened. He adds that "I hope I'm mostly rational. It's important to ask yourself 'why?'" Throughout the interviews, Timothy's comments are embedded in long historical examples with many details, quotes, anecdotes, and tangents, often backed up by references to a wide variety of historians, political leaders, columnists and others. He acknowledges that people "can read history all kinds of ways" based on their background and other factors; he says he enjoys playing the devil's advocate in arguing with people at both doctrinaire extremes. In his feedback letter, he writes that he "found the comments of the research assistants very interesting."

Left-Male: Religious. Politically active. Elaborates on particular points ad nauseum. Very knowledgeable.

Left-Female: Highly educated, writes well, speaks well. Rambles on. [Recognizes] different levels of intensity: Mussolini not as bad as Hitler, Tito a fairly reasonable communist. Satisfied with life. Aware. Nondogmatic. Thinks politically, but is boring.

Right-Male: Very broad knowledge of history. Repetitive. Contradictory view of foreign policy and domestic policy--You can't have your cake and eat it too. Stubbornly clings to ideals of social welfare and government ownership of industry,

Right-Female: Pleasant and likeable even though he was constantly going off on "academic" tangents. Very intelligent and seems to hide his personality behind all of his knowledge. Every time he was asked a personal question he would find some way to involve politics in it. A good, well-meaning person, he does care about other people. Semi-religious. Motivated, optimistic, tolerant.

#### 10. Victor (P-1)

The three letters 30-year old Victor wrote to the State Journal prior to the interviews and one he wrote several months afterward were all related to the corrupting effects of campaign contributions, a topic that is related to his graduate work in political science; throughout the seven and a half hours of interviews he repeatedly returns to this theme.

If the way we can finance elections continues the way it is. . . . it's totally conceivable that you can reach a point where you have nothing. You have a democracy in name only. In other words, your politicians become so dependent on sources of money that are outside of the, of their constituents, their district, that really the shots that are being called--you have a, what's the uh, dictionary definition of fascism? It's binding of the power of the state and big business, I believe. I'm not sure of that, but I, I can see a situation where the power of the state is controlled by those groups who, due to their size and the resources at their disposal, and the dependence of government actors on those groups for their job security, renders the electorate vote essentially meaningless. I can see us reaching that point. And that would definitely get me out in the streets.

Despite his view that many people are currently apathetic and politically unaware--a situation he attributes to poor political education, the corrupting influence of campaign contributions and other questionable

political practices, and the development of the US into a "nation of strangers"--Victor retains his faith in representative democracy and believes that an honest government could effectively balance the short-term and long-term public interests. He does think, though, that there isn't much chance of the general public directly initiating significant change through the political system "until you have a generation or two of people that have gone through an educational system in which there has been a stronger, much stronger emphasis on political awareness and participation." Victor's ultimate goal is to affect public policy on these and related issues, through writing, working for a public agency similar to one he once worked for that was investigating corruption, or participating in voluntary groups working on consumer issues. He has worked on several local political campaigns in the past, primarily doing research.

The origin of political corruption and favoritism comes, Victor maintains, from basic self-interest ("When Eve gave Adam the apple I think she tried to sell it to him for a buck twenty-nine; from the word go, that's human nature"). Self-interest, including greed, competition, and the desire for more, is natural and can be positive, but an honest, concerned government uncorrupted by outside financial interests is necessary in order to make sure that needs are met. Defending the social welfare system, Victor makes the point that

most of the abuses that occur in social welfare are not by the recipients, they are by the middlemen, they're by the agencies that are disbursing those funds and the employees that work for those agencies, or the individuals or groups that are delivering the goods or services under a particular social welfare program. A lot of the people complain about the government being involved in social welfare programs are some of the same people who are enjoying the ability to abuse those types of programs. I think it's a legitimate government function to focus on not only satisfying basic needs of those less fortunate in a society but investing in the human capital of the society. I think it's a legitimate function. Who else is going to do it? Certainly not the private sector.

On the one hand, Victor attributes his own political concerns and activities to personal factors rather than to an altruistic concern for the public good; he says he enjoys thinking about politics, and he jokes that he writes letters to newspapers "as therapy" and doesn't even mail all of them. He also refers to his participation in demonstrations against the Vietnam War as having been "more of a social activity for me than it was an intellectual activity." At the same time, however, he does think that for him, working to improve the community is a priority, even as it satisfies his own needs.

At one point, Victor calls the terms liberal and conservative "illusionary," arguing that "you can be a conservative on social issues, uh, you can—I'd say I'm liberal on some issues and conservative on others." If the Gallup Poll asked him, "I'd declare myself as an independent, because I think their variables and their questionnaires are pretty much limited to that. Or leaning to Democrats." At another point: "Well, I take a mish-mash of philosophy and theory and practice from all of the parties, both major and minor"; his view of democracy is

a hodge-podge, it's kind of a mix. But is, is a basic respect there for another person's opinion and the right of that person to express himself and to try to sell those ideas in the marketplace of ideas and persuade people to their side. That's what I think is good about this system.

When I ask how he would characterize his own political affiliation, Victor does not have an immediate, consistent response:

I'm definitely outside of the mainstream. Uh, socialist, you know, democratic socialist, I guess. Um (LONG PAUSE). You know, if we have to label—

Q: Oh, we don't have to label—

A: Generally speaking,

Q: I'm just wondering whether you do.

A: You know, well, I'm outside of the mainstream. It's--I'm a democratic socialist I guess. I believe in in the theory behind democracy. Uh, at the same time I also believe in, in the economic system of capitalism. Uh, and that, that there are inherently conflicts between the two. . . . I'm also out of the mainstream in that I think the whole approach to politics in this country now, the way the game is played, uh, that both . . . main political parties are at fault. And that the, the game that's being played is eroding the system of representative democracy, which isn't a pure system or anything in terms of reality, but that the Democrats and the Republicans and the group supportive of both parties, whether you're talking about business and industry, or unions, or the learned professions, trade associations, right on down the line. That they're all playing this game that is essentially destroying the system of representative democracy. Let's say not destroying it but moving it in a direction that is not, certainly not improving the system. So from that standpoint I'm outside of uh, both main political parties.

Democratic socialism, combined with putting limits on the campaign finance system, would enable government to "represent the public interest better in our legislative process, if we put curbs on the natural inclinations of politicians to, to pursue their own self interest." A democratic socialist representative democracy "where at least 90% of the electorate showed up in each election" would be "my idea of a utopia." We already "have a degree of it now" when social welfare is considered; "I'd like to see a stronger degree of it."

Campaign finance reform and improved political education would be a step in the right direction, allowing the growth of third parties. "I think a two-party system is a, an indication of a stage of democracy that is low in development." Victor voted for Anderson in 1980, and has voted in the past for the Citizens Party's Barry Commoner. "A group I haven't voted for is Libertarians, which I don't agree with their philosophy of having government butt out of economic affairs." (He has not yet provided information about his 1984 vote.)

I gave up my membership in the Democratic Party this year. Just because I was disgusted with the way they're, the directions they're moving in, the way they're set up. . . . Primarily because I think



they're playing the same game as the Republicans, and I don't see a whole heck of a lot of difference between the two. . . . The difference is more rhetoric than substance. Uh, I think the Democrats share with the Republicans the belief that the the US should be involved the way it is around the world, and I disagree with that philosophy.

Although Victor agrees with the social welfare concerns of the Democrats, he says that "at the same time I'm sympathetic to um, some of the concerns of the Republicans and--you know, you have to be concerned with the creation of wealth so that you can share the benefits of, of this wealth." Better distribution of the nation's wealth

is definitely something that should occur to a greater extent. There isn't, no reason why--or for what some would consider a radical proposal. I don't see why there's any reason why anybody should earn more, have disposable income after taxes . . . of more than let's say 300 to 500 thousand dollars a year. If you can't get by on that, you know, to heck with you, there's something wrong with you. And so, you know, anything in excess, tax the hell out of it and redistribute it.

Despite his socialist perspective, Victor expresses interest in eventually becoming an entrepreneur for a period of time, largely because of the challenge. He is confident he would do well. He remains antagonistic toward large corporations, and thinks they should be subject to the greater political controls that would come about if the political system were more honest. He often refers to arguing for his views as "selling in the marketplace of ideas," and he says he is thinking about writing a book on state legislators' campaign contributions--"If they can sell 400,000 books on juggling, there should be a market for this." At the time of the interviews he was a full-time student, living on soon-to-be-depleted money left from his father's estate; several months after graduating he began working in the family business, not yet sure if it was a permanent or temporary prospect. He is active as a volunteer on two local political issues related to political corruption.

Although Victor recognizes that self-interest affects interpretation of "the facts" and results in different philosophies, a situation he thinks demonstrates the need for tolerance and respect for the views of others, he repeatedly emphasizes his belief that political education is crucial and makes it clear that he tries to study things from the wide-ranging perspective of a generalist rather than as a specialist. He says different issues are interconnected and, thus, a multidisciplinary course of study is crucial. He attributes his concern for tolerance at least partly to his religious views. Although he is hazy about his parents' Protestant religious teachings and he and his wife attend an interdenominational church only a couple of times a year, he does think that his political views have been affected by his religious views

in terms of a sense of right and wrong, fair play, of not deliberately, consciously trying to improve my situation at the expense of those who are too stupid or ignorant or. . . . I can get ahead without having to screw somebody else. I hope I can.

Jesus, Victor laughs, "could well have been a democratic socialist."

Left-Male: Completely absorbed in his thesis. The tying in of all political maneuvers and social welfare programs to [campaign contributions] shows narrowing of perception. Contradictions are frequent; states poor are not responsible for their lot but he can accomplish any task. Ideology seems to be a direct contradiction to his articles.

Left-Female: Optimistic view is simplistic and naive. Reasonably intelligent and politically informed. Political pseudo-activist, semi-hypocritical. Slight paranoia towards organized power systems. Generally optimistic attitude towards future.

Right-Male: There seem to be several main themes, [including] disillusionment of people in society, and both a conservative and a liberal view of society. I don't think that [he] is as radical as he thinks he is. He supports individual rights, and wants to combat corruption where he can find it in order to improve democracy.

Right-Female: I think I would like this person, find him pleasant. Isn't too radical or too idealistic. Realistic. I think he is a very insecure person, very concerned about saying the right thing. Self-contradictory; seems to think humans are motivated by self-interest but tries to say he isn't. Optimistic about human nature--

he really believes in people. Likes people and believes in human potential.

## CHAPTER VII

## GENERAL THEMES

The most fundamental and ubiquitous aspect of a human social setting is that of meanings. These are the linguistic categories that make up the participants' view of reality and with which they define their own and others' actions. Meanings are also referred to by social analysts as culture, norms, understandings, social reality, definitions of the situation, typifications, ideology, beliefs, world view, perspective, or stereotypes. Terms such as these share a common focus on a humanly constructed set of concepts which are consciously singled out as important aspects of reality. Meanings are transbehavioral in the sense that they do more than describe behavior--they define, justify, and otherwise interpret behavior as well.

John Lofland and Lynn H. Lofland  
Analyzing Social Settings (1984, pp. 71-72)

For most of the ten individuals who agreed to spend several hours talking to a stranger about their views of the world, working out a meaningful philosophy of life or an all-encompassing political or religious framework is either a current concern or something that has been a major preoccupation in the past. This very concern with the theoretical basis for, and practical implications of, political or religious ideology is one of several general themes that emerged during the interviews.

In Chapters IV and V I discussed the rationale for, and the process of, the qualitative thematic analysis of the voluminous material elicited during the interviews. With over 500 pages of interview transcripts, and the practical limitations of time and energy, it would be impossible to provide a definitive accounting of every general, differentiating, and individual theme. Many themes may in fact remain unidentified, to be described at another time after additional analyses focused on different

areas of interest.

In keeping with the qualitative approach I adopted here, I avoided as much as possible imposing upon the interview material a preestablished analytical framework. I did not use checklists of personality traits to rate each participant's mental health, or particular value inventories, or any of the many other available psychological scales. It is not that such scales would be irrelevant; rather, it was important to allow the participants' concerns to flow more naturally into themes, unconstrained by preconceived categories. I avoided specifying strong hypotheses about the nature of what I was studying, and in fact I was not looking for particular kinds of themes other than in the sense of being interested in the way in which the participants dealt with political issues and the other areas included in the interview guide. I tried to remain open to seeing what was there, in the participants' own terms, in order to come to understand them and their world views better.

The tentative themes that "emerged" gradually on the pages of the Analysis and Observation Notes generally began as comments on participant commonalities that I noticed as the interviews progressed. Only later, when the actual coding of the transcripts began, did I more consciously look for particular thematic elements. Certainly my own views (some of which are discussed in Chapters II and III) affected my interpretation of the material; the fact that I had specifically set out to interview people who were dealing with many issues that were important to me made it likely that the themes I would find would often be relevant to my own life. Whether such a situation is perceived as contamination of the data or as enhanced insight into the participants' perspectives may depend on the theoretical and methodological commitments of the observer. The

situation from my own perspective is mixed, but in any case I do think the evidence for the themes discussed in this chapter and the next is fairly clear.

Relevant here is the point made by Lofland and Lofland (1984, p. 8), who noted that the common connections between a researcher's own life and the material he or she chooses to study "are frequently not publicly acknowledged" because "the norms of scholarship do not require that researchers bare their souls, only their procedure." Lofland and Lofland approve of this tendency to "'make problematic' in our research matters that are problematic in our lives," and they provide a number of examples of research that were enhanced by the researcher's personal involvement with the issues being studied.

In this chapter I describe five general themes and, for each general theme, several related secondary themes that typify all or most of the participants:

1. The Difficulty of Political Self-Definition.
2. The Importance of Looking at Issues in Context.
3. The Rejection of Mainstream Assumptions.
4. The Belief That the United States is a Sick Society.
5. The Desire to Influence Others.

The overlapping nature of the themes makes their order and specific content somewhat arbitrary. It also sometimes requires repetition of specific quoted passages that are relevant to more than one area.

In hindsight at least, the broad outline of these themes is not surprising. Some of the specifics follow from the fact that the participants all consciously made an effort to write letters that publicly identified them with particular stands on controversial issues. This in itself is unusual, considering that "most people care very little about politics" (Flanigan & Zingale, 1979, p. 81). More surprising, perhaps,

are many of the details of the secondary themes and of the themes that differentiate between Individualists and Collectivists (described in the next chapter). It is in fact the exceptions to the general themes--and the breaking of stereotyped categories--that are often most noteworthy.

### General Theme 1:

#### The Difficulty of Political Self-Definition

The participants' difficulty in defining themselves politically was described in detail in the last chapter. None of them find it meaningful to think primarily in terms of the classic liberal-conservative political spectrum, and only Allen, who repeatedly refers to himself as a libertarian, feels fully at ease using a specific label. Interestingly, reacting to the initial description of his views, Allen writes that although he voted the Libertarian Party line in the 1984 election, he is now an anarcho-capitalist who prefers to be considered a "small-l libertarian" (implying the area of philosophy) rather than a Libertarian (implying Libertarian Party membership); in keeping with his anarchist attempt "to abstain from going along and being part of the political process," he will "try" not to vote in the future (which would place him in the estimated six percent of American nonvoters "whose pride it is not to vote" for a variety of ideological and other reasons--Hadley, 1978, p. 41). Thus, even the participant most willing--even eager--to accept a political label continues to clarify the particular nature of that label. Similarly, Timothy writes that "It would probably be more accurate to describe me as a social democrat in domestic affairs rather than as a democratic socialist."

The struggle to arrive at an appropriate label would not be captured by most public opinion polls, which generally find that the majority of

Americans will, when asked, identify both their political party and their place on the liberal-conservative continuum (Flanigan & Zingale, 1979). This point is brought out by several of the participants. Paul, the former member of a revolutionary Communist party, notes that he'd have to tell the Gallup Poll his party affiliation is "other," and others call themselves "independents" when trying to fit themselves into traditional categories. The participants can, for the most part, describe their views fairly comprehensively, but those views are generally marked by a crossing of party lines and of the boundaries between liberal and conservative; any attempt to pin down particular labels is resisted. When the participants do refer to themselves, say, as a liberal or a democratic socialist, sometimes in response to my own direct questions, the label is not used consistently, and is often rejected at another time.

How typical of others this difficulty is remains unclear. Flanigan and Zingale (1979) noted that, despite the ability of most people to categorize themselves when asked, political analysts "invariably impose on the analysis their own version of ideological consistency, which, in light of the ambiguities surrounding the terms [liberal and conservative] is likely to be somewhat artificial" (p. 121). They also concluded that opinion polling, with its typical forced-choice questions, "seriously exaggerates the number of people who hold views on political issues" (p. 99). Among the participants here, however, many views are strongly held, but difficult to classify. Unlike those for whom political labeling is easy but nonconsequential in terms of actual stands on issues (Flanigan & Zingale, p. 122), these participants generally attempt to apply their ideological perspective to policy matters in what seems to them to be a consistent manner. Their efforts to be precise in using labels, thus,



should not be surprising.

### Ambivalent Attraction of the Term "Liberal"

Even the Individualists who argue that liberals as a group are naive, impractical idealists who don't understand human nature often have a positive emotional response to the term "liberal" itself. As is made clear in the last chapter (Table 2), most of the participants use the term to refer to at least part of their political views. Bill, for example, despite his support for many of Reagan's policies, defines himself at one point as a "liberal realist"; he equates liberalism with education and intelligence despite his scorning of liberal naivete. Similarly, David carefully calls himself a "liberal thinking conservative," but he more often simply calls himself a liberal even as he argues against many domestic policies conventionally considered to be liberal; he also refers to Democrats as more "educated and aware" than Republicans, who are "out of touch" on issues such as the ERA, but he says the Republicans are good because they're opposed to socialist Democrats. Christine captures the heart of these distinctions when she says she is liberal politically, but conservative economically.

On the other end of the economic spectrum, as might be expected, the term liberal proves to be more popular, though even there ambivalence is apparent. To some extent, some of the Collectivists see themselves as more radical than liberal, but for the most part the term liberal itself is not totally rejected. Timothy says he is liberal economically and conservative on foreign policy, and that "doctrinaire" liberals and pacifists are naive. The other democratic socialist, Victor, refers to the liberal-conservative distinction as "illusionary" and says he is

liberal on some issues, conservative on others. Scott says liberals are more open-minded and intelligent and describes himself as, among other things, "not conservative" but a "conservative liberal"; he adds that unlike liberals, conservatives have a "healthy skepticism," and that his parents were "conservative but intelligent."

Of the ten participants, only Eve, the born-again Christian who tends to support Republican candidates, sees herself as generally conservative across the board. Still, even she remarks that some other people might consider her liberal in certain areas.

It is possible that the ambivalence about the term liberal could be seen as corresponding to ambivalence about the term conservative, but the tone of the many references to the two makes it clear that such is not the case. Except for Eve, participants on both sides of the economic spectrum seem to equate conservatism with narrowmindedness on social issues, and that evaluation colors the reaction to the term even for those whose economic views are admittedly conservative. It is the term liberal, with its connotation for the participants of intelligence and education, that even the anti-welfare Individualists seek to hold on to as much as possible; those on the left, who might be expected to accept the term, still view it with less than complete approval.

#### Circuitous Reasoning on Voting Decisions

Participant dissatisfaction with the liberal-conservative spectrum and with the American two-party system is reflected in their voting decisions. All have voted in the past and all except Allen plan to vote in the future. Enthusiasm for their choices, though, is markedly absent.

In the 1980 presidential election, five of the participants voted for the Independent, John Anderson. Four are on the right side of the

economic spectrum: Allen (before he had come to accept libertarianism), Christine (who likes the Libertarians but says they are too extreme), David (who chose Anderson as the "least objectionable" choice and voted for Reagan on the same basis in 1984), and Eve (who was at the time disillusioned with both Reagan and Carter). The fifth Anderson vote came from Victor, who has voted in the past for the Citizens Party's Barry Commoner and who specifically mentions the Libertarians as a party he disagrees with.

Reagan and Carter each received two participant votes from the left side of the economic spectrum. Timothy says he has a general pattern of voting for Democratic congressional candidates and Republican presidents, though he often breaks the pattern (as by voting, after Eisenhower and before Ford, for Kennedy, Johnson, Humphrey, and McGovern); Timothy voted for Reagan in 1980 because he felt Anderson "didn't really have a chance" and Carter was too "weak" on foreign policy (and he voted for Reagan again in 1984 for similar reasons). Paul also voted for Reagan in 1980 in an effort to "create a situation in which . . . things would be clearer." Carter's two votes came from Roberta, who didn't think her first choice, Commoner, had a chance, and from Scott, who worked for Carter's election despite a general yearning for a viable democratic socialist party.

The final participant, the "liberal realist" Bill, least political of the participants, says he isn't sure who he voted for in 1980, but suspects it was for a friend, as a joke, because he "couldn't bring himself" to vote for Reagan or for Carter. In 1984, he was out of the state and did not vote.

These brief descriptions, and the details presented in Chapter VI,

make it clear that the participants are far from party-line voters. Their voting decisions, arrived at in idiosyncratic, circuitous fashion, make sense when explained, but they could not always be predicted in advance. (Perhaps the best example of this is Timothy's 1972 decision to vote for McGovern, whose domestic policy he liked but whose foreign policy he strongly opposed; Timothy notes that if he had thought McGovern actually had a chance of winning, he might not have voted at all). The implication seems to be that, although "the central focus of research on American political behavior is vote choice, especially presidential vote choice" (Flanigan & Zingale, 1979, p. 127), such a focus might not be the most useful one in trying to understand the nature of political ideology.

#### A Note on Religious Self-Definition

Only for four of the participants does the difficulty with political labels parallel to some degree a rejection of religious labels, though even for these four the difficulty is not as great. Eve, for example, accepts the terms "fundamentalist" and "born-again" cautiously, despite her membership in a campus fundamentalist group; she is very clear, however, about being a Christian. Roberta is "not necessarily" a Christian and mistrusts organized religion, but considers herself religious and "spiritually" a pagan. Allen says it is "hard to say" if he is Jewish because "I'm not of the Jewish faith" and no longer believes in God, but "I do kind of feel a part of my identity is with that set of people"; two years later, however, he writes that "I'm not Jewish, I'm from a Jewish background. . . . It would be more accurate to consider me (now and when we talked) an agnostic or atheist (probably the second)." Victor considers himself "a religious person," but "I wouldn't label

myself" and "I would not align myself with any one particular religion" despite occasional attendance at an interdenominational Christian church.

The remaining participants show even less difficulty with religious labels. Timothy comfortably identifies himself as a Catholic, and often refers to religious issues and perspectives. Christine has lost her literal belief in the Bible but she does believe Jesus was the son of God and she attends church "about every other Sunday." Paul is clear about being a "former" Catholic for whom the existence of God has "become a pretty unimportant question"; similarly, despite considering himself a "confused agnostic," Bill "would say I definitely don't have a religion," and he doesn't "think about it all that much." Paul and Bill each remark that religious questions might become important for them in the future, but each is comfortable with his current lack of interest. Finally, David is a "free-thinking, existentialist agnostic if that's possible, but essentially I'm an atheist" who fairly regularly attends a non-Christian "humanist church."

### General Theme 2:

#### The Importance of Looking at Issues in Context

With differing focuses and degrees of emphasis, each participant insists that political issues are more complicated than most people think, and that they can be understood correctly only by taking into account the historical and cultural context from a broadranging perspective. The participants believe that, for a variety of reasons, they have been able to avoid the incorrect or oversimplified analyses of many other people, and although they acknowledge that they can't possibly know everything and that they might be wrong, they are confident that their views are supported by the evidence rather than merely by tradition,

faith, or personal values. This theme has several components.

### Complexity of Political Issues

Directly and indirectly, the participants emphasize that the complex nature of political issues cannot be understood in simple terms. A number of seemingly different issues are often related, and political issues, thus, must be understood as a whole system, not in isolated parts. Some argue that only a well-developed ideological perspective can account for a wide variety of factors.

When asked about the need for competition in producing technological advances, Victor responds by saying:

I don't think you can--You can't speak in, you can't address these matters in terms of yes or no. . . . It's a matter of degree. Uh, you know, the easy thing to say is that Yeah, I think we need more cooperation, in that sense. But at the same time we need competition as well. I, ec, economic competition I think can be good, but it also produces excesses that definitely aren't good.

Similarly, in discussing US policy in Central America, Victor notes:

If you get a communist government, well, okay. You know, a communist government, that could mean a whole heck of a lot of things. It's not necessarily--you may have certain aspects of it that is communist, but the distinctions aren't that cut and dry.

Paul is most explicit about the importance of escaping simplistic approaches:

My sense of history is that . . . nothing can be understood in isolation. Whether it be the political system, or the economic system, or individuals within that. We are, we're all operating within a much larger unit. . . . Reagan's economic policies, his political policies--those are not, they didn't happen when Reagan came to power two years ago, and you can't understand what he's doing now, or what anybody's doing now, without looking at a much much larger span of time. I mean, that doesn't mean going back, you know, to 1970 or 1960 or anything like that. It means really trying to understand a much broader sweep of history. Uh, and I think one of the things that really irks me, if that's a good word, is the way people misuse history. Uh, too often they'll take an incident and they'll try and draw a lesson from it without any attempt to understand the larger context. And when it's misused, I think it can be

a very very dangerous weapon. I think Reagan, in my mind, is one of the quintessential examples of someone who has misused history to the point that it really has become an art, for him, and because most people I think in this country are fairly ahistorical, they really don't know their history, they don't know history period, he can get up there and say what he wants and they believe him. . . . And if you don't have the time or the effort or the energy or the desire to figure it out, you more or less are left with either believing or not believing.

"It's very easy just to try and see the world in black and white terms," notes Paul in a typical comment. "I like to think that the world is mostly gray, with very little black and white in it." At another point, he reiterates that "The American people, I think, have a real knack for seeing things in black and white, and ignoring a lot of gray":

It makes the world a whole lot easier to live in, if you see black and white and you don't have to think about things in life, instead of trying to figure them out. And you, I think you can create a world view that's just a lot easier to live with if you divide the world into good and evil, and black and white. So, I think most people do.

Still another time, he says that

I do think everything's connected. . . . I think that identifies me, or that's the way I identified, a Communist analysis of things is that you can't really separate out and take care of problems as though they were discrete or isolated phenomenon. It doesn't work that way. . . . You work with organizations and people who are interested in those isolated problems, and by working with them and supporting them, hopefully you can draw for them the connections between the environment and American capitalism, or between South African apartheid and the world economic and political structure, something like that. Um, but, you know I don't believe that if you get all the people in the US to somehow support the nuclear freeze, and do that in isolation to the causes behind the US and the Soviet Union building arsenals and weapons, I mean not--It's like putting a bandaid on something, it's treating it as, treating the symptoms, not the disease, I guess. It isn't going to work. The problem's still gonna be there. So the, you know, any sorts of solutions that I see are very broad, sweeping solutions. . . . There are no easy solutions.

Disagreeing with Paul's Marxist politics, but agreeing with his view that "Everything's connected," is the libertarian Allen, whose own views rival Paul's in their systematic nature. For Allen,

I think the facts are definitely there. It's just a matter of, more than anything else, of education. . . . What I have that carries me through the most, is kind of a viewpoint--It's like a place to stand in which to view current events. . . . I'm showing a different point and saying, Well, whenever government does something like that, the result is a higher inflation, you know, the government steps in with higher wage and price controls, jack up inflation. And you know, I think it's a matter of education that there is a consistent theoretical interpretation of current events that leads one to this anti-power sort of line, and the more people see that there is that alternative, that the range that they think is enormous between liberal and conservative, that's the first step towards . . . considering how true that is.

At another point, Allen says that

By trying to argue with people, trying to convince them, it's not--I don't feel it's like converting them to something, you know, trying to force a viewpoint on them. But I really see it as I'm trying to show them that this is a viewpoint that's got integrity. You know, it's self-consistent and it explains a lot of things that people just take for granted, but that they're just not really willing to see that, how connected it is and unified it is.

Allen links his view of common personal problems in this country to his libertarian analysis:

Sort of the feeling of a lack of power in one's life. You know, depressed self-esteem. Less than the usual self-esteem, there's lots of depression. Um, I think that, if not the major problem, they'll be the root causes of, or the basic symptoms of, the problems that most people have. And those are really linked to the idea of individual autonomy and the ability of an individual to have an effect on the world and be able to change something, . . . to run a life for himself and make a success of his own life according to his talents and abilities. And that's something that's always being denied and you're told, you know, that you shouldn't be thinking of yourself, you know, that's selfish, that um, you know, we're all helpless here, we're all going to die anyway so what's the use of trying. And it's part of that . . . that this is kind of mental illness that's caused by being stunted back from the idea of human efficacy and from not being free to live a life according to what you think is important.

For the retired history professor, Timothy, world problems are "so complicated" that their solution requires "balance" and moderation and the avoidance of "doctrinaire extremes." John Kennedy, for example, "could think things through and reverse himself, if he had to, without floundering around as often as" Jimmy Carter, who "had no sense of



correction." "There are gradations" among Communist governments--"I don't think you can blanketly condemn all Communists, by any means"--but

I think the Marxian dialectic has certain fascination . . . from an oversimplified, simplistic thing can--Not too-well-educated people can think they have all the answers. . . . The intricacies in the Marxian dialectic are quite fascinating to other people. . . . The so-called Marxian blinders that some people have--because they are so fascinated with the dialectic, and no matter what Communist regimes do, and I don't know how many tens of millions they kill, and how brutally they crack down on their own people, can't stand any dissent--why they think, you know, Oh well, somehow, it'll all--when they get more Communist countries, why they'll be fine.

"Simplistic" is a term Bill also uses, when referring to "idealists" and liberals who "look for a quick and easy cure" to complex problems:

A lot of people talk without thinking, and they don't really think through everything that could happen. And they may be right. But, I don't know, a lot of people just don't seem to really think through, you know. They'll say something like that, and then if you start talking to them about it, they they aren't really sure what they would do in this situation or that situation, or what this effect would be.

### Search for Multidisciplinary Knowledge

For many of the participants, the belief that issues are complex is related to their interest in obtaining broad-based, multidisciplinary knowledge. Many have taken a variety of college courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, sometimes combining majors in two or three fields. Victor notes that he spent

an awful lot of time studying that stuff. You're trying to study it, trying to learn about it, which is good and bad. I try to be a generalist, and I've done that in my approach to education. That's why I'm multidisciplinary in the social sciences. . . . I see too many specialists and not enough people that can make connections. And, and in my study of political issues I try and know about defense, about foreign policy, about domestic economic policy, about union issues, about business concerns, environmental concerns. You know, I like it all, but I can hardly be an expert.

Victor says that "I've been fortunate to be in a position where I can devote time to considering such problems," and he later continues:

In my understanding of political issues I try and look at it as broadly as I can. You know, the pluses and the minuses, what are all the variables that are involved in a particular problem. And I certainly can't do justice to that. I'm not capable of doing justice to that, but I try. I think that's the whole reason [for] the approach to education that I have, which is more of a generalist orientation than a specialist orientation. So I can see the interconnectedness between different things.

For Allen, "one of the things I was coming to college for, one of the things I wanted to learn so much for was . . . to find out exactly where I fit and if there was a framework for these rag-tag collection of truths that I held." Allen also went out of his way to take courses in a number of areas, and he notes that "school's more to train you more how to find knowledge than to actually cram your head full of facts that will carry you through the rest of your life."

Roberta, after becoming active in opposition to US involvement in Central America, told me several months after the interviews that she did a lot of reading in the interim, and that her knowledge of the issues had increased. The search for knowledge, thus, takes place outside of school as well, in continuous reading and in seeking a variety of news sources and political analyses. Timothy, for example, discusses the importance of "following news, current events, whatever you want to call it, rather closely all the time," and he says

I used to read Time Magazine quite a lot. I haven't frequently, except sporadically recently. I read the State Journal quite carefully. Uh, Washington Post I follow, at least the editorial, Op-Ed pages quite carefully. Some of the New York Times I see occasionally. I like to follow what's in Harpers, Atlantic Monthly, uh, the Nation for a fairly far left point of view, and National Review on the right. And uh, occasionally Commentary, sometimes Commonweal.

Q: Do you have subscriptions to these?

A: No, I use the MSU library quite a bit, and the East Lansing library, too.

Q: Do you get any professional journals?

A: I used to belong to both the American Historical Association and the American Political Science Association. The last several years I haven't kept that up. Again, I can usually read their periodicals, I follow those too.

Timothy adds that he regularly listens to the morning news on National Public Radio and the afternoon news when he has the time, as well as Washington Week in Review and Wall Street Week on public television. He also sometimes attends lectures and films put on by groups he disagrees with--for example, a film on Latin America "put out by the Maryknoll, and some of them are into this liberation theology, and cooperating with the extreme left." Timothy's attempts to keep up with current events are matched by many of the other participants, who similarly read a number of newspapers, cite many books, listen to National Public Radio, and so on.

#### Confidence in Own Analytical Ability

The participants' recognition that broad knowledge is necessary in order to understand complex political issues is often accompanied by the acknowledgment that, for one reason or another, their own analyses might be wrong. In general, however, they are satisfied with their ability to sift through complicated issues and arrive at rational conclusions, an ability that some of them think is better than the ability of many others to do the same. For the most part they are, or have been in the past, high academic achievers who have won national essay contests, made Phi Beta Kappa and other honor lists, or risen to similar academic heights. Although they see themselves as different from others in several ways, they do vary in identifying the source of that "differentness."

David, for example, after praising Ayn Rand's individualist philosophy and speaking admirably of her "brilliant mind" and the fact that "she was just so far over the heads" of people questioning her, went on

to indicate where he disagreed with her:

She was so cut and dried. . . . If that's the way it is, then that's the way it is. Well, it's not always that's the way it is. People are always punching out new understandings. I think we have to deal with new truths when they come along. What is true today might not be true five years from now. . . . And because that's true, because that's a reality, then I think any and all of us have to be more flexible, we have to be flexible with the changing reality of that truth. . . . And I'm more able to change with that, I think. And I don't think she was as able to accept the changes.

Rationality, "dealing with reality," is crucial for David. An agnostic, he notes that "intelligent people [who] continue to believe in God . . . just don't want to deal with reality. They just do not or can not or won't deal with reality." He concludes: "That's a real conundrum, as far as I'm concerned. Why anyone with a brain would believe in God." Occasionally, he does indicate "I don't know" in response to a question, but he resists it; when asked about what the US role in Central America should be, he responds:

Oh boy, you're getting into sticky questions. That's really sticky. I don't know what's going on down there. I just don't know. I've read everything I could read, and I don't know. I don't even know who's right and who's wrong. . . . I guess in the final analysis I, . I just don't know. It's too frustrating. . . . Man, I hate to equivocate, but I just do not know!

David acknowledges that those well-educated people who disagree with his views

don't see the same thing that I do. Their experiences wouldn't be the same as mine. Uh, you know, I may not be right on all of this, I may be off the wall. That's always possible. . . . I accept what I see as logically feasible, that is, that has merit. That is something that is balanced. Then I incorporate it into my system. If it doesn't work, I toss it. And so if it doesn't, if somebody comes up with a different idea, that doesn't agree with that, well they're probably just as right as I am. It's all, again, just an opinion.

A few minutes later, however:

Whoever and how intelligent are they, people that have argued with me? I find as many holes in their arguments, and I've backed them down into their holes and I say hold it. And I finally get them to

agree with me simply because I've rationally backed them down to having to deal with what is real first.

David typically is definite in his responses, and repeats that "it's very difficult" to make people who have "failed to deal with reality" understand his perspective. He discusses a woman who disagreed with his view that abortion "is a fact of life" and should be legal and safe in order to avoid a return to the dangers of illegal abortions:

Can anyone deny that simple fact? As long as they possess a rational mind, no matter what their education, or political or religious beliefs? How can they deny it? I mean, how? And this lady. . . . says it's against God. I said, I know it's against God for you, I said, but the fact is, and I--I'm sorry it's against God, and Jesus Christ! She's not dealing with reality. . . . As long as a person will not deal with reality, there's no way. I cannot convince them. You can't change their mind, you can't talk to them.

Q: What makes people differ in how well they can deal with reality? Why do some people do that better than others?

A: I think it's brains. I think it gets down to pure IQ. Mentality, mental--brains.

Q: Yeah, but there are a whole lot of people with high IQs who believe in God, and work against abortions, and believe in a whole lot of other things that you don't.

A. That is something I can't answer. That's the mega-conundrum again. I cannot, I really feel that people who have that kind of brain power, who sit around and, you know, go against just total deductive reality such as abortion. . . . Those people are not dealing with reality. . . . That to me is an avoidance of reality.

David refers to women on welfare who do not use birth control "because they don't have enough brains, they don't have the education, they don't have the understanding, the self-awareness." He attributes many problems to the fact that "this country has an eighth grade reading level. . . . And so with that you have all these people that are trying to deal with all these things that are so far over their heads." He himself has escaped many common problems

simply because I was brought up by two good parents. Two great parents gave me very strong values and self--My mother mothered the

hell out of us kids. . . . They taught us right and wrong. Simple right and wrong to them. . . . We all had pretty good innate intelligence and we just took it because of the drive we, the self-confidence and whatever it brought us, we were given by our parents.

David's views and tone are generally matched by Bill, who also refers to knowledge gained in "the real world" and says that "most people don't think enough. . . . They just kinda act on instinct, don't really look at the situation," and to a lesser extent by Christine, who says "there are very few things that make me madder than stupidity." Chris discounts the ability of "the general population" to "get it through their heads" that overpopulation and resource scarcity are serious problems; she says "I like to think I'm more tolerant [than people who disagree with her], but that may or may not be true (LAUGH)":

Well, I know I'm more tolerant than my parents (LAUGH). Uh, I don't try to judge people, and I'm an optimist and I always like to think the best of people. Even when it turns out in the end that I shouldn't have. So, I think that makes me little bit more tolerant of other people, being willing to look inside first.

Q: Well, what makes you like that? I mean, why are you like that more than other people?

A: Oh, partly because I'm proved right more often than I'm proved wrong.

As for Bill, "I like to think that I sit down and evaluate things." "I think that most views that I have I've kinda sifted around and figured out for myself." His political views would be more popular, he believes,

if a lot more people thought about what was going on. . . . People aren't really thinking things through any more, forming their own opinions. They're just kind of taking the popular opinion and running with it, and not really thinking about it.

Bill can figure things out better than most, he says, because

truthfully, I think I have a lot more insight than a lot of people. And I don't know if that comes from just basic intelligence, you know, that you're born with, or uh--I think my parents did a pretty good job as far as instilling a few values in me and making me look at things like that. But um, I don't know . . . if that's something that people can learn, to empathize and to have insight . . . or if

it's something that'll never change.

Intertwined with his strong statements are frequent references to his own uncertainty. For example, when asked how the formation of his own opinions differs from that of others, Bill says:

I'd like to think that I read things and I analyze things, not really in-depth analysis, but run things through my head. And I think--and I don't say it very often, because uh, you know, it's not the popular opinion these days, but I kinda like the way Ronald Reagan is going right now. And I haven't read enough about it to really know. But I think there are, something had to be changed, in the way that things were being run. . . . And he's doing something different. And it may be wrong, and it may prove to be wrong . . . but I think that something different had to be done.

The rest of the participants generally share the view that their own ideologies are a result of their analysis of relevant material, but they are not as likely as David, Christine, and Bill (three of the four Individualists) to abruptly dismiss the rational abilities of those who disagree. Paul, for example, says about his first-year undergraduate students that "I know a lot more than they do, and yet I know very, very little"; although he doesn't see too many students questioning things, he thinks there are situational reasons for that:

This is a . . . fairly typical university campus. You know, its students, its student body almost by definition is pretty wealthy, because they're here paying tuition, or at least their parents got them here to pay tuition. It's, you know, a very comfortable life. I mean, I doubt that most of these people on this campus have ever been in downtown Lansing and have the slightest idea what, um, what the life is, uh, of a working class family. The daily life of a student in this county is so different, so foreign to what their life is gonna be afterwards that they are just not political about those kinds of issues.

Paul frequently begins responding to questions with variations of "Oh, boy, this is where I wish I had my anthropology background" and "I dunno . . . there are a lot of reasons, and I don't profess to understand even most of them." Asked near the end of the last interview if some of the things we had talked about were difficult or confusing, he says:

Well, it's been--It's difficult in the sense that, I'm not nearly as clear on what I believe and, and the concreteness of what I'd like to see, as I'd like to be. Um, I don't know if that reflects a lack of really thinking about it, or a lack of understanding, or an underlying confusion. Um, you know, I would like, I would like to be clearer in my own mind about a lot of things, but, um--and part of that I'd simply chalk up to this notion that I have that there really is a lot of gray in the world, and there is a lot of confusion, and it is hard to figure things out. And, I can live with, I can live with uncertainty and with not being able to figure it out completely, right now at least. And maybe the knowledge that I ever will. But . . . you have to try and understand, and sometimes the process and the struggle to do that is more important than the end result of, of actually coming to a, a perfect understanding of the world.

Although "I don't know if I want to believe that or not," Paul does acknowledge that there "does seem to [be] a measure of truth" to the view that "you tend to see or reinforce what you already believe" when you examine "the facts":

I do think that that you, you cannot be an unbiased observer. You bring to your evidence, or you bring to your subject everything that you are and everything you ever heard and everything you ever believed and everything you've ever been taught. I think the most that you can strive for is to try to be as fair as you can with your evidence. But I think there's a difference between being fair and being critical, and being unbiased. . . . Somebody that has a different political orientation than I do is gonna look at the world right now and is gonna see different enemies and different evils that I do. Um, and they're gonna be able to come up with, you know, a whole array of arguments just the way I might, to try and argue their case.

Paul's realization that his ideology might be affected by his own biases does not prevent him from strongly advocating his views. When asked about Libertarians and others who question the status quo from a different (nonMarxist) direction, he says:

My sense of the Libertarians is pretty limited, but when I think of them, I think of a group that really--the reason that notion of complete laissez-faire capitalism, no constraints on the individual, very minimal government intervention in any forms of society, um--They, I think, have a very, very poor understanding of history. They're talking about, and they base their arguments on, a historical situation that never existed. . . . When they talk about turning the clock back and getting back to some of these things, that's



where I see the similarity between them and the fundamentalists. Because the fundamentalists are always arguing about, you know, let's turn the clock back, get back to a time when, you know, family-oriented morals and ta-ta-ta-ta-ta. And that never existed either.

A few minutes later:

I think early on you can . . . condition people to be questioning or accepting or, you know, open to new ideas. Or you can really turn them into people who are narrow-minded and don't, don't allow themselves to be open. . . . Look for crutches, look for things to lean on. That's . . . always my analysis of, you know, people that are very religious, or people that are fundamentalists or libertarians, fundamentalists especially though. I think they really need a crutch to get through life. They need someone to tell them how to think and what to think, and what to like and what not to like, so they don't have to do that stuff for themselves.

As might be expected, the libertarian and the fundamentalist among the participants don't agree with Paul's interpretation of their possible motivations. Allen says that "What I seem to find is that it takes a pretty, you know, a very well-opened mind to really consider the things I say," since "this idea of, you know, individualism--and an extreme form of it--is something that they just haven't encountered, and it really runs counter to the standard wisdom." For too many people, "it's like skimming over the respective philosophy I'm offering with an eye toward picking up flaws and discarding it, you know, but . . . a more healthy person wouldn't be doing that." "I would call it just like a stubborn refusal to understand."

Unlike Allen, who makes very few references to uncertainty or lack of knowledge, Eve makes many, primarily in terms of her "generally conservative" politics but also in terms of the details of her born-again Christianity. She says that even born-again Christians disagree among themselves about political issues, and that "I don't know, we're probably all wrong in some ways." The campus fundamentalist group to which she belongs does encourage debate about political issues related to religious

beliefs, such as capital punishment.

Despite her reluctance to claim total knowledge, Eve insists that her Christianity is a matter not just of a "blind leap of faith" but of analysis. "Jesus Christ claimed to be God, and he proved it by a lot of different things, but one of them was the Resurrection, and there's a lot of historical proofs for the Resurrection." "I mean, if the Resurrection had never occurred, I don't think I could believe anything. But I believe, um--And so that, I think, it's based on history." Eve thinks "intellectual students" should read C. S. Lewis's (1952) Mere Christianity and analyze Christian beliefs, approaching Jesus through the powers of reason, as she says she did when she took part in a Bible study group.

When I ask why some people who read and analyze the Bible don't end up believing it, Eve responds:

Um, gee, I don't know (LAUGH) if I'm making a huge presumption, but I would have to say that the people, that I think there's probably something preventing them--well, that makes sense, preventing them from believing in it.

Q: What would do that?

A: I don't know. It would probably be um, ah--Um, I know in like my own life, pride. Fear, fear of like social pressures, things like that. Um, fear of physical injury or something like that. . . . A lot of rational or irrational ideas. I guess rational in that there might be something really to fear, like social pressure. But I think that really knowing God, that would change it.

The remainder of the participants exhibit the same confidence in their analytical ability despite acknowledgment of possible error. Scott refers to the effect his parents' approval of dissent and nonconformity had on his views about life, and reluctantly admits he sometimes thought of himself as more intelligent than other people, though "I don't usually let myself think that." Victor too attributes his interest in "improving the community" to parental influence, and although he says "I'm willing

to admit" that he might be wrong in his views, most people "tend to accept things without questioning them, and I've been amazed that I got to that point where I like to question professors rather than just accept what they say." Roberta, who thinks she is more open-minded and trusting than most people, remembers a school project she did as a child that involved creating a model of a utopian community much different from the suburban visions of her schoolmates. Asked how he differs from people who disagree with him, Timothy laughingly jokes (much as do several other participants at similar times), "Well, other than the fact that I'm right and they're wrong?" He asserts that he is probably self-contradictory, and repeatedly refers to the "doctrinaire approach" of many others, echoing David, Bill, and Paul by arguing that "I think you have to go by how it works" in looking at different political systems; for Timothy, unlike these others, such an approach clearly supports the virtues of "those smaller advanced countries such as Switzerland, the low countries, Scandinavian countries."

#### Interview Process as Self-Clarification

For a variety of reasons, every one of the participants indicates a great deal of satisfaction with having taken part in the interviews, both at the time of the interviews and, for those who responded to the preliminary material they were sent, in letters up to two years later. All say they found the interviews to be interesting and enjoyable (or as Christine and David each put it, "fun"), and they uniformly express interest in follow-up interviews and in eventually seeing the results of the study. Some admit they appreciate the chance to "emote" (David) or the opportunity to "disseminate" their views (Allen) or serve in part as a "representative" of their perspective (Eve). Most apparent, however, is

the degree to which the interviews are seen by the participants as an opportunity to further examine their own ideologies.

Victor's remarks are fairly typical. He wonders at the beginning of the second interview if his comments the week before "sounded logical."

At the end of the final interview, I ask why he had agreed to take part:

Well, I figured if anybody was willing to sit and listen to me talk for hours on end, I would be more than willing to put the perhaps-unfortunate person through the experience. And it's good for me. It's good for me in trying to enunciate things that are difficult for me to enunciate, trying to focus, trying to move from one area to another or see connections between different areas is difficult for me. . . .

Q: Has it generally been easy or difficult to talk about the things we've been talking about?

A: Well, it's been easy for me to talk about a wide variety of things. Difficult for me to be satisfied with my ability to adequately or clearly enunciate my opinions on things we've talked about.

Q: Do you think you've generally done that?

A: So-so, so-so. Covering such a wide area of stuff. No, I'm not completely satisfied. Just because I know my opinions, my ideas, are imperfect. . . .

Q: Has the interview process at all made you reconsider anything that you believed, or think about things in a different way?

A: I don't know. I think it's made me more conscious of adequately explaining my beliefs, how I feel about certain things. It's made me even question my ability to adequately communicate.

Q: What do you think I should do differently with other people I talk to?

A: I don't know if, I don't think I can offer any advice on that because I'm sure you go about these individual interviews depend on the individual that you are interviewing, to a large extent. Uh, you know, getting people to explain themselves is about the only thing you can do, and you have done that with me in terms of moving from broad concerns, speaking of, well, this is in the public interest, government should do this because. Well, we've gotten down to the individual level. . . . I think that's really good. And I think you get people that hold misconceptions or beliefs based on myths that will force them to explain why they hold certain beliefs, in things like blaming our economic problems on the laziness and cor-

ruptness of welfare recipients. . . .

For Christine, who says "I've never been really good at talking about myself, so yeah, there were parts of it that were difficult," the interviews covered ground that "I never had to verbalize opinions about" before. The interviews "forced me to really think about how I feel about things"; she suggests organizing a group discussion for the participants "to bounce ideas off each other," something that is useful "to develop the mind." Scott, who says he took part out of curiosity, interest in the topic, and "probably a certain amount of being flattered," also says that there were "parts that made me think; your questions are questions I don't usually ask myself." Being curious and flattered are similarly mentioned by Bill, who says "I think I learned from sitting here verbalizing a lot of these things," particularly in areas "maybe that I hadn't tied together" previously.

Self-clarification is also noted by Eve: "That was one of the reasons I wanted to talk to you, and just to get my own ideas clear, more clear." Similarly, Timothy brings to the third interview clarifying notes about historical points from the previous week. David says that, besides being "fun to express myself," "also it's healthy. I saw some things as I went along this interview. I brought some stuff up that I haven't said before within myself. I'm pleased with that."

Paul and Allen, the participants with the most systematic political ideologies, find the interviews useful in similar ways. For Allen, "one of the things I appreciate about the opportunity to sit and be interviewed like this is the chance to go over areas that I haven't really rethought, and make sure that we cover areas that I hadn't thought to reconsider." At another time, he says:

It seemed to me an opportunity to go over more systematically my thoughts and maybe uncover shaky areas around the edges that I hadn't really thought about, and while I'm still coasting along on my assumptions, you know, or a chance to spot things that I had to work out more fully.

Q: Have you been able to accomplish that?

A: Yeah, I think so. I mean since we were talking the last time about freedom for El Salvador and what are the things I feel about that, I've been able to think about that more and really throw my lot on one side, which is always a tentative evaluation.

Allen also says that questions about the kind of life he would lead in a libertarian society and about the nature of pre-literate hunter-gatherer bands are questions "I never really thought about" before in detail.

Paul jokingly likens the interviews to his doctoral orals, saying at one point that "these are not easy questions, are they?" He notes that "we're cutting across some pretty deep issues at a fast clip"; although public opinion polling "doesn't allow you to talk about the issues fully as I think, not the way we've talked," he also says laughingly that even the interviews are "a lot more superficial" than they should be to fully cover the material, even though "I don't have the knowledge to go into them" completely. Occasional questions (such as about his perceptions of hunter-gatherers) "I had simply never thought about before"; others are difficult to answer,

in the sense that I'm not nearly as clear on what I believe and, and the concreteness of what I'd like to see as I'd like to be. Um, I don't know if that reflects a lack of really thinking about it, or a lack of understanding, or an underlying confusion.

Paul mentions at the beginning of the second interview that the first interview made him realize how he needs to go into some of the issues more deeply on his own. As for the interviews as a whole,

It's always useful, I think, to try and figure out what you think and what you believe and why you believe it. Um, it's sort of like a, sort of the same sort of process as when you try and write something. Oftentimes when you try and articulate it, it becomes

clear, or you realize that it's not clear. And that's reasonable, too. So I, you know, I think in that sense it's, it's helpful.

Q: Are you pretty much satisfied with having gotten across the things that you do believe?

A: Yeah, I think so. Although I, I am anxious to see what I've actually said when it's typed out, to see if I, if what I said is really what I'm trying to say.

### General Theme 3:

#### The Rejection of Mainstream Assumptions

The third general theme, the rejection of mainstream assumptions, is an outgrowth of the second, the importance of looking at issues in context. It would certainly be possible to look at issues in context and conclude that the American mainstream's dominant ideology is the correct one. This is not the conclusion reached by most of the participants, however, who believe that they strongly reject at least some of--and sometimes a major portion of--what they see as the basic assumptions of the majority of Americans. That the participants disagree among themselves in the details of their world views has already been made clear; what they share is their rejection of the status quo as they see it.

This rejection of the mainstream holds true not only for political views, but sometimes for religious and other views as well. Thus Eve, despite her moderately conservative Republican politics, knows that her belief in born-again Christianity is not typical of her student peers, most of whom "weren't really sure" they would go to heaven; "most people, even if they consider themselves a Christian, aren't maybe what the Bible calls a Christian. . . . They really don't know what the Bible calls a Christian." Scott recognizes the nonmainstream character of his Buddhist beliefs, and Roberta modifies her statement that she is "culturally" a Christian by saying that she's "spiritually a pagan."

The political status quo is rejected explicitly by a number of participants. Considering the capitalist ideology dominant in the United States, it makes sense that those who are most critical of individualism and capitalism are in general most aware of their distance from the mainstream. Scott's socialist sympathies and his blend of personal anarchy and Buddhist philosophy is one clear example; Paul's Marxist ideology is another: "What I see as the main difference between me and others is that I think I've taken one more step than a lot of people, and that is to not accept the status quo." Victor immediately characterizes his politics, when asked, as "definitely out of the mainstream" before he grapples with more specific labels, and he finally repeats that "I'm outside of, uh, both main political parties."

Similarly, Timothy, who says that perhaps he just acts "against the prevailing view," considers "most people in general," as well as most political leaders, to be "too doctrinaire."

I think it is a case of them being either conservative in foreign and domestic, or liberal in foreign and domestic. I think it is that the more or less doctrinaire liberal and conservative, you know, goes along with one party or another.

Roberta, who even as a child had views unlike her peers and felt herself to be "different from a lot of people," says she joined her anti-intervention group because she felt her views on El Salvador are "probably not [typical of] most people in the US" and she wanted to "educate more people about what's going on." She is "probably more often in the minority" than in the majority on public opinion polls, but "it makes me feel good" when she does find herself in the majority, even though "I don't look at those [polls] as extremely meaningful." Roberta considers her "humanistic views, feeling so strongly about the altruistic sort of



thing," to be a "big difference" between her and other people, and she says, about the role of governments,

I have certain opinions about how it should go which are different from most people, and I don't think I can define what the government has the right to do and what it doesn't have the right to do. . . . Can only be democratically decided, the majority can decide that, but in a country this big with so many kinds of people and so many different kinds of interests, that usually isn't the way things are decided usually, so it's not as democratic as it is in smaller places.

Among three of the participants supportive of capitalism, there is less of a subjective feeling of being out of the political mainstream, but much more of a sense that their own ability to analyze issues is not shared by the general public. Bill, Christine, and David all question the intelligence and rationality of those with whom they disagree, and they often apply disparaging labels to people in general. Bill and Christine, however, do see themselves as "usually" in the majority in public opinion polls--"on about a 60-40 distribution," says Christine; Bill is "not a big believer in polls anyway" and believes that the polling agencies "know what they want to hear, and they know how to word it to find out what they want to hear." David says he "can't tell" how often he's in the majority or minority, and adds that he too doesn't think the polls have much validity. Despite the fact that they view themselves as not always that different from the majority, their political views, voting histories, and characterizations of the general public do make their perceived placement in the mainstream somewhat inaccurate.

Allen does consider his libertarian views to be clearly out of the mainstream, a mainstream that he sees as "really amazingly cohesive. You know, it's a pretty narrow band when you consider the whole spectrum of political ideas." Allen, who like Roberta says "I've always felt that I'm different . . . from people" in terms of his interests, usually

identifies with the minority in polls, and repeatedly stresses that his viewpoint "runs really counter to, you know, the standard wisdom." In many ways, Allen's approach to libertarianism most clearly parallels Paul's diametrically opposed revolutionary Communism: Both clearly see themselves as out of the mainstream, but see potential for underlying support for their views (as described in the next section); both insist that their views can't be compromised, with Paul arguing that a society cannot successfully combine socialism and capitalism and Allen arguing that "freedom is absolute" and can't be restricted to the noneconomic realm; and both see the university as a place to learn how to think and how to find knowledge, rather than a place to learn "facts."

#### Suspicion of Hidden Public Sympathy

Despite their sense of being different from others, many of the participants believe that on at least some level their views are, in fact, reflective of more widespread but largely unrecognized (or unanalyzed) underlying dissatisfactions. Christine, David, and Bill, as noted, directly see their views as having public support, at least among those who are capable of understanding the issues. Timothy, on the other hand, points to indirect evidence that the general public shares his preference for liberal domestic policy and conservative foreign policy despite the widespread failure to recognize that preference. Asked what causes people to disagree with his views, Timothy says:

Well, I don't know that they do subconsciously, perhaps. I think it's interesting that, at least in this century, the Democrats have controlled Congress for, what, since midterm election of '30. . . . So I do think there is a fear, as a result of Harding-Coolidge-Hoover, the people that Reagan admires and so forth, particularly Coolidge--um, I think they do fear the Republican domestic program, and I think that's why the Democrats, or rather the Congress has a lot more to say about domestic policy. . . . Yet I think that the

Democrats, being somewhat weak and naive in foreign policy, including FDR. . . . As I say, they've kept Congress Democratic, which is more liberal on foreign policy. . . . There still, be a Democratic preponderance in the White House, but that's been somewhat kept back. I think, as I say, subconsciously maybe some [people] do, because I think that's why we've had as many Republican presidents as we have.

Discussing congressional liberalism, Timothy approvingly says "I think that is a sign, in a way, that the people are a little afraid of Republicans in domestic affairs, a little afraid of the Democrats (LAUGH) in foreign affairs." Still another time, he argues that "people would move more to the left domestically, if [the Democrats] didn't have so much of what I feel is a dangerously naive approach in some of the foreign policy areas."

Timothy's perception of underlying hidden support resembles in some ways Victor's views. Despite identifying himself as a nonmainstream democratic socialist, Victor says he usually is in the majority on public opinion polls, but

I don't pay a lot of attention to public opinion polls per se because I don't think they offer enough of an in-depth explanation of why people believe, favor, or disfavor certain questions. I think that in terms of public opinion polls, it's remarkable that the American people are more intelligent than our political system gives them credit for. A perfect example is gun control. For years and years public opinion polls have been taken, have indicated that the vast majority of Americans favored some form of gun controls and yet we still don't have those forms of gun controls.

To different degrees, Scott, Allen, and Paul also think that widespread hidden sympathy for some of their views may exist. Scott, for example, when asked how most people would react to his views on the increasing isolation in American society, says that "I think the number of people, the number is growing of people that it would make sense to. That would, you know, empathize with it," though the majority would still react "hostilely" to such a notion.

Allen and Paul each talk about common dissatisfactions that people have which can be better understood in the framework of their preferred political ideology. Paul describes his parents as "mainline Democratic" and goes on to express a view that he returns to several times:

But not so mainline that they don't every once in a while vote Republican, something like that. But it's, it's a very establishment oriented, two-party political system, um. Like most people, they rumble a lot and groan a lot about the poor choices in the reelection. They, you know, moan about what's going on with the economic system. But it's all criticism that takes place within the given context of, This is it, these are the two parties, this is the structure, what do you do to sort of put bandaids on the structure or to tinker with it? It's not really, they never step outside of that context and think about whether or not there should be some radical changes or whether or not there's really something fundamentally wrong with the system.

Similarly, Allen says that

My dad's one of those people who I think agree with me even though they don't know that they do, 'cause he's, he's very much aware that uh, the government screwed up that and they're a bunch of criminals, and you can't trust anyone, you can't trust a politician. You know, kinda things like that. He's not as driven about it as I am, but he's a victim, one of government's darkest moments, you know, he was in the concentration camps. . . . If I'll talk about a separate action that should be done, you know, that we should remove government from--Okay, get rid of the small business tax. It just stifles everybody, and he's totally aware of that. He's a small business. He's got to spend hours and hours and hours a week filling out forms for the government. . . . When I talk about a separate thing like that, he'll agree. . . . But, you know if I say, I mention that this is a principle and it's not just an exception in these cases, that's true, you know, he'll just wink out, and it's like "No, no, you have a weird viewpoint, I can't subscribe to that."

The participants in general, thus, exhibit a dual tendency to perceive at least indirect evidence of potential widespread support for their views and to believe that they themselves are better able to evaluate evidence than most people. This pattern, which is seen most clearly in the case of Bill, David, and Christine but which is present to a lesser extent for others as well, resembles one identified by Marks (1984). Marks found that, for college students, "people prefer to think

or imagine that there is considerable peer group support for their own personally important opinions but, at the same time, prefer to think or imagine that their own best talents and abilities are unique" (p. 203).

#### Gradual Attainment of Current Beliefs

The current ideological positions of most of the participants represent a shift away from beliefs they held earlier. Confidence in their own ability to analyze complex issues has led the participants to reject not only the views of the mainstream but, also, either the views they were exposed to as children or the views they initially held as younger adults. Only Bill says that, in terms of "overall basic attitudes. . . . I think I've always pretty much thought like I do now," though at another point even he says "the way you look at things has to change."

The generally gradual acceptance of their current beliefs (often attributed by the participants to increased knowledge of "the real world" gained through jobs, study, or the influence of others) was often the end-point of what was sometimes a quite significant change of perspective. The extent of this change, which is greater than most Americans go through (Barner-Barry & Rosenwein, 1985; Flanigan & Zingale, 1979; Sears, 1969), as well as its slow-but-steady pace, resembles the kind of relatively undramatic ideological conversion identified by Toch (1965) as being most common, one in which "predispositions persist over time and are not completely specific. Available appeals can be more calmly and leisurely considered. A conversion becomes more a lazy step than a plunge into a life-saving breach" (p. 125).

Most clearly articulating the steps along the journey toward his current ideology is Allen, whose viewpoint developed within the year or two prior to the interviews as he moved away from what he had "learned at

momma's knee." Allen remembers that in high school,

I pretty much subscribed to the standard view of business, that they've got to be watched and you've got to be suspicious of them, but I was a lot more wary of government. I always pretty much saw myself as a conservative on . . . economic matters and a liberal on social matters, you know, like civil liberties.

When a close friend began introducing him to libertarianism during his sophomore year in high school, Allen dismissed it as "crazy."

"God, this is weird stuff." "How can you believe this, that's terrible." And you know, the view I've come to see about how people change their mind is just pretty much my understanding of how it went for me because, you know, it took about a year for me to really wear down all these ideas--everyone knows that democracy is the best way for people to live, you know, for there to be a government and for it to be democratic, and you know, everyone knows. And it took about a year for me to wear down those things and instead of saying, "Well, everyone knows that's truth," starting to think about "Wait a minute, is that really consistent with what I know?" and if things I know like government is corrupting--

Q: What happened that year? You were talking to this friend and other people and started thinking about it. Did you just wake up one day and decide?

A: Oh, no, I've been saying it was kind of like a gradual process over time. You know, I guess it would kind of go like this: I'd argue with him about something, see, you know, he'd be explaining about libertarian society without government, you know, free market, and I, you know, "Wait a minute, that doesn't work. Where's your government? You've got to have controls over the greedy ruthless businessman." And you know, we'd part for whatever reason, go to class or something, and you know, all during that thing I go home and read the paper and see about, like, FDA delaying some drug that a lot of people think has helped them, and you know, the government announcing a new tax. And on the other side, representatives announcing that they want a new tax and they're instituting a new social program or increasing one. And my little doubts about, they're all a bunch of crooks anyway, and you know those sort of things, just started, it sort of dawned on me over the course of time that these were connected with what he was saying. And then I was searching, "Well, that would explain this. But still, you know, there's problems. I can't understand this."

When he began college, Allen supported Anderson in the 1980 presidential race because "I really felt that there was an integrity about the man, an honesty that was coming through the political games," though he

admits there were some "disquieting moments." He occasionally borrowed the libertarian magazine, Inquiry, from his friend, attended occasional campus meetings of libertarians, and began reading more political theory. Then, "I finally started identifying myself as a libertarian." By the time of the 1982 elections he was writing to the newspaper urging more press coverage of third parties in general and the Libertarian Party in particular; he didn't actually join the party until

about a month after that letter, in December. I finally decided, all right, I was convinced, and it sounded--You know, I wasn't very active. I have never been much, you know, putting up posters and stuff, but I finally plunked down my membership dues and now I'm a member, even attempting to become a [party officer].

A year and a half after the interviews, Allen continues to refine his libertarian beliefs, as discussed in Chapter VI. He has decided to stop voting in the future because he now identifies more with the anarcho-capitalist wing of libertarianism and rejects the party's support of even a minimal state.

Although Allen sees his acceptance of libertarian ideology primarily as the result of a rational process of analysis, he also acknowledges the influence of other factors, such as his friendship with a committed libertarian. When asked about additional possible influences, he says:

The thing I would bring up is, my relationship with my father is one of the things that predisposed me towards, like--In discussions of the Magna Carta, one of the issues is the arbitrary power of the king or the sovereign. You know, he can do whatever he wants to do because he's in a powerful position. And my resenting that from my father is one of the things that made me sympathetic to that kind of view.

Allen is the only participant to repeatedly discuss tensions with a parent. The tension with his father continues: "The more I'm gaining independence, the more really friction there is, but that's kind of also that that increases respect, him for me." Most of the other participants

focus more on the positive aspects of relationships with their parents, even while recognizing differences in their views.

Eve, for example, speaks warmly of her parents and other relatives, volunteering that they "have really had a huge effect on me. They trust me." She has not strayed far from her parents' Republican beliefs, and her own interest in community service resembles her mother's active efforts in local drug awareness programs. When asked where she learned her generally positive views of human nature, Eve responds, in part:

My parents, probably. I think my parents have a different idea that--I guess having a (LAUGH), I don't know, there's such a different connotation depending on what circle you're in, but a, a humanist philosophy, that people can be good. They can overcome some of these things. Um, and I guess my general conception is they can to a point, but--or sometimes they can't.

It was by becoming a born-again Christian that Eve made a definite break with her parents' religious views, one they found hard to accept. Her parents "don't believe what I call basic Christianity" and don't attend church; when young, Eve remembers, "I had no religious beliefs." She is also on close terms with her grandfather, despite his attempts to "convince me maybe that my thinking was wrong."

Eve began to investigate Christianity during her first year in college, after "someone challenged me to start looking at the Bible."

There were two girls, and they set up a Bible study in the dorm, and we went through different parts of both the New and Old Testament. And there were about 30 girls, women, and we talked about how we'd run our book--what our views of God were, and then what the Bible had to say about who God was--

Q: And when--

A: and what we thought about God.

Q: And it was from the studying that you changed what you thought? Or did--

A: Right.



Q: you have some kind of religious experience, born-again, um--

A: No, I don't, I--I mean, it wasn't any, it was a decision that I made.

Eve notes that her becoming a Christian came after a long period of time during which

A bunch of things all happened to me at once. My best friend was killed in a car accident, when I was a junior in high school. That really affected me a lot. Um, the husba--well, the man and woman who, were husband and wife, were the leaders of my fellowship in [college], really had an effect on my life. And I was going through some big struggles with the guy that I was dating at the time, and they helped the two of us work those out.

Like Eve, Roberta uses the term "humanistic" to refer to her mother, whom she describes as "really loving and warm and open-minded, relatively speaking" ("I got most of my humanist viewpoints from her"), though she describes her father as "very conservative," "very intelligent but very racist. . . . He's always very into the money things, and uh, he's very into power. I don't think most people like him." Both parents are apolitical Republicans whose views are much different from Roberta's own. She has moved away from her assumption as a child in middle school that she was a Republican:

As soon as I started thinking about things like that, um, you know, who should have power and who shouldn't have power, um, what kind of people I feel should run the government, just--Not even that complicated, just, you know, the way things ought to be, um. I guess I've always been liberal.

Roberta's major original political interest was the environment.

"Before I got so concerned about what's going on with people, I was primarily concerned with what's going on with, um, the land and plant populations," a concern that was influenced by "growing up in the woods" and by her mother's small greenhouse business that resulted in several trips to jungles and flower shows. Roberta's personal knowledge of Latin America and the continuing influence of friends who write to her from

that region stimulated her to join her anti-intervention group, some of whose members she describes as "really political and well-read, and have very radical viewpoints--not radical, but very strong feelings, and generally to the left of things"; though she doesn't think they would consider themselves Marxists, she laughs at one point that "I'm starting to sound like a Marxist more and more." Her concerns about conditions in Central America have led her to change her long-held belief in pacifism, and she now considers violent revolution to be preferable to continued oppression. "Seeing the way things have gone in Nicaragua since the Revolution has really reaffirmed my faith in people."

Similar patterns hold true for most of the remaining participants, who generally acknowledge both parental influence and movement away from parental views as part of long-term changes. Scott, for example, places great emphasis on the importance of his early upbringing, particularly in terms of how his father, knowingly or not,

encouraged nonconformist behavior. He was a nonconformist. I come from a nonconformist family, that's part of it too. Um, he's, you know--I come from a family where, he never watched, my father never watches football. We aren't TV watchers in general. Um, we were, you know, he played in the symphony. Basically nonconformists. But also, it's like he taught me about, he told me stories, and the moral I got was, don't fink on other people. Um, and basically I'm not sure if this came from a particular story, but I got a very strong feeling of necessity of performing moral--Okay, if you're morally right, then it doesn't really matter, whatever is going to happen to you, you stand up for what is right.

Scott's nonconformity, enhanced by older siblings, encompassed reading Marx in elementary school, attending Socialist Labor Party conventions, and, later, rejecting radical political identification and becoming a vegetarian and a Buddhist. Recently, like Roberta, Scott has modified his pacifism in favor of qualified support of third-world revolution; his general orientation remains to the left of his father, "a more conserva-

tive liberal," and his "rather conservative" mother.

The years of the Vietnam War protests were mentioned as particularly important influences by two participants with very different views, David and Paul. Paul, whose parents were "mainline Democratic," remembers that "I grew up on war stories about my father in the Marines," and that he considered himself in the Democratic mainstream while in high school. Political reevaluation began during the anti-war era, "a time when I really got away from my parents and from a familiar environment," during which "I think part of my initial anger and frustration was a little bit of a rebellion against parents." It was a

very, very long, very gradual process. It was, I--you know, I don't know if I'm typical or not of the way you arrive at these things, but it began as an understanding of the things I was really against, and it took a long time to sort of figure out what I was for, or what, what I at least could give support to. And that really has only happened within the last three or four or five years.

Paul's eventual decision to join a Communist revolutionary party followed his break with Catholicism. "In its final sense, it was real gradual. A long time before I stopped going to church, I stopped really having this sort of blind allegiance or blind faith or blind acceptance." Joining the party, and later leaving it primarily because of job concerns, represent relatively recent changes in Paul's political life.

David, whose father was a military officer who died when David was 17, joined ROTC in college and chose the medical service corp "just to avoid the draft. I made that perfectly clear (LAUGH). I did not want to die." "Nothing else mattered, 'cause I was just going to be killed." He served in a US military hospital, "watching and caring for these kids coming back from Vietnam . . . [whose] faces were burned off. Their arms and legs were amputated. I was depressed, horrendously depressed." He

wrote monthly protest letters to political leaders and went to Washington to march in anti-war demonstrations. "God, I had some incredible times. Incredible mental feeling." "I still wear my peace ring," he says, after noting that "I think the great tides of '65 to '75 is one of the great tides of human awareness, and I think its already passed us by." He would still march in protest of a military draft in the event of a war he disapproved of, and concludes that "The system back then was cheating us of our lives, trying to trick us, trying to kill us. . . . They were making us fight a war we weren't allowed to win."

Although his parents were Republicans, and the source of what he sees as important influences on his values, common sense, and love of the outdoors, David has not voted consistently for any one party. He campaigned for anti-Vietnam War Democrats and wrote letters to newspapers.

At that time I was very idealistic, and thought I could put some input in and change things for the better. You know, Vietnamese, save the blacks from the whites, all the problems of racism and God knows everything else, and all the poor people that are oppressed and the big money class. I thought I could change these things. Make things better in education. And then I ran up against the brick wall of reality. But with that reality realizing that I had no money, and therefore no power, therefore I was wasting my time trying to be political. I just kind of wrote letters on and off, and said well, this is something, it's almost a sharing of my knowledge and my awareness that were first hand.

David's current views have developed since the end of the Vietnam era and his completion of college, partly when he began to work full-time and pay taxes for "the burgeoning welfare budget." He now opposes many of the candidates and political positions he favored a decade ago. "It took me 'till about age 27 to really get in touch with and gain that kind of, my universal, my kind of conceptual understanding of the universe at this point, which I think will grow as I grow, continue to expand."

Citing Ayn Rand, Konrad Lorenz, Robert Ardrey, Desmond Morris, Richard

Bach, Donald Shimoda, Hermann Hesse, and a number of other authors who have had an effect on him, David also attributes great influence to the head of the humanist church which he joined in 1969, a church that deals with "reality" rather than with "miracles."

The changes undergone by the remainder of the participants generally resemble those described so far. Victor's democratic socialist views differ from those of his Republican parents, though he attributes his interest in community improvement to similar interest on the part of his father, who died several years ago. He now cares more about politics than he did when his participation in anti-war protests "was more of a social activity for me than it was an intellectual activity" and when "I didn't really give a damn about what went on." His interest in raising voter awareness has grown since his job on a state commission investigating political corruption, when he became "surprised to the extent that I think there's an institutionalized form of corruption, the whole system of campaign finance in the country." Victor gave up his Democratic Party membership shortly before the interviews, "just because I was disgusted with the way they're, the directions they're moving in, the way they're set up."

When asked if her views on human nature had ever changed, Christine says, "Oh yeah, I used to be a bleeding heart liberal. . . . I think I've swung from the far right to the far left and now I'm in the middle as far as politically goes." Her conservative Republican parents are "extremely prejudiced racially"; she thinks "I probably [became tolerant] in the first place just out of spite toward my parents." She remembers becoming opposed to the Vietnam War when she was 12, and makes several references to her later move away from liberalism: "I used to be sympathetic with

the unions, but I'm not any more"; "If you had told me four years ago, probably, that I would join the military, I would have laughed. . . . I've changed my mind on most areas"; "It came over a period of years. Basically, from about my junior or senior year in high school I started changing my political viewpoint, and it's still changing." Christine's decision to join ROTC, which was opposed by her parents, came after her brief involvement in a study group organized by a campus Christian group she describes as a cult; her participation in Christian groups continues, in contrast to her parents' minimal church attendance.

Timothy's parents were northeastern ethnic Democrats, and he remembers getting "quite enthusiastic" about opposing Franklin Roosevelt's reelection in 1940--"I don't know why, perhaps I just got tired (LAUGH) of having the same president for eight years. . . . I got a Wilkie sticker and put it on the car. I think my folks were (LAUGH) kind of embarrassed by it." Timothy remembers other political disagreements with his parents, and his own views have shifted over the years as he's attempted to reconcile his social democratic beliefs with the American political system. He originally supported the Vietnam War, but says that eventually "I did come to the conclusion we didn't really need that."

#### General Theme 4:

##### The Belief That the United States is a Sick Society

The participants are in general agreement that there is something seriously wrong with American society today. Considering the variety of political ideologies they express, it is not surprising that they don't agree about what the underlying sources of the problem are or about how to deal with the situation. They often, however, do point to many of the same symptoms. To varying degrees, they see some combination of wide-

spread--and increasing--social and psychological problems such as family breakdown, stress, alienation, apathy, disillusionment, materialism, and consumerism, with people increasingly subject to manipulation by the media and by political and corporate elites. They tend to link many of these problems to increased societal complexity, greater mobility, and technological change. Although some of them point to positive aspects of US society as well, and explicitly reject the notion that the US is a sick society, the positive comments pale in comparison to the negative ones. Television in particular is seen by most of the participants as a negative aspect of American life.

Victor's comments are typical of many of the participants. In a discussion of the differing crime rates Japan and the US, he says:

Culturally, I think we are closer to being a nation of strangers than we are to being a nation of friends and neighbors, just because of the way we've developed, in the course of development. And that's a cultural characteristic of, of modern life in this country, of mobility. We don't have those cultural things, such as, uh, a tight, extended family. . . . There's a breakdown of the, a cultural breakdown let's put it, in terms of the nuclear family, the concept of a nuclear family and an extended family. Uh, we don't have uncles and aunts and a father around that are helping to shape the development and growth of the, uh, young person.

Victor mentions this theme of "a nation of strangers" three times during the interviews, in different contexts. He believes that the government was more representative of the public interest 50 years ago,

to the extent that a tighter form of social organization existed. In other words, that people had more firmer roots in the areas that they lived in. . . . I think it was more representative. I see us moving in a direction that is less representative because of the increased mobility of people, the lack of roots that they feel, the lack of stability.

Asked about the problems that people have in their personal lives, Victor responds:

Well, it's been said that we've become a nation full of strangers--





Q: Yeah, you mentioned that last week, too.

A: because of this mobility. So I think one of the problems is that, other people don't particularly give a damn about what happens to you as an individual. If they ever did. I think they did more so. Support groups were more common. You know, if somebody was done an injustice, it was not somebody who was an individual who stood out there all on their own. They had lots of close acquaintances, friends, and relatives that lived in the same immediate area as they did. They could empathize and provide a support group for that individual. I don't think that exists as much now as it once did. Which in turn gives one a feeling of really being isolated, or alone, in the problems that we all face.

Other areas. Well, there's all sorts of problems that confront individuals who perceive themselves as being wronged. As things have broken down, one of the attractive alternatives for people as they seek to cope with problems has been to turn to the legal profession to provide that support that they need. You get into the whole thing about the countless thousands of frivolous suits that are filed in this country, and how we've got one lawyer for every 200 people and in other societies you have--like Japan, they have one lawyer for every 2000 people, and another country had one lawyer for every 20,000 people. For individuals to act--The alternative has been more and more to turn to the legal profession for support, as opposed to a time when problems were dealt with more so in a small group type of environment, in raising at least a minimal cry against those interests that had supposedly harmed an individual.

Victor attributes increased mobility to "the way the economy's developed, people going where the jobs are." He points to "the expression of feelings that reflect individuals preparing themselves against organized groups . . . a sense of insignificance, of powerlessness," and concludes, "Perhaps the term that, most appropriate to what we're talking about is alienation. . . . In other words, bigger is not necessarily better. One of the things that bigness can produce is alienation." Although "size is quite often a modern economic reality, important within an economic sphere of life, at the same time size is not necessarily conducive to a system that is based on representative democracy," which suffers, Victor repeats, because of "voter ignorance and apathy."

According to Victor, most people don't think in terms of community

involvement and improvement,

because the natural human concern [is] with your everyday economic situation. I think we live in a society that reinforces that concern on a daily basis, a consumer-oriented society where, you know, success and failure is quite often--You know, the easiest measure of that is in economic terms.

Many of Victor's views are echoed by Paul, who refers to the problems of alienation and meaningless work in a society "where most of us are left with scurrying about, trying to make ends meet for our entire lives." Easy mobility "quickly severs . . . ties between children and their parents," leading to "a society in which you feel like you're more independent and more of an individual, or have less of a family structure to rely on." In a better society, by contrast, Paul "would hope that there'd be more stress on social responsibility and some sort of, of, uh, corporate or communal responsibility, and less stress on individual gain against others."

I think Americans have a real problem in articulating what their definition of happiness is, and in finding ways to work towards that. I think, I guess that's sort of the over-arching problem that I think pretty much all the other specific problems like family relations, money worries, job happiness, all those would fall under. I think--Growing up in this country, reading the newspapers and watching the TV, and in looking at your neighborhood and all of those sorts of things, at least if you grew up like I did, sort of a middle class environment--Happiness seems to be tied towards material things, and the acquisition of material things. That you try to surround yourself with enough comforts that there's some semblance of security and a kind of life that you, that you think you should have, whether it be a house with a yard and garage, and couple of cars, or being able to send your children to school, and things like that. And um, you know, I think it's real easy to get caught up in that. All of a sudden you look up one day, and you really remember that your living has risen to at least the level of your income, if not a little bit farther. And there really doesn't seem to be a way out. You can't all of a sudden decide that because you're unhappy in your job you're going to do something that makes you happy, because you have all these bills, and all these constrictions and things like that. I think that creates a lot of problems, to marital relationships, and family relationships, and job happiness, and all that kind of, all that stuff. And you know, I don't know that that's different in any society, I don't know. I've never really been in any society. It strikes me that in American society,

though, happiness as a term has sort of been co-opted to mean some sort of quantifiable list of things that you, you've got, and, or at least are working towards. For some people, maybe that makes them happy, I don't know. But it doesn't mean to me too many people are, are really all that happy at the core.

Basic underlying dissatisfaction is on the increase, according to Paul, "for a lot of reasons, a lot of them tied to the economy. . . . That whole notion about, anything at all is possible in America—I don't think too many people believe that any more." Within the university, job dissatisfaction leads to

a lot of people, I think, who perhaps understandably have built their job into um, their little bitty domain, and will guard that little domain tenaciously, and will make sure that you understand very quickly just what power they have, whether it be power over the, the bathroom toilet or power over the mailboxes, or whatever. They, it's important for them to somehow justify their existence in that job, by letting you know that, you know, they may not have much of a say or much control in their life, but this is their territory. . . . You find unhappy professors doing that, and unhappy secretaries, and unhappy librarians, and unhappy graduate students. And you know, there's really bitchy people, and when—they're bitchy for reasons, it's not just because they're crummy people. It's because they're caught in a situation they don't have much to look forward to, and they're not very happy, and their job hasn't really, doesn't really give them a lot of satisfaction. It doesn't have a lot of meaning. So they do what they can with it.

Although Christine also thinks that "people are often times more concerned with themselves--how they look, how they feel, how they're doing, I'm OK, You're OK stuff--rather than worrying about the person who's next to them," she thinks such self-oriented concerns are a far cry from individualism: "True individuals are really a minority right now." "A lot of people are afraid of being individuals any more." This represents a change in the US:

I think the American Revolution stemmed from a bunch of individuals who felt the same way, but they were individuals. And the settling of the great Northwest, the rugged individualists stereotype—I think that was pretty accurate. But the problem with individualism now is that it's almost become conformity to be a nonconformist, and so finding a true individual who isn't just doing it to play the game is harder, because everybody flaunts their individuality, and

all of their individualities are the same.

The shift away from true individualism, according to Christine, began in "the late 40s to the early 50s," when "teenagers [who] were becoming more independent from their parents," partly as a result of "the advent of the car," would "all band together." The result of this and other factors was increased separation between the generations, plus

a very complacent society, pretty much willing to let things keep going along the way they're going along as long as you don't rock the boat. And then you wake up one morning and find out that the whole US has been paved over and you don't have any national parks any more.

Americans still, says Christine,

pride themselves on being the brash young cowboy and all that, but I think that as far as individualism goes, Russians are much more individualistic than Americans are, because they learn--despite the fact they are working under a Communist government, they've learned to take care of themselves and not count on getting handouts or anything like that. Whereas an American knows the government is not going to let them starve to death.

Another change pointed to by Christine, similar to one mentioned by Paul and others, is the fact that "the more we've turned to cities rather than rural areas, the more success has turned toward money." Such a shift in the importance of money as a sign of success can be healthy for society "up to a point . . . because it almost ensures at least a rapidly changed--the economy moves quickly. But after a point, no, I don't think it's good." Although striving for money "works for a lot of people," it too often means that "you don't always take the time to stop and listen to somebody. And when you do have all that money, if that wasn't really your goal, if happiness was your goal . . . I think you'd be isolated, because probably you'd drive people away."

Striving for money is also mentioned by David, who, more than any of the other participants, specifically uses the phrase "sick society" to

describe the US today. The first time he uses it, he hesitates and says "I can't say a sick society," but he immediately adds, "It is a sick society. I think we have a very sick society at this point." Later, asked to explain, he points to what he sees as the consequences of over-population: widespread mental and physical illness, drug abuse, crime,

and all those kinds of behaviors that show that this society is not functioning well with the population mass, density, and the technological running--well, what Alvin Toffler will call future shock . . . with the tremendous amount of stress, the tremendous amount of "you have to produce," "go get this," and high pressure speed which we are not as a species really normalized to, and it's just gone beyond us. . . . All these people are just scratching to the top, scratching for the big buck. You know, go in hand cuffs, make so much money--they're just locked to their job, uh, status, and so forth.

Urged on by media advertising, people are "driving themselves half nuts" and going "psychologically under. Their future shock is present shock." Asked if he thinks there are more sick people in this society than in other societies, David repeats, "Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely." He attributes that to "the root cause: This country has an eighth grade reading level. Cognizance of an eighth grade reader." And those who are educated have

a loss of touch with themselves and the natural world, being able to relate to the natural world, their natural needs, and their relatedness. Uh, family units and love, and just having identity within that is really the most important thing.

Related to these problems is the problem of having "more choices than they can deal with and not a strong self-concept," which is "simply because of possible breakdown of the nuclear family. Not enough strokes" from fathers "worried about making too much money" who "didn't get home." David repeatedly mentions "lack of parenting," a situation which, he says, may come from

societal expectations that have been perpetrated as we have gone from a basic agrarian society to the industrial, where some people can make a whole lot more and grab a whole lot more turf and lot

more status.

Despite his repeated view that society is "disintegrating," that welfare abuse is rampant, that people are too comfortable and removed from their natural roots and too satisfied with living "vicarious lives," David does say at one point, in contrast to his basic theme:

Our society is good, excellent. Because it runs, you know, it goes in a positive way. People aren't getting slaughtered everyday, cut up by the troops or whatever, so it's a good government. Everything mostly is good, it's a good society.

The remaining participants generally reiterate the view that the US is a society with underlying problems. Scott, for example, talks of people who live lives of "quiet desperation," who are apathetic, scared, and conforming in the face of the coming "fascist age." He talks about competition, job dissatisfaction, isolation, the sense of powerlessness, and the destructive effects of striving for money. He jokingly asks about "limited escapism": "Isn't that what 20th Century life's all about?"

Allen also speaks of the "feeling of a lack of power" that's common in the US, relating it to the "depressed self-esteem" that he sees as a major problem in a society not geared toward individual autonomy. "This is kind of mental illness that's caused by being stunted back from the idea of human efficacy, and from not being free to live a life according to what you think is important." He agrees that problems such as loneliness and isolation are increasing, "but with a little caveat" because more people are beginning to recognize that the individual is important and that there is a need to "start searching about for some other way to look at these events which makes sense."

Similarly, Bill speaks about widespread apathy, alienation, lack of empathy, and the "sad" end of farming as a way of life. Roberta mentions

mobility and economic differences as sources of strain, and sees a need for society as a whole to "mature"; however, despite "stifled creativity" and widespread insecurity, which she sees as a primary problem, she says specifically, "But that's not to say that our society is sick and it's never been this bad before. It's probably much worse before. . . . when large groups of people were being persecuted." Eve, who sees "sin" as a problem basic to all, says that being a Christian can ease--but not eliminate--the constant juggling of individual and group responsibilities and the common anxiety that comes from the desire to please others as well as the self; too many people turn to short-term solutions to the loneliness and depression which stem at least partly from fast-paced urban living.

Timothy, the last of the participants, complains about moral breakdown, the deterioration of education, family breakdown, selfishness, extremism, and the loss of trust; he criticizes suburbs that are "very mediocre and overly spread out." A spiritual approach to things is needed, he says, though he does think people are now more enlightened in terms of racial and religious tolerance. Timothy decries the return of today's college students to "crass materialism" and to the "nose-to-the-grindstone, over-competitiveness . . . for academic grades." At one point he says, referring to a phrase also cited by Scott,

I remember one cartoon they had during the student riots of the late 60s, maybe early 70s. Shows a couple of deans, or a professor and a dean, up in, looking out over a mob in front of a big university building. And he says, "Why don't they live lives of quiet desperation (LAUGH) like the rest of us?"

### Negative View of Television's Place in American Life

For the most part, the participants have an extremely negative view of television. They see it either as a destructive force in itself, or as a symptom of other destructive forces. Roberta, David, and Christine have each gone for long periods of time without owning a television; Eve, Paul, Victor, and Scott say they don't watch very much; Bill keeps a set on in the manager's office when he works late at night. Only Timothy, who watches with his children, and Allen, can be considered regular viewers. Viewing habits of those who do watch tend toward news, documentaries, sports, and much of what's shown on the Public Broadcasting System; situation comedies are almost totally avoided, with frequent comments similar to Paul's: "I really don't understand why people like the kind of stuff that's on TV--The Dukes of Hazzard, the situation comedies. I don't understand that." Paul, Allen, and Christine all make a point of watching MASH reruns, however.

Views somewhat less negative than the average are expressed by Christine, who didn't have a TV at the time of the initial interviews when, she says, she went "to the grill" every Sunday to watch 60 Minutes. Several months later, after a new roommate arrived with a TV, Chris says she still doesn't watch very much--primarily, the late-night news, 60 Minutes, MASH, and Real People.

I think all in all, TV programs are pretty stupid. TV commercials are even worse. And I don't, when I'm in classes, I don't have the time to start watching TV, because it doesn't expand my mind in any way. It just takes time away from studying. I watch cartoons on Saturday morning, though.

Q: Why do you think people in this country watch so much?

A: My father watches it because it's mindless. That's exactly why he watches it. He has a very mentally high-pressure job, and he comes from work and turns on the Newlywed Game. . . . My brother watches it because he likes it. My mom doesn't watch very much TV.



Q: Do you think it's very good to have around?

A: I think it's very convenient. I've only missed it once in three years that I didn't have one that I can remember, 'cause I missed the Michigan-Ohio State game (LAUGH).

The most consistently negative views are expressed by David. He does mention having seen particular people interviewed on talk shows, and he himself was once interviewed on a local show about an educational program he ran. In general, though, he believes that "This country is dictated by the TV set. I think the TV set usurps the entire naturalness of the human species." "I have never been a spectator," he insists. "That's why there's no TV in this house," and he disparages "popping pills and watching TV from day one to the end of your life" as well as "watching Wild Kingdom when you can be watching it for real." Asked why so many people watch TV instead of going out and doing the things he does, he says "It's just too easy to do nothing, and it's too easy to be entertained. Passive entertainment with the tube."

Scott, whose parents and siblings "aren't TV watchers in general," rarely watches even the news, and "usually when I do, the sound is off"; he occasionally watches an old movie late at night. He raises the "possibility" that television is actually "hypnotic," a comment similar to that of Timothy, who calls it "somewhat addictive." Scott thinks that TV watching adds to isolation, because of its "self-focused distraction, maybe absorption is a better word," and he attributes to television some of the rise in crime, partly because he thinks television violence leads to actual violence and partly because "a terrible frustration" arises when people "feel a right to other things they see other people having."

Scott's last comment is similar to those made by others. Bill thinks that Entertainment Tonight and other shows about "all the Beauti-

ful People going to their ceremonies. . . . leads to alienation when people see that, and then look around and see where they're living."

Timothy, calling himself "in some ways a TV addict" whose children "think I watch too . . . many news programs," says TV "has been a destabilizing thing, particularly with the youth. . . . Some of the rioting and other things may've stemmed from TV too, when most of the middle-class programs on the TV may have made people envious, in the slums and such." And Paul says TV watching adds to the American notion that "happiness seems to be tied towards material things."

Eve, who "occasionally" watches TV news and "rarely" watches a "good movie," would like to see more documentaries; she doesn't watch situation comedies, which "I don't really enjoy." People watch television, she says, "To have something to do. . . . I think sometimes we, we can relate to people on TV. . . . Personally, I'd rather . . . read a book. . . . I think TV tends to spoil you . . . rather than really making you think."

Roberta doesn't have a television,

principally for financial reasons, I can't afford it. But also, um, I would really hate TV (LAUGH). I guess, um, in college I got really fed up with it. I had a portable TV that I ended up giving away. . . . Some I really miss, like a lot of PBS shows. I would have loved to see that nature series, or whatever it was called, and Nova, and a lot of the good, well-produced dramatic things. But, um, I find TV commercials really insulting (LAUGH) to my intelligence, what little there is of that. Um, I don't know, I find even when I'm in a bar with the TV on, I find that it demands my attention, and I don't pay attention to the people I'm with. My eyes keep going over to the TV stand. . . . I think it's a bad thing to do. So, I don't have a TV, but the place I'm moving to now there's a color TV. I miss seeing the news. I'd like to know, since I've gotten more or less active in Latin American things, I want to see what they're saying on TV about the situation, because that's the way probably most people get their news.

Roberta adds that television is

easy entertainment. Um, you asked me before why I thought people weren't able to be creative, whichever sort of context it was in.

And it didn't occur to me at the time, but I think that's sort of one way in which people's creative energies are sort of drained, sitting in front of the TV for so long.

Victor thinks "the informational aspect [of television] has been phenomenal" in terms "of things like improving the political awareness and participation of the electorate," and that "the potential for educating people, the informational potential of television, and cable TV in particular, is really great." However, he thinks the typical news show is "extremely limited into how in-depth it can go. . . . They're reporting on events that happen, not providing the viewer with the in-depth knowledge that they would need to follow a situation and make an intelligent decision." Americans watch so much TV partly because "they don't have any other activities to keep them busy":

You get into the whole thing of, in part, the effects that mobility has had on the society in terms of being a nation of strangers. . . . It's a form of relaxation, you know, especially for--a lot of programs that they run on the three major networks are no-brainers, you just sit back and watch it. Doesn't require any significant thinking on the part of the viewer.

The most positive comments about television are made by Allen, who jokes that "even being a libertarian . . . I still don't like commercials." He says he watches "a lot of TV, probably more than I should, but still I watch," though "there really aren't a lot of prime time shows I'll watch." Asked what he thinks about those shows, he responds,

I don't know. I'm trying to decide if I still feel, I can dismiss it as trash. I don't think it's entirely trashy. God knows there's a lot of awful shows that I hate, like Three's Company--I believe that's been on eight or nine years now. That's going to rival the run of MASH (LAUGH), that's a terrible thought. But um, you know, that's give the people what they want.

When asked why people watch so much TV, Allen says

It's an entertainment. It's like going to the opera or the symphony would have been last century when only the rich could afford to get entertainment. It may be for low-brow taste, but you know. . . . Maybe network television is trashier, is the trashiest kind of

public entertainment that ever existed, but that's because for the first time in the world, everyone's tastes are trying to be met. Someone's trying to meet those desires, that the people who don't make a lot of money are also being entertained.

A year and a half later, Allen began the last paragraph of a letter by writing "I think that covers it, and 'Leave it to Beaver' is on soon. So I'll wrap this up."

#### General Theme 5:

##### The Desire to Influence Others

That all the participants wrote letters to newspapers that were intended to be read by the general public fits in with their generally strong desire to influence other people. The participants for the most part say they feel a personal responsibility to try to affect others, especially through writing, teaching, and one-to-one interaction, and, to a much lesser degree, through direct participation in political activity. However, they are not interested in conventional electoral political careers, often viewing politics as tainted, dishonest, or incapable of bringing about real change.

##### Interest in Writing, Teaching, and Political Activity

Six of the seven male participants would like some day to earn at least part of their living by writing on themes that are relevant to their social and political perspectives: Victor, Bill, Paul, Allen, David, and Scott. David is already a professional writer. Christine also has an interest in writing, though mostly "stories and poems" which she says she writes well, as a hobby. The seventh male, Timothy, is a retired professor, and Paul teaches at the university. David, who taught elementary school and organized drug awareness programs in junior high schools and is a member of a national Speakers-Writers Association,

offered to speak to one of my own classes about his views.

Only Eve and Roberta express little interest in writing or teaching, though both want to influence people. Roberta's political group, for example, seeks to "educate more people about what's going on" in Central America. Asked about the effectiveness of public demonstrations, Roberta says "I feel that somebody has to speak out, and uh, I think that that's a good way of doing it. . . . I think it's important to do, because otherwise people don't know that stuff's going on."

Eve says that if people

really seek God within, they'll find Him. Um, I guess, based on what I believe, I'm--that's my goal in life, is to reach every person in the whole world with that, that message. Maybe that--I mean, not personally, but (LAUGH).

Eve says at another point that it's

really important for people, for Christians, to let other people know about their faith in just little one-on-one ways that they could say, they could share how their faith had helped them through some kind of situation. . . . [But] I don't think I can sit here and sit, sit you down and convince you, because I don't know that that's really caring about you and thinking about, you know, the questions that you may have or the doubts you may have or whatever.

Eve's acceptance of a responsibility to help others extends beyond the spreading of her Christian faith:

I think the most important thing is to, um, share the good news about Jesus Christ with the whole world, with, you know, every person. But, [once] you've done that, I think there's a lot of responsibility that I have as a person to work with world problems.

At the time of the interviews, Eve was a volunteer in a community health program; two years later she is interning in her field. She says, "It's my responsibility to be, um, just because of where, where I am--I'm a college student, I'm a supposedly educated person, who might be able to affect some of that. . . . That's my responsibility to, to do something." "As a Christian, my even main responsibility is to help others."

Victor's goal, which he expects to attain, is "to be able to concentrate on public policy and get paid for it. . . . And that can mean being within government itself, or being on the outside and prodding government to move in certain directions." Influencing policy means writing--he is a frequent letter writer, and would "like to write for a living" about "social and political issues" even if his efforts are not ultimately successful:

I have no way of measuring whether my input into these areas of life has any significance or not. So during the whole course of it there's--a sense of alienation exists. It's a matter of pushing it in, not having it at the forefront of your mind, and doing it for your own satisfaction. You know, and anything beyond your own satisfaction is frosting on the cake.

Allen, the "evangelist or missionary" for libertarianism who refers several times to his "preaching," wanted to write science fiction "for my whole life"; he worked on several humor and other magazines in high school and college, and he's taken writing courses, as have Scott and David. Now, however, Allen wants to write about "politics and political theory and anti-governmentism" as part of an attempt "to set out to make [the world] better"; he won an essay contest on libertarian themes:

I'll probably make an effort to wind up like somebody like Murray Rothbard--maybe not with that kind of staying power of analysis, but popularizing political theory, and trying--What I'll be trying to do in most of my life, you know, personally, or hopefully also professionally, is trying to show people that it's really important for them right now to get more of an understanding of the meaning of a government, what happens in their lives, and how important it is to question the institution itself rather than just what goes on within that institution.

Writing and teaching are both interests of Paul, who sees the purpose of life in terms of "trying to contribute a little bit towards human happiness." He thinks it's "really important that someone get up" and counter the views of "libertarians, or fundamentalists like Jerry

Falwell, or politicians like Ronald Reagan." "Somebody's gotta be out there telling them, at least present a different argument, so at least people will have inputs to make up their mind with."

For the most part, says Paul, "I really like teaching. What I've enjoyed the most is being a teacher here" because of the opportunity to "raise questions" and to "work for change . . . through an individual." He is, however, disillusioned with the "bullshit that goes with being in a[n academic] department" and with the difficulty of countering the assumptions his students bring with them from high school. Consequently, he has considered teaching elementary school children, and he adds, "I think, sometimes, I wanna be a writer. I think I'd like to be a, I wouldn't mind being a writer for a large newspaper, or a magazine. . . . I wouldn't mind being a columnist." Paul also reiterates that more than teaching and writing is necessary; a political organization such as the Communist party he belonged to is crucial to bring about change.

The remaining participants express similar interests in influencing people. Bill "would like to become a successful writer" of books that "have a definite impact on the way that people think. . . . And I would also like to make money on them"; he sees himself as a leader, capable of organizing people when necessary. Leadership is a theme also expressed very strongly by Christine, who has taken leadership courses in ROTC and whose father "was already training me to be an individual and be a leader." She says she has "learned a lot about motivating people and influencing them," though she has little interest in political activism.

Timothy, David, and Scott are among the more prolific writers, with Timothy and David both having teaching experience as well. Timothy doesn't consider himself too persuasive, though "I've always kind of

enjoyed arguing with people, particularly when I taught." Success means "being able to do a fair amount of what you most want to do. And uh, I think again it's good if you can make a contribution to society, or country, or the world, or region, or what have you," a contribution that, for Timothy, entails public advocacy of his positions on issues.

David considers writing to be his career, although he hasn't been able to give up truck-driving yet. He has sold "dozens" of articles to magazines, and has written several children's stories demonstrating the importance of responsibility, hard work, and health and fitness:

I like to try to share my awareness so somebody may not go down the same, uh, path, or not hurt themselves, or whatever. . . . So all it is is just a sharing of my knowledge, and hopefully a betterment for anybody who can get in touch with it. . . . If I can share it with somebody else, then I've done a little bit for my part of the universe and my part of the world. Even though the big scope is just almost hopeless at this point. So that's why I write."

Finally, Scott writes stories and poetry as a hobby, has considered journalism as a career, and thinks that through writing one can "make people think, educate people through a certain way of thinking." "The purpose in life," he says, in accordance with his Buddhist beliefs, "is to do for other people, and it's basically to me the only purpose."

#### Lack of Interest in a Conventional Political Career

The participants' interest in having an impact on others and on public policy clearly does not extend to personally entering electoral politics. Of the ten, only Allen says:

I always kinda thought that's where I'd end up. . . . I think I'm going to wind up being the Libertarian candidate for some local position. And you know, that's not going to be until after I've become conversant with the literature, you know, a book cutting back City Hall and how to go about privatization of services, you know, that sort of thing. I feel that I could actually do something good for people, instead of the current BS about who gets political patronage, which is what politics usually winds up as.



Allen's later expression of philosophical opposition to voting and taking part in the political system, of course, is a change of position, leaving unclear how he views his earlier interest in being a political candidate.

None of the remaining participants share Allen's original optimism or desire, including those who have campaigned for candidates in the past. Victor, for example, has thought about going into politics, but "I can't see it right now. I like my privacy too much." He might change his mind "if I thought I could run a dollar campaign and get elected" and do something about campaign finance reform, but it is those very finance problems that make electoral life unlikely for him; he sees "so many examples" of politicians with positive attitudes who have "found the realities of the political game, uh, that necessitated them compromising" in order to gather the money to be reelected.

Similarly, Timothy balks at the need to "raise enormous funds," and Christine says "I don't see myself as a politician. I don't like that public a life." Bill finds politics "one of the more fascinating things to watch" but "would never get into it in a million years" because of

the insecurity. And the higher you climb in politics, the more you have to sell your soul. . . . You have to do too many things to too many people. And I don't think I could stand at a fund raiser and tell a bunch of former flower children that I was all for, you know, all for regulating nuclear waste or whatever and then turn right around and tell a bunch of businessmen that I was all for deregulation, just to try to get votes. I think it depends too much on votes. It would be too insecure, I wouldn't like that life.

For Paul, the important thing is that "You're not going to make revolution at the ballot box"; socialism won't come about by "creating a large alliance of Congressmen that's gonna vote with you on a specific bloc of issues." Although a Marxist candidate might be useful as a way "to make people think about things," he would not run himself because, he laughs, "The FBI knows far too much about me to let me get very far."

Similarly, Roberta says running for office

would be too difficult for what I. . . . It's working within the system, you know, which is good and bad. And I don't know, I just can't see myself running for a public office. I'm not really a public sort of person.

Q: What about working for somebody who is doing that?

A: Uh, I see myself as someone who will devote energy more to a cause than to a person. And unless that person um, you know, totally agreed on--If I totally agreed on every point. . . . I still don't see myself doing that, because I think I can have more of an effect in a group talking about a cause rather than becoming a part of a machinery.

Although they do not directly discuss this point, Eve, Scott, and David also show no interest in entering electoral politics. David says that "politics are just ideas," not worth losing friends over, because "you really can't do that much, as a plain old, common, ordinary citizen." Scott's efforts are in writing and in advocating his views in other ways rather than in running for office, though he (like David in the past) has worked for candidates. Eve's primary emphasis is clearly on spreading Christianity and working in direct human services rather than on electoral politics.

CHAPTER VIII  
INDIVIDUALISTS AND COLLECTIVISTS:  
DIFFERENTIATING THEMES

Chapter VII describes five broad, overlapping value themes that typify the participants as a group. Chapter VI describes each participant as an individual. The descriptions should make it clear that the goal of gathering a sample of people with a wide variety of nonmainstream political views was for the most part attained.

As explained earlier, this research project was not designed to examine the views of a representative sample of individuals from all possible ideologies. Consequently, the views that are expressed, though varied, do not cover equally all parts of the political spectrum. The sample selection procedure did not result in individuals with consistent, traditionally mainstream Democratic or Republican views, though Eve comes close to a moderately conservative Republican position. Nine of the participants, however, can be placed tentatively--somewhat uneasily, perhaps--in one of two groups for the purpose of speculating about the contrasting concerns of people holding very different ideologies.

Four participants are sympathetic to overlapping parts of the very wide range of political and economic views within the libertarian-right segment of capitalist thought. Allen, Bill, Christine, and David, though differing markedly among themselves in many ways, all can be characterized to one degree or another as Individualists. Paul, Roberta, Scott, Timothy, and Victor, on the other hand, are all sympathetic to sometimes

conflicting positions on the socialist left, and thus can be considered Collectivists of one kind or another.

I would like to make it clear that being labeled an Individualist or Collectivist would not necessarily be easily accepted by the participants themselves, who reject most political labels. The particular labels are intended primarily as a convenience, and should be interpreted broadly. I would also like to reiterate that within each category, differences among the members are large, and many of the participants would object to being grouped with others in their own category. (For example, Allen's libertarian rejection of all governmental regulation is at odds with the call on the part of the other Individualists for increased government regulation of toxic wastes and with Christine's advocacy of a world government; similarly, Paul's revolutionary Communism is rejected by the social democrats Timothy and Victor.) Occasionally, in fact, individuals in opposite categories are more similar to one another in relation to particular subthemes than they are to those within their own category. The comparisons discussed here, thus, are not meant to imply definitive descriptions of political ideology, but are useful in providing a glimpse at how the world looks to individuals with widely varying views. The fact that it is individuals that are being described rather than representatives of groups should not be lost sight of.

Keeping these cautions in mind, there are three broad, overlapping themes that differentiate between Individualists and Collectivists:

1. Individualism versus Collectivism.
2. Personal Consequences of the Sick Society.
3. The Prospect of Technological Solutions.

Much of the supporting material for these differentiating themes--for the first one, especially--has already been extensively quoted in earlier

chapters, and when such is the case, it will not be fully repeated here.

### Differentiating Theme 1:

#### Individualism versus Collectivism

##### Individualism

With allowance for a few exceptional circumstances, the Individualists believe that people should be held responsible for whatever happens to them in their own lives. There should be no legal responsibility to provide for others who do not work; the welfare society, which immorally takes from those who work to give to those who don't, should be modified and perhaps, eventually, dismantled. An individualistic self-oriented approach to life--in economics as well as in other areas--is natural and preferable. Books by Ayn Rand and similar writers are cited as having been influential in the development of their thinking. The Individualists see human nature as either competitive, aggressive, territorial, and animal-like, or as including cooperative elements that find their best expression within libertarian capitalism. They all see themselves as "true individualists" and, to a lesser extent, as leaders.

Allen and Christine in particular repeatedly refer to themselves as individualists in a variety of contexts. For example, when I ask Allen how he feels when confronted by people with different political views, he responds at length:

Yeah, they say, "Well, the government should be doing this" (LAUGH). That's the one people come up with, if you go below the surface, really of anything. "Well, this is what government should be doing, to fix things." And I just go, "Oh, no"! And with them I just try to give them examples, and God knows, there are plenty of them. The government itself harms people. . . . The philosophy that I have is really, really is cut from the core and the bedrock of issues about human beings because, you know, everything in the world--everything in the mainstream--is part of the most incredible number of variations you can have on the theme of authority or the individual. . . . To say that the individual is paramount is to say that there's only

one individual the human being must obey, is himself. . . . On our side there's only one variation that makes any sense. But to go to the other side and say that the individual shouldn't be able to rule his own life, there's four billion separate people who could potentially be the ruler that he wants.

Q: What happens when you find people who agree with what you have to say about the government . . . but who don't see the free market as a solution?

A: I--The principle that I try to make clear to them--keep, you know, here's a case and here's another case--just that freedom is not divisible. You can't have, there's no such thing as just a little bit of freedom. . . . To grant, okay, you have the right to force me to do something, or I'll let you force me to do something, is to say that my life is not mine to direct in that case. You know, "Okay, we're going to strictly limit it, it's only for this amount of time each day, or only in this area." But once you've given the answer as a yes instead of a no, the idea that someone else can master you, you know the whole jig is up. And you can't say, "Here, we'll have some restrictions in the market place but still the government should respect every bit of an individual's freedoms, civil freedoms," is not consistent. You know, you can just show a cross-over case with the IRS, how they're required to collect that revenue, and the requirements that they should be able to find out, uh, you know, they should be able to peek into your bank accounts or be able to watch you at work and find out where you earn your money and how and if you're not making any money on the side that you're not telling them about. It just, it's very natural for the restrictions on economic activity to leak over into private life, 'cause there's no real, there's no dividing line that is real. I mean, between one part of your life and another. Or one part of your freedom and another. It's a whole. Either you're free or you're not free. And if you're not free, like I said before, there's a whole different range of being able to restrict this or we'll let that go free, but the jig is up. Once you've said yes instead of no.

The meaning of life for Allen, he says,

is that you must live your life and try to uh, fully express or increase or to expound, or you live your life to try to fulfill the highest values that you have. It is always to try to expand and glorify and fully experience, you know, try to fulfill yourself. And your self is defined pretty much by what you think is important. So you know, for the martyr burning on the cross, I don't know if his mission to glorify God actually comes from God or not, but I think that the idea that he has to live according to what is valuable--and what is valuable to him is the glory of God--then the necessity for him of dying in the service of that cause is, is what the meaning of life is. You know, for that person.

Among the four Individualists, who are all antagonistic to the idea

of the welfare state, Allen's views are the most moderate, and he is the least accusatory about people who are actually on welfare. He says:

Welfare itself isn't the problem. It's just a symptom of the idea that people can't be self-sufficient, or that individuals aren't enough, they aren't qualified to deal with what's bad in the world and make decisions based on their own will, and that they're not qualified to run their own lives.

About proposals to cut welfare benefits, Allen remarks:

Well, it's, I think that's the wrong area to be hitting first. I think the thing that I think is more important is, uh, eliminate the hidden government actions, the spread-out ones that cause the kind of dependencies that lead to programs like welfare. You know, that create a need that programs like welfare fulfill. Getting rid of minimum wage laws and small business regulation, you know, business regulation in general, you know, leaving more things to the open market. . . . When I see a proposal like to cut welfare, you know, it's a good thing but it's not the first thing that should be done. You know, that's the concentrated benefits to the few that are very very visible, and what you should do is cut back those things that people don't realize that the government, that create those needs in the first place.

In looking at the possibility that in a libertarian society, voluntary charity might not be enough to take care of all needs, Allen argues:

Establishing the idea of a society's needs as something that are equally important with individual's needs, is just another form of the same kind of problem we've been dealing with all along: Is it the individual that's important or is it the group that's important? . . . If [charity] runs short--and I see that that's a very bad situation--the question is do you right that wrong by stealing from others--you know, taxing them, imposing force--and for destroying their freedom of choice and their independence of action?

Allen's philosophical individualism is combined with a view of human nature that sees people as cooperative, nonaggressive, and willing to help others, unless "they suffered in childhood, or for some other reason have never learned the options that are better ways to solve a problem." Positive traits are best brought out in a free libertarian society where the childhood feeling that "I'm wonderful, I'm unique" is not "stunted" by being taught to be "selfless." For Allen, "selfishness," or "awareness of self, if you want a term that's easier to take, is being able to

live your life according to what is important to you." In terms of economics, capitalism provides "the most efficient way of cooperating and coordinating resources that's ever been created," with cooperation and competition being "mutually reinforcing in most cases, and in the cases in which there's no coercion or force involved." "People tend to be more industrious than lazy if they know that 30 percent won't be taken away by a government that'll throw them in jail if they don't pay."

As is true for Allen, individualism is stressed by Christine, who says in addition that she has an interest in, and talent for, being a leader. She despairs that, unlike during the days of the American Revolution, "a lot of people are afraid of being individuals any more," and she considers herself to be "more individualistic than most of the people that I run around with." She adds, however, that she's "still uncomfortable being individualistic in some things." "It's hard being a minority. And I think true individuals are really a minority right now."

Christine says that, "being as independent as I am, I would say that economically I would rather live in a capitalist state than in a communist state"; she believes she will do well in "survival-of-the-fittest" capitalist America. Although she thinks that the Libertarian Party is "too extreme" and that we need a world government in order to bring about disarmament, she adds:

I think that the government needs to get out of a lot of things. Um, if I had my way, we'd completely revamp the welfare system.

Q: And do what?

A: Um, just like I was reading in the State News or Time Magazine or something like that, that Social Security and welfare, when they were brought in by Roosevelt, was supposed to be an insurance against not having any money. And it's turned into a retirement plan. . . . I don't know quite how you could do it, but the welfare program needs to be looked at to get people out of it that are



capable of holding down jobs, just don't want to look for them or don't want to have jobs. I know a personal case of a lady on the ADC with three kids, just because she decided to have the kids rather than give them up for adoption, because she doesn't like to work. So she stays around the house and eats potato chips all day and screams at her three kids, and gets paid for it.

In general agreement with the other Individualists, Christine does think "there's a need for welfare and a need for Social Security, but I think they're being used wrong." She also believes that the "desire to work" is now "disappearing."

Christine, like Allen, has a view of human nature that emphasizes cooperation more than competition. Christine, however, who thinks "that man is basically a community-based organism," believes "you get more selfish people in a highly--The selfish side of human nature is expressed more in a highly civilized society because people have the opportunity to display it." Asked if "the switch toward displaying the selfish side" was inevitable, she responds, "I don't think it has to be, because I think that the thing that, if we're going to save ourselves, is going to save ourselves is the willingness to cooperate." She also notes that "you can't distrust people that much and survive," a reference to her disagreement with survivalists who, she thinks, misread "the message behind Heinlein's books" that people "look out for themselves but they [also] look out for their families and their society, too." For Christine, the ideal society would be based on the cooperation of "tolerant," "patient," "intellectually stimulating" individualists.

Bill and David share a view of human nature that is more one-sidedly competitive than the views of Allen and Christine. David, for example, in a typical comment that combines a number of themes he repeatedly returns to, insists that:

Capitalism is probably the finest system for addressing the human

condition, the human spirit. The human need for turf, if you will, for property. The first, that is, the first personal freedom is the right to own property. And with that, yes, the system can go forward on a level of personal freedom and integrity. . . . Because you can't always have everybody have everything. It's not ever been that way; it'll never be that way. . . . It has not and will not change from time immemorial, because no-one really is equal, okay. They just have equal opportunity, under this system. Uh, so I do think that the capitalist type of system does address that reality, where socialism or communism doesn't address that first personal freedom, to own property. And once you don't have that first personal freedom to own property, you really don't have any freedom past that, because somebody else controls your turf, or what could have been your turf. And you as an animal need to have the right to own that whatever-it-is to make your life worthwhile. At least that's the premise of animal--well, Robert Ardrey wrote it, The Territorial Imperative. Desmond Morris wrote it in The Naked Ape, and also The Human Zoo. It's in many of Heinlein's, Robert Heinlein's, uh, stuff, his science fiction, The Moon is a Harsh Mistress, um, I Will Fear No Evil, Stranger in a Strange Land.

It's human nature to want to be "the biggest, baddest dude in the valley." Proper, loving parenting, however, can help instill the kind of responsibility and morality that is often missing in the capitalist system, where, despite its benefits, "we have too many greedy, unethical human beings who love too much turf, too much power." Because of unrestrained greed and the dangers of overpopulation, ecological and economic disaster is a certainty unless strong steps are taken now, including controlling corporate irresponsibility, preventing immigration from the Third World, and ending welfare dependence. "Each of us must take responsibility for our own lives, and I don't want to take responsibility for your life, or your child, or your problems, or anything else, and I shouldn't have to":

We don't owe shit. Today is Number 1. Today is today. You know, a person in this country who's black, who's Hispanic, they have to get off their ass, take a shit [job], go get some food, or to eat, go earn some money, or whatever, themselves. . . . If they aren't, they can get their ass back to where they think it's so much greater. But to sit around on their ass and complain and not do anything, not contribute--Hell, I don't have time. And everybody makes a choice in the final analysis. They make a choice to get educated or not to get educated. You know, etcetera, down the line. And yes, some of

those folks have a harder time in one way or another. Just saying, if you are going to start yelling and screaming the loudest, you'd better back it up, back your ass up with something that you've done or something that you're doing, some action on the positive plane. . . . There must be responsibilities toward the system. . . . Liberals are just--and they think the only way to make responsibilities is to heap more taxes on your butt and my butt. We're the ones who contribute. Even the [pet dog] here. He has responsibilities. He gets food, he gets love, and he gets care. But in return, he eats somebody's face if they come in this house unattended.

Bill too complains about people who "don't look for work," and although in response to a question he says it's "true" that it's hard to find jobs for the millions of unemployed, he immediately reiterates: "And there is some work out there. Maybe it's just me. I think that if people really tried, they could still find work." After recounting the story of a former employee who quit his job in order to "make more money not working" on welfare, Bill says "There's not enough incentive to work." After agreeing that "the government can't let people starve" and that "there's more people than jobs," he again says, "But still. . . . I don't like the idea of someone collecting welfare and not doing anything. Fishing all day, or sitting around and--There should be some kind of training or something."

Overall, I just don't like the idea of anybody getting money, just getting it. There should be some trade-off, you know. If the women don't have a high school diploma, have a certain time schedule set up that they have to have their GED in. Now you couldn't cut 'em off, I guess, if they didn't have it, but you could make life, you could make it miserable for 'em getting the money (LAUGH). They can run you around a lot if they want to.

Bill concludes "I still think that anybody who uh, who can speak English and who wants to get ahead can, at least to make themselves a living if not, if not actually do something with their life."

"Basic human nature," according to Bill, "more than anything is a problem" because "people are out too much for themselves," too concerned with "wanting power." Power and strength in general are recurring themes

for Bill, who sees himself as a leader. "I just think that deep down in all people there's a dog-eat-dog nature. And I think that when the shit hits the fan, that that comes out in most people."

### Collectivism

In contrast to the Individualists, the Collectivists tend to believe that the system is structured against individuals at the bottom and that, consequently, welfare is both a practical and a moral necessity; some form of income redistribution is seen as a worthwhile goal. People do have a personal responsibility to help others who are "casualties of the system." Human nature is seen as somewhat more mixed, and the selfish, competitive aspects of it--enhanced under capitalism--must be held in check to allow more room for the equally natural cooperative aspects. People are seen as naturally social, with societal changes interfering with the necessary emphasis on cooperation and community; working or living in a group context is often seen as appealing or necessary.

Victor, to a much greater extent than any of the other Collectivists, acknowledges that greed ("Let's just call it self-interest") is "something that's always going to be there," and his strong belief in the competitive basis of human nature often matches the views of Bill and David. "I think it's natural, it's human nature, to want, in terms of material benefits, to want more." Victor, however, goes to much greater lengths to modify what is, for the Individualists, a more one-sided view:

But what you can, I guess, emphasize is, uh, in seeking to fulfill your self-interests, that you are responsible to not only your fellow man, your society. And that you're, well--responsibility for individual actions, uh. And that you are going to be held responsible for that.

"One of the things that's missing in my life right now," says Victor, "is

that I'm not involved in a community-oriented type of endeavor." He says his own "self-interest is tied into . . . the broader interests of the community." The thrust of Victor's research has been to help reform the electoral process by removing the influence of large amounts of money; after he finished his studies, he again put more time into working on public issues. For him, the purpose of life "is to look at something and be able to see the room for improvement. . . . That for me, I think, is probably the motivating force behind all this silly stuff I do about complaining about the political system."

In terms of individual responsibility for people's position in the social system, Victor's views are typical of the Collectivists:

Reagan reflects a philosophy that's been with this country ever since its inception, in that we attribute poverty or a person's hard times on faults of the individual. In other words, the individual's fault that they find themselves in that situation. Well, there certainly is an element of truth in that. In particular instances that's the whole truth of the matter. But in other instances, you know, it's not the individual--Can you fault the individual, can you fault a steel worker who works in the mill in the hills of Pennsylvania, a one-company town where you had a prosperous company that was bought out by a bigger fish with the intent of the bigger fish to milk that company for all it's worth? . . . The end result being that the person who worked there is suddenly on the unemployment line? Okay, that's the kind of situation where you can't blame, totally blame, the individual.

Victor, who is the only Collectivist to indicate any interest in becoming an entrepreneur, says that "for a lot of small business people," how well someone does is determined at least partly by "if you're willing to put the effort behind it to see it to fruition." He makes it clear, however, that he doesn't think the link between individual reward and individual effort is "applicable to somebody who's working in a factory" who is "working for somebody else and going through the prescribed motions."

Roberta's view of human nature includes the belief that "there's probably a range of human natures in every human culture." For her, "The

way that I feel about people is that you can't live your life in isolation so you might as well be altruistic." She notes that "There aren't really that many animals that are really inherently violent" except for "survival reasons," and she sees herself as trusting and "optimistic about human nature," though sometimes cautious in dealing with others "whose human nature are not the way I would like them to be."

Describing conservatives as "more oriented toward . . . making a profit . . . for one person, for their individual selves," Roberta says:

liberal is more . . . making sure that the poor people have enough to survive on. And unfortunately, you know, in cases that means taking money away from the people who make more money. Um, which I have trouble--I think that anybody who works for something, um, ought to be able to reap the benefits.

Asked if socialism removes motivation to achieve, Roberta responds:

Um, I don't know, I see it as a more complicated situation than that. Um, I think in situations where people are dwelling in poverty and had no means to do anything for themselves in perhaps a dictatorial situation--In that situation, they'd have no motivation to improve their lot because history tells them they can't. Um, and if, if someplace like--Nicaragua, um, is defined as socialist, um, you can, there are concrete examples of communities that now are getting some sort of financial assistance and can plan, and are motivated to improve their communities, whatever.

Once basic needs are taken care of, "and everybody's healthy and happy and educated and jobs," which is "probably a long long way,"

Then will people still have the motivation to improve their lives, you know, get a better paying job or, um, something like that? And in that situation it may be that upward mobility, economic mobility might be less possible, therefore people would be less motivated to do that sort of thing.

Q: Is that a problem?

A: Um, it depends. I mean, I don't think most people would be because, um, a lot of people are probably always satisfied . . . . Probably some people would be frustrated by the fact they couldn't, you know, become the boss or something, play the game of power or something like that. And at that point we get to the situation of, well, should that person be able or shouldn't he be able to? I think if they're decreasing other people's level of existence,

standard of living, whatever, in the act of elevating their own, I think it's good that they wouldn't be able to do that.

The views of the other Collectivists parallel many of these positions taken by Roberta and Victor, with variations of course according to their own political ideologies. Paul, for example, often talks of his goal of a society in which "there'd be more stress on social responsibility and some sort of . . . communal responsibility, and less stress on individual gain against others. Just much more of a stress on, um, where an individual fits in to a larger societal relationship." He responds to the question about socialism removing people's incentives:

Well, if your incentive is--I think, I think at one level it does remove the incentive. But that, that's because my impression is that oftentimes the incentive, the incentive is to, is for personal gain and personal greed. To try and, and--and I don't mean that in a pejorative sense. I think people oftentimes are motivated by very, you know, very fine ideas of, you know, doing for their children what they never had, making a good life, and all that kind of stuff. But, that can happen outside of any sort of corporate consciousness, where you, you really see that you're part of a larger whole, and that, you know, it's not impossible for both you and for everybody else to gain at the same time. So in a sense, I think if socialism were actually to happen, it wouldn't, it would take away the incentive to sort of accumulate--that acquisitiveness that American society seems to have. Um, and it, I think it would, it would necessitate a fundamental change in one's outlook on one's property, at, at an individual level. I don't know that that's possible. . . . But I think it's something to look towards. It's a better goal I think to work towards than, than a capitalist society.

In terms of his own life, Paul also says, reminiscent of Victor's view, and even of the Individualist David, that

I think I'm real big on responsibility for my life. People don't take enough responsibility for their own . . . actions, or for the situations they get themselves into. I think you can carry it too far. I think you're not responsible for everything. There are some things that aren't in your control. But, by and large, you have to recognize that you are responsible for trying to figure it out.

But, carried into the political realm, Paul disagrees with the notion that the individual is responsible for his or her own economic position. The American tendency to blame economic distress on the individual is a

very very good kind of attitude . . . for a government to instill in its people, because you automatically deflect tension from the system. You've got a whole group of people out there who believe success or failures depend on them and not on some economic structure that they're caught in, you're not gonna have very many revolutions.

More than any of the other participants, Paul says "a lot of things come down to whether or not you're willing to sacrifice a little bit in some sort of cooperative effort," and he criticizes people on the left who are not willing to temper their American individualism. Still, in discussing people who violate laws against environmental pollution by "pumping leaded gas into their newer cars," he adds:

I think you can force people, but I think you can force them only to a point. . . . If they don't see that somehow their self-interest is involved, there's only so much you can do. . . I don't think I believe in sort of a rigid system where you, you force people to do things against their will. Um, I think there's an individual responsibility involved in it. If that isn't enough at some point, you know, I don't know what else you can do.

Timothy and Scott, as is clear from the material in their Participant Profiles, both share the several subthemes of Collectivism with Paul, Roberta, and Victor. Timothy says "I don't go along with the idea that . . . people who are unemployed . . . are just lazy. . . . If jobs are totally available, I think most people would want to work." He thinks "there is certain selfish tendencies, to survive," but he says "the Libertarians, I think they're--or the extreme unrestrained, those who are enthusiastic on unrestrained capitalism--That over-selfishness, or not caring about what happens to the poor people, is rather horrible."

At one point, Scott says he has "a healthy disrespect for human nature, even my own," but for the most part he emphasizes his Buddhist belief that human nature includes both "the divine and the earthly . . . in different proportions in everyone," and that there's a general "progression." "I would have trouble living if I thought the universe is



fundamentally negative." He adds that, "In some ways, I do have this irrational but strong faith in humans, in humanity." American society has become too isolated, with people too self-absorbed and competitive and "not very socially concerned." People would be better off turning to each other; "just the aspect of working on something . . . together, that would be positive." "The purpose of life is to make yourself happy," but "the truthful happiness is gotten by nurturing the divine. . . . Recognizing it in yourself and in others, and then working with it," which Scott again translates as "to do for other people. And it's basically to me the only purpose."

#### Differentiating Theme 2:

##### Personal Consequences of the Sick Society

As described in Chapter VII, both the Individualists and the Collectivists agree that, in general, American society is a sick society, with widespread dissatisfaction and unmet physical and psychological needs. Despite this belief, however, the Individualists insist that they themselves are doing okay, and expect to do okay in the future, because they are capable, practical, and intelligent, true individualists who can flourish despite societal problems. They are personally optimistic about their own lives, and at least three of the four are fairly certain about what they want to do in the future. In fact, even though they do think society in general might be going downhill, these same three (Allen, David, and Christine) enthusiastically view the United States as a near-perfect society--resembling a utopia--for autonomous individuals who are capable of taking advantage of it.

This theme of personal immunity from the sick society is absent for

the Collectivists, who for the most part tend to see themselves, as they see others, as susceptible to the widespread consequences of a society with basic problems. Most are less optimistic, and less certain about their goals, than are the Individualists, and speak with much less enthusiasm. Rather than seeing the US in utopian terms, the Collectivists either see it in clearly dystopian terms, or, more generally in keeping with their political views, they conclude that only a few get the real benefits of the American economic system.

### Personal Immunity

Christine, for example, differentiates herself from people who attempt to create utopian communes:

Well, I don't know if it's that I'm a perfectionist who doesn't necessarily expect everything to be perfect, and they're perfectionist who do expect everything to be perfect, or if I'm just not as perfectionist, or what. But, I think they're people who are expecting everything to be perfect, they can make it perfect. And I don't think that any human agent can ever make everything perfect. And I'm pretty happy with things the way they are.

Q: Why is that?

A: Well, I do meaningful work (LAUGH), I have friends that are intellectually stimulating. I'd like it better if my classes were more interesting, but, all in all, a university is a really--I would say that the university environment comes closer to utopia than anything else that I've experienced.

Utopia, says Christine another time, would be

any place where I could do work that is meaningful to me. Have people around me that were intellectually challenging and that I could be myself with, have a good time, enough time to do what I want besides work. I guess that's it.

Q: What kind of society do you think would be the best kind of society where that could happen?

A: Where it could happen--Well, it's possible today in American society if you can find the right little niche. And then don't get any newspapers or watch TV news (LAUGH).

Christine is "a lot more satisfied" with her life now than when she

was in high school. "I have a better idea of where I'm going and how I'm going to get there." An important goal is to become a doctor. She expects that, "Five years from now, I'll be graduating from med school. And I'll still be in the army, and I hope I'll be doing research work." In general, she says--reminiscent of the Army's "Be all that you can be" recruiting advertisement--"I want to be honest, and, I don't know, just generally be the best person I can be. I'd like to make a mark on the world, if possible." Asked how she might to do that, she responds, "I haven't decided yet. I may cure cancer. Right now I'm working on a project that, if it works out, seven years from now will cure diabetes." Success for her is "being happy with what I'm doing," unlike her view of what it means for most people: "Money, lots of it." Christine adds later that, "Actually, I can't think of anything that I ever really wanted and didn't get."

Christine's enthusiastic optimism about her life, as great as it is, is surpassed by that shown by David throughout the interviews. David is openly and continually excited about his writing, about his past and future travelling adventures, about his being a rational, intelligent "participant" in society and in nature and not a "spectator." Rather than ever resorting to welfare, he says,

I will go out--and I did, I worked for Manpower, three dollars an hour. I worked for Kelly Girl. Uh, I washed dishes. That's all there is to it. . . . There is always a job to get, and I'll get it. If it's the lowest paying scum bag job in the street, I'll get it. I will participate, 'cause I take so much from the society--Well, I won't say I take so much, but I am a participant in the society, so I must give back to it. I must contribute. And I want to contribute. Because I really like this society. It is just the glorious, most glorious adventure in a society that has ever been known. And I'm very thankful for it.

"A utopian situation," David thinks,

is purely fiction. It's utopia for those who are able to somehow blend their ability to fulfill their personal expectations and their need for food, water, drink, and clothes and playthings and whatever they make, that makes them happy. Uh, and to live a life that is essentially fulfilled, self-actualized and so forth. And that's on a personal level for some people. . . . I don't think that a utopia can exist naturally. I don't think it will exist. And even if it did exist, it would only be for a few. I mean, here we have essentially a, in this country, a utopia for a vast amount of people, and yet, right within our borders of utopia . . . just across the street is ghettos, a ghetto situation. . . . And yet there's the one person there who joined essentially the utopia and another person, because of birth, because of brain power, because of condition, because of environment, is living in sheer misery.

Q: How about the people who aren't in--You're saying that for most Americans, it's utopia?

A: No, I think--No, I--Again, it gets down to description of utopia. It's utopia for those who are able to self-actualize. It's utopia for those who can get up every day and feel happy.

Allen and Bill are somewhat less enthusiastic, optimistic, and personally satisfied with their current lives than are the other two Individualists, but they still see themselves as essentially capable individualists who will do well in American society. Allen, who says his long-term problem with low self-esteem is easing partly because of his acceptance of "this individualist philosophy that I have," remains most enthusiastic about his libertarian beliefs:

The best utopia is a framework for all possible utopias. And this is what I was saying, that my kind of optimism is better than someone who says there'll be peace on earth and everyone smile at each other and give away everything. Because I think that this is something that's not only optimistic but optimistic about the real world. It could happen. You know, that is my version of realistic utopia, that's the best people could ever live with each other.

A truly libertarian society will not come in his lifetime, Allen acknowledges, but "I just hope we get a lot closer while I'm still around." He does think it will come about "sometime within the next couple of hundred years, if . . . not even sooner than that."

Although Allen would prefer to see a move toward a greater degree of

libertarianism, the development of a more ideal society would not significantly change the kind of life he actually expects to have:

What I would be doing is--I don't think the job market would be a whole lot different from what is now. I would, you know, you go into different companies, and say, "These are my talents and these are my skills and I want this much money to start with. Can you find a place for me?" Or else, if I was really a good job applicant, I'd say, "This is where I can help you. This is why you should hire me." You know, but I--I think I'd pretty much be living the way I will be doing anyway. Going to a job where someone has agreed to pay me a certain amount of money for a certain amount of work that I've agreed to, and then coming home to some apartment where I'm paying rent per month, and you know, going out to do whatever activities that I've decided to take part in.

A few moments later, when asked for his views about attempts at building utopian communities, Allen adds:

I guess just the really important consideration for you to notice is that I'm really wrapped up in thinking of my life in terms of the job network and the market as it is and making a living. And I really don't consider alternatives to that very seriously. But that's not something that ranks very high for me. I don't know, I, I can't say that this is my entire reason for being suspicious of it but part of it is kind of reluctance to take myself out of society as it is. Bad as it is, it's the best. And you know, I think I can do a good amount to change the larger society towards the way of freedom.

Allen expects

to get a second degree in economics now, and when I go to law school, get a combined program in law and economics. . . . Anywhere from law, pure law on one side and pure economic research on the other, anywhere in that spectrum I would be satisfied making a living. Just I think I'm going to wind up--or at least, I'll probably make an effort to wind up like somebody like [libertarian theorist] Murray Rothbard.

Bill, the fourth Individualist, shares the basic personal optimism of the other Individualists, but is less goal-oriented. As discussed earlier, he is particularly confident about his ability to write "just stuff like [Kurt] Vonnegut, a little more complex than Vonnegut," but he has only vague plans about turning his talent in the direction of a career--he thinks he may "try to get into writing, maybe screenwriting or

something," though he also returns to the possibility of settling for a high-paying advertising job.

Bill sees himself as a leader, and as more intelligent, realistic, and insightful than most people. He believes he knows how to "manipulate people," though he denies doing it. He thinks he has generally escaped the apathy, alienation, lack of empathy, and other problems widespread in American life. He might be interested in visiting a commune "to talk to them," but only one-to-one rather than in a group, because only then would you "hear some negative things." "I can't see myself getting all worked up about it and living in one, and calling my parents and saying, 'Oh, it's the greatest, the flowers are blooming.'"

#### Personal Susceptibility

The Individualists, whose personal goals mesh fairly well with both their political ideologies and the realities of American society, have cause for optimism in terms of achieving those goals. The Collectivists, on the other hand, despite similar high levels of intellectual ability and academic success and generally positive self-assessments, have political ideals that are less likely to be achieved on the societal level; their personal goals, often tied in to their political goals, are counted upon less as well.

Scott is perhaps the most conflicted about his current and future life. Several months before his graduation, I asked him what he planned to do afterwards:

I was going to talk about that today, but gee, I don't really know. Um, I'll tell you some ideas. I might go down to Nicaragua, see what I can do down there, see if they can use me at all at something other than a foot soldier. I could do some sort of journalistic, news, management type thing. Um, I might bum around the country, go out west, visit my sister. I don't want to--there's a strong urge to do that, you know. There's also the practical. It's always

possible that I might do something practical, but I'm disinclined to. Um, that would be going, setting up interviews, getting an internship, getting a job right out of school. I really don't think I'm going to do that.

Scott reacts to the increasing isolation and other problems he sees within American society--symbolized for him by the Beast of the Fascist Age--with much greater personal difficulty than do the Individualists. He is extremely introspective. Thinking about American "misdeeds" in Central America "drives me into depression." When I ask about his knowledge of utopian communities, he says he's read about them:

I've always been fascinated by them, actually, because for a while I was a utopian. I thought about that a lot. Trying to make a community like that. Uh, I guess now I feel like, the present state of the world is like, it's almost irresponsible. . . . where it's almost irresponsible to break away. Because you obviously are part of the world, you are affected.

Scott has never visited a commune, but assumes he eventually will, and that the people who choose to live in them are "temporary people. . . . That's how I would feel myself, at a stage in life where you decide to get yourself together and go to a commune." He points out that "monasteries are in a sense utopian"; at another point he says,

I wanted to be a monk. . . . Decided somewhere along the line that that would be too selfish. And I still have--The problem with communes right now, um, is I guess a sense of urgency that I feel in the situation now. I mean the world. Of course it comes down to, well, can you do anything about it anyway, which is another--I mean, you must know that I don't have these things resolved. Some of the things I wonder about myself.

Scott sees himself as an escapist, and says he uses drugs on a regular basis:

One thing I haven't been very successful at is cutting down on my escapism. I think, I guess the problem with that is sort of an escapist notion of dealing with escapism. That if the situation would change, then the need for escapism would disappear, which is outrageous, you know. Um, I think--Although I still think the same nonetheless. You know, if I wasn't alone, if I was in a commune, if everything was perfect, I wouldn't need to escape. But (LAUGH) it's really likely I'm not really setting myself up to go in that direc-

tion. So, I'll probably end up being a limited escapist at best. I think, I mean, isn't that what 20th Century life's all about?

In contrast to the utopian visions of the Individualists, visions that resemble US society, Scott describes a network of smaller communes, each "a group of about a hundred people, fifty to a hundred people" who are self-sustaining. "I'd like it to be a vegetarian community":

I think that people actually work best in that type of small environment, where you know the people you work with, and even if you don't know them, you know their faces, you know who is in the community. . . . It's like there's a sense of community.

Roberta, who also read utopian literature in high school, has a view of communes and utopia that closely resembles Scott's. She says of people who try to create utopian communities:

I used to think that it was great, and, Wow! That's a wonderful idea! You know, have your own little place and ignore the rest of the world. Now I guess I look at it as pretty escapist, and I--I don't think there's anything wrong with that, because those people who are escaping to these little niches or whatever are not doing anybody else any harm. And that goes by my definition (LAUGH) of right existence.

Roberta would visit a commune "if I knew somebody who lived in one; I'd certainly like to go see what it was like. I'd probably want to stay, too (LAUGH)." She remembers designing a village-size rural utopian community for a school project "around sixth grade or something," and she still thinks of utopia in such terms. "It's probably 'cause of my background, growing up in a rural area." She also thinks that:

If there were to be utopian existence, people would have to live more or less a Taoist sort of life, or, um--It doesn't, you know, necessarily have to be defined as one particular religion unless--as one could be in a real basic Christian way too, because they're pretty similar. . . . I sort of stopped thinking about it for a long time, and just recently I was sort of thinking about it a little bit and didn't get very far. And I was wondering if it would be boring (LAUGH). Um, I don't think that it would necessarily have to be dull or anything, because there um, it seems to me it would be a time when people were being really creative and have time and energy to spend on things that now seem completely frivolous, but are really self-fulfilling.



Roberta is not generally dissatisfied with her life right now, though she laughs about "wild mood swings once in a while" that "tend to be short-lived." She does say, "I often have, I seem to be plagued by changing goals in midstream. Uh, you know, halfway toward one goal I decide that's not what I want to work towards." She's not sure if she will pursue an academic career; instead, at the time of the interviews she says she's

trying out being very active in Latin American things. I feel that I'm sort of experimenting with my lifestyle. . . . I think eventually, I'll go on. Right now, I'm not really interested. . . . I'm not willing to give up enough the rest of my life just to be a hotshot academician, and I'd have to be to get a job.

Roberta's lack of enthusiasm for the career her academic background has trained her for parallels Paul's. Although he likes the "university atmosphere" and says "I used to think I really wanted to, to be in a university," now it's become more apparent that "I don't know any more":

I really like teaching. . . . But there's so much bullshit that goes with being in a department and so much uncertainty and--you know, I don't know that I want to do that. And I don't know that I want to . . . go through what it takes to try and get tenure either. . . . So, I don't know what I'm going to do. I think, sometimes, I wanna be a writer.

His unsettled family life has affected his preferred research plans.

Paul would like to go abroad, but "We keep having babies. . . . So it really sorta . . . shelved the two or three ideas that I had that I liked the best. Which is too bad, but got no-one to blame but myself (LAUGH)." He says he's "really stuck, stuck financially, stuck trying to get work done that I don't have time to do any more. Stuck because I'm outta energy. Too many sleepless nights." He wonders if it's possible to get more out of life.

Paul's ideal society would be a socialist one in which there's a

greater emphasis on "the kind of relationships that humans have within themselves, I think that's what's important. Especially economic relationships." "I would like to think that ideally, a society could evolve in which work has more of a meaning and has some dignity attached to it," where technology is used for the benefit of all and the wealth "is really distributed," He agrees with all the Collectivists that the society we have today is far from utopian. Unlike Roberta and Scott, however, he's not personally attracted to what he calls the "preindustrial sort of agrarian bucolic ideal world, where each little unit was self-sufficient," which he says was advocated by the "utopian socialists."

"That's not possible. And I don't even think it's desirable." He does, however,

sympathize with people who want to do that. I think in a, I think in part of a lot of us, if not all of us, there's a desire to--Or there's a, a repulsion when you look around and see what's going on. And a desire to turn your back and try and create, you know, the best that you can in your own little corner. . . . It's probably realistic, because you really can't change the world all by yourself, and perhaps people in communes realize that. . . . I think the problem that I have with that is that if--It isn't, it isn't a solution for any more than those few people. Uh, it doesn't address the larger problem. It's an attempt to treat the symptom but it isn't really an attempt to treat the cause of what's happening. And I think. . . . I don't think that you can run away from the world. I don't think you can isolate yourself enough. . . . I'm perfectly willing to let people do things like that. . . . For me, they just don't present the kind of solution that I want to see.

Victor, the only Collectivist who has entrepreneurial interests, is also the only one who confidently insists, "I'll get that type of situation," referring to his primary interest in a career in influencing public policy. "I'll get something." Twenty years from now, "I'm gonna be doing something that will be tied into politics and public policy." He's satisfied with most parts of his life, though "I feel a need" for "donating time on a volunteer basis for a community, for the benefit of

the whole." He says he is happy, satisfied with most parts of his life.

Victor's view of utopia, not surprisingly, is a blend of the Collectivists' focus on socialism and the Individualists' focus on variations of American society:

My idea of a utopia would be having a system of representative democracy where at least 90 percent of the electorate showed up in each election. . . . And in conjunction with that, an educational system that stresses lifelong learning and a stress on political participation and awareness.

Such a development "would help equal out some of the imbalances that exist right now," and would lead to a "more equitable system in terms of distributing wealth and income." Victor shares Paul's view that small utopian communities are not a solution on a large scale, and he says he disagrees with those who

remove themselves from society in attempting to pursue that dream. I question why it is impossible, why they don't attempt to do the same within a given city where there are other people around, why they can't do that. Why do you have to remove yourself from other groups of people?

Victor notes that, "for different people utopia means different things" and "for a democracy that has to compromise . . . it's very difficult to think in terms of creating a utopian society, because of our diversity and tolerance. . . . You've gotta operate within the Constitution" and "not infringe on the Constitutional rights of the minority."

I think when we talk about utopia as it pertains to a democracy, the only utopia for a democracy is a stronger democracy. Which I guess democratic socialism would be my idea of a high, high level of democracy, a strong secure democracy.

Q: You think this country will ever get there, democratic socialism?

A: Well, we have a degree of it now. The very existence of social welfare programs gives meaning to that. . . . So it's a matter of degree. I'd like to see a stronger degree of it.

The final Collectivist among the participants, Timothy, is retired. Throughout his life, he says, he hasn't accomplished his goals "to the

extent that I would've wanted probably. Still keep going, I guess (LAUGH). Can't ever tell." However, he's "pretty much" satisfied with what he has been doing, and "would like to get more of . . . the things written on the Kennedy and Johnson administrations." "I think there is certain mellowing with age that you can get." "I'm kind of an optimist, fairly easily pleased, I think." Timothy puts a lot of effort into frequent newspaper letters and other means of communicating his views, though he thinks that he's not very persuasive in getting across his political perspective to people holding traditional doctrinaire perspectives.

Timothy's qualms about large-scale utopian solutions are similar to Victor's. "Why does it have to be the 100 percent state owned or 100 percent private?" he asks. "Why can't they have a mixed" system, where people have choices? For him, of course, as for Victor, a more egalitarian democratic socialism would be the direction in which to move the United States. On a more personal level, the idea of an ideal situation evokes images of rural living, "on the edge of a wilderness perhaps, but a very quiet area, and yet perhaps on the other side having a lot of things going on," such as "an academic community." "But that would be a personal thing."

### Differentiating Theme 3:

#### The Prospect of Technological Solutions

The Individualists and the Collectivists differ markedly in the degree to which they consider advanced technology to be a likely solution to widespread problems. In general, the Individualists enthusiastically believe that in the long run, despite current societal problems, and assuming we don't destroy ourselves first, the world is going to be a

much better place because of the virtues of science and technology. The Collectivists, on the other hand, are noticeably less enthusiastic about what technology is likely to bring, and more likely to link the prospects of useful technological solutions to desired political change.

### Technological Enthusiasm

Bill, the least enthusiastic of the Individualists, nevertheless insists that the answer to problems such as toxic waste "is gonna have to come from science"; the "chemists, I hope, right now are working on it, trying to take care of it." Bill's attitude is much less optimistic than that of the other three Individualists, each of whom mentions the science fiction of the libertarian-survivalist writer Robert Heinlein as having influenced his or her thinking and each of whom strongly believes that space colonies will some day prove to be a practical means of resolving current crises on earth. Only Bill has "never really read that much science fiction" and doesn't bring up the possibility of space colonies.

Christine describes herself as a science fiction fan and subscribes to "some science fiction magazine." When asked near the end of the final interview about books that had influenced her, she responds:

Well, books I've read--most of Robert Heinlein's books. When I first started reading them, I really disagreed with his view of humans and how they should interact and all that. And I've since changed my mind, over a period of six years now since I started reading him. I agree, I think he's right.

Disagreeing with those who think they will survive a nuclear war, Christine thinks that the survivalists reprint Heinlein because:

Heinlein has never been one of those people to advocate, uh, banning weapons of any sort. And all of his heroes and heroines and people like that are people who can take care of themselves. But if the survivalists really understood the message behind Heinlein's books, and people never--They look out for themselves but they look out for their families and their society, too.

Q: And you don't think the survivalists do that?

A: They sure aren't looking out for society. They don't care about anything except their own skins.

Q: So the view in Heinlein that you kind of like is, um, capable, self-confident people who are helping each other get through things.

A: Right.

"Mankind is capable of almost anything," Christine notes. "A lot of people are scared of technology because it seems to be dehumanizing, which it can be. But it doesn't necessarily have to be." Technology brings "the blessing of the communications revolution," and, also, the prospect of "living in space, finding other planets where we can live."

Space. We have the technology to get out there. The question right now is one of commitment. Are we going to commit people to living in outer space, maybe on a mission to Alpha Centauri, travel to Alpha Centauri or some other star system where there's a possibility of an inhabitable planet? Which takes quite a few years, so we would have to either put people in suspended animation or create a spaceship large enough for it to be self-supporting.

Christine's views on technology are matched by those of Allen and David. Allen remembers reading "mostly science fiction" as a young teenager; when asked about books that had influenced him, his first response was Heinlein, who has "a fairly individualist and anti-authoritarian outlook." David, too, spontaneously brought up Heinlein's name, in the context of a discussion of the territorial, animal-like quality of human nature, and referred to Heinlein's novels, which he didn't read until his mid-twenties, as utopian. Both also think space colonies are going to help resolve earth's problems; Allen expects that to happen

in another twenty or thirty years. I'll be forty or fifty, but I would like to fly in space sometime in my life, and um, one of the questions I'm not really, not really sure about myself . . . I wonder if I would really . . . wind up taking that big a step of being like, say, a colonist on the moon, or . . . a space city at one of the L5 points.

David says that an explosion of human population into space will happen "absolutely":

I don't want to be one of them, though. I like it here. I want to live and die in the good green earth. I don't, I'm not the kind to go out there and run around. . . . I'm not the Star Trek—I like Star Trek, that's the only movie I ever thought was worth watching because of the positive things they say. Uh, much like [Heinlein's] Stranger in a Strange Land. But I like to just enjoy the earth. I love living in this day and age. This is the greatest time, as far as I'm concerned, to be alive, because you have the technological advances. I can go wind surfing, I can go motor cycling, I ride a bicycle, I can do what I want. . . . In the final analysis, where there's a cataclysmic war, if it's a cataclysm of disease or starvation or whatever, there will be those of us who survive, and it will be a survival situation. . . . There will be those of us who survive and actually win, and prolifically win, and go out, and they'll go back to the stars. Or they'll certainly maintain here, whatever they do. . . . and they will maintain, and they will rebuild, and start over again.

For David, "anything that's thinkable is possible," including eventually learning to unleash unused powers of the mind:

We'll just take that picture over there and send it across the room if we want to. We will be able to do those things because if they're thinkable, they're possible. . . . Whether Warp Factor 9 on Star Trek Enterprise, I don't have any doubt that some day we will create the ability. . . . Because I think it's just so unlimited what we are doing. We started with the pea brain, and we've come this far, look how much farther we can go. That is one of the great, the great incrediblenesses of the human race, the creativity of it. God, that is a tremendous thing to me, it tickles me pink. I'm glad to be a part of it.

Allen's enthusiasm for technology, shown in one of his letters to the newspaper in which he justified expensive medical research, is modified by his libertarian philosophy. At several different points during the interviews he adds the caution that technology will advance to its fullest only if economic freedom under true capitalism is brought about:

The extent to which the US is free is also the extent to which it has been the most prosperous country where, the freest country, the one where all the--well, an enormous amount of the technological advance comes from, you know, free scientific inquiry.

Given the proviso that freedom is more in practice, more of a practice than an ideal everyone talks about, then there is always





the possibility of minds to come up with ways to solve a problem, but. . . . I think the mind is always going to be equal to the task of providing for everybody. And that's given the incredibly large, all-important proviso that those people are not stopped by force, you know, they're, 30 percent of their work effort is not taken away by the government, or up to 98 percent in England. And the proviso that they have the right to disseminate information and read information freely, etcetera.

When you're not relying just on the government to solve problems, that means that some, you know, some school kid on the way home from school thinks up a clever idea, go "Hey, that'll solve pollution." And you've got billions of people who each have their own little out, uh, outlooks. Any one of those might come up with the idea that can solve that problem. And you know, and, well, what happens . . . in that society, says, "Ah, I can make some bucks off of that by packaging that or publicizing it" or whatever. And there's just millions of individual contributions done for one's own sake, that help everybody.

The Individualists do not deny that technology brings pollution and other problems. All are concerned about toxic wastes, for example, and all but Allen want more governmental regulation to prevent such problems, though they do expect technological developments to provide the ultimate solution. Despite their recognition of harmful technological byproducts, however, all would probably agree with Allen's conclusion:

That's where hope's going to come from. Technology is the ability to come up with, to devise means to correct problems. You know, that's how it starts. There's a problem that people can't get around very easily between city to city so Henry Ford--no, the person he ripped it off from--invents an automobile which is cheap enough for the average worker to buy, and that allows him that transportation, okay. And maybe that causes a problem of pollution, but you know, that means that there'd have to be modifications to that motor to raise the cost of it but reduces costs of pollution. . . . It's true, you know, that any time you introduce technology, it creates problems, but the whole reason it was introduced in the first place is to meet a problem, meet a need. And there's no way you're going to have a problemless world. Introducing technology is not multiplying the problems that there are. That's not the kind of thing where you'd be better off just leaving it at the lower level, because at the same time, they're introducing . . . how to deal with this particular aspect of pollution we didn't have before. But at the same time, this technology has more than doubled the average lifespan over the last hundred years, and we've gone from being able to support a population of maybe 20 million to 200 million and things like that.

### Technological Caution

Allen's belief that maximum technological improvement can come about only in a libertarian free-market society resembles a corresponding view held by the Collectivists: that whatever promise technology does bring depends on the nature of the political system in which the technology is embedded. The Collectivists, of course, do not consider the free market to be the solution that Allen does. Rather, in one way or another, they urge greater economic and political equality, with increased controls placed upon those who now profit at the expense of others. All the Collectivists are less enthusiastic about technological cures for social ills than are the Individualists; most do acknowledge the benefits, but focus instead on the problems.

None of the Collectivists mention Robert Heinlein, and unlike the Individualists, most show little or no interest in science fiction. Paul can "count on one hand" the science fiction books he has read; Scott has read "some, a smattering," but "I don't care for science fiction too much"; Timothy responds simply by saying "not very much" when asked if he's read any. The most interest is expressed by Victor, who has "literally stopped reading fiction the past couple of years" but who did read science fiction "when I was a kid," and especially by Roberta, who "used to read a lot of" science fiction when younger, and who in the past few years has read some by Ursula LeGuin, a feminist writer.

Despite her interest in science fiction, Roberta rejects notions of a technological utopia, saying, "Yeah, science fiction's full of that":

Utopia. Um, I guess in some ways that kind of scares me because, um--Well, I think this really scares me but I don't think that, that it would, that it's really possible because of . . . resources. When I was talking about it scaring me, it's because people get completely out of touch with the way the earth is and have a, um,

completely human-created environment. . . .

Having more people than presently grow up without being out in the woods at all, without being in touch with nature, because I think there's a lot to learn that people can learn about themselves from observing nature (LAUGH).

Similarly, asked about technological solutions such as space stations, Timothy acknowledges, "Umm, that's possible," and laughingly adds "but I imagine the costs of space travel would have to come down by a tremendous amount." In terms of other possible technological solutions to problems such as world hunger, he says:

Population should be controlled. I guess certainly technological things can do it, but I think we have enough even now to feed everybody, and . . . we went into that distribution problem. . . . I think, it would have to be political solutions for them along with the technological. Certainly agricultural research has done an awful lot.

The ambivalence about technology is, perhaps, expressed most clearly by Victor:

The role of technology primarily has satisfied, in the 20th Century, the short term material considerations that are common to most people. In other words, improving their standard of living. Technology has been able to do that, in the industrialized world at least. That's geared up towards satisfying the here and now than it is towards thinking of the future and what are the consequences of these actions.

Q: Do you think . . . that's a positive or negative direction?

A: I don't have the ability or the knowledge to assess that. I think there will be negative consequences and there will be positive consequences. Trying to visualize exactly what those will be is difficult. You know, on the one hand technology has certainly been of great value in eliminating certain diseases. There's a positive benefit. On the other hand, technology has also been the source of creating new diseases, such as various types of cancer.

Q: There are people who think that 50 years from now things are gonna be just great. Uh, American know-how, technology, scientific advances, it'll just be beyond our wildest dreams.

A: Umhmm.

Q: What do you think of that view?

A: Mankind has to advance with technology. . . . You can't rely on, on technology to pull mankind, in terms of, of developing along with technology. Technology can put to, be put to very productive yet harmful uses, or--If you benefit at the expense of many, that, so that could be one way that technology can be extremely harmful. . . . And there's the positive as well. I guess my main worry is that, is that man is capable of keeping up with technology, which is certainly advancing at a, at a faster rate of development. If you can make a comparison like that.

Perhaps the most positive Collectivist view is expressed by Paul, who resembles the Individualists when he says technology has "enormous potential." However,

The problem is how its gonna be used. Um, more and more, at least in this country--and my sense also is more and more in the Soviet Union--technology is being siphoned away from environmental issues or food production, social--from helping social ills. And more and more tied to better bombs and better planes and better lasers. . . . The same thing as happened throughout the Vietnam era, where so much energy and effort by so many minds was put into the Pentagon. Those minds simply weren't turned to those other issues.

In an ideal Communist society, according to Paul, where there's no "motivation by the people running the companies . . . to squeeze every ounce of profit out, but rather to make a more humane environment to work in,"

Maybe that means technology will take over all of those [menial] tasks because now technology can move away from building better bombs to creating, um, some kind of infrastructure for society that takes care of all those and frees people up. I guess in the ideal world that's what I'd like to see happen. Whether or not it, it could ever be a reality, I dunno. But, it's not a bad dream.

Paul disagrees with the 19th Century "utopian socialists, who had this notion that we could return to, um, you know, a preindustrial sort of agrarian bucolic ideal world, where each little unit was self-sufficient":

That's not possible, and I don't even think it's desirable. I think technology and industry have created the potential, and the reality, of a standard of living that really is good. The kind of medical care that is available, um, communication systems--I mean, it's a lot better than medieval Europe or even 18th Century France or something like that. So that, I think that's all good, I don't think we should try and return to a situation where, you know, we're all itty-bitty self-sufficient units. . . . But, what that means is

that you do have to have some overarching organizational matrix to pull it all together and to make it work. It simply shouldn't be a matrix that, or a structure that, that's intent is really to help a certain group of people keep a lot of the wealth.

Unlike the other Collectivists, whose views on technology can best be described as mixed, Scott is almost completely negative. He does say at one point that technological solutions are going to happen "for some things," but with very little optimism:

It's all a matter of whether we want them to happen. . . . I mean, the people in power. Things like solar power, you know. Solar power is economically feasible. You have a certain amount of investment, research investment. Um, but the thing is it's not—I mean it's sort of a classic case of of, um, economics governing um, you know, the actual practical results. The economics of the situation subjugating the popular good. . . . The sun, you know, you buy your parts at the hardware and whom do you pay? They get a monopoly on parts but that doesn't really, it isn't a money making thing. . . . It doesn't make money, a big amount of money for anybody, like resources like oil and gas do. So it's all a matter of technological solutions. Yeah, I think it will happen. It's all a matter of putting enough into them so that they do happen. . . . There's a lot of people in power that don't want any sort of solar power, I think.

Q: Well, unless they can make these big solar satellites that'll beam down.

A: Yeah, you're right. Maybe it comes down, it'll come in some sort of concentrated--That's a sad thing, you know. That's the sad thing, because the way the economics of the situation is set up, it does sort of tend to make things more concentrated.

The remainder of Scott's comments on technology are less ambivalent, often having to do with identifying technology with the "coming fascist age" of isolation and repression. Technology

draws people away from focusing on what they themselves can do or focusing on people in general. And it's more focused on the wonders of, like, video games. . . . It leads also to isolation, individual isolation. Look at pornography. Porn fits in very well to that. . . . When the Nazis broke into Poland, they totally opened up the porn. Made pornography more available than it had ever been, and I think they in some ways understood that. That, um, it is a sort of individual type thing. . . . It's not really a sharing type thing most of the time.

At another time, Scott notes that television is "just an aspect of the

other technological advances [that] work in the same direction," and he adds that a friend who

defends video games . . . says they're good for coordination, you know. They probably are, but, um, I think that they sort of work into that too as far as--They're almost, it's almost like some sort of, um, emotional, not exactly masturbation but very self-focused. It's not like you're interacting with anybody. You're interacting with a machine. I mean, with TV, you know, you're not interactive. A very passive thing.

"Technology is power," adds Scott, "a certain type of power, . . . a sort of a destructive power." Problems arise from "shortsightedness and selfishness," compounded by a capitalist "laissez faire ideology" but present in the Soviet Union as well, where if "there is a spill or an accident, you won't hear about it anyway."

I think the problem is not facing consequences of our technology, or trying not to face them. At a certain point, you can't avoid them, you can't ignore them. But the thing is we put off facing them until we can't ignore them, and by that time, a lot of damage has been done.

With his antipathy toward technology, Scott would willingly do without its benefits in order to eliminate its dangers. He believes that, in "the perfect society in the future, you can do away with a lot of our technology and still have a good life."

## CHAPTER IX

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this research project has now been accomplished. The three preceding chapters present in great detail descriptive accounts of each of the ten individuals who participated in this study; of five broad value-related themes and a number of related secondary themes that the participants on the whole generally have in common; and of three additional themes that differentiate four of the participants, cautiously described as Individualists, from five other participants, just as cautiously described as Collectivists. For some qualitative researchers, the research report would end here, with the extensive verbatim material standing on its own. My own inclination, however, is to extend this report in order to briefly consider several related areas.

#### A Comment on Political Psychology

Political psychology has a long, and often controversial, history. Allport (1968) pointed out that social psychology had its origins in political philosophy, and an examination of social psychology textbooks written many decades ago (e.g., Katz & Schanck, 1938; Newcomb, 1950) makes it clear that political concerns were seen as relevant to social psychological theory. The American tendency over the years to turn social psychology into a purely "objective" experimental science removed much of the overt political content. It's worth noting that some of the more recent social psychology textbooks (e.g., Cvetkovich, Baumgardner, & Trimble, 1984; Fisher, 1982; Kahn, 1984; Perlman & Cozby, 1983; William-

son, Swingle, & Sargent, 1982), particularly those that include sociological as well as psychological perspectives and those with an "applied" focus, are again including chapters on political topics such as public opinion, social movements, voting behavior, social change, and international relations. The mainstream treatment of the connections between social psychological theory and political ideology, however, remains limited.

As Barner-Barry and Rosenwein (1985) commented in their political psychology text, "political psychology itself [is] suddenly becoming a 'hot item'" (p. 29). That political psychology is by now an established field is not in doubt. In addition to the existence of journals such as Political Psychology, there is a wideranging literature, with a growing list of textbooks, edited handbooks, and a variety of specialized works (e.g., Barner-Barry & Rosenwein, 1985; Elms, 1976; Greenstein & Lerner, 1971; Kirkpatrick & Pettit, 1972; Knutson, 1972, 1973; Stone, 1974). Early classics in the field such as Smith, Bruner, and White's (1956) Opinions and Personality have had great impact on more mainstream areas of social psychology. Still, despite this abundance, psychologists who examine controversial political topics continue to face charges of ideological bias, a situation that has not changed since The Authoritarian Personality (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950).

When psychologists combine the study of controversial topics with methods that stray from the accepted conventions of experimental, quantitative research, they are even more likely to be put on the defensive than when they attempt to use traditional quantitative approaches. For example, Kelman (1983b), in responding to critics of his earlier analysis of Yasser Arafat (Kelman, 1983a), felt it necessary to say that "Perhaps



they are unaware . . . that there are psychologists with professional expertise in the study of politics. Political psychology has by now become a vital discipline" (p. 1126). He added:

My critics seem unaware of a genre of scholarly writing called policy analysis. . . . Inevitably, I bring certain values and assumptions to this work and I come up with policy proposals, but this does not mean that I am merely expressing my political opinions and trying to give them a scientific veneer. (p. 1126)

I have discussed in earlier chapters the view that all methods and theories, particularly in the social sciences, are inevitably affected by ideology. The aspect of this issue to which I now wish to turn briefly is the question of whether or not explanations of individual political ideology should be limited to some kind of individual pathology. Perhaps because of the belief that only a small percentage of the general public is primarily motivated by strong ideological views (e.g., Converse, 1964; Flanigan & Zingale, 1979; Sears, 1969), and also because of the general American tendency to exhibit a "person-blame" attributional bias (Caplan & Nelson, 1973), nonmainstream political activity has often been attributed to psychopathology, particularly in past decades. Psychoanalytic interpretations of political leaders and followers abound, attributing political activity to such factors as unresolved Oedipal complexes (e.g., Wolfenstein, 1967). Members of social movements have often been seen as misfits (e.g., Hoffer, 1951). From the perspective of many academic observers, strong commitment to an ideology (rather than noncommitment or apathy) has been something that needed to be explained--and, most importantly, explained by academics who themselves are not politically committed to such "extremes."

In the late Sixties, accompanying the sympathy for the New Left felt by many academics, social movement participants and others with strong

ideological commitments were often seen as having positive mental health. This was true primarily in the case of student activists on the left (e.g., Keniston, 1968), but not exclusively; Elms (1969) concluded that "although extreme psychological disturbance may be a sufficient precipitating factor for [right-wing] political extremism, it is not a necessary one" (p. 163). Despite the fact that this rosy picture was never shared by all (e.g., Feuer, 1969), many academics since the Sixties have agreed with the positive interpretation given by C. Wright Mills (1956) to what others have interpreted more negatively:

The knowledgeable man in the genuine public is able to turn his personal troubles into social issues, to see their relevance for his community and his community's relevance for them. He understands that what he thinks and feels as personal troubles are very often not only that but problems shared by others and indeed not subject to solution by any one individual but only by modifications of the structure of the group in which he lives and sometimes the structure of the entire society. (p. 318)

Mills's view, of course, is far from universally accepted, particularly among the psychoanalytically oriented. This is made clear not only in connection with analyses of American activists (Rothman & Lichter, 1978, 1982), but also in recent debates over the relative importance of psychopathology and rational ideological commitment in the motivation of Shiite Moslems widely referred to as "suicide terrorists" (Cunningham, 1984). Especially within sociology, however, there has been increasing agreement that "the discontented are no more nor less rational than other political actors" (Gamson, 1975, p. 137), and that explanations that revert to underlying irrationality are not likely to be the most useful.

In general, even outside the specific focus of nonmainstream political activity, "There is a pronounced tendency to define ill-understood behavior as bizarre, sick, or irrational when on closer inspection such

definitions turn out to be quite unwarranted" (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 103). Social scientists in the qualitative research tradition generally attempt to avoid assuming that the individuals they study are in some way "different." That such an effort must be attempted consciously can be concluded from what seems to be the common inclination to rate as psychologically healthier those research subjects who are similar to the researcher in terms of race, gender, social class, and so on (Gergen, 1973). In describing and analyzing political values, it is important for the researcher to be conscious of--and open about--his or her own values, as I have tried to be here, so that readers can assess for themselves the possibility of investigator bias. Of course, readers also must be aware of their own value priorities as they attempt that assessment.

The question remains of whether a researcher with different ideological commitments would have arrived at a different set of value themes for the participants in this study. I discussed this possibility in Chapter VII, and here I would only like to reiterate my belief that the voluminous quotations included in this report are a fair representation of the views of the participants (a belief that is shared by the five participants who responded in detail after reading drafts of their own Participant Profile). Interpretations may reasonably vary, but the evidence for the descriptive themes is fairly strong. In any case, I have avoided general comments on the participants' mental health, presenting instead the participants' views in their own words as much as possible, leaving mental health assessment to the reader.

Personal Autonomy, Psychological Sense of Community,  
and Political Values

It is the realm of political values in which I am most interested, setting aside for now the question of the ultimate origin of such values. Just as political psychology is a recent "hot item," so is the study of values. Although the topic is not usually given a chapter in its own right in most social psychology texts or handbooks, there has been increasing interest in the area, much of it spurred on by the work of Rokeach (1968, 1973, 1979), as discussed in Chapter III.

Values are often seen as crucial in analyses of political participation. Ball-Rokeach and Tallman (1979) noted that a social movement

seeks to promote or prevent change in the name of certain universal moral values. These values are usually translated into prescriptions for change that would not only require decision makers to alter their present policies and practices, but would also bring some cost to those benefitting from the status quo. A social movement's values not only guide the articulation of such changes, but also provide justifications as to why such changes constitute moral imperatives. Likewise, the arguments of the movement's opponents are couched in value terms to justify the policies and practices that the social movement would change. The social conflict that emerges is rooted in competing value priorities that guide and justify competing policy prescriptions for resource distribution. (pp. 84-85)

It is the acting out of these "competing value priorities" of groups in opposition to one another that make up the political process. And it is in value priorities as well that the political ideologies of individuals are based. The important point, repeatedly made by Rokeach, is that it is not single values that are important so much as the way in which a number of important values are given priority. Thus, ideology extends beyond single values to the level of value systems, a notion that Rokeach has developed into his much-used value ranking procedure.

Most relevant to the present research is Rokeach's (1973) direct

linking of political ideology to the relative ranking of the values freedom and equality in an individual's value system; my own speculations (or "hunches") about the political ideologies associated with differing priorities between two similar sets of values were presented in Chapter III. More broadly, as discussed in Chapter II, the balance between personal autonomy and a psychological sense of community, between "the individual and the community," has long occupied a central place in psychological, philosophical, and political theory, though as with most centuries-old debates, there is little general agreement even about how to define the terms that are debated. It should be clear from the description of the differentiating themes that focusing on the balance between personal autonomy and a psychological sense of community is a fruitful approach in understanding the connection between personal values and political ideology, paralleling Rokeach. This is the case despite the fact that the ten participants, individually, defy the easy political classification implied by much of Rokeach's work.

The distinction between the Individualists, whose political and personal lives are to a great extent organized around the value complex associated with personal autonomy (personal freedom, individualism, and so on), and the Collectivists, whose lives embrace the values associated with a psychological sense of community as well as those of personal autonomy, is directly related to Tetlock's (1983, 1984a, 1984b) analysis of value-related differences in ideological reasoning. Tetlock presented evidence that individuals whose political views are shaped by two values that are approximately equal in importance exhibit more complex, evaluatively inconsistent reasoning about particular issues than do those who emphasize a single primary political goal. Such a state of affairs seems

to be evident among the participants in this study, and appears to extend beyond the cognitive level to include emotional consequences as well.

The Individualists, as might be expected, repeatedly emphasize the importance of personal autonomy in a variety of contexts, ranging from political views on the immorality of welfare to clear statements about the essential self-oriented quality of human nature, the importance of living according to one's own self-derived values, and the description of a perfect society in terms of what's best for themselves as individuals. They do not reject the importance of community and friendship, and they do not completely negate the importance of personal responsibility to try to help others, but they do not consider such responsibility and community to be the concern of the larger political system. In general, as noted above, the Individualists are certain of their goals, optimistic about their personal futures, and fully convinced that they themselves will flourish despite the widespread problems faced by the rest of the society.

The Collectivists, on the other hand, while acknowledging the importance of increasing the control that people have over their own lives, generally see such increased control in a wider political context, and focus more on the obstacles placed on such control by the economic and political system than on their own ability to live their own lives. Their view of human nature is mixed as well, more likely to include cooperative, social aspects along with competitive, self-oriented ones. All the Collectivists feel a personal responsibility to work toward political change for the benefit of others, even to the extent that Scott and Roberta reject what is for them the attractive possibility of joining rural communes because they feel such a life course, while it would be

individually satisfying, would not bring about the widespread social change they see as crucial. This weighing of personal and political preferences on the part of the Collectivists, which accompanies for most of them increased personal stress, is very different from the situation faced by the Individualists, whose current lives are not inconsistent with the lives they would lead even if their ideal societies did come about.

It would not be accurate to imply that the Individualists and the Collectivists are diametrical opposites in their values, at different ends of some simple political spectrum. More accurate would be the conclusion that for the Individualists, personal autonomy is a single overriding goal clearly preferred over equality, societal responsibility for the poor, and similar aspects of a sense of community, which they either deemphasize or completely neglect; this would place them fairly securely in Cell II of the Autonomy-Psychological Sense of Community Value Model discussed in Chapter II (see Figure 2). For the Collectivists, on the other hand, considering autonomy and a sense of community to be more equal in importance results in greater difficulty in setting life goals and greater ambivalence about their place in a society that they perceive to be more individualistically oriented than they themselves are. The Collectivists do vary greatly among themselves in this regard, though all would probably fall somewhere within Cell I; Victor, who seeks to combine his political work with becoming an entrepreneur, might be closest to the top edge of the figure, while the revolutionary Communist Paul, who emphasizes the need to give up some individuality for the sake of the party and of society, might be closest to the boundary with Cell III. Eve's concern for others and her commitment to live her life in

accordance with her interpretation of Christian law would probably place her in Cell III.

### Cautions in Categorizing Individuals

It's interesting that Victor, the only Collectivist with a generally competitive view of human nature and the only one who expresses a strong interest in becoming an entrepreneur, exhibits a degree of personal optimism more closely resembling that of the Individualists than that of the other Collectivists. Victor's mixed Individualist-Collectivist pattern, as well as other participants' idiosyncratic pattern-breaking tendencies on a number of subthemes, confirms the importance of remembering that the participants, despite their placement in certain labeled categories, are individuals. Reducing their views and their lives to general summary statements, despite the grain of truth that might be thus observable, does them an injustice.

It quickly became clear to me during the interviews that each of the participants departs in important ways from the stereotyped view of his or her particular ideology--both the larger society's stereotypes and my own. That is, to a great extent, they don't fit the popular view of "typical" Libertarians, or Communists, or Fundamentalists, or even of "liberals" and "conservatives." It is relatively easy to look through the interview transcripts and focus only on those statements that support a particular stereotyped view. Such a procedure, however, would reduce the complexity that is there to distorted oversimplification. The undergraduate research assistants repeatedly made reference to being surprised by unexpected statements as they read the interview transcripts, and they noted many apparent contradictions that prevented clear categorization. The advantage of a qualitative, phenomenological analysis is that common-



alities can be specified without losing sight of idiosyncratic patterns seen in actual people.

Public opinion polls that seek to predict voting behavior and, in the process, force people into predetermined political categories may adequately perform the task they face. Such polls, however, as the material presented in this report makes clear, cannot be assumed to provide much understanding of the views actually held by individual human beings; the same is true for a wide range of structured questionnaires that are used to categorize people according to political beliefs. Being able to assess presidential preference is important for matters of practical politics, but for descriptions and theoretical analyses of political values, it fades in usefulness in comparison to actually eliciting from individuals descriptions of their own ideologies.

#### Directions for Future Research

The areas I've discussed in the previous two sections can serve as somewhat contradictory general suggestions for future research. On the one hand, even within this small sample, there is support for Tetlock's (1983, 1984a, 1984b) view that differences in value priorities are systematically related to differences in reasoning processes. The autonomy-oriented Individualists, for the most part, are more consistent in, and certain about, their views than are the Collectivists, who seek both autonomy and a psychological sense of community (though there are exceptions to this overgeneralization). In fact, the differentiating themes suggest the possibility that Tetlock's analysis may be extended beyond the cognitive realm to the emotional. The Individualists are generally more optimistic about their own lives, enthusiastic, goal-oriented, and

so on, which may be related to the fact that their individualistic views, though more extreme than those of most Americans, are more consonant with the dominant American value system than are the views of the Collectivists, who are less certain of their personal goals and more troubled in their personal lives. Future qualitative research might focus more directly on these emotional aspects among individuals with different political ideologies, while more quantitative research might seek to discover the degree to which this situation, if it is confirmed, can be generalized. Longitudinal research of both types, focusing on the development of political values among the young, would be useful to help determine the degree to which political values affect personal lives and, alternatively, the degree to which personal wellbeing might lead to differing political ideologies.

It would be especially interesting to find out whether, in settings where egalitarian and community values are stressed, such as the Israeli kibbutz, American communes, socialist countries, and less Westernized preliterate societies, the differences between Individualists and Collectivists found here are reversed. Do individuals who depart from their culture's egalitarian, cooperative ideology in the direction of individualism exhibit greater personal distress than those whose views are more widespread? Such a possibility is suggested by events such as the recent migration of Cubans who, for the most part, were seeking greater freedom to advance themselves economically in the United States, leaving behind the vast majority of their apparently satisfied peers who rejected the opportunity to take the boat to individualistic capitalism.

On the other hand, however, despite the value of generalizations, any attempt to extend to a wider population the general and differentiat-

ing themes found in this unrepresentative sample must be done with great caution. What has struck me throughout this project has been not the commonality among participants but the degree of idiosyncrasy; even among these ten individuals, generalizations are often misleading. One direction in which qualitative research might go would be to more directly focus on the way in which a single individual's disparate views are merged into an ideology that makes sense to that individual, and on the way in which that ideology combines with other concerns and is translated into political and nonpolitical action. In general, quantitative survey research would benefit from the inclusion of a qualitative component, which would reinforce the awareness that departures from generalizations are common, thus helping avoid oversimplification.

#### Speculations on General Themes

The degree to which the specific themes identified here are found in the general population cannot, of course, be determined from this kind of research. I would speculate, however, that the first general theme, the difficulty of political self-definition (with its secondary themes concerning the ambivalent attraction of the term liberal and the circuitous reasoning on voting decisions), are not the dominant American pattern. In Chapter VII, I noted Flanigan and Zingale's (1979) view that most Americans can easily place themselves on the liberal-conservative spectrum; it would be interesting to see if that holds true when people are encouraged to actually define those terms rather than just quickly accept or reject them. The term "liberal" has become increasingly looked upon with disfavor in recent years, and the participants in this study who struggle to apply it to themselves do seem to be at odds with the general trend.

To different degrees, the other general themes are also not likely to be dominant cultural patterns, though particular components of the subthemes may be. For example, the belief that the United States is a sick society may be widespread in political circles similar to those with which the participants identify, but the strength of their views is not likely to be shared by most Americans, who would probably resist such sweeping condemnation. The participants' anti-television views may be more common, at least on a verbal level, but certainly their minimal television viewing habits and the fact that three of the ten did not own television sets marks the strength of this subtheme, too, as relatively unusual.

Similarly, the participants' intense desire to influence others, especially by writing and teaching, is probably not a primary concern for most people. Even writing letters to newspapers, while certainly a basic form of public communication, is not something that most people do, and charges of general apathy rather than commitment to change are likely to be more accurate. Since the participants' lack of desire for conventional political careers probably is representative of the general public, their strong departure from their peers in terms of other forms of influence attempts is even more noticeable.

The several components of the remaining two themes--the importance of looking at issues in context and the rejection of mainstream assumptions--are also likely to differ in the degree to which they are true of people in general. Most people might agree that political issues are complicated and should be viewed in context; that they themselves are, in fact, better able to analyze such issues than others (e.g., Myers, 1980), which may lead them to believe (often incorrectly) that their views

depart from the mainstream or are in other ways unusual ("pluralistic ignorance"--Katz & Schanck, 1938; Newcomb, 1950; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980); but that there is nevertheless widespread underlying support for their own views (the "false consensus" effect, or "attributive projection"--e.g., Goethals, Allison, & Frost, 1979; Messé & Sivacek, 1979; Ross, Greene, & House, 1977; Sherman, Presson, & Chassin, 1984). In fact, as discussed above in relation primarily to the Individualists, Marks (1980) identified a common tendency to think that one's own abilities (such as analytical ability) are above average but that one's opinions are widely shared.

Despite these apparently common phenomena, however, it is doubtful that most people actually make an effort to seek out as many information sources as do the participants here, who have taken multidisciplinary courses of study, read widely, and gone out of their way to expose their views to possible criticism (as in their letters, and even in the interviews). Further research--going beyond public opinion polling, and allowing people to express themselves at length in a setting that does not inhibit the expression of unpopular opinions (e.g., Hochschild, 1981)--could seek to identify the degree to which people who actively promulgate nonmainstream views are accurate in their perceptions of support and the degree to which phenomena such as false consensus and pluralistic ignorance might be at work. Even if it is true that people in general have little insight into their own mental processes (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), a situation which would have significance for qualitative research's focus on individual perspectives, ignoring the content of radical views by simply ascribing them to the psychological functioning of their proponents may be short-sighted as well as inaccurate.

Similarly, the fact that the participants' views have generally changed over time suggests the importance of research to explore the interaction between the acceptance of new views and exposure to new information. As pointed out in Chapter VII, the conversion to the participants' current beliefs was generally reported to be a slow process. It may be the case that a concern for appearing correct led to the participants' letter-writing and other efforts at influencing others, as a means of justifying their changed attitudes, and that the desire to seem consistent prompted reports of gradual, reasoned change. It may be the case, alternatively, that the participants' memories of their reasoned analysis of new information are accurate, and that their change efforts are indeed value-related attempts to disseminate views they consider to be important. Even if motivations to appear consistent are present, of course, it would not necessarily imply that the participants' views are wrong. Longitudinal research would here, too, be necessary.

#### Speculations on Differentiating Themes

Each of the three differentiating themes can similarly be taken as a tentative hypothesis for research designed to investigate the differences between people holding particular opposing political ideologies. Most Americans probably do not share the broad ideologies expressed by the participants, particularly in the case of the Collectivists but even in the case of the Individualists, whose views go well beyond those of the mainstream. Thus, most people would probably be neither Individualists nor Collectivists to the degree found here.

The basic difference between the Individualists and Collectivists--the primary focus of the Individualists on personal autonomy and the dual

focus of the Collectivists on autonomy and a sense of community--has already been discussed. Future research should seek to determine the extent, and consequences, of this difference, by extending the work of Tetlock beyond the cognitive level.

Other directions for investigation are also suggested. It has often been found that political conservatives tend to believe that human nature is, by genetic endowment, inherently competitive, aggressive, territorial, and so on, in contrast to liberals who emphasize the cooperative aspects and the influence of environmental factors (e.g., Pastore, 1949). In fact, genetic explanations of human aggression, competition, and acquisitiveness have been criticized specifically because of their apparent rootedness in capitalist thought (e.g., Lewontin, Rose, & Kamin, 1984). To the extent that the Individualists and Collectivists can be considered to be conservatives and liberals--and that extent is fairly limited, particularly in the case of the Individualists--the present study finds mixed support for this traditional view: A number of the participants are striking exceptions to this pattern. Future research can investigate not only the generality of the pattern, which probably holds true on a wider scale, but also (and perhaps more interesting) the dynamics of exceptions to the pattern. Individualists who see human nature in positive terms (such as in the case here of the libertarian Allen, who links cooperation to capitalism) and Collectivists who argue that human nature is essentially competitive and selfish (as Victor and perhaps even Paul) provide opportunities to examine the way in which individuals make sense of their own views even when those views violate traditional expectations.

Also noteworthy is the situation in which at least two of the five

Collectivists, all of whom disagree sharply with the Individualists' "blame-the-victim" tendency to attribute poverty to those who are poor, tend to attribute the successes and failures in life of people like themselves to their own personal efforts. It would be interesting to see the degree to which this possible reversal of the fundamental attribution error is common among those on the political left, who may believe in capitalisms' harmful effects on others while still internalizing self-destructive aspects of the culture's individualistic ethic. In other words, it may be difficult to apply political understanding to one's own life, in terms of the degree to which people hold themselves accountable as well as in other areas.

That the Individualists see themselves as generally immune from the societal disintegration they see around them, while the Collectivists see themselves as susceptible, is another distinction that should be investigated further. Perhaps as a result of different proportions of past success and failure, Individualists are merely more personally optimistic than Collectivists, or have a greater sense of being in control of their own lives (De Charms, 1968; Rotter, 1966; for a discussion of the links between locus of control and political ideology, see Gurin, Gurin, & Morrison, 1978). Perhaps they are unreasonably overconfident, having internalized to a greater extent the American "can-do" ideology. Or perhaps, instead, as suggested above, holders of an individualistic ideology actually have good reason to be optimistic in a society closer to individualism than to collectivism; this would account for the close resemblance between the utopian visions of the Individualists and American society today, in contrast to the noncapitalist utopias described by the Collectivists. Cross-cultural research can help determine whether



optimism is in fact generally related to individualism or whether it is instead related to the degree in which one's values can be expected to be fulfilled within the culture. For people for whom political values are less central in life, personal optimism may be less tied to political views and more tied to other primary concerns.

The final differentiating theme, concerning the prospect of technological solutions, also raises questions for further study. Certainly there are political leftists who are enthusiastic about the promise of technology, but in this sample actual enthusiasm was absent among the Collectivists; ambivalence was rare, however, among the Individualists. It would be interesting to examine in greater detail the role of technological enthusiasm and technological caution in political ideology. Are the Individualists more enthusiastic and optimistic about their own lives because they believe technology will eventually find solutions to whatever problems exist? Do Individualists and Collectivists differ in the level of societal (and personal) risk they are willing to accept? These speculations bring to mind the work of D. M. Buss and Craik (1983), who described two sociotechnological worldviews that are in some ways similar to the two views found here; however, several of the ten participants are not easily placed in either of Buss and Craik's categories. Buss and Craik did tentatively suggest the possibility of a third worldview, which advocates "the use of technology and economic growth for humane ends such as aiding poorer countries" (p. 270); such a position is close to that of some of the Collectivists. Future work might investigate the generality of technological worldviews as well as the difficulty of actually placing individuals completely within any single category.

The possible impact of science fiction should also be noted. It's

fascinating that three of the four Individualists cited Robert Heinlein as an influence on their political views, and that Roberta, a Collectivist, mentioned she had read work by Ursula LeGuin, a feminist who writes of noncapitalist utopias. The Collectivist Victor--closest to the Individualists in a number of ways--remembers reading science fiction when young. Science fiction is a form of literature that adolescents often begin reading; politically oriented writers such as Heinlein, thus, may have a greater impact than generally realized upon those whose values are developing. If political differences are uncovered among those who have read science fiction and those who have not (or among those who have read different kinds of science fiction), it would be interesting to find out whether adolescents who read science fiction differ politically from those who don't. It might be the case that science fiction--or at least the kind of science fiction written by Heinlein and LeGuin, describing alternative societies, rather than more limited "space cowboy" adventures with traditional social arrangements--encourages the view that alternatives to current society are possible. I would not be surprised to find that, in general, political anarchists (of the left and the right) have read more science fiction than have people with other ideologies.

#### Implications For Qualitative Methodology

My decision to use qualitative methods in an effort to attain greater understanding of individual patterns of political values was made with a combination of enthusiasm and ignorance. It seemed clear to me two and a half years ago that talking to people within a systematic but openended framework was the best way to begin my investigation of how individuals view the political world around them. Qualitative methodology held the promise of understanding people on their own terms, of

eliciting from them descriptive accounts that were not limited in advance by my own preconceived categories. By allowing the study participants to respond to questions in their own manner, to raise questions of importance to them, and to comment on my own first efforts at describing their views, I hoped to end up with themes that described the participants as individuals as well as themes that seemed to typify them as a group that had in common an interest in making public their perspectives on important issues.

The actual procedures to be used in a qualitative research project remained somewhat unclear even as I began to plan the project. I took comfort in the view, repeatedly emphasized in the qualitative literature, that the approach's acceptance of--even insistence upon--flexibility would prevent my being locked into procedures that proved fruitless. Such turned out to be the case, and decisions along the way, for example, to reduce the total sample size from twenty to ten while extending the length of time spent with each participant, to ask four assistants to read and comment upon the transcripts, and to modify the coding scheme when the preliminary version proved cumbersome, all served the purpose of enhancing the research while allowing reality to be taken into account.

Unfortunately, however, the research process itself was a massive undertaking that no degree of flexibility could simplify without sacrifice. At every step along the way, decisions to make manageable the labor-intensive work meant turning away from potentially interesting areas. Although the general and differentiating themes do take into account most of the areas covered in the interviews, the sheer mass of material often left me frustrated at my inability to give to each area the attention that a complete descriptive analysis necessitated. Part of

me has continually despaired at the inevitably superficial treatment given each participant; no-one knows better than I (and the participants) how much has been left out. Consequently, I would advocate the intensive study of single individuals, through longitudinal, case-study analysis. I do think that such understanding of the psychology of real individuals, gained through in-depth interviewing, should be at least the starting point for psychologists, regardless of their primary interests (see Sanford, 1982).

At the same time, however, as much as I endorse the qualitative, idiographic, phenomenological approach to understanding, the remnant of the quantitative, positivist side of me wonders how the present study might be a springboard for future, more generalizable research as well. I do not consider this study merely "exploratory," because I believe it has value in and of itself. Yet despite its value--perhaps because of its value--its descriptive analysis provides food for thought for those who would seek to more systematically investigate specific hypotheses. Thus, while I am more convinced than ever that longitudinal case-studies will be useful, at the same time I think it is important to move in the other direction as well and examine the autonomy-sense of community political balance in larger samples, and in different kinds of samples as well, as discussed in the previous section.

Part of the frustration of qualitative research comes from carrying it out in an academic world that provides inadequate support (financial and other kinds) for such undertakings. This problem was mentioned in Chapters IV and V; here I would like to emphasize my belief that, in order for the benefits of qualitative research to be obtained, more widespread changes in the field of psychology must come about. The

vicious circle of, on the one hand, ideological insistence upon narrowly focused laboratory research and, on the other hand, academic career pressures to continuously and endlessly rush to publish, results in a situation wherein qualitative research--which takes much longer to do than the typical quantitative dissertation, and is looked down upon in any event--can only be considered by those who are willing to fall behind in the race for career advancement (Fox, 1985a; for related criticisms of standard practice in psychology related to publication, tenure, etc., see Fox, 1983, 1984, in press; Mahoney, 1985; Z. Rubin, 1978; Wachtel, 1980).

Despite these and other frustrations along the path to completing this dissertation (including the awareness that my list of relevant-but-unread books and articles never stopped growing, and even now remains embarrassingly long), my overall assessment is that my general course of action was for the most part successful. Qualitative research has the air about it of a pursuit into the unknown, and despite the long hours of labor and the many uncertainties, the experience for me has often been exciting, and almost always gratifying. My understanding of the sometimes bewildering nature of individual ways of looking at the world--particularly of the way in which real people refuse to conform to the simple stereotypes often imposed upon them--has been enhanced, as has been my own thinking about the issues the participants unhesitatingly discussed with me.

My interaction with the ten participants was the most satisfying of the many different aspects of the research. Of course there were moments of confusion, of boredom, of disagreement. But listening to people open up their lives to scrutiny for hours at a time is a fascinating process, and reading the interview transcripts evokes memories of emotional satis-

faction. Beyond the specific aims of the research, the interviews provided the participants (and me) with the opportunity for wideranging value-relevant self-disclosure that brought lasting benefits of self-expression, self-clarification, social validation, and even relationship development, consistent with the self-disclosure literature (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979). It is personally very satisfying that (as discussed in Chapter VII's section on the interview process as self-clarification) at the end of the interviews every one of the participants gave extremely positive reactions to the interview process in terms of the personal benefits they received, benefits that those who have been in touch with me have emphasized up to two years later. Although benefits for the "subjects" are not often enough specified--or considered--in psychological research, I am glad that these participants are pleased that they took part.

#### Implications For Political Psychology and Political Change

The current research provides support for the view, expressed in Chapter II, that a central focus on the often-contradictory needs and values of personal autonomy and a psychological sense of community can provide insight into political ideologies. Such insight is necessary if attempts to resolve global problems through comprehensive social change are to succeed.

My own view is that, in the long run, only political ideologies and psychological theories that allow for the simultaneous attainment of both autonomy and a sense of community are likely to prove useful. That this view marks me as closer to the Collectivists than to the Individualists

in this study is clear, at least in terms of general goals, though none of the Collectivists has a political ideology that I would endorse in full and I often found myself in agreement with much of what the Individualists had to say. I do think that a greater focus on the community side of the autonomy-community balance is not only necessary for the political world but appropriate for the world of psychology as well.

Haan (1982) noted that "The justification for choosing equality as the moral ground are analytic, not empirical, but they are consistent with psychological fact" (p. 1102). This view is in accord with the growing concern with psychological sense of community expressed by many of the psychologists and other social scientists cited in Chapter II as well as in more recent work (e.g., Bellah et al., 1983; Wachtel, 1983). One challenge for those interested in bringing about positive, comprehensive social change in the United States is to learn how to make the broad range of ideologies reflected among the Collectivists more attractive to those who are steeped in variations of the dominant American Individualist ideology. At the same time, any Collectivist solution that fails to provide reasonable means for Individualists to meet their own needs and fulfill their own values is not likely to succeed. Arriving at satisfactory solutions will continue to be difficult; my hope is that this study will add to the understanding that is necessary to aid that process.

My political disagreements with the participants in this study--larger in some cases than others, but present in all cases--do not, I think, lead me to simple rejection of their views as "irrational" or "dogmatic." If anything, my interactions with them have reinforced my belief that intelligent, thoughtful people, beginning with different assumptions and values, can reasonably arrive at a multitude of well-

supported political positions. I am more convinced than ever that the kind of open-ended interviews used here are crucial to allow complicated patterns of thought to be expressed. Attempting to reduce the views described in this dissertation to the simplifications of a forced-choice questionnaire would have distorted those views beyond recognition.

Readers who are unsympathetic to all of the participant perspectives described here and those who are unsympathetic to the tone of qualitative research may find this research report value-laden, focused on irrelevant idiosyncrasy, and generally unsatisfying. Those who share aspects of the participants' critiques of American society, as well as those who accept the qualitative emphasis on individual descriptive analysis, will, I hope, find this report interesting as well as potentially useful. The effort for me, in any case, has been well worth it.



## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A**  
**SAMPLE REQUEST LETTER**

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH BUILDING

EAST LANSING · MICHIGAN · 48824-1117

May 9, 1983

Dear Mr. :

Your letter to the editor of the State News of , concerning your views on socialism, addressed several issues of public concern. As a social psychologist studying the different reasons people have for their opinions on controversial issues such as the appropriate role of government, I am hoping that you will agree to discuss with me your views on this and other topics in more detail.

As you may be aware, it is often difficult to interpret public opinion polls (such as the Gallup Poll) because we cannot be sure that the issues are adequately explored in the short time typically allowed for each interview. In fact, such polls have often been criticized for asking questions which can easily be misinterpreted and for not allowing people to clarify their answers.

As part of the research project I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation, I am hoping to avoid these problems. I am now interviewing a small number of people who have publicly expressed their views about different aspects of our society. I am asking you to take part in this study. This would involve two or three interview sessions, adding up to a total of five or six hours, scheduled at your convenience either at your home or in my office at MSU (Baker Hall).

I realize that my request is an imposition, but I am hoping that your interest in expressing your views in the State News will extend to assisting me in this research. The interviews will allow you to discuss a variety of issues fairly informally and in depth, and should be interesting as well. Your participation, of course, will remain completely confidential.

I would appreciate it if you could return the enclosed form to let me know if you will be able to participate. If you have any questions, please call me either at my office (355-2162) or my home (332-7440). I am looking forward to meeting with you in the near future. Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Dennis Fox  
Doctoral Candidate

**APPENDIX B:**  
**RESPONSE FORM--"PUBLIC ISSUES STUDY"**

PUBLIC ISSUES STUDY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in taking part in this study?

☐ Yes. Contact me to discuss details.☐ I may be interested, but I would like more information. Call me.☐ No, I am not able to participate.

Where would you prefer the interviews to be held?

☐ In my home or office.☐ In your office at Michigan State University.

Which times are usually best for the interviews?

☐ Mornings☐ Afternoons☐ Evenings

Which days of the week would best fit your schedule?

☐ Sunday☐ Monday☐ Tuesday☐ Wednesday☐ Thursday☐ Friday☐ Saturday

What is your:

Age? \_\_\_\_\_

Sex? ☐ female ☐ male

-Occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C:**  
**RESEARCH CONSENT FORM**

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
Department of Psychology

Research Consent Form

1. I have freely consented to take part in a series of three interview sessions being conducted by Dennis Fox under the supervision of Dr. Charles Wrigley, Professor of Psychology.
2. The study has been explained to me and I understand the explanation that has been given and what my participation will involve.
3. I understand that I can turn off the tape recorder at my own discretion.
4. I understand that I am free to discontinue my participation in the study at any time without penalty.
5. I understand that the results of the study will be treated in strict confidence and that I will remain anonymous in any written reports.
6. I understand that a summary of the results will be made available to me and that I will have an opportunity to discuss the results with the investigator if I so desire.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D:**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE**



Letter-to-Editor

1. Explain more completely your point of view.
2. Written other letters? What?
3. Why write letters?
4. Kinds of reactions to your letter(s).
5. Are your views typical? Who would agree/disagree? Why?

1. Problems and Solutions

1. What are world/US serious problems? Which getting worse/better/same?  
 Economy/inflation/unemployment/poverty      Maldistribution/imperialism/communism  
 Resource scarcity/overpopulation      War/nuclear war  
 Pollution/environmental      Spiritual/religious  
 Crime

2. How are problems related? Solutions to each separately? Likely? Connections obvious?

3. What will US be like in 50 years?

4. How do these problems affect you personally?

---

5. What kinds of personal problems face ppl in US today?      Widespread:  
 Loneliness, shyness, friends, boredom, alienation, decision-making, marriages/relationships, lack of creativity/privacy/religion, need to follow orders....      Others....

6. These problems getting worse/better/same? Why?      In 50 years?

7. Related? Solutions?

8. Related to global/national problems? or always present anyway?

9. Which have you faced? Still? Solutions?

10. Autonomy-community balance problems make sense? Common? For you? Societal solution?

---

11. Stronger leadership, better leaders, science, religion, education, revolution, less federal regulation, decentralization, centralization, free enterprise, socialism, anarchism, libertarianism, ..... Which help? hurt? Realistic? Ethical? Do you like?

12. Do Americans need to accept a lower standard of living (fewer gadgets, etc) in order to raise standard for other countries and bring world peace? What would you give up?

---

13. Are your views similar to others'? Who would disagree?  
 Why do people disagree about the direction they think society should go?

2. In general, how often do you think people try to get away without doing their share? Why?
- ~~8. Some people think human beings are generally reasonable, helpful, cooperative, peaceful, rational--essentially, that people are by nature "good." Others think that by nature people are bad or evil--that they are unreasonable, selfish, competitive, aggressive, irrational. What do you think?~~
9. Are people born like that, or do we learn to be like that? Can we learn to be different?
10. What do people mean by the term "human nature"?
11. Is everyone pretty much the same basically, or are people different? In what ways?
12. What about people in other countries, like the Russians?
13. What were people like before we had civilizations with cities and large governments? How did people live differently then? Were the people very much different from us?
- 14.. How are people different from/similar to animals such as monkeys and apes? Why?
15. What's the purpose of life?
16. Can human nature change? Has it changed?
17. Would you like human nature to change? How?
18. Have you ever changed your mind about what you thought human nature is like. What did you think as a child? What made you change your mind?
19. How do children learn what human nature is like? Parents, friends, church, TV, school...

5. Political Values and IdeologiesGovt  
Purpose

---

1. What should the main purpose of a government be? What shouldn't it do?

2. Do we need to have a government? What would happen if there were no government?

3. How did governments form? Always governments? What kind before cities, nations?

If no law/govt, which kinds of crimes would go up, which wouldn't? Why is there crime?

Own  
Politics

---

4. What were your parents' political affiliations?5. What are you political affiliations? Changed over time?  
Democrat, Republican, what?

6. Third Party interests? Ever voted for/supported one? Do they have a chance?

7. Would you support a Third Party if you thought they had a chance of winning?

8. What do the terms liberal and conservative mean to you? Do they apply to you?9. Voting:- Do you usually? Why (not)? Reagan/Carter/Anderson?

10. Do people have a responsibility to vote? Good reasons not to?

Polit.  
Change

---

11. Does it make a difference which person/party is elected?

12. Should people pressure government directly, or leave it to elected officials? Effective?

13. Do politicians care what people think? Some more than others? Who goes into politics(Why)

14. Support "radical" change? Which kinds? What is "radical"?

15. Can problems be resolved without radical change? What is most important to attempt?

16. Have you ever protested government policies? political process, protests, cd,....

17. Is:force/violence ever necessary/legitimate to bring about change? When?

18. Ok for government to use force/illegal activities against protest groups?

19. Worth working for change even if success unlikely. Who gets involved(kinds of people)?

20. Other ways of working for change? (besides politics)

---

21. Pay much attention to political news? Which sources of news? local, etc?  
Think about politics much? What's more important in your life?22. Have you considered/what would it take to get you to consider going into politics/  
working for political change yourself? What would it take to change mind? You be diff.?23. Your views common? Who would (dis)agree? Why? Related to views of human nature?

7. Speculation about Utopia

1. Have you ever thought about how life might be different in some kind of ideal society that doesn't really exist? How? When did you think about these things?
  
2. Have you ever read any utopian literature? science fictions? What? Remember any that you'd like to live in? Wouldn't like to?
  
3. What kind of society can you imagine that wouldn't have the global and personal problems we talked about before? Is this possible? Why (not)?
  
4. What do you think about groups that actually try to create utopian societies? Would you like to visit a commune some day?
  
5. Do you think it's worth trying to create small utopian communities, or is it better to work on changing the whole country or world, or is it not really worth trying to change anything? What kind of people try?
  
6. How close to utopia do you think society can actually get? Can progress be made? Will things ever be much different from the way they are now? How?
  
7. How do you decide what things are practical enough to work towards and what things are too unrealistic to even try? What would it take to get you to work toward significant change?
  
8. How do people differ in the utopias they have in mind? In how much they're willing to work toward change?
  
9. If human nature was more the way you'd like it to be, how would your ideal society be different? How would this society be different (current U.S.)?
  
10. Should the U.S. adopt a goal of trying to create a different kind of society within, say, the next 50 years? What kind? Would it make a difference in the way the gov't works?
  
11. What "realistic" (not utopian) society should we be working towards? Possible? Would most people want it?

6. Personal Background and Goals

- |   |                            |                            |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Education  | 2. Occupation              | 3. Past jobs               |
| 4. Place of Birth   | 5. Community size as child | 6. Desired                 |
| 7. Parents' occupation  | 8. Birth order             | 9. Hobbies                 |
| 10. Religion--child   | 11. Religion--now          |                            |
| 12. Married   | Want to be?                | 13. Children               |
|   |                            | Want?                      |
| 14. Lived/travelled outside U.S.  |                            |                            |
| 15. College major/plans after finishing/ career plans   |                            | Why in college? Why plans? |
| 16. Have TV?  | How much watch?            | What?                      |
|   |                            | What think about it?       |
| Why do you think people watch so much TV?   |                            |                            |
| 17. Have you ever done things or lived places or been interested in things that other people consider to be out of the ordinary? Would you like to? What?                                     |                            |                            |
| <u>17b. Which laws have you broken? Should there be respect for law, obey all laws, etc?</u>  |                            |                            |
| 18. Which parts of your life are you most/least satisfied with right now? Change what?  |                            |                            |
| school/job/relationships/friends/religion/future plans  |                            |                            |
| 19. Are you more or less satisfied than in the past?  |                            |                            |
| 20. What do you think you'll be doing in 5 years? 20? How do you feel about that? Would you rather be doing something else?   |                            |                            |
| 21. What are your goals in life? What is "success" for you?   |                            |                            |
| <hr/>   |                            |                            |
| 22. Do you generally accomplish the things you attempt?   |                            |                            |
| 23. Do you tend to blame yourself when you don't get what you want, or do you tend to blame other people or the nature of the situation? When each? What about other people--what do they do? |                            |                            |
| 24. What kinds of problems are really individual/result of other things? How common?  |                            |                            |
| 25. Are there times that you don't particularly like yourself? When? Often?   |                            |                            |
| 26. Do you think professional counseling is a good way for people to try to resolve their problems? Which kinds of problems/people? Have you? Who else talked to?                             |                            |                            |
| <hr/>   |                            |                            |
| 27. What else has had an effect on your answers? Events/people/time periods affect beliefs?   |                            |                            |

**9. Conception of Similarity to Others**

1. How are you similar to/different from other people?
2. When you hear about public opinion polls, do you usually agree with the majority/minority?
3. Thinking about people who would disagree with your views in these areas, how are they different from you? similar? what makes them that way?
4. Do you have friends who disagree with you about these issues? Does this disagreement cause any problems? Do you talk about these issues with them? Do you try to convince each other?
5. If you thought more people shared your outlook on politics, would you do anything different in your life? Would you be more/less active politically?
6. Why do people disagree so much about these things? Is there any way to get people to agree more? Is that important?
7. How do you feel when you're in the minority on an important issue? Do you often change your mind? Do you try to change the other's mind? Are you successful?
8. How do you feel when other people try to get you to change your mind about these things?
9. In the utopian society that you might like to see, would most people agree or disagree about important things? What kinds of things would people disagree about? Would that cause problems? How would problems be handled?

Why did you agree to be interviewed?

10. Reactions to Interviewing

1. How do you feel when we talk about the different issues that have come up? world problems? politics? personal problems that people have? your own life?
2. Is it easy or difficult for you to make up your mind about these things?
3. Have you gotten confused, bored, angry, excited, disappointed, satisfied, amused?
4. Would you rather not have to think about these things?
5. Have you thought much about these kinds of things before?
6. Which things that we've talked about did you never really think much about before?
7. Have you changed your mind about any of these topics since we started the interviews?
8. Do you think you'll do anything differently from now on, or pay more attention to these issues in the future?
9. What kinds of things should I have asked you about that I didn't, in order to understand the reasons for your opinions better?
10. What else should we have done differently? What suggestions do you have for doing it better in the future?
11. Are you glad or sorry that you agreed to take part in this study? Why? Do you think it's been useful/interesting/what?
12. What do you think I'll be able to tell from this research? Are you interested in getting a copy of the results and perhaps discussing them before I write the final report?



**APPENDIX E:**

**SCENARIOS**

**Lifboat Scenario**—Imagine that you are on a ship in the middle of the ocean. There is an explosion in the engine room and the ship begins to burn and then it sinks. You make your way into the only lifboat that survives the fire, where there are 20 other survivors. There are also about a dozen people swimming in the cold water, trying to climb on board.

The lifboat is only designed for 15 people, and is already in danger of capsizing. Some people on board want to keep the people in the water from getting in the boat. Some want to take in as many as possible and worry later about what to do if the lifboat sinks. Others want some people in the boat already to get out, so that only 15 will remain.

1. What do you think you would want to do in this situation?
2. If everyone decides that some people on board have to get out of the boat, how should the decision be made about whoshould go and who should stay?
3. What do you really think would happen?

Some people think that the earth today is like a lifboat. They say that the U.S. and some other countries that have lots of natural resources and productive agriculture should realize that it's too late to save the rest of the world, where there is overpopulation and many people are hungry. These people argue that if we keep giving food and money to these poor countries we'll be in more trouble ourselves. We should close our borders and take care of our own needs first, leaving other countries to sink or swim on their own?

4. Do you agree? Is this an accurate picture of the world today? What should be done?

Commons Scenario--Imagine that you are a farmer, several hundred years ago in England. You own several cows that graze on a small field used by all the local villagers. Each farm family takes care of its own cows, and keeps the profit it makes by selling the milk, butter, and cheese their cows produce. Over the years, the different farmers have begun to graze a few more cows in the common field. Unfortunately, there seems to be a growing danger that too many cows will cause the field to be overgrazed, which would mean that there wouldn't be enough grass to produce as much milk as before. You realize this danger, but you also realize you can still increase your own profits by adding another cow of your own to the field.

1. What do you think you would do in this situation? Why?
2. What do you think most people would do?
3. What would make some people decide to add another cow, and others decide not to?
4. Thinking about the example of the farmers and the cows in the field, what kind of arrangements could the farmers make to avoid overgrazing the field?
5. What do you think the farmers in such situations actually did?
6. Have you ever been faced with this kind of situation in your own life, where you had to decide between doing something for yourself and doing something for the good of everyone as a whole? What happened?
7. Is this similar to having to decide whether or not to use scarce energy and other natural resources, whether to pollute the environment or have a lot of children, etc.?

Constitutional Convention Scenario

In recent years there have occasionally been calls to hold a Constitutional Convention. Usually, the purpose that is suggested is to amend the Constitution in order to require a balanced federal budget, to outlaw abortion, or to approve school prayer. Some people object to holding such a convention because they believe the convention might decide to consider changing other parts of the Constitution or the Bill of Rights. Some other people think that reexamining the entire Constitution would be a good idea, because they want to make some changes in the American political system.

I want you to imagine that the decision has been made to hold a Constitutional Convention, and that you are a delegate at the convention. Shortly after the convention begins, several groups of delegates organize to advocate a variety of major changes in the Constitution.

Do you think that you, yourself, would propose any changes in the Constitution? If yes, which types of changes would you like to see?

I'm going to describe seven groups of delegates that form at the convention.

1. The first group believes that the Founding Fathers did not want to remove religion entirely from public life, and they want to restore the importance of religion in the U.S. This group wants to change the Constitution in order to require prayer in the public schools, to teach children in public schools to believe in God, and to make it illegal for public libraries to have books that make fun of religion. Some of the delegates in this group want to officially declare the U.S. to be a Christian country, though some do not.

What do you think about this group's proposals? Which would you support/oppose? Why?

2. This group argues that the Founding Fathers did not want the Federal Government to get as strong and powerful as it is today, that they wanted the State Governments to stay stronger. This group wants to change the Constitution to give the States some of the powers that the Federal Government now has, such as the power to regulate business, schools, abortion, welfare, highways, and so on.

3. ...the real purpose of the Constitution was to make sure that Americans were all treated equally, but in the years since then powerful corporations have developed that control too many areas of people's lives. This group says that now the free enterprise system causes problems such as unemployment and poverty. These delegates want to change the Constitution so that the Federal Government would be able to take over the big corporations and manage the economy for the good of all the people, especially for the working people.

4. ...the only thing the Federal Government should do is defend the country and protect people's property from criminals. These delegates say that people can run their own affairs without government regulation and without paying taxes for things like public schools and highways. They want to change things to prevent the Federal and the State Governments from making so many decisions about what people can and can't do.

5. ...Wants to eliminate the entire Constitution. These delegates believe that the people don't need a Constitution and don't need any central government at all. They think that people can organize themselves in their own communities and cooperate with each other in order to provide for all their needs together.

## Convention Scenario--continued

6. ...wants to leave the Constitution just the way it is now, without making any major changes.

7. The final group of delegates isn't sure that there's any way for all the other groups to agree with each other. This last group suggests that the U.S. divide itself up into six regions. Each region could have its own way of doing things, and people could move from wherever they lived to go to the region they liked best.

---

7. Which of these groups do you think you agree with the most? Least?

2. Can you think of any other opinions that might come up at the Constitutional Convention? Is that something you agree with?

3. If the last group got its way and the U.S. was actually divided into six separate regions, each with its own way of doing things, which region do you think you'd want to live in?

4. Which regions would work better than the others?

5. If a system was set up for this part of the country that you didn't like, would you move away?

**APPENDIX F:**  
**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION COVER SHEET**

P- \_\_\_\_\_

286

**Participant Information**

Interview Dates: 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: Female Male

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Major interest: \_\_\_\_\_ Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Wrote to: State News State Journal

# of letters: \_\_\_\_\_

Letter topics: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Political Summary Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Government: \_\_\_\_\_

Human Nature: \_\_\_\_\_

Commons Scenario: \_\_\_\_\_

Central Themes: \_\_\_\_\_

Other:

**APPENDIX G:**  
**GENERAL CODING CATEGORIES**



## GENERAL CODING CATEGORIES

Categories are not mutually exclusive; material is coded in as many categories as appropriate.

## 1 Letter-Writing--History/Reasons/Reactions

SELF-ASSESSMENT, ETC.

- 3 Similar to others/Majority in polls
- 4 Different from others/Minority in polls/Different in general/  
Things other people have trouble accepting about self/Reject status quo
- 5 I'm right because I know/understand complexity, see things in context.  
Important to be a generalist. "If they knew what I know, they'd agree."
- 6 "People are different" (No implication that own view is correct.)
- 7 "I don't know enough yet/May be wrong/I'm not an expert." "Don't know."
- 8 Effects of media/TV on shaping opinions, hindering/affecting political process.
- 9 Cites authorities, experts, statistics/Importance of experts/Not sure which expert to believe. Or: Dismisses such authorities.
- 11 Other influences on views: Intelligence, ability, personality, pride, independence, leadership, strength, community-mindedness, etc.
- 12 Education important for self/in general.
- 14 Reference to (or: Apparent) motivating forces. (Dis)satisfactions.  
Self-evaluations, especially in comparison to others.  
Reference to own/national morality, conscience. Autonomy/Community.
- 15 "Don't know why I have the views I do."
- 17 Influencing others: Attempts, ability, desire. Self as leader.  
Career (goal): writer, teacher, politico. Have an effect.
- 18 Other life goals. Definition of "success."
- 22 Reactions to others' attempts at influence.
- 23 "Important to try even if success unlikely"/Accomplish things that attempt?

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

- 30 Serious global, US problems. Trends. US in 50 years.
- 32 Technology
- 33 World problems affect me.
- 35 Serious individual problems. Sick society. Nation of Strangers.  
Complexity, mobility, size, materialism, apathy, political disillusionment.  
Problems of autonomy/community.
- 36 TV--Why so much? Ownership/Evaluation/Preferences
- 37 Blaming the victim.
- 38 Different problems are interrelated.

POLITICS

- 40 Government purpose/need. Purpose of law in theory/practice.
- 41 Government origins. "Primitive" government, way of life, human nature.
- 42 If there were no laws. . . .
- 43 Personal history of law-breaking/Attitude towards law-breaking.
- 45 Political self-definition (and difficulties with it) (Direct reference).
- 46 Changes in political views/other views.
- 47 Political history--Voting, protest, participation. Interest in protest.
- 48 Assessment of political (Third) parties, politicians, ideologies.
- 49 Assessment of protesters, commune members, etc.
- 51 Nationalism, patriotism. Evaluative views of US.
- 52 Demonstrated interest in politics/news/(political) TV, magazines.
- 53 Other views on political/legal system in general.  
Other desired changes/solutions.
- 55 Economic issues--welfare/socialism/capitalism/etc.
- 56 Foreign policy--in general/Nuclear issues/Central America/etc.
- 57 Communism/Soviets--Threat, Goals, etc.
- 58 Social issues--drugs, abortion, crime, racism, sexism, etc.
- 59 Alternatives to political action.

HUMAN NATURE

- 60 Self-interest, competition. Selfishness, greed. Negative views.
- 61 Positive views. Altruism.
- 62 Complex, mixed. Both heredity and environment, learned, cultural.
- 63 Purpose of life.
- 64 Relationship between human nature and political views.

UTOPIA

- 66 Background in utopia, science fiction.
- 67 Views about utopia.
- 68 Commune knowledge, interest.

BACKGROUND

- 70 Education/college major
- 71 Community size--as child/desired
- 72 Sports
- 73 Religion
- 75 Jobs, hobbies, volunteer work, military, organizations, living arrangements.
- 76 Friends, spouse, children, girl/boyfriends.
- 77 Relations with parents, siblings, other relatives. Birth order.  
Class, occupation, status, etc. Parents' views/impact. Adolescence.
- 78 Things out of the ordinary. Travel, foreign languages. Desired.

INTERVIEWS

- 80 Why agreed to be interviewed. Assessment of interview process.  
Glad, nervous, helpful, difficult, self-conscious, etc.
- 81 New topics not thought about before. Changed mind.
- 82 Things brought up spontaneously.
- 84 Discussion of school, social sciences, polls, research, education.
- 85 Discussion of researcher's life, views, etc.
- 86 Other informal discussion.
- 87 Interest in follow-up, continuing, etc. Lateness.
- 90 Out of interview interactions.
- 91 Researcher's reactions.

**APPENDIX H:**  
**ADDITIONAL INDIVIDUAL CODING CATEGORIES**

## ADDITIONAL INDIVIDUAL CODING CATEGORIES

## PARTICIPANT 1: VICTOR

- A Campaign finance reform. Agency relationship. PACs.
- B Sees human nature in political framework. Returns to political themes.
- C Act politically for own reasons. Letters as therapy; protest as social activity.
- D "Selling in the marketplace of ideas." Interest in being entrepreneur.
- E Refers to Maslow hierarchy in terms of rising material needs.

## PARTICIPANT 2: BILL

- F Pornography discussion. Women's movement.
- G Backtracks on earlier definite statements.
- H Loses train of thought.
- I People are hypocrites.
- J Strength, power, ability to carry out decisions, leadership, realism.

## PARTICIPANT 3: TIMOTHY

- K Work on Higher Education and other commissions.
- L Long historical examples, anecdotes, tangents.

## PARTICIPANT 4: EVE

None.

## PARTICIPANT 5: PAUL

- M References to Communist revolutionary Party.

## PARTICIPANT 6: ROBERTA

None.

## PARTICIPANT 7: ALLEN

- N Libertarian Party, philosophy.

## PARTICIPANT 8: DAVID

- O Health, nature, survival of the fittest, freedom;  
Laws to control pollution, tobacco, alcohol, etc.
- P Effects of cigarettes, violent movies, etc. on children/Writes for children.

## PARTICIPANT 9: SCOTT

- Q Drugs.
- R Personalized anarchist philosophy. Anti-societal rules.

## PARTICIPANT 10: CHRIS

- S Military, ROTC details; interest, criticisms.

**APPENDIX I:**  
**SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTERS**

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH BUILDING

EAST LANSING · MICHIGAN · 48824-1117

February 22, 1984

Dear ,

As with most dissertations, mine is taking me much longer to work on than I had hoped. I just wanted to let you know that I'm still analyzing (or trying to find time to analyze) the interview material from last spring, and I will get in touch with you again when I'm ready to provide you with some information about what I'm coming up with.

I notice occasional letters from you in the Journal, so I assume you're still living in East Lansing. I do hope to have enough material to discuss with you by summertime.

Thanks again for your help with the interviews.

Sincerely,



Dennis Fox

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH BUILDING

EAST LANSING MICHIGAN 48824-1117

January 29, 1985

Hello. It's been a long time since the interviews for my dissertation, back in the spring of 1983. Although my teaching and other activities have taken much more time than I expected, resulting in the usual delayed dissertation progress, and although I've had to lower some of my original expectations about how much I could reasonably accomplish, I have been moving along at a slow but steady pace.

Since the last interviews, about a year and a quarter ago, the tapes of the interviews with all ten participants have been fully transcribed. The 500 pages of typed transcripts have now been coded into categories that seemed meaningful, and I'm in the midst of analyzing the general themes. I've written much of the introductory material for the dissertation, and I'm hoping to complete the analysis and finish the dissertation sometime next summer. Of course, delays are always to be expected.

One chapter that I have finished a first draft of is essentially a brief description of the concerns of each of the participants. I'm enclosing a copy of the section that attempts to describe your own views. Also included at the end is a summary of some of the comments expressed by four undergraduate research assistants (two on the political left, two on the right) who read all the transcripts; I should point out that the research assistants are not trained in analysis, and they were asked simply to write out their candid personal first impressions after a single reading of each transcript. Some of their comments may appear to you (as they do to me) to be overly blunt or in error, and I want to make it clear that I do not share many of their impressions.

I would be very interested in hearing your comments on the material I'm sending you, and am enclosing a return envelope in the hope that you are able to respond. As I point out in the introductory section, each description is necessarily brief and fairly superficial; additional details will be presented in later chapters where appropriate, and additions to the descriptions based on your own comments are also possible. Important biographical details were often changed to preserve your anonymity; please let me know if you think the description is still more identifiable than you would like it to be.

I'm particularly interested in several things:

Is the description as written a fair portrayal of the material we covered in the interviews? If not, what is omitted or overemphasized?

Are there any clarifications you would like to make concerning your views of a year and a half ago?

Have there been major changes in your views, your career or family situation, or your life plans since then? In connection with this, did you vote in the 1984 presidential election, and if so, for whom? and why?



What is your personal reaction to the comments of the research assistants?

I would like, if possible, to include your reactions in the dissertation itself, or perhaps in later work. I do think it's important that the description accurately portrays your way of looking at the world. Also, when the final analysis is complete, I'd like to send that to you as well so that you have a better idea of the work to which you have contributed. (Is the address to which this is sent still accurate?)

I do appreciate all you have already done, and I hope the final research reports fairly represent your perspective. The research process for me has been long and sometimes frustrating, but almost always fascinating. I do thank you, and I'd be happy to discuss any aspect of this with you in person, on the phone, or by mail. I will also send you, by the way, a general summary of the dissertation once it's completed.

Good luck with your own plans. I look forward to hearing from you, partly because of the dissertation, but also because I'm genuinely curious about how your life has gone in the past year. Interviewing each of you was beneficial for me personally, far beyond the academic, analytical element. You each raised a variety of issues that stimulated my own thoughts and made me more aware of the diversity that is possible among sincere people who look around them and try to explain, and perhaps improve, the society we are part of.

Thanks again.

Sincerely,



Dennis Fox  
(517) 353-7163 office  
351-9154 home

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH BUILDING

EAST LANSING · MICHIGAN · 48824-1117

March 21, 1985

This is the latest progress report on my dissertation. I'd like to thank those of you who have written in response to the material I sent you two months ago; your comments have been helpful in terms of the dissertation, as well as interesting personally.

Enclosed in this envelope are two different papers. The first is an updated version of the "Participant Profile" describing yourself that you have already seen; this version still does not yet reflect some of the comments you have made, which will be incorporated in the next version. This copy includes more direct quotes than the first, and some other minor changes. You'll notice that I've rearranged the order of presentation of the ten participants, and that your pseudonym has consequently changed as well.

The second paper is a first draft of a paper I'm giving at a conference. This is my first effort to briefly summarize the dissertation as a whole, which forces me to generalize and categorize more than I think is really reasonable. I would appreciate any comments you have on the paper in its present form, particularly in terms of how you feel you do or don't fit in to what I've described as general themes. Your comments will be taken into account in later versions, and in the dissertation itself.

As far as the dissertation goes, I am still hoping to finish a first draft by the summer. Right now I'm working on the chapters describing in detail the general and differentiating themes described in the conference paper; this involves going through the mountains of interview transcripts and collecting evidence for and against the themes. The final version will, I hope, make more clear than is possible in the conference paper the problems with placing people in categories.

Although I am interested in hearing from each of you, please don't in any way feel obligated to respond. You have already done far more for this project than is reasonable to ask, and I would not in any way want you to do more if you have neither the time nor the interest. I will in any case send you further material when it is ready.

If you do respond, and haven't yet told me the reasons for your voting decision in the 1984 presidential election, I'd appreciate your including that information. That's a question that I'm often asked, and although I don't place as much significance on it as my questioners do, it would be good to have an answer for them.

Once again, thank you for all your help, and good luck in your own endeavors.

Sincerely,



Dennis Fox  
(517) 353-7163 office  
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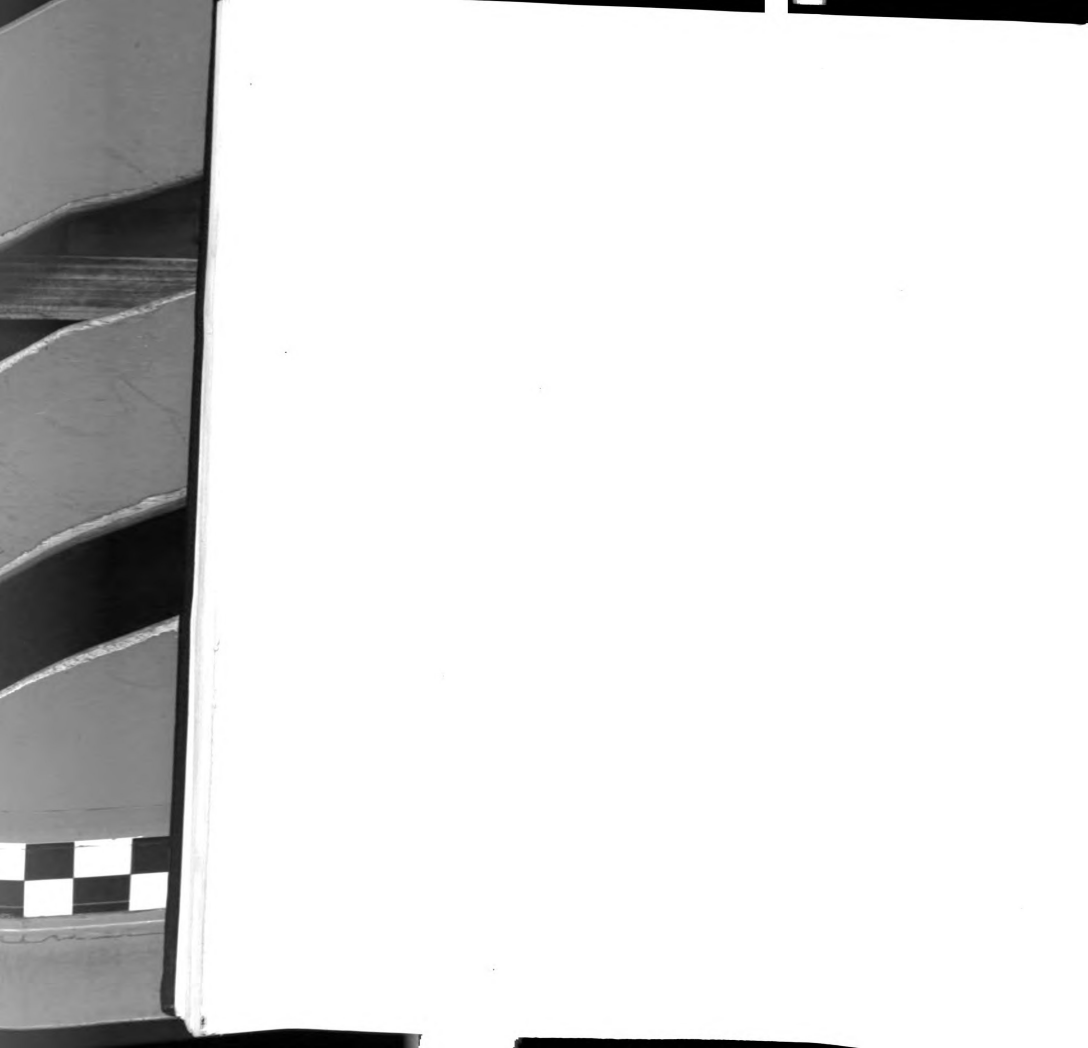
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