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Choosing voluntary simplicity as a lifestyle

Nolen, Teris P., Ph.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1994

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CHOOSING VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY AS A LIFESTYLE

by

Teris P. Nolen

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
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Approved by

Mary G. Morgan
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The purposes of the study were: (a) to investigate factors that lead individuals and families to a decision to adopt simpler lifestyles, (b) to determine what people mean by voluntary simplicity and how they practice a simpler lifestyle, and (c) to explore the role of group support in individual or family pursuit of voluntarily simpler living. A model of factors influencing voluntary simplicity was proposed as an explanation of the process. Components of the model included ethical issues, ecological concerns, and economic considerations. The model suggests adoption and practice of voluntary simplicity leads toward a more equitable global society--humane sustainable culture.

The sample consisted of 48 individuals who had participated in LifeStyle Simplification Labs and were believed to be practicing a lifestyle simpler than mainstream society. Follow-up to the first mailed questionnaire (VSQ) netted 43 (90%) useable returns. Based on their composite score on voluntary simplicity behaviors, a sub-sample of 14 respondents was selected to receive the second questionnaire VSQ--2; eight (57%) were returned. Non-respondents to VSQ--2 seemed so engaged in life altering events they could not complete the second questionnaire.

The analysis of VSQ was both quantitative and descriptive. Analysis of VSQ--2 created vignettes of each individual/family to compare with the model.

In general, ethical issues came before ecological concerns or economic considerations as elements leading to adoption of voluntary simplicity. But, in their definition and practice of voluntary simplicity, respondents placed ecological concerns uppermost. Interrelationships among the components--ethical issues, ecological concerns, and economic considerations--were evident as lifestyle patterns became congruent with voluntary simplicity. Nearly half of the respondents reported themselves less anxious about the future since adopting a simpler life pattern. One fourth earned a lower income because of their decision to live more simply. If they were to earn more, respondents typically wanted to reduce debt, to save more for retirement, and to help others. For one fourth of respondents, experience living in other, less affluent, cultures was influential in their decision to live simply. Themes emerging from the vignettes included: connectedness with God, other people, and the earth; interdependence and a striving for sustainability within community; commitment to the simpler lifestyle for its benefits and outreach potential; and struggle to counter prevailing social norms.

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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The concept of simple living is more complex than nostalgically retreating to an earlier time, living off the land, and rejecting modern technology. Simple living for some includes a search for personal meaning and realization of basic human values centered on faith, family, and commitment to lofty ideals. Individuals who realize that their affluent lifestyles haven't provided the expected satisfactions note that their jobs are stressful, that family life suffers, and that they haven't time to enjoy leisure activities. These are the people who ask "How much is enough?" and begin to make changes.

Some individuals necessarily simplify lifestyles after experiencing a reversal of fortune through job loss, death or divorce, or serious illness. When simple living was first adopted in response to crisis, recognition of the many benefits of a simpler lifestyle may eventually lead to its being chosen voluntarily. For example, families who formerly were satisfied driving the highway to success are becoming detoured by recession. Some of them had intended to continue buying more expensive houses every few years as real estate appreciated in value and speculation was encouraged (Pearl,

1992). Upon reevaluation, some of these people are deciding to sink roots into their present communities and make the best of their situations.

Many are alarmed at the rate of ecological damage occurring and hope to live more lightly upon the Earth. They come to believe that simpler lifestyles, if widely adopted, could transform society in the direction of humane sustainable culture. This is defined as living in the present in such a way that succeeding generations will have quality lifestyles. To ensure the survival of the planet, it seems to them necessary to think and act ecologically (Brown, Flavin & Postel, 1991). From this point of view, it will be especially important to relinquish behaviors such as wastefulness and violence in favor of conservation and harmony (Eisler, 1987; Harman, 1987; Schmookler, 1988).

Partnership Model Society vs. Dominator Model Society

Eisler (1987) delineated ways that prehistoric, pre-Neolithic peoples in diverse environments throughout the world lived in partnership model societies characterized by harmonious relationships between males and females under the beneficent Goddess deity. Repeated invasion and mass cultural destruction carried out by dominator model patriarchal societies resulted in the continual enlargement of male power and control. The resulting paradigm shift from partnership to domination required centuries. An encroaching and powerful patriarchal focus changed emphasis from nurture

to conquest and exploitation which created new pressures on the land and new philosophical bases for behavior.

Lerner (1986) traced the history of patriarchy. She noted that prior to the conceptualization of private property, men had already appropriated control over women's sexual and reproductive function. Patriarchal governments had "an essential interest in maintenance of the patriarchal family" (p. 9). Slavery was an outgrowth of men's domination of women captives of war. Sexual subordination of women was institutionalized in law, social class distinction for a woman was based on her association with a man.

The dethroning of the powerful goddesses and their replacement by a dominant male god occur in most Near Eastern societies following the establishment of a strong imperialistic kingship (p. 9).

Monotheism, as established by the Hebrews, required attacks on the widespread cults of the goddesses; "female sexuality other than for procreative purposes becomes associated with sin and evil" (p. 10). Within the covenant community, women were placed in subordinate position. "Their only access to God and to the holy community is in their function as mothers" (p. 10).

This symbolic devaluing of women in relation to the divine becomes one of the founding metaphors of Western civilization. The other founding metaphor is supplied by Aristotelian philosophy, which assumes as a given that women are incomplete and damaged human beings of an entirely different order than men. It is within the creation of these two metaphorical constructs, which are

built into the very foundations of the symbol systems of Western civilization, that the subordination of women comes to be seen as "natural," hence it becomes invisible. It is this which finally establishes patriarchy firmly as an actuality and as an ideology. (p. 10)

Dominator model societies set the stage for the all-encompassing consumerism of the 20th century. Economic theory was eventually invented to explain and maintain the rigid hierarchical rankings of persons in positions within society. Dominator model economic patterns resulted in complex processes such as monetizing the economy, elevating war and conquest, and validating dominance by men over women as the result of the depiction of a male God dominating humanity. Glorifying conquest and booty capture led to a deemphasis on nurturing relationships. Material wealth and status became the primary measure of one's rank and worth.

Resurgent periods of cooperative, partnership model changes in society, such as valuing women's attributes and contributions, have alternated with firm reinstatements of the dominator behavior (Schmookler, 1988, 1989; Waring, 1988). Desire for a humane sustainable culture may lead individuals to adopt a simpler lifestyle. The move toward lifestyle simplification may be the result of one or a combination of the following factors: ecological concerns, ethical issues including the measurement of and definition of human success, and economic considerations centering on answering the question "What is enough?" Acknowledging the

issues, as they present themselves, are very complex and intimately interrelated, nevertheless it is important to address each of them.

Ecological Concerns

Ecologists believe that in order for the earth itself to be sustainable, the critical factors include:

a population that is stable and in balance with its natural support systems, an energy system that does not raise the level of greenhouse gases and disrupt the earth's climate, and a level of material demand that neither exceeds the sustainable yield of forests, grasslands, or fisheries nor systematically destroys the other species with which we share the planet. (Brown, Flavin & Postel, 1991, p. 11)

Population

Scholars have developed models of a sustainable society that posit sufficient resources to provide for the global population. When Northern Hemisphere countries accuse the developing Southern Hemispheres of gross overpopulation, they fail to see the impact of their own consumption patterns. Considering the impact of particular populations rather than merely counting heads validates comparisons. Henderson (1991) recommended wider use of the "Indian Equivalents" formula.

An American baby's impact on world resources is at least 50 times that of an Indian child. By these calculations, the U.S. population must be figured in the tens of billions, and viewed as the biggest contributor to the global population problem. (p. 123)

Population growth certainly relates to poverty. However, today in the poor regions, increasing family size is the only "insurance" families have to sustain themselves. As educational levels and economic self-sufficiency increase, the size of families begins to decrease (Charlton, 1984, Meadows, 1992).

Energy

Current concerns such as ozone depletion and global warming are related to energy expenditures. Individuals in developed societies are highly dependent upon fossil fuels for heating and cooling and transportation. Persons in developing societies are highly dependant on burning wood and other organic matter as fuel and for methods of cropland maintenance. Levine (1993) states that such biomass burning accounts for as much as 40 percent of the greenhouse gases contributing to global warming. Both global warming and ozone depletion generate concern about possible catastrophic climate change. It is therefore important to conserve energy and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Ecologists urging lifestyle simplification, point to expedients that lead to conservation. Such measures include: improved appliances, home design, and light bulbs; bicycling and walking augmented by efficient mass transit; alternate forms of fuel such as solar energy are completely renewable and non-polluting. Brown, Flavin, and Postel (1991) anticipate that the "ultimate efficient, clean vehicle

could appear soon after the turn of the century--a hydrogen-powered car with a fuel cell and electric motor rather than a conventional engine" (p. 40). Suburban life may de-emphasize the car and incorporate more community centered production and activities. Examples include: community subscription farms, food cooperatives, community gardens, and small business enterprise including home-based business.

Level of Material Use

Studies of consuming societies show that demand for consumer goods drives worldwide environmental destruction. Forested areas shrink drastically under seemingly insatiable requirements for wood and wood products. Logged areas, if replanted, become mono-species forests. Timber farms produce quickly, but because they are a single species, the trees are more susceptible to pests and diseases (Postel & Ryan, 1991). Biological diversity is threatened as more species become extinct. Unfortunately, much of the harvest, taken at great cost in energy, air, soil, and water damage, provides packaging materials and throw away goods, such as disposable chopsticks.

Environmental sensitivity has grown from a grass roots political action movement holding the first Earth Day in 1970 (McCollough, 1991), to a concept more fully integrated into mainstream culture in the early 1990's. Concerned with environmental destruction, families have begun to examine their expenditures, to question their purchases in regard to

packaging, energy use, and whether or not the product is "environmentally friendly". American cities, although beginning to recycle, reuse, and to limit some packaging, are still inundated with garbage. Water and air pollution threaten human health. Many areas monitor pollution levels and report a daily air quality index. Transporting food to international markets uses more energy than relying on locally grown produce. Farming cash crops moves poor people off the land when exportable crops such as coffee, tea, cocoa, or flowers are produced at the expense of staple foods. Pesticide and herbicides, unregulated in many countries, contribute to pollution and disease. Topsoil is lost through over-grazing, wind erosion, and failure to use conservation methods. Numerous concerns center on the livestock industry. Nutrition authorities question the wisdom of high fat diets associated with meat consumption (Durning, 1991, 1992).

Environmental and ecological health is increasingly the subject of political discussions and community programs. Many individuals, families, and groups are becoming active in organizations such as Bread for the World, Alternatives, Inc., Context Institute, and The New Road Map Foundation. Such involvement is related to ethical issues that prompt movement toward voluntary simplicity.

Ethical Issues

Many scholars have shown that the poorest of the earth's peoples continue to grow poorer as the rich grow even richer (Durning, 1991, 1992; Postel, 1991). Winnick (1988) outlined how the separation between the rich and the poor in the United States has widened in recent years. As the gap widens, alienation between social classes is expressed in racially motivated disputes and rising crime rates. A further signal of a lack of partnership model societal conditions is the proliferation of prisons and homeless shelters.

Rather than use the term "rich," Durning (1991, 1992) uses the term "consumer" in defining consumption classes worldwide. The consumer society has grown to encompass not only the U.S. and Canada, but Western Europe, Japan, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the oil rich Middle East (Durning, 1992). Durning's table, World Consumption Classes provides a way of contrasting level of consumption with lifestyles. (Table 1)

According to these categories, world wide average annual income of the consumer classes is above \$7500 per family member per year. These 1.1 billion wealthy people earn 64% of the world's income. No matter how frugal we consider ourselves here in the U.S., we are among the rich whose dietary habits, for example, harm the environment as surely as the habits of the truly poor.

Table 1

World Consumption Classes, 1992

Category of Consumption	Consumers (1.1 billion)	Middle (3.3 billion)	Poor (1.1 billion)
Diet	meat, packaged food, soft drinks	grain, clean water	insufficient grain, unsafe water
Transport	private cars	bicycles	walking
Materials	throwaways	durables	local biomass

Note. From How Much is Enough? The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth (p. 27) by A. T. Durning, 1992, New York: W. W. Norton, Copyright 1992 by Worldwatch Institute. Reprinted by permission.

If all the world's people nourished themselves with the consumer class's regimen of meat, heavily packaged and processed foods and drinks, and specialties transported great distances, we would use more energy just for food and drinks than we currently do for all purposes--along with other natural resources in equally mammoth quantities. (Durning, 1992, p. 77)

The poorest 1.1 billion people barely survive on less than \$700 per family member per year which amounts to just 2 percent of the world's income (Durning, 1992). Their harm to the environment comes from denuding vegetation for firewood, from eating seed intended for planting while seeking relief from hunger, and from engaging in desperate acts due to societal rejection. There are over 100 million homeless people worldwide.

Consumption patterns of the world's middle classes approach a level of humane sustainability. Diets are healthy and energy efficient. Transportation is non-polluting, inexpensive, repairable, and alternates with efficient modes of mass transit for longer trips. Attention to conservation of materials means that quality and value are more important than fashion or impulse when possessions are bought. Durning (1991, 1992) acknowledged that although middle class habits are environmentally more sustainable, nevertheless their aspiration is to imitate the wealthier consumer class. Global health is threatened due to the serious and continuing depletion of planetary resources as increasing numbers emulate the lifestyles of the rich (Postel, 1992).

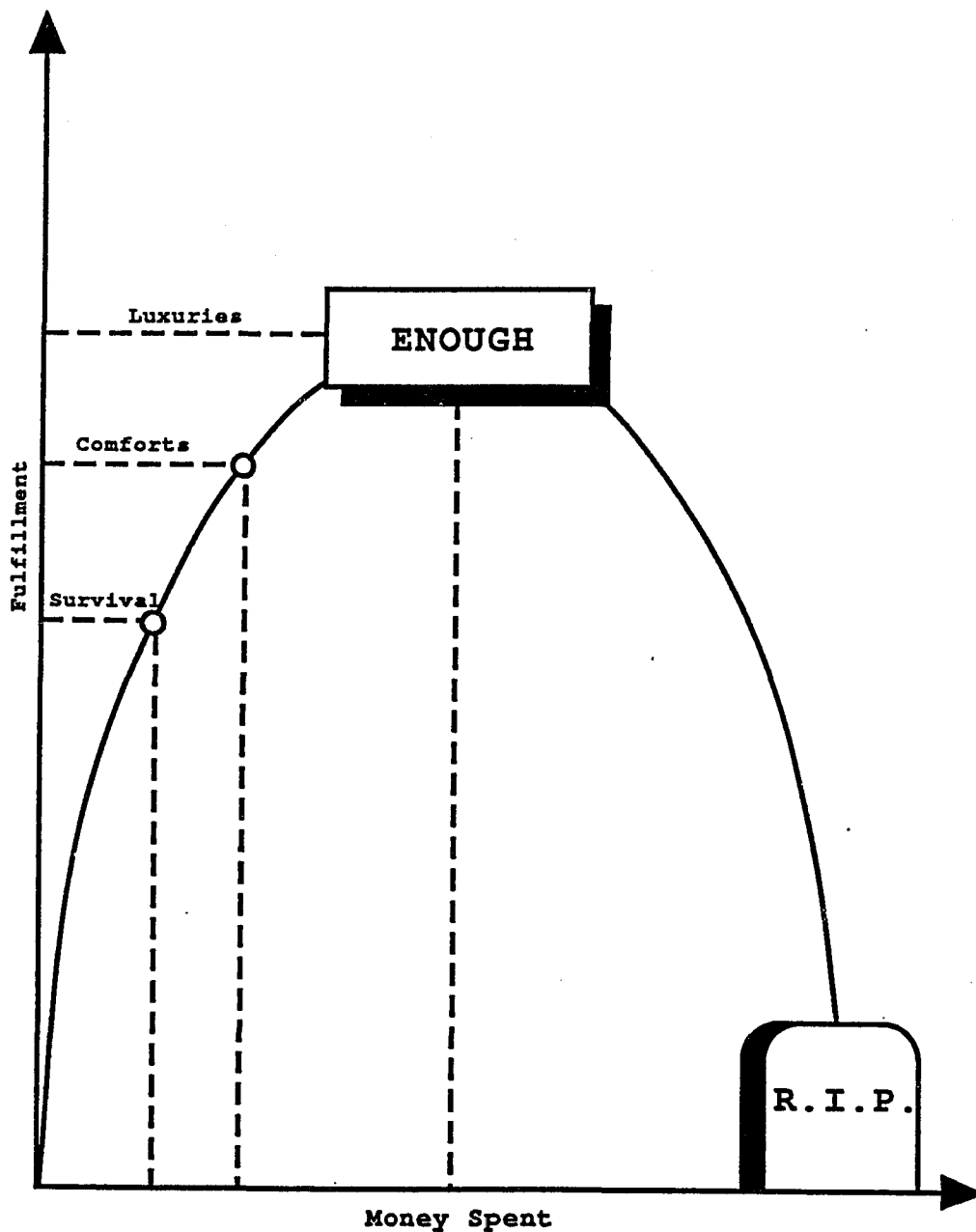
In the U.S., the trend has been for many people to equate their value as persons with their financial balance sheets, their educational and professional status, and their styles of living. The concept of the expanding frontier equated wealth with material possessions acquired through competition rather than peaceful sharing of the necessities of life. As people imagine their lives as happy, a typical glib description in contemporary culture might be "to be rich and successful," "to be very wealthy," or merely "to win the lottery!" The media portray successful people as glamorous and wealthy; witness television shows such as "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" and movies like "The Color of Money".

Many social critics contend that appetites for more and better and faster and bigger became almost insatiable. Americans never seem to feel satisfied. Instead, we appear to lead the way as "developed" societies surge out of control in terms of resource acquisition.

In spite of the talk and striving for material gain, something essential is missing--wealth does not buy happiness. We sometimes even seem to be seeking, through materialism, that aspect of humanity that is best realized as spiritual development (Schmookler, 1991). Inner peace, spiritual development, and human connectedness are the things identified with personal fulfillment. Having "enough" money and possessions to be comfortable is necessary and acquiring these levels can be a profoundly creative process. Dominguez and Robin (1992) developed the Fulfillment Curve (Figure 1) showing that personal fulfillment drops rapidly once acquisition exceeds the comfortable level of "enough". "We hit a fulfillment ceiling and never recognized that the formula of money = fulfillment not only had stopped working but had started to work against us" (p. 25). Becoming frugal with money and living within one's own definition of "enough" can free time and resources to work for the common good--within families, communities, or the larger world. Acquiring more than is needed does not provide increased satisfaction (Durning, 1992; Elgin, 1981; Schmookler, 1991).

Figure 1. The Fulfillment Curve: Enough

From Your Money or Your Life: Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence (p,26) by J. Dominguez and V. Robin, 1992, New York: Viking. Copyright 1992 by Vicki Robin and Joe Dominguez. Reprinted by permission.



Schmookler (1991) contrasted the quest for economic abundance with the search for meaning. "The human soul, like the earth itself, is turned into a resource for the market's endless push toward growth" (p. 22). He pointed out that child rearing practices in the Western world tend to reduce tactile contact thus creating "people alienated from a primordial connection with their bodies [who] may indeed be insatiable in their material yearnings" (p. 23). To illustrate,

We become addicts, willing participants in an economy premised on growth without limit. With an addiction, there can be no such thing as enough because more of the wrong thing will never scratch the itch. The poet Robert Bly said of his alcoholic father that he thirsted for Spirit, but reached for the wrong one. (Schmookler, 1991, p. 23)

Durning (1991, 1992) and Elgin (1981), among others, cited studies of comparative religion and culture on the subject of overabundance. In addressing the subject of money acquisition and use, religious texts of all faiths condemn greed, selfishness, and display of wealth (Table 2). Bible verses in both Old and New Testament teach against relying upon wealth, e.g., (The Holy Bible: New International Version, 1978): "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income," (Ecc 5:10, p. 621); "'He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty'" (Lk 1:53, p. 948),

Table 2

Teachings of World Religions and Major Cultures on
Consumption

Religion or Culture	Teaching and Source
American Indian	"Miserable as we seem in thy eyes, we consider ourselves...much happier than thou, in this that we are very content with the little that we have." (Micmac chief)
Buddhist	"Whoever in this world overcomes his selfish cravings, his sorrows fall away from him, like drops of water from a lotus flower." (Dhammapada, 336)
Christian eye	It is "easier for a camel to go through the of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:23-24)
Confucian	"Excess and deficiency are equally at fault." (Confucius, XI.15)
Ancient Greek	"Nothing in Excess." (Inscribed at Oracle of Delphi)
Hindu	"That person who lives completely free from desires, without longing...attains peace." (Bhagavad-Gita, II.71)
Islamic	"Poverty is my pride." (Muhammad)
Jewish	"Give me neither poverty nor riches." (Proverbs 30:8)
Taoist	"He who knows he has enough is rich." (Tao Te Ching)

Note: From How Much is Enough? The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth (p. 144) by A. T. Durning, 1992, New York: W. W. Norton, Copyright 1992 by Worldwatch Institute. Reprinted by permission.

and "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1Ti 6:10, p. 1103).

The Catholic Bishops' Pastoral, in 1986, emphasized three themes--creation, covenant, and community--as the basis for translating scriptural teaching into practice to create economic justice. According to Hohman (1988), "The response to these Biblical themes must be both personal and corporate, involving one's own personal conversion as well as the change of social structures that are harmful to persons and community" (p. 181). The Pastoral's enumeration of basic minimum conditions for life in community includes: "the great disparity in income and wealth in the world today is morally unacceptable" (p. 182). Hohman outlined steps for the church as a

transnational, national and local community....to help its largely middle-class members live in such a way that they can become oppositional, truly a sign of the already not-yet kingdom in an environment where the focus is on the competitive pursuit of this world's goods. (p. 186)

Colby and Damon (1992) chronicled the lives of people identified as moral exemplars. Each of the individuals studied found fulfillment in life through dedication to a vision of a better world and an unselfish devotion to others. For some, such as Suzie Valdez and Charleszetta Waddles, this required personal sacrifice of material comfort. Others, such as Virginia Durr and Cabell Brand, remained financially

secure. None of the moral exemplars found happiness in striving for personal wealth or recognition.

We did not find our moral exemplars to be a suffering, grim lot. With but few exceptions, they were positive, cheerful, and optimistic. (Gladly, none had had their lives destroyed by adversity, but many had had their lives marked by privation, frustration, danger and personal tragedy). None saw their moral choices as an exercise in self-sacrifice...unity between self and morality makes them exceptional. (Colby & Damon, 1992, pp. 300-301)

Relinquish materialism for spiritual growth as the way toward inner peace and worldwide harmony is the message of Peace Pilgrim (1983), whose pilgrimage from 1953 to 1981 exemplified simplicity in living.

The simplification of life [is] to bring inner and outer well-being--into harmony in your life....I could no longer accept more than I needed while others in the world have less than they need. (p. 8)

Increasing interest in sustainability and spirituality has focused on indigenous peoples of the world. They exercise frugality with foodstuffs and fuel. Native people's spiritual relationship with the earth and its life-giving potential contrasts with the Western stewardship model whereby humankind was given dominion over all the earth and encouraged to tame the wilderness. Brayboy (1990) and T. Berry (1988) chronicled the spiritual traditions from Indian cultures. T. Berry stated,

The Indian peoples have become increasingly aware that they carry a primordial tradition of great significance for the entire human community. Because of their hurt in association with the dominant political powers of the continent, the Indians might well conceal the inner mysteries of their spiritual traditions lest they be trivialized by a secular society that destroys the inner meaning of everything it touches. (p. 185)

Assuming that the family is the place where people first gain a sense of morality and community, the lack of family time together is seen as a serious and widespread problem. Mellman, Lazarus, and Rivlin (1990). Suggesting that families set aside time together one night each week as "family time," Nutt (1977) developed a guide for families to orchestrate such a communication process. Varied themes are suggested such as, "Discuss the statement: 'There are people who know the cost of everything and the value of nothing!'" (p. 43).

Bellah (1990) described ways in which the "job culture is crowding out family culture, given the economic pressures of our era" (p. 231). Partly due to the proliferation of consumer goods which all too readily become classified as "needs", work has become excessive not only for adults but also for teenagers. "They are working at meaningless jobs that don't further their moral or intellectual development--all in order to buy these things" (p. 232). Bellah called religious institutions to take a vigorous stand in the secular community to "raise the unpopular issues and to help

our society to recognize faults and challenges that we might otherwise ignore" (p. 236).

Reacting to the ecological crisis, many individuals, families, and communities are adopting new habits. Some are going beyond the surface to examine deeply held values and practices. They ask, "What gives life meaning?" McCollough (1991) suggests that individuals and groups answer the ethical question, "What is my personal relation to what I know?" Solutions to the questions are found in lifestyle choices. Perhaps we only need to examine our checkbook registers to find out how our use of money reveals our values.

A growing body of scholarly literature shows that this common sense approach is not a new idea. Whereas people find certain simplifications are easy and give a sense of quick accomplishment, it requires a lifetime to develop their own expressions of their values and align habits effectively.

Economic Theory Is Challenged

Scholars have emphasized that the world's mainstream economic strategy has focused on production at the expense of the environment and human progress (Brown, Flavin & Postel, 1991; Harman, 1987; Henderson, 1988, 1991). According to Beckmann, Agarwala, Burmester & Serageldin (1991), government incentives, tax policies, and development aid have all tended to further economic production. Pollution, destruction of wilderness or farmland, depletion of resources, high stress

work environments, addiction to work or to alcohol or drugs, and many other results have occurred.

Production costs include liabilities within society, such as unemployment; debt; costs of ameliorating damage caused by unsound practices; costs of insurance, health care and adequate wages; and costs of lobbying and supporting political campaigns. Dominator model operating schemes have centered decision making in the hierarchical authoritarian mode. Touting increased income as the answer to all ills, most economists and politicians believe that unlimited growth remains the answer to world dilemmas (Brown, Flavin & Postel, 1991).

Just as countries, states, and individual cities have begun to examine the factors leading to change toward humane sustainability, individuals and families are also frustrated by failing to find fulfillment once they have achieved the "American Dream", i.e., success measured by status and happiness in a balance sheet. Some within the field of economics are now questioning previous reliance on GNP as a measure of worldwide success, individuals and families are asking "What is enough?" in terms of work, money, and relationships.

Purpose of the Study

Today's society is unique in that the masses have almost instantaneous access to images and ideas. Through travel, education, and the news media our receptivity increases.

Changes in perception and in behavior do not necessarily require centuries to accomplish. After a long history of cultural change through exploitation of powerful over powerless peoples, there is an increasing call for change to a more equitable partnership (Eisler, 1987). Entire segments of the population are rethinking what it means to be human and to live on a planet with limited resources. Thinking people respond by a desire to understand and interact with others on a level that goes beyond the exploitation of the sophisticate (McCollough, 1991). A growing number of individuals understand that contentment does not lie in overabundance, nor does it make sense to consume wasteful amounts of natural resources while others suffer for lack of the bare necessities of life.

Historically, most groups engaging in simple living in order to achieve spiritual growth have been short-lived (Shi, 1986). There is now an urgent global need for fairness in distribution and conservation of limited natural resources. Beyond the search for spiritual enlightenment, new ecological awareness mandates that societies relinquish former goals epitomized by the very definition of "success" as unlimited material and monetary growth.

This researcher believes that a component of the mission of the field identified by multiple names--home economics, human ecology, or human environmental sciences--is to increase understanding of the factors which influence

personal and family choice of voluntary simpler living as a means of moving toward such lifestyle changes. Experiencing support from those who share similar perspectives might encourage persistence in practice. Additional educational programs might be developed to help larger numbers of people examine their lives and determine if intentional living could be personally rewarding. Some home economists are joining with those in other disciplines in grassroots movements supporting simpler lifestyles. This trend could eventually lead toward humane sustainable culture worldwide.

For these reasons, this study surveyed persons who have adopted and are practicing lifestyles simpler than the mainstream and focused on the following purposes:

- (a) To investigate factors that lead individuals and families to a decision to adopt simpler lifestyles.
- (b) To determine what people mean by voluntarily simple living and how they practice a simpler lifestyle.
- (c) To explore the role of group support in individual or family pursuit of voluntarily simpler living.

In conclusion, this study presents some observations about what the respondents' experiences mean to them and to society.

Definitions

One of the problems in studying a new and developing phenomenon is the language associated with it. Definitions

were therefore developed for the following terms that refer to a cluster of attitudes, thought processes, and actions.

Voluntarily Simpler Lifestyle

Gregg's definition of voluntary simplicity, cited by Elgin (1981), Pestle (1984), and Shama (1988) elaborates various aspects of a very complex concept.

Voluntary simplicity involves both inner and outer condition. It means singleness of purpose, sincerity and honesty within as well as avoidance of exterior clutter, of many possessions irrelevant to the chief purpose of life. It means an ordering and guiding of our energy and our desires, a partial restraint in some directions in order to secure greater abundance of life in other directions. It involves a deliberate organization of life for a purpose. (Gregg, 1936, p. 4)

Humane Sustainable Culture

Coined as a term to encompass global issues as well as individual lifestyles, "humane sustainability" is defined by Alan AtKisson, former editor of In Context:

The integration of social, economic, and environmental health within the limits of the natural world, in stark contrast to the physical impossibility of infinite growth in the size and material appetite of human society. (AtKisson, 1992)

As previously stated, numerous ecological, economic, and ethical factors encompass voluntary simplicity. Endeavoring to create humane sustainable culture through voluntarily simpler lifestyles, individual and family emphasis may include: human empathetic response--showing solidarity with

the poor; economic reasons--it saves money which can be used in other ways; independence from bureaucratic institutions--to be able to subordinate the importance of paid work; or search for inner meaning--discipline of living within a particular religious framework.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Longing for increased meaning and purpose, individuals and groups throughout U.S. history have undertaken to simplify living arrangements and habitual patterns of work and community participation. Voluntary simplicity has evolved as a continuing strand of U.S. history, broadening to encompass multiple goals rather than as a tenet of faith among the variety of religious separatist groups. To more nearly reflect their philosophical and religious beliefs, these groups believed that life must center upon inner spiritual growth. An inner-directed life and its manifestations of worth would therefore lead one to reject superfluous material goods.

The review of literature presented in this chapter is divided into the following four parts: historical tradition of simple living in the U.S., global and local indicators of human welfare, research related to voluntary simplicity, and application of simplicity in living.

Historical Tradition Of Simple Living In The U.S.

Europeans seeking relief from persecution and the chance to practice their religious beliefs were attracted to America because it offered freedom. American democracy is centered

in following the enduring themes: freedom to search for and achieve one's ideals in living; protection of unpopular beliefs and actions; and citizen participation and joint effort toward the common good. Throughout U.S. history, proponents of simple living have established communities within which to practice their beliefs. It appears that while the groups were attracted to the freedom to practice their beliefs without censorship, the groups who sustained the longest held their members to rigid standards of personal behavior and belief.

Pious Simplicity

Pilgrims and Puritans. As early as 1620, with the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth and, in the 1630's, the Puritans colonizing Massachusetts, those escaping religious persecution envisioned a new social ethic balancing "hard work, self-control, plain living, civic virtue, social harmony and spiritual devotion" (Shi, 1986, p. 15). Religious doctrine drawn from Luther and Calvin included belief in a person's being called to a vocation in life. Responding to this leading, instilled religious meaning to work. While calls for simple living were heard from the pulpits, magistrates legislated sumptuary laws to restrain the display of wealth and prescribe appropriate dress for the members of the Bible Commonwealth. Increasingly, the rewards of hard work and the use of unlimited natural resources led to material wealth. Later, in the 1660's the admonishments

of new sumptuary laws followed by the religious revivals of the Great Awakening (1730-1750) failed to stop many of the Puritans from turning into "grasping Yankees" (Shi, 1986, p. 16). The Puritan ethic of taking a middle way between poverty and luxury felt the influence of "religious pluralism, increasing population growth and selfish materialism" (p. 15). Ironically, it was discovered that the work ethic's inherent tension between industry and frugality frequently leads to prosperity and the temptations of excess.

Quakerism. American ideals of freedom, justice, democracy, education, equality, and others have been influenced by Quakerism (Hinshaw, 1976). Like the Puritans, Quakers left England under persecution for their religious standards of simplicity and pacifism (Freiday, 1967). Settling in Delaware, Pennsylvania, and West Jersey, members of the Society of Friends soon had thriving settlements. They also experienced predicaments, similar to those plaguing Puritans, in balancing prosperity with piety. William Penn, leader and inspirational guide to the earliest Quaker meetings, wrote Some Fruits of Solitude as a guide to the practical meaning of pious simplicity. John Woolman, through his writings and exemplary life, was a leader in the mid-18th century Quaker reform movement. According to Shi (1986),

It was easy enough for a William Penn and other affluent Friends to tell the lower ranks to be contented with a simple way of life, but to command the sustained respect of commoners required a saintly willingness to share

some of their austerities. Woolman displayed such an applied empathy, and in doing so he became a figure both believed and beloved. In his humble yet effective way, Woolman served as both an apostle of simple living and an early crusader against slavery, urging those around him to abandon their worship both of worldly treasure and leisurely ease and redirect their attention to the service of God and all of humanity. (p. 35)

Quakers influenced the development of democratic ideals in America (Hinshaw, 1976). They sustained the vitality of their sect by willingly giving up political control of the colony in order to maintain their community ethic. Their adoption in 1770 of stringent disciplinary measures toward those Friends who veered away from traditional principles set them apart from society. Continual challenges to Quaker simplicity have caused reformers to redefine the call to simplicity (Prevallet, 1982). Jones, cited by Shi (1986), elaborated in 1897 the meaning of simplicity in meeting for worship.

The moment the line of comfort and pure taste is passed, and a display of superfluous ornament or of extravagance appears, it is a wrong use of money, and it is an exaltation of the lower things of life over the higher. The proportion and perspective are wrong, and a penalty always follows such a course. . . .

There is almost as much need in our day of a powerful testimony for simplicity in life and worship as there was when Friends first made their splendid stand against the fashions and elaborate formalities of a corrupt age. (p. 46)

Pietistic Simplicity

As the Quakers found it necessary to separate themselves increasingly from society, other groups of simple living

adherents founded religious communities apart from the larger society. Small sects such as the "Mennonites, Amish, Dunkers (German Baptist Brethren), Brethren in Christ, Moravians, Schwenckfelders and later Hutterites--shared a strong commitment to communal values and strict nonconformity to the ways of the world" (Shi, 1986, p. 49). These groups, part of the Anabaptist tradition, attempted to live more nearly as first century Christians. They preferred rural life because it offered freedom from cosmopolitan and corrupting ways. Conformity was required within each group although each differed as to ownership of property, policy on celibacy, and enforcement of community order. The Shakers were a religious group with "different origins and beliefs but similar social principles" (Shi, 1986, p. 49).

Mennonites. Mennonites, named for Menno Simons, martyred Dutch Anabaptist leader (1496-1561), first came to Pennsylvania from Germany in 1683 at William Penn's invitation. He offered a tract of land at generous terms which they settled as Germantown, just north of Philadelphia. Penn had visited the Mennonites in Europe and recognized similarities between Quakerism and Mennonism.

Both rejected the prevailing world of rigid social classes and artificial complexity; both stressed simplicity and pacifism and believed in an 'inner light' inherent in each individual. 'They are very near the Truth,' Penn wrote to a friend. (Shi, 1986, p. 52)

Mennonites eventually settled in Lancaster county in Pennsylvania and south into Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas and west to Ohio, Illinois, Iowa and Indiana. Finding political life too divisive, they eventually withdrew from taking a governing role in Pennsylvania. Disputes and divisions among groups of Mennonites occurred in both Europe and America.

Amish. In 1693, Jacob Ammann, a Dutch Mennonite preacher insisted on the practice of avoiding excommunicated members. The Amish sect formed as Ammann and his followers left the Mennonite faith in a schism over the doctrine of shunning. The first Amish arrived in Pennsylvania in 1727 (Shi, 1986). Shunning, the strictest level of enforcement of the social order, is perhaps one of the main reasons the group has endured as long as it has.

German Baptist Brethren (Dunkers). The practice of baptism by complete immersion in a flowing stream set the Dunkers apart from the Quakers and the Mennonites. The three groups held to similar belief in plain living and opposition to slavery and war. Harassment during the Revolutionary war caused many of the German Brethren to move west to escape persecution. In 1720 a group led by Conrad Beissel formed Ephrata, a cloistered community, that for over 50 years was "famous for the humility and charity practiced by its residents" (Shi, 1986, p. 54).

Shakers. Officially the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming, the Shakers' founder was Mother Ann Lee. An illiterate daughter of a blacksmith, she had worked in a cotton factory as a child. In 1758, she became a member of evangelical group known as the Shaking Quakers. Enduring much suffering as a young wife, whose four children each died in infancy, "she experienced many visions which convinced her that sexual relations were at the root of most social evils and that Christ's Second Coming would be in the form of a woman" (Shi, 1986, p. 55). Deciding that she was that woman, in 1774, Ann Lee immigrated with some of her followers to form a community near Albany, New York. Their community of Shakers practiced communal living, worshipping together, and practicing sexual abstinence. Some African-American women leaders, admiring the equality practiced by the Shakers, organized communities for their followers (Lerner, 1993). Twelve Shaker communities had formed by 1794, throughout the northern states. Female physician Harriot Hunt (1856) visited Shaker communities and praised their validation of women and sense of commitment.

They have solved the problem of association successfully, so far as material competency is concerned...[practicing celibacy] they fully recognize the necessity and blessedness [of parenthood] in the development of human affections by the adoption of children in their society. (Hunt, 1856, p. 233)

In the early nineteenth century, Shaker communities were established in Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana. Hunt noted, "There are eighteen societies of Shakers--six thousand members" (p. 233).

Most of the separatist religious groups eventually disbanded under the pressures of affluence and social disintegration. Rigid discipline and rural living have served to maintain some of the established orders into the present.

Old Order Mennonites, Brethren, and Amish, as well as the Hutterites and the few surviving Shakers, have remained remarkably insulated from the advance of modernity and its temptations and complexities. That their pietistic version of pious simplicity has endured so long testifies to the strength of their spiritual commitment and social tradition as well as to the rigidity of their social discipline. (Shi, 1986, pp. 55-56)

Republican Simplicity

Protestant simplicity with classical Greek and Roman thought. Patriots in the colonies held to the vision of enlightened simplicity for the new society in America. Educated in the classics, such leaders as Samuel and John Adams, John Dickinson, Benjamin Rush, Thomas Jefferson, and Richard Henry Lee envisioned America as a distinctly virtuous society. Their revulsion at the excesses of British ruling classes was fueled by knowledge of the classical ideals of Hesiod, Horace, and Virgil as well as the ethical writings of Socrates, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Epicurus

(Shi, 1986). Unfortunately, the revolution did not produce the enlightened simplicity for which the patriots had hoped. Instead selfishness was manifested in hoarding, price gouging, and speculation. John Adams, in a letter to Mercy Warren dated January 8, 1776, expressed concern for the future of the republic.

Virtue and Simplicity of Manners are indispensably necessary in a Republic among all orders and Degrees of Men. But there is so much Rascallity, so much Venality and Corruption, so much Avarice and Ambition, such a Rage for Profit and Commerce among all Ranks and degrees of Men even in America, that I sometimes doubt whether there is a public Virtue enough to Support a Republic. (Shi, 1986, p. 95)

While bemoaning the loss of Puritan values, Samuel Adams and his cousin John Adams devoted their existence to the ideals of the new republic. In contrast, Alexander Hamilton joined others in denouncing the virtues of simple living, instead promoting economic growth and social development through manufacturing and international commerce (Shi, 1986).

Thomas Jefferson developed his ideals of simplicity from the classical works. Basso (cited in Huddleston, 1982) discussed the opposing ideological values of Puritanism and Rousseauism with which Jefferson wrestled. He eventually adopted the Rousseauist view that there is a natural "aristocracy" of talent and virtue. His initial vision included an agrarian life, enlightened study and reflection, and rejection of corrupting influences of Old World

commercialism and industrialism. Eventually, Jefferson modified his view. "By the early nineteenth century, however, Jefferson decided that Americans were unwilling to limit themselves....As president he helped promote commerce and industry and territorial expansion" (Shi, 1986, p. 99). Though accommodating to the pressure of industrialism, Jefferson longed for pursuit of the more simple life he had established at Monticello.

I know no condition happier than that of a Virginia farmer might be, conducting himself as he did during the war. His estate supplies a good table, clothes himself and his family with their ordinary apparel, furnishes a small surplus to buy salt, sugar, coffee, and a little finery for his wife and daughters, enables him to receive and visit friends, and furnishes him pleasing and healthy occupation. To secure all this he needs but one act of self-denial, to put off buying anything till he has the money to pay for it. (Shi, 1986, p. 100)

The continual expansion of the American manufacturing increasingly separated families. Work in factories, rather than home-based enterprises separated family members. Often joining the work force at early age, children in factories faced danger and diminished educational opportunity. Fears for societal decline were expressed by new voices from the pulpits and in popular writings of the day.

The Harmonists. New Harmony was a separatist society that lasted a century (1805 to 1905). Founded by German Lutheran immigrants led by George Rapp, theirs was a communitarian society which focused on the imminence of

Christ's second coming. First the group established Harmony, Pennsylvania. Later they relocated to Harmony, Indiana, then to Economy, Pennsylvania practicing simple living, work as worship, and celibacy. Restricting their population furthered their belief in the symbolism from the Book of Revelations indicating that 144,000 people would be redeemed. Emphasis on music and beauty led to specific feast days and regular gatherings. An elaborate outdoor maze of trimmed hedges leading to a beautiful grotto symbolized the spiritual rewards available to those who continued the struggle toward faithfulness and wisdom (Kring, 1973).

Domestic Simplicity

Revival of traditional simplicity. Rapid change and unfamiliar roles were tempered by familiar calls for a revival of traditional simplicity. Religious revivals were led by evangelistic preachers such as Lyman Beecher. Poets such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, and John Greenleaf Whittier, created evocative verses glorifying the earlier traits of simple living, honesty, and frugality. Artists such as Thomas Cole of the Hudson School and novelists such as Mark Twain and James Fennimore Cooper painted portraits of rustic and simple scenes threatened by overindulgence and wickedness. Literary heroes, Huck Finn and Leatherstocking, embodied natural simplicity and honesty in contrast to the complexity and artificiality of the then current modes of living. Besides the general call for

preservation and veneration of republican simplicity, specific works were aimed at "transforming the home into a training ground for enlightened moral restraint" (Shi, 1986, pp. 107-108).

Leading proponents of domestic simplicity included Andrew Jackson Downing, architect, whose farmhouses, cottages, and villas were designed to instill republican virtues in the three social classes he saw in America. Women writers, including Caroline Kirkland, Lydia Maria Child, Catherine Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Harriot Hunt, articulated the benefits of simple home life in building character in children.

Caroline Kirkland's autobiographical novels inspired moral traits, giving families models for living as many Americans migrated westward. Kirkland's characters lived lives of self-restraint rather than self-denial (Shi, 1986).

Lydia Maria Child had written sentimental novels prior to her marriage to lawyer David Child. Both were active abolitionists, editing an anti-slavery magazine. Lydia Child "like so many other women activists of the era, ...promoted an array of causes ranging from temperance to prison reform to the moral improvement of the home" (Shi, 1986, p. 127).

Having been reared in a strict, yet loving home, Harriot Hunt was among the first female physicians to practice in the U.S. Noting the difference in the children and their surroundings in comparison to the home of her

upbringing, she counseled a return to simpler living. Hunt's 1856 autobiography, Glances and Glimpses:

Fathers! Mothers! think of this; and while you are striving for houses, lands, wealth, social position, and all those uncertain and perishable accumulations you are wont to gather for your children, give some little time to your own spiritual development,--to that certain and imperishable wealth of parental care which should be bequeathed to them; their use of this treasure will bless your lives and solace your dying hours--it may be, conscious that you have left them the best legacy! (Hunt, 1856, p. 21)

Home economics. Family improvement through education was the goal of a group of educators, philosophers, scientists and social activists who met yearly at Lake Placid, NY. The decade-long conferences, begun in 1899, founded the profession known as home economics. Home economics founder, Ellen Swallow Richards, envisioned a lifestyle centered on family and community where material goods were subordinated to the improvement of home life, greater access to education and health care, social betterment, and equitable public life. Horn and East (1982) and Pestle (1984) called Richards a futurist whose ideas in the 1890's centered on use of the scientific method in solving human problems. Examples included Richards' efforts for optimum public health standards beginning with food and nutrition education and feeding programs. Noting the present nutritional status of current American populations, Horn and East wrote,

By the standards of her (Richard's) day we are indeed well fed; but by today's standards we still find many inadequacies and superfluties in the typical American diet. Nor would she have expected the 'chemical feast' we are presented with in the many additives and insecticides involved in the food growth and processing today. And most importantly, she intended that the nutritional requirements of the public would be the primary ruling factor in such systems not the profit motive of free enterprise. (Horn & East, 1982, p. 12)

Green (1990) quoted home economics founder Caroline Hunt's plea for enabling choice and simplicity in living.

The final test of the teaching of home economics is freedom. If we have unnecessarily complicated a single life by perpetuating useless conventions or by carrying the values of one age over into the next, just so far have we failed. If we have simplified one life and released in it energy for its own expression, just so far have we succeeded. (p. 44)

Brasher (1992) quoted Wood's description of the importance of the home given at the fourth Lake Placid Conference.

The home [should reflect] an unselfishness and altruism so large and farsighted that they would if necessary sacrifice...for the sake of the next generation and of all generations in the future....Those factors which are of a more material or physical nature...are to be estimated in their relation to mind, character and effective conduct. (p. 43)

Brasher reiterated the importance of the family, and not the provisions of a materialistic society, in socializing individuals.

Comparing the founders' vision with the evolution of the profession, Horn and East (1982) noted that home economists,

by the 1920's, had joined ranks with corporations promoting consumption of modern conveniences and energy. They had forgotten the earlier call for simplicity and did not foresee the energy crisis of the 1970's and beyond. Baldwin (1991) called for a return to the vision of those founders who saw the profession as a social movement to better family and community life through greater integration between theory and practice, political activity, and increasing use of modes of scientific inquiry other than the mechanistic empirical approach.

Transcendental Simplicity

Eclectic idealism. Concord, Massachusetts in the 1830's was home to a diverse lot of poets, philosophers, and preachers. Known as Transcendentalists, these unique writers included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, George Ripley, Theodore Parker, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Peabody, Ellery Channing, and others (Shi, 1986). Varied and romantic in their expressions of the simple life, they stressed self-control and regard for nature combined with social reform. Drawing upon the Greeks and Romans, inspiration was sought within Christian teachings and Oriental religions as well.

Some of these New England idealists, such as Emerson and Thoreau, preached individual self-reliance; others preferred the communal simplicity offered by the experimental settlements at Brook Farm and Fruitlands. Self-reliant simplicity proved to be more enduring. Transcendentalists and other romantics were much too

idealistic to last long in collective associations. By 1850 the Transcendentalist communities had collapsed. (Shi, 1986, p. 140)

Emerson was the mastermind behind the Transcendentalist movement having survived poverty following the death of his father in 1811. Leaving the Unitarian ministry in 1832, he settled in Concord. Living simply with an inheritance from his first wife, he "discovered a sense of republican community and many stimulating friends especially young Henry Thoreau" (Shi, 1986, p. 141).

Brook Farm. Answering a request by George Ripley to join Brook Farm, a community being formed to practice the Transcendentalist version of simple living, Emerson wrote that he would support their ideals but would not join them nor give them money. Ripley continued with the plan and the Brook Farm community grew to about 150 adults and children. Although many of the residents were happy and fulfilled, Nathaniel Hawthorne was one who became disenchanted. Describing the hard work and his disillusionment, Hawthorne wrote, "It is my opinion that a man's soul may be buried and perish under a dung-heap, or in a furrow of the field, just as well as under a pile of money" (Shi, 1986, p. 158).

Fruitlands. Another experimental community, founded by Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane, began in 1843 on 90 acres outside Harvard, Massachusetts. Unlike Brook Farm, the Fruitlands concept was pure asceticism. The Alcotts, Lane

and his son, and a collection of other idealists wore only linen clothes because cotton was the product of slave labor and wool was stolen from sheep. Their strict vegetarian diet was not enhanced with flavorings, not even salt.

Unfortunately, the leaders spent so much time away from Fruitlands recruiting new residents, that the "burden of maintaining the community fell to Abigail Alcott and her young girls. By the early winter the food supply had run out" (Shi, 1986, p. 161).

Louisa May Alcott later wrote a satirical yet very comprehensive account of the Fruitlands experience in an essay entitled "Transcendental Wild Oats (Sears, 1915).

He had tried, but it was a failure. The world was not ready for Utopia yet, and those who attempted to found it only got laughed at for their pains. In other days, men could sell all and give to the poor, lead lives devoted to holiness and high thought, and, after the persecution was over, find themselves honored as saints or martyrs. But in modern times these things are out of fashion. To live for one's principles, at all costs, is a dangerous speculation; and the failure of an ideal, no matter how humane and noble, is harder for the world to forgive and forget than the bank robbery or the grand swindles of corrupt politicians..." (p. 169)

Walden. In contrast to Emerson whose simple life was supported by a legacy, Henry David Thoreau epitomized the life of Transcendental simplicity "earn[ing] his way his whole life by using his practical skills and limiting his desires" (Shi, 1986, p. 165). The Puritan conscience

struggling for inward spiritual development needed to subordinate the needless material and sensual temptations. According to Thoreau,

If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours....In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. (Thoreau, 1854, pp. 562-563)

Through living two years at Walden, experiencing nature, and developing his philosophical ideals, Thoreau came to understand that simple living was more challenging than the mere act of living in the woods. "By 1853 Thoreau had come to recognize that simplicity is first a quality of the mind and only secondarily a manifestation of one's standard of living" (Shi, 1986, p. 173). Thoreau's example and writings continue to inspire individuals seeking their own paths toward truthful, sincere lifestyles. Many are continuing to listen to voices urging removal of superfluous belongings and distractions.

Progressive Simplicity

Post civil war reform movements. Amid the rush to expand and industrialize the country following the Civil War, greed seemed to rule the day. Throughout the period a few reformers continued to promote simple living, particularly as an enlightened approach for the growing middle class.

Architects developed plans for country homes devoid of excessive ornamentation and characterized by comfort and utility.

Naturalistic simplicity. Theodore Roosevelt feared the end of the American frontier had left people weak and lacking character. He felt the striving for money had caused permissive parenting and schooling. He very much

supported the rise of college athletics, the back-to-nature movement and new organizations such as the Boy Scouts....He also glorified the uplifting effects of warfare upon American character. (Shi, 1986, p. 179)

Expeditions into the wilderness inspired movements toward simplicity and the benefits of communion with nature. Naturalists such as John Burroughs, John Muir, and Ray Stannard Baker, whose pen name was "David Grayson," revived the Transcendentalist reverence for nature and led many to the outdoors for the physical activity and spiritual nurture lacking in cities.

The arts and crafts movement. Deriving pleasure from simple surroundings, one could best appreciate fewer and finer well made possessions. Advocates of Craftsmanship included Gustav Stickley, a New Yorker who made rustic furniture and published a journal The Craftsman: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine for the Simplification of Life. Besides Stickley, others in the crafts reform movement included Joseph Worcester, Charles Keeler, and William

Morris. New England as well as California embraced the Craftsman movement in home design and landscaping. Publications, such as Edward Bok's Ladies Home Journal, praised the simple life and gave prescriptions for modifying the overly decorated home to facilitate less strenuous housekeeping chores and more peaceful family life.

National Consumers League. Prominent reformers including Florence Kelley, Julia Lathrop, Louis Brandeis, and John R. Commons helped organize the National Consumers League. Its task was promoting middle class simplicity through wise use of resources and "to exert consumer pressure on management to improve the quality of their products and the treatment of their workers" (Shi, 1986, p. 180). All too soon the call to simplicity was an urgent need for conservation and restraint of a country engaged in war. During WWI, Victory Gardens, frugality, and purchase of war bonds became the patriotic rule of the day.

Simplicity Between the Wars

Back to the land movements. Twelve intellectuals at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee wrote a treatise in 1930 called I'll Take My Stand on the value of agrarian life. The Nashville Agrarians, as they came to be called, included Allen Tate, John Crow Ransom, Donald Davidson, Frank Owsley, Robert Penn Warren, and Andrew Lytle (Shi, 1986). They glorified the traditions of the South such as "dignified plain living and high thinking rather than the

encroaching northern culture of indiscriminate production and consumption" (Shi, 1986, p. 218).

Ralph Borsodi (1933), a social theorist, and his wife, Myrtle Mae Borsodi, a home economist, left New York City in 1920 to live a self sufficient life in rural New York State. Their increasing independence eventually allowed them to provide for their own family and friends who were struggling through the Depression of the 1930's. Installing household machinery enabled the Borsodis to effectively produce their own food, clothing, and shelter. The Borsodis' ideals hearkened to the republican simplicity of the Jeffersonian era.

If enough families were to make their homes economically productive, cash-crop farmers specializing in one crop would have to abandon farming as a business and go back to it as a way of life. (Borsodi, 1939, p. 8)

Depression era programs of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal included the Department of the Interior's Division of Subsistence Homesteads, Civilian Conservation Corps, and the Tennessee Valley Authority. These programs created jobs in rural areas thus removing some of the populations from urban conditions and promoting a simpler, healthier existence.

Private cooperative movements were seen by many as the answer to government mandated programs and reforms. Chief spokesperson for the consumer cooperative movement was Bertram Fowler who "saw in cooperation the means of enhancing

mutualism and diminishing the competitive and enslaving effects of the consumer culture" (Shi, p. 128). The journal Free America, published from 1937-1947 was edited by Herbert Agar uniting homesteaders, cooperativists, and decentralists into one movement.

Catholic simplicity. Another call for homesteading was the Catholic Rural Life Movement. Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day had begun The Catholic Worker newspaper in 1933. In 1990, it was still selling for the original price of a penny a copy (Wright, 1990). Maurin's persistent editorials on the need for a "green revolution" promoted the ideals of medieval craftsmanship and the value of working for the common good. They also took the lead in New York City to organize shelters for the homeless and to hold discussions on religious and social issues. In the Midwest, a Catholic rural homestead was developed by Fathers Luigi Ligutti and John C. Rawe under the Division for Subsistence Homesteads.

Greenbelt communities. Recognizing that many Americans were not free to take up homesteading, Lewis Mumford wrote a letter to the editors of Free America extolling the virtues of planned suburban communities. Greenbelts would enhance the urban areas and provide for the relaxed atmosphere and wholesome country living desired by the homesteaders. Radburn, New Jersey had been the site of a planned "garden city" and by 1937 three more of the demonstration towns were built. The approach of WWII called a halt to the

appropriations financing the construction which had been criticized as too expensive and socialistic (Shi, 1986).

Simplicity Amid Abundance

Postwar abundance. Following the sacrifices and shortages of World War II, the government promoted consumer spending as the primary means for ensuring the nation's well-being. Increasing wealth and abundant availability of goods created "the sanctification of an indiscriminating consumerism" (Shi, 1986, p. 255). Challenged in the late 1960's, the consumer culture had begun showing its faults in less fulfilling jobs, impersonal and bureaucratic work, and high stress levels. Massive cultural upheaval was characterized by civil rights and antiwar protests and by youth rejection of the status quo.

Social critics of the 50's. Lewis Mumford harkened back to the Transcendentalist simplicity proposed by Emerson and Thoreau, cautioning that consumerism carried to extremes leads to futility. Mumford's 1951 book, The Conduct of Life, suggested that

There is no purpose in incessant systematic work, or in the leisure that the machine has already introduced, unless we make a different use of the time so put at our disposal. To practice an external speed-up without an internal slow-down that brings with it a more copious supply of personally useable and enjoyable time, is an extravagant misdirection of our time and energy. (Mumford, 1951, pp. 259-260)

Another social critic, Joseph Wood Krutch (1964), biographer of Henry David Thoreau, joined Mumford in promoting simple living. To critique modern life and its advertising industry Krutch wrote an imaginary dialogue between Thoreau and himself on the 100th anniversary of the publication of Walden.

HENRY: What I call Economy I understand well enough. It means the way in which men get a living, how they are fed and clothed and sheltered. But when you change Economy to Economics--and clothed and sheltered. But when you change Economy to Economics--and another one of those modern words with a paralysis in its tail--it seems to be a very different matter. Somehow the right of men to food and clothing has got itself transformed into their duty to use up as much food and clothing as possible.

ME: That to begin with. But it is only a beginning. It is also their duty to buy hundreds of things never heard of in your day and then to buy new ones before the old have worn out. Only a society which operates on this principle can be healthy today. (p. 220)

Along with Mumford and Krutch, playwright Arthur Miller mourned the dissatisfactions of modern living with his classic play, Death of a Salesman. Gary Snyder of the Pacific Northwest, and later San Francisco, inspired the Beat Generation of the 1950's as well as the counter culture of the 1960's. Student of oriental languages and religion, lover of nature and simplicity, "Snyder also developed an intuitive resistance to mainstream American capitalism and its consumer culture" (Shi, 1986, p. 269). His grandfather's association with the Industrial Workers of the World had

given Snyder a vision of constructive rather than destructive social change. Snyder's writings envisioned a new "tribal" system in the West characterized by valuing prehistoric religions and culture.

The man of wide international experience, much learning and leisure--luxurious product of our long and sophisticated history--may with good reason wish to live simply, with few tools and minimal clothes, close to nature. (Snyder, 1957, p. 116)

As Gary Snyder promoted simple living from the west coast, socialists Scott and Helen Nearing left New York City in 1933 for a lifetime of homesteading simplicity, first in Vermont and later in Maine. Their 1954 book, Living the Good Life, was not popular until it was reprinted in paperback in 1970 (Shi, 1986). Many in the youthful counter culture studied Thoreau's Walden and used the Nearings' book as a practical guide. Explaining their Vermont homestead, Scott and Helen Nearing (1970) wrote:

Viewed in a long perspective, our Vermont project was a personal stop-gap, an emergency expedient. But in the short view it was a way of preserving self-respect and of demonstrating to the few who were willing to observe, listen and participate, that life in a dying acquisitive culture can be individually and socially purposeful, creative, constructive and deeply rewarding, provided that economic solvency and psychological balance are preserved. (pp. 185-186)

Communes of the '60's and early '70's. Rejecting their elders' seemingly meaningless existence, youthful idealists

attempted self-sufficient group living in both urban and rural settings. Known as the "hippies," many experimented with mind-altering drugs, free love, and rejection of materialism. Most of the communes lasted only for a short period. Rather than becoming totally self-supporting, many were subsidized by parents or outside menial jobs. Researchers investigating communes included sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and historians. Keith Melville's (1972) Communes in the Counter Culture, was among the best scholarly work. Interviewing members of a variety of groups throughout the U.S., he captured their idealism and their variety. Noting their retreat to pre-industrialized modes of life he warned,

The danger in any form of nostalgia is that it is so simple to imagine a past which never existed. It is seductively easy to assume that, until the beginning of the industrial age, community universally meant that one was always close to the warm bosom of cherished friends and welcome traditions. (p. 171)

Angela Carter, British writer, critiqued communal life after visiting both rural and urban communes in the late 60's. Pointing out obvious discrepancies in beliefs and behavior she noted, "all have reversed the trend of one-hundred years of European progress toward female emancipation and put their womenfolk squarely back where they belong: cooking on wood stoves and bearing children without benefit of anaesthetics" (Shi, 1986, p. 285).

In his article "Simple Living Ain't So Simple" published in Green Revolution, 1976, Jubal stated:

Unfortunately, the realities of 'simple living' are not as simple as the dream. Simplicity is generally defined as the absence of complexity, intricacy or artificiality. But anyone who has tried a life of self-sufficiency has soon learned that the amount of knowledge and skill, fortitude and hard work--combined with the ability to improvise--that are required sometimes make the simple life very complicated indeed. (Jubal, 1976, p. 7)

Although the communal living experiments of the hippies were mostly abandoned by the mid 1970's, suspicion had been raised about the American consumerist ethos. When increasing alarms were sounded over the state of the environment, a new movement gained widespread support.

Ecological Simplicity

Crisis reactionaries. Prolific writing by scientists and naturalists such as Rachel Carson, Barry Commoner, Paul Ehrlich, Ivan Illich, Eugene Odum, and Garret Hardin "caused many Americans to question their tradition of indiscriminate consumption and their worship of unlimited economic growth as a measure of national well-being" (Shi, 1986, p. 295). Among the outcomes of the 1973-74 Arab oil embargo included widespread adoption of alternative forms of transportation such as carpooling, bicycling, or walking to work. Vegetable gardening and handicrafts in general enjoyed revival as did

installing of woodstoves, solar heating devices, and recycling of materials.

Global hunger as a deepening and persistent problem led to a 1973 meeting of religious retreat center directors. They developed the Shakertown pledge in response to discussions of the ecological crisis and global hunger. The Shakertown pledge formed the basis of countless congregational evaluations of the relationship between material life and spiritual life (Finnerty, 1977). Publications, such as E.F. Schumacher's Small is Beautiful (1973), influenced President Jimmy Carter to attempt to restore a Jeffersonian style of plain republicanism and Christian piety to government. Serial publications that promoted simpler living included: Mother Earth News, The Whole Earth Catalog, and Organic Gardening.

Aldo Leopold, agricultural ecologist whose work during the 30's had been all but ignored, gained new respect when his writings were reprinted in the early 1970's. Writing essays based on his personal observation, Leopold cautioned against the overuse and improper use of cropland, forests, wild animals, and other resources.

Our children are our signature to the roster of history; our land is merely the place our money was made. There is as yet no social stigma in the possession of a gullied farm, a wrecked forest, or a polluted stream, provided the dividends suffice to send the youngsters to college. Whatever ails the land, the government will fix it.

I think we have here the root of the problem. What conservation education must build is an ethical underpinning for land economics and a universal curiosity to understand the land mechanism. Conservation may then follow. (Leopold, 1966, p. 202)

As Leopold's work as a conservationist matured, his professional life grew to encompass the concepts of the emerging new field of ecology. Eloquent messages by T. Berry (1988), W. Berry (1992), and others have challenged the environmentally damaging aspects of agriculture, business, and individual practices. Unfortunately, many harmful practices legislated out of the U.S. are relocated to third world countries. Sounding the alarm of future worldwide disaster Meadows, Meadows, and Randers (1972, 1992) wrote Limits to Growth followed by Beyond the Limits: Confronting Global Collapse, Envisioning a Sustainable Future. Among the several modern day agrarian reformers, Wendell Berry began publishing in the 1970's. His articulate plea centered on individuals taking responsibility for the ecological crisis and practicing basic land management and simple living. Poetry, essays, and novels have combined with teaching and farming to round out Berry's message and life.

Tom Bender, editor of the 1970's publication Rain, used the magazine to promote ecological simplicity. Rather than an agrarian perspective, Bender's works relate to the urban and suburban dweller. "Meaningful work, localized economies, diversity and richness of employment and community, and

controllable, clever, human-centered technologies will become important" (Shi, 1986, p. 307).

Hess (1979) recorded the experience of a Washington, DC neighborhood's attempt to transform itself through community technology. The experiment, though initially very successful, eventually failed because the sense of uniting around a central organizing principle gave way to crime and racism. As the neighborhood became more desirable, prices rose and gentrification resulted. Recognizing the benefits of localized and diversified farm enterprises, Hess (1978) also values small business.

Self reliance, of course, means that people individually and in volitional associations, communities, etc., depend largely upon their own energies, initiatives, and resources for the major portions of their needs....It does not say anything, in particular, about the tools we will use except that we will use them in a different way, a way that gives priority to personal involvement and responsibility, with less room to hide in fancy legal exclusions, like corporate law, or in privileged sanctuaries like universities.
(Hess, 1978, p. 43)

Joining Hess and Berry in espousing simpler living, Arthur Gish (1973), a Church of the Brethren theologian and social activist, wrote Beyond the Rat Race. Gish admonished,

Both our emotional needs for things and our actual physical needs can be simplified. Learn to know the difference between real emotional needs (e.g., cheerful surroundings) and addictions. The complexity of our lives is directly related to our material desires.
(Gish, 1973, p. 25)

In contrasting simple lifestyles that are freely chosen with the plight of the poverty stricken, Gish explained,

Voluntary poverty does not include the problems of forced poverty. Forced poverty creates resentment, frustration, and a desire for things. It is dehumanizing and oppressive. Voluntary poverty is founded on liberation, not enslavement. Voluntary poverty is an expression of joy...(p. 81)

Richard Gregg, who lived for a time with Scott and Helen Nearing in Vermont, traveled to India to learn from Gandhi. In his 1936 pamphlet, The Value of Voluntary Simplicity, he related a story from his own experience. Talking with Mahatma Gandhi, Gregg confessed that it was easy to give up many things but that in simplifying his life, books were much more difficult to part with. Gandhi replied,

Only give up a thing when you want some other condition so much that the thing no longer has any attraction for you, or when it seems to interfere with that which is more greatly desired. (Gregg, 1936, p. 320)

Emerging Quest for Paradigm Shift

Individuals acting independently influence others by example, especially as they speak and write about their ideas. Eventually, seemingly spontaneous and collective shifting of thought brings about cultural transformation (Young, 1992). For example, Gandhi's promotion of simple tools fostered sustainable economies at the individual, family, and village levels. Johnson (1978) credited

Thoreau's writings with giving "Gandhi a strategy for gaining independence for India. The same strategy was later used by the civil rights movement in the United States during the 1960's" (p. 21).

Examining the role of scientific assumptions in perpetuating the current emphasis on growth and domination, Harman (1988) chronicled current changes in belief structure which combine aspects of science with aspects of metaphysics to create a more harmonious future society. Throughout history, resurgent reform movements undertaking a quest for simplicity have included a wish for behaviors reminiscent of the partnership model rather than the dominator model characterized by exploitation, war, and hierarchal social patterns (Eisler, 1987; Harman, 1987, 1988; Harman & Hormann, 1990; Schmookler, 1988).

Social patterns are in the midst of a shift more complex and more globally oriented in response to environmental, economic, and peace issues (Clark, 1992; Dietz, 1992). According to Harman (1987) fundamental change is needed in the world system; such a fairness revolution is already underway to extend the rule of law practiced in 120 nations throughout all nations of the world. Harman cited Turner's explanation of the perception shift necessary for the adoption of the fairness revolution. Change is unlikely as long as injustices, the historical and cultural oppression of certain persons by others, is seen as

misfortunes, as regrettable circumstances which are unlikely to change. When a change in perception occurs such that these same conditions are perceived, not as misfortunes but as injustices, as wrongs which must be righted, then the motive force is present for a fundamental change or revolution. (Harman, 1987, p. 30)

Harman further predicted that a paradigm shift incorporating the perception shift described is necessary for a more humane sustainable culture. Rather than extending the conflict in ideologies that has existed since the end of the Middle Ages between the mechanistic assumptions backing scientific inquiry and the dogmatism of religious authorities, a total integration of useful values and perspectives is emerging. Harman (1988) explained how the transformation to a new global understanding would combine science with spirituality. Unexplained phenomena lead to the increasing acknowledgement by the scientific community that some questions are not answerable using conventional methodologies. It becomes feasible to match appropriate methods of investigation to the types of questions being asked. Harman concluded,

There appears to be no conflict between a mature science and a mature religion. Indeed, we must seriously question whether we have a mature science as long as such conflict appears to exist. (p. 102)

Government would realign itself with the spiritual philosophy of its Freemason founders. Freemasonry symbols printed on

currency since the earliest days of the United States refer to concepts:

the works of men (either individual character or external works) are incomplete unless they incorporate divine insight...the nation will flourish only as its leaders are guided by supraconscious intuition. (p. 163)

Worldwide problems with security, fairness, and ecology would be more readily solved with the marriage of science and religion as Harman described. Perhaps it is necessary to change how society measures "progress" in order to encompass the true cost of using the earth's resources and its impact on human life.

Summary

Throughout history, simple living as a theoretical and practical approach has enjoyed varying levels of acceptance. As a tenet of religious sects, or as an ideal espoused by philosophers and social activists, the concept of voluntary simplicity has ebbed and flowed with reinterpretations based on the conditions of the time. For example, the 1950's social activists such as Gary Snyder, Joseph Krutch, and Lewis Mumford, advocated approaches that are similar to those expressed by contemporary writers at both the Worldwatch Institute and Context Institute. As Harman's writing evolved from discussion of third world development dilemmas (1987), to the conceptualization of thought processes (1988), to the creative way business enterprise can transform society

(Harman & Hormann, 1990), he has gained a wider audience and his ideas have become more broadly accepted. The concept of voluntary simplicity has broad implication for several arenas including economic and social justice; environmental well-being; and inward spiritual growth and/or religious life.

Global and Local Indicators of Human Welfare

Gross National Product

Economists traditionally measure a nation's monetary health in terms of gross national product (GNP) and gross domestic product (GDP). GNP is a measure of income generated. It does not distinguish between sources of income or consequences of the method of producing that income. Not all income, as measured by GNP, adds benefit to society or to the planet. For example, natural disasters or wars actually boost the GNP as entire localities are forced to rebuild.

Economic reconceptualizations. Nowhere is the human or ecological cost figured as a debit in the GNP calculations.

Because GNP does not account for unpaid work (mostly of women, raising food, producing crafts, etc., as well as household maintenance), it has simply 'subsidized' the apparent economic production of the 'head of household'-presumed to be a man. (Henderson, 1991, p. 167)

Current development policies must change to fully empower women as well as men if equitable societies are to be sustained anywhere.

In male-dominated societies, women's poverty and hunger...is not only confined to families headed by

women. It is integral to family organization in which the male 'head' of household has the socially sanctioned power to determine how resources or money are to be distributed and used. (Eisler, 1987, p. 178)

Developing countries seek to emulate the American version of "success" depicted in the international media. Business and government practices are based on the idea of "trickle down" economics whereby the benefits of capital investment would extend to the poor rural populations globally (Elgin 1981, Trainer 1989). Unfortunately trickle down economics has failed (Henderson 1988).

Capital investments in more efficient, automated industrial plants were encouraged to raise per capita productivity....The total economic pie was expected to keep growing....All this worked quite well as long as abundant cheap resources from all over the planet were available to fuel this type of economic growth. Today, in a turbulent global economy with rising population and expectations combined with dwindling resources (especially petroleum), this Keynesian game is up and the excessive energy and resource dependency of the late-stage industrial societies has become their most crucial vulnerability. (p. 32)

Using GNP as the measure of progress actually perpetuates the unsustainable practices which result from misdirected development programs. The poorest people usually end up worse off. Considering economic growth synonymous with development puts overemphasis on a country's ability to service its international debt and overlooks entirely the overall welfare of its people (Gilman, 1992; Henderson, 1991; Postel, 1992). Outlining changes toward a more humanely

sustainable economy, Brown, Flavin, & Postel (1991) and Meadows, Meadows, and Randers (1992) are among those calling for limits to growth, practical economic reforms, and fundamental changes in dealing with global development. Henderson (1988,1991) and Waring (1988), examining economic theory and current measurement tools, condemned them as supporting the patriarchal growth-at-all-costs paradigm. Instead, they suggest that new measurement tools be used to fully include the non-monetized economy that is usually conducted by women and children for "love" rather than a paycheck. Including those people and activities presently uncounted in the economy would allow benefits to accrue more fairly and establish a new partnership model of cooperation and mutual dependence (Eisler, 1987; Harman, 1988; Schmookler, 1988, 1989).

Alternate measures of human welfare. Redefining measures of national monetary health to go beyond GNP is one way to identify and generate a more humane sustainable culture. Numerous organizations are beginning to develop statistically based measurements which enumerate points of human welfare rather than purely income growth. The U.N. Development Program's Human Development Index (HDI) is one such measure. It "merged income with life expectancy and literacy to give an overall figure and ranking" (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 1991). The HDI is measured on a scale of 0 to 1 and compares countries using

life expectancy at birth, adult literacy, mean years of schooling, and gross domestic product (GDP) adjusted for purchasing power (Brown, Flavin, & Postel, 1991).

Incorporating a new Human Distress Index which measures various industrialized countries relative to divorce rates, unemployment, rapes, and suicide, the HDI also measures environmental factors such as inventories of radioactive wastes and industrial air pollutants. As expected, countries with high GNP do not necessarily have correspondingly high HDI ratings. For example,

Costa Rica ranks 40th in the HDI, while South Africa, with an adjusted per capita GDP 27 percent higher than Costa Rica's comes in at number 57. Despite their lower average purchasing power, Costa Ricans boast an adult literacy rate of 92 percent, compared with only 85 percent in South Africa, and at birth can expect to live 13 years longer than a newly born South African. (Brown, Flavin & Postel, 1991, p. 126)

Additional indicators are being developed to measure aspects of human and environmental welfare. An example is the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) developed by the Overseas Development Council. According to Henderson (1988), the PQLI measures not only the starting level, but also the rate of achievement of some attainable level. The gap between rich and poor nations appears (unlike GNP measures) to be narrowing over time.

GNP may go for fancy gee-gaaws, nuclear explosives, or great armies; but the PQLI measures success in attaining

certain basic conditions that contribute to a satisfactory quality of human existence. (p. 389)

Another measure, the Daly-Cobb Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) has only been calculated for the U.S. but takes into account environmental measures including depletion of nonrenewable resources, loss of farmland from soil erosion and urbanization, loss of wetlands, and the cost of air and water pollution and long term environmental damage--effects of global warming and depletion of the ozone layer. Using the ISEW, an increase of 42 percent in the per person welfare occurred during the years between 1950 and 1976.

But after that the ISEW began to decline, falling by just over 12 percent by 1988, the last year for which it was calculated. Simply put, about 15 years ago the net benefits associated with economic growth in the United States fell below the growth of population, leading to a decline in individual welfare. (Brown, Flavin & Postel, 1991, p. 127)

Henderson's (1991) Country Futures Index is an even broader measure taking into account bio-diversity and species loss, cultural and recreational assets, and accounting for unpaid productive work. Whereas the new indicators measure crucial social aspects of development, the data used in developing the ratios have been collected, for other uses, for a long time. Most of the new indicators are developed from statistical information already in existence. As enabling as the new indicators might be to help societies

measure progress toward humane sustainable culture, Henderson (1991) cautioned against their misuse. Just as the GNP was never intended to be used as an all-encompassing measure of progress, it might be tempting to fashion a composite score from all the social indicators. The figure thus created would be as misleading as the current use of GNP indicators.

Indicators of sustainability. Within the U.S. and in foreign countries as well, regions and individual cities are developing their own indicators of sustainability (Hart, 1992; Henderson, 1988, 1991; Indicators Project Task Team, 1992). Jacksonville, Florida started maintaining statistical data in the mid 1980's to develop its own scale "Life in Jacksonville: Quality Indicators for Progress." Subheadings included were the economy, public safety, health, education, natural environment, mobility, government/policies, social environment, and culture/recreation.

Comparable efforts in Oregon track 158 indicators of sustainability in a publication known as "Oregon Benchmarks" (AtKisson, 1992b). A voluntary network and civic forum for sustainability in Seattle, Washington is working on the Sustainable Seattle Indicators project. Other cities, including Greensboro, NC, have begun discussion groups whose interest in ecology and social action may develop into a local indicators project (Stover & Stover, 1992a, 1992b).

These indicators of sustainability differ from the Chambers of Commerce designation "most livable city" in that

the emphasis is on sustainability for the future rather than attainment of lifestyles which may disregard environmental or other consequences.

Research Related to Voluntary Simplicity

Living more simply has become a trend noted by researchers including Elgin (1981), Shama (1988), and Goldstein and Maresch (1991). Prompted by a desire for personal fulfillment and closer family ties, some individuals are relocating, turning down promotions, or accepting pay cuts to reduce stress (Goldstein & Maresch, 1991). Rodgers (1992) noted several trends, "working fewer hours, spending more time at home, giving more attention to family, buying fewer items, buying goods that will last, budgeting money better, and becoming more involved in the community" (p. 25).

Redbook magazine surveyed its readers about simple lifestyles (Goldstein & Maresch, 1991). Of 1050 respondents, 73% are budgeting money more carefully and cutting debt, 62% are changing lifestyles to lower stress, 46% are less focused on work than previously, 44% have changed lifestyles to allow time for personal or leisure interests, 29% have changed jobs for increased fulfillment, 28% have relocated for more benefits of small-town life, 23% have moved closer to the their home towns to be near family or to buy more house for the money. The authors concluded,

People will rethink their obsession with work--and begin to focus more on the pleasures of home, family and community....the apparent trendiness of the early environmental movement will deepen into profound changes of lifestyle. (Goldstein & Maresch, 1991, p. 80)

Chapter 2 of Elgin's 1981 book is based on responses to a questionnaire published in the Summer, 1977 issue of Co-Evolution Quarterly. The 400 respondents were primarily under 35 years of age, educated (approximately 70% college graduates), and living with less family income than their contemporaries who had not chosen the simple life. The average respondent had been living a voluntarily simple lifestyle for six years as of 1977. Reasons for the adoption of simpler living included: to balance inner life with outer expressions such as work, consumption, relationship, community; to provide an example for one's children for humane sustainable culture; to become independent and economically more self-sustaining; to begin to reduce the gap between the rich and poor worldwide; to cope with environmental pollution and resource scarcity; to foster equity between people; to use nonsexist approaches to living; and to align one's feelings, thoughts, and actions.

Shama (1988) used the phrase "voluntary simplicity consumers" to mean "those exhibiting a lifestyle of low consumption, ecological responsibility and self-sufficiency" (p. 859). Surveying voluntary simplicity consumers in three U.S. cities--Albuquerque, Denver, and New York City--he

tested whether voluntary simplicity values were consistent with voluntary simplicity behaviors in all three cities.

Results showed consistency between values and behaviors of voluntary simplicity....in all three cities the motivation for this lifestyle is for the most part a result of personal preferences....the level of adoption of, or engagement in, behavior of voluntary simplicity varied from city to city....it may be more difficult to recycle cans and make furniture in New York than in Albuquerque or Denver. (p. 868)

Jacquet (1989) chronicled four families' habits and philosophies regarding simple living. Though each developed uniquely, they each saw simple living as a means of acting out their faith,

without selling their house, walking away from an established career, or living on ten acres in the country with six other couples. In the process they have discovered the rewards of being among the masses rather than off at their own private Walden Pond. (p. 30)

S. Bender's (1989) autobiographical account of her two extended visits among the Amish traced her own journey to live a more meaningful life. Contrasting her urban, professional existence with the rural, homespun life of gentleness and faith she returned to the city hoping to maintain the grace, serenity, and order she had found within Amish family life.

I never knew what to say if someone asked me at a party, "What do you do?" Artist, writer, therapist, wife, mother--I would be judged by the label I chose. The Amish make no distinction. No one is labeled cook,

quilter or housewife. In fact, standing out would be a sign of false pride. I remembered Miriam saying, 'Making a batch of vegetable soup, it's not right for the carrot to say I taste better than the peas, or the pea to say I taste better than the cabbage. It takes all the vegetables to make a good soup!'

Maybe one of these days I'll be able to give myself a gold star for being ordinary, and maybe one of these days I'll give myself a gold star for being extraordinary--for persisting. And maybe one day I won't need to have a star at all. (pp. 130-131)

Application of Simplicity in Living

Levering and Urbanska (1992) embarked on their own search for simple living by returning to the Levering family orchard business, living frugally, and developing their skills as writers. Their book, Simple Living, chronicles their own experiences as well as that of numerous other individuals and families interviewed. Noting their adjustments to working in the orchard business, they wrote,

In American culture, manual labor is reserved largely for recent immigrants, illegal aliens, blacks, poor whites, women, small farmers, teenagers, and leftover hippies. For Frank, who had made steady strides toward conjuring success in his new farmer fittings, the half-year diet of manual labor became easier to swallow as his investment grew in the orchard, as he helped decide what fruits to plant, what trees to cut, how to market four thousand bushels of peaches.

For Wanda, the everyday routine of making up a cash drawer, laying out bags and filling some with fruit, waiting on customers, and, at the end of a long day, clearing out and closing down was exhausting. It was also exotic. Wanda liked to joke that she was the only member of Harvard's class of 1978 to end up in the produce business. (pp. 79-80)

Like Levering and Urbanska, Kirsch (1991) and her husband left fast-track careers in Los Angeles in favor of a

farm near her childhood home in Northern Wisconsin. How to Get Off the Fast Track: And Live a Life Money Can't Buy chronicled numerous individuals' career shifts from high pressure, high paying positions to more satisfying lifestyles often in strikingly different locations. Written as a guide for "mavericks" who are talented, energetic, and resourceful, the book encourages careful introspection into one's values, habits, goals, and objectives to determine specific requirements for a personally satisfying life. Examples of successful "ex-fast trackers" are interspersed with reports on the pro's and con's of specific locations of the U.S. for living a more fulfilling life.

Dominguez and Robin (1992) equate money with life energy and counsel individuals to take control of their wage earning capacity, to examine their expenditures, and to strike a balance between what they really want and how much money is required to sustain that lifestyle.

Financial integrity is achieved by learning the true impact of your earning and spending, both on your immediate family and on the planet. It is knowing what is enough money and material goods to keep you at the peak of fulfillment--and what is just excess and clutter. It is having all aspects of your financial life in alignment with your values. (p. xxvi)

Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin live a voluntarily simple lifestyle. They achieved financial independence by placing their nest egg into investments which pay each of them \$6000 per year, enough for them to sustain their lifestyle. By

practicing frugality, they are able to work at their educational activities through the not-for-profit New Road Map Foundation (NRF). They are able to give away all their current income to worthwhile organizations that serve to lift humanity and the environment (Watson 1992). To receive money from NRF (1992), organizations must "demonstrate and foster in others the power of personal responsibility and personal initiative" (Dominguez & Robin, 1992, p. 2). "In 1991 the amount donated to other organizations was \$36,678" (p. 20). In a 1993 newsletter sent to graduates of "Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence" audio-cassette course, the New Road Map Foundation assured readers that they can accomplish their goals without "a support group, a life seminar, and 'advanced version' or personal advice" if they will just do the steps outlined in the program.

One Fier who has followed the program for three years said, "There's a big difference between people who are actually doing the steps and the ones who just want to do them." The only times we've seen productive interaction among Fiers is when they have Steps 1 through 5 well established for themselves. So do the steps....[they] are precisely designed to help you grow in independent thought and action, and when you do them, they work.

We do encourage you to talk with friends about the impact that following the steps has had on your life. You have no idea how powerful your stories (however insignificant they may seem to you) can be in opening people's eyes to their unworkable financial patterns. Your friends may not act like it's getting in, but rest assured that your words--and the model you provide--can change the world. (p. 7)

Others (Colby & Damon, 1992; Frazer, 1992; Marks, 1989) have learned that through spiritual and personal motivations, individuals can live out their dreams and impact others in a positive way. In her early 20's, Frazer formed a support group for herself and others to investigate the implications and practical aspects of giving away large sums. They interviewed others who had given away principle, not just interest.

Here were people with courage, vision, and frequently humor, thinking about the effects of their actions and making powerful moves toward justice. They had various amounts of money, ranging from \$150,000 to \$80 million, and gave away varying amounts, from 20 to 100 percent, but all of them had decided that they had more than enough. (Frazer, 1992, p. 48)

Most people who choose to live more simply have not been burdened with huge sums, but recognize that their moderate incomes are extravagant by the rest of the world's standards (Durning, 1992). Seeking inner meaning within religious doctrine and experience calls for rejection of over-consumption (Pettepiece, 1979). The Alternatives, Inc. organization promotes revision in thinking and in lifestyles in opposition to the dominant profit motive. Alternative Celebrations Catalogue and their other publications encourage individuals, families, and religious groups to communicate their values through making new choices on life affirming practices surrounding holidays and other observances and in the broader aspects of living.

Schmookler (1988) contrasted the warlike with the peacemaking attributes of the human race. Standing at the brink of ecological and social disaster, society must envision a new reality.

Throughout the millennia, people have had experiences that seem to reveal us to be part of or agents of something greater than ourselves. In our own time, in our own society, a large proportion of people have had these experiences. And these experiences guide their lives in the direction of love and wholeness. (pp. 319-320)

Voluntary simplicity and home economics. Some home economists emphasize the need for individuals and families to consider simpler living as a means of improving family well-being, thus improving society. Envisioning three possible scenarios for society in the next 40 years, Horn and East (1982) asked home economics professionals to consider the overall implications of each and choose to implement strategies conducive to professional and societal health. In the first scenario, technological improvements and affluence would continue increasing rapidly as in present society. The third scenario predicted severe economic and social crisis; unemployment, food shortages, and energy depletion similar to a replay of the hardships of Ellen Richards' day.

In the second scenario, which seems to portray adoption of voluntary simplicity, humans do not merely extrapolate the current growth trend; they react against becoming overly dependent upon technology. Recognizing that there may be

periods of continuing recession, "we will not continue the unprecedented material growth that we have enjoyed since the end of World War II" (p. 13). Home economists can

see in this potential trend toward home-centered industry the opportunity to help families regain control over their physical, social and economic environments; to develop patterns of living that will move us all toward a sustainable society; to be able to handle high technology without sacrificing warm human relationships. (pp. 13-14)

Rettig and Everett (1982) delineated several possible outcomes for the future. Examples included: doing "more with more" as in the case of dual earner families; or, doing "more with less" as in the conservation ethic. Calling home economists to broaden their scope in teaching about family resource management, Rettig and Everett stated,

It is important that we assist home economists and families to go beyond the organization and efficiency conception of family resource management to incorporate the macro view of the impact of family decisions on the ecosystem as well as to examine family adaptation to resource scarcity. (p. 6)

Eventually the scarcity of non-renewable resources will force humans to adapt. Will we be able to consciously direct the change so that it occurs with gradual and tolerable speed? Or will we continue to deny the problem and be forced to act in crisis at the last minute when fewer alternatives are available? (p. 17)

Combining home economics principles with religious conviction favoring simplicity, Longacre (1980) compiled practical suggestions and anecdotal information from Mennonites into her book, Living More With Less. Besides

collecting the hints and instructions, she also categorized them as follows: Do justice; Learn from the world community; Nurture people; Cherish the natural order; and Nonconform freely. Pestle (1984) developed teaching materials and a questionnaire to measure attitudes toward voluntary simplicity of lifestyle. She acknowledged that people have different reasons for seeking a changed lifestyle.

Long term preservation of a healthy environment has been a perpetual concern of home economics. During the 1980's, home economists promoted energy conservation. Education and programs focused on: home energy conservation, weatherization programs, reducing water use, clothing for comfort and energy savings, recycling, and generating income through home-based business. Nolen and Stover (1993) called home economists to promote a new economic paradigm, humane sustainable culture, which is measured by Human Development Indicators (HDI) rather than Gross National Product (GNP). Nolen and Clawson (1992) suggested that voluntary simplicity is a values issue requiring incorporation of lessons from geography and history along with home economics philosophy and skills.

We could serve as the catalyst for redefining the relationship between resources and well-being, as we help families decide for themselves what is enough in terms of family finances, housing, food and nutrition, child welfare, clothing and textiles, personal growth, career and lifestyle. (p. 8)

Alternatives to positivism. Home economists are being challenged to intellectual rigor in defining professional goals (Green, 1990; Horn & East 1982) and to develop critical science as the preferred method for research (Baldwin, 1991; Brown, 1984; and Istre & Self, 1990). Green concurred with Brown that home economics is a critical science.

Attributes of a critical science [are] practicality; social and moral orientation; inclusion of critical thinking; interdisciplinary theoretical activity; inclusion of evaluation of existing social practices; and emancipation as the purpose. The role of the scientist is fused with political moral actor roles. (Green, 1990, pp. 43-44)

In contrast to the empirical method of scientific inquiry, critical science allows for broad application to personal, familial, and societal dilemmas. Using the perennial practical problem approach, multifaceted answers are possible. Critical science aids individuals, families, and groups to empower themselves to create satisfying life choices. Brown (1984) berated home economics for remaining "frozen into the patterns of thought and action that prevailed at the beginning of the twentieth century" (p. 51). Elaborating on the ways home economics has molded itself after society rather than defining and living its mission, Brown pointed to shortcomings of empirical science methodology. She challenged the profession to change, stating,

Start with a reinterpretation of the original mission of home economics...differentiate conceptually among different forms of questions the subject matter is to address relative to the mission...become knowledgeable about different modes of rationality and use each to address the form of question for which it is logically appropriate...develop an attitude and competence to seek out the implications of existing social conditions and to ask whether other alternatives would be better for those we serve. (p. 54)

Brown (1984), Baldwin (1991), and Green (1990) counseled that home economics must become more intellectually rigorous; use methods besides empirical science; take an interdisciplinary approach; and learn to be politically active to survive as a profession. Home economics is involved with the family and its intimate interrelationships within society. The field is uniquely positioned to examine various avenues through which individuals move toward voluntary simplicity. Home economics can encourage families to question incongruence between their values and lifestyle choices (Tippett, 1991).

Simple living study groups. Even in situations where the decision to simplify was made as an individual, group support has been important to some people. Gaining a sense of community and support from fellow simple living adherents is the essence of the study circles concept. In Seattle, Luhrs (1992) and Andrews (1992) developed study circles of interested individuals to examine the concept of humane sustainable culture. Similar study circles are beginning in Berkeley, CA and Portland, OR.

The groups (and my own life) have been evolving in a wonderful way. At first, we struggled to organize ourselves....In America, complicated living screams from every corner. We were no longer just a study group: we were a support group too. (Luhrs, 1992, p. 24)

In Greensboro, NC, Stover and Stover (1992) conducted a series of workshops they called "LifeStyle Simplification Lab" beginning in January, 1992. Following the first workshop, five of the participants and their spouses decided to meet for six weeks to take Dominguez and Robin's (1987) audiotape course "Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence." Upon completing the audiotape course, the couples found they had become friends. They each wanted the group to continue because together they could support and challenge each other along the path toward becoming more financially independent and living more simply.

Intentional communities. From the earliest days of U.S. history, attempts at religious community have been tried by sects such as the Shakers with mixed success. Later Transcendentalist communities of Brook Farm and Fruitlands were short-lived experiments at living out one's highest beliefs within a community. Today a new generation of individuals have joined with like-minded believers to maintain ongoing communities. Koinonia Farm and Sojourners are examples of intentional communities living according to Christian principles. Community offers the mutual support necessary to focus attention on the spiritual while learning

to de-emphasize the material aspects of life (Coover, Deacon, Esser, & Moore, 1981).

Themes Emerging

There are many factors that lead people to adopt a voluntarily simpler lifestyle. Review of the literature identified three distinct yet interrelated themes: ecological concern, ethical issues, and economic considerations.

Ecological Concern

Harm to the planet creates dilemmas about current use of resources. Population growth and pollution stresses jeopardize future habitability of the earth. Awareness of the harmful effects of overconsumption can increase personal discomfort, spark attitudinal change, and initiate modifications in lifestyle.

Ethical Issues

Not only is the use of resources and wealth unevenly divided between Northern and Southern Hemisphere populations, the gap created between men and women by dominator model social systems leads to hostility, exploitation, and increases in consumption.

Spiritual search for meaning and an inner life is one avenue for ethical conduct. Religious teachings condemn greed. Happiness is related more to meaning than it is to wealth beyond the comfortable level of "enough."

Economic Considerations

Growth in production has been seen as the cure-all for societal problems. Measured by GNP, unlimited growth promotes waste of human energy as well as limited resources. Obtaining healthier measures of society means developing broader indicators of human welfare. Attempts at arriving at measures which go beyond economic indicators are underway at the international, national, state, and local levels.

Is crisis a factor?

Few references in the literature associate the adoption of voluntarily simpler lifestyles with overcoming crisis. Might weathering adversity created by economic or other crisis lead some individuals or families to adopt a frugal lifestyle? Might it be possible to investigate the process leading many people, frugal by necessity, eventually to choose the simple life? Perhaps they are drawn to simpler living because of its intrinsic benefits including ecological health and spiritual growth. Individual families may continually develop their life standards as they strive to live more simply. No one approach can work for everyone. Varying understandings and practices evolve over a lifetime. Grass roots behaviors affect local and global society.

The literature gives little explanation of how individuals group themselves into support networks around the aim of voluntary simplicity and humane sustainable culture.

Religious communities have historic roots and numerous fresh attempts are being explored. Study circles are more informal. Additional knowledge is needed about how they educate. How important are the components of mutual psychological and moral support?

In view of the information gleaned from literature, the following model of factors influencing voluntary simplicity, is proposed as a possible way of thinking about the multiple factors influencing adoption of a voluntarily simpler lifestyle and commitment to establishing humane sustainable culture (Figure 2).

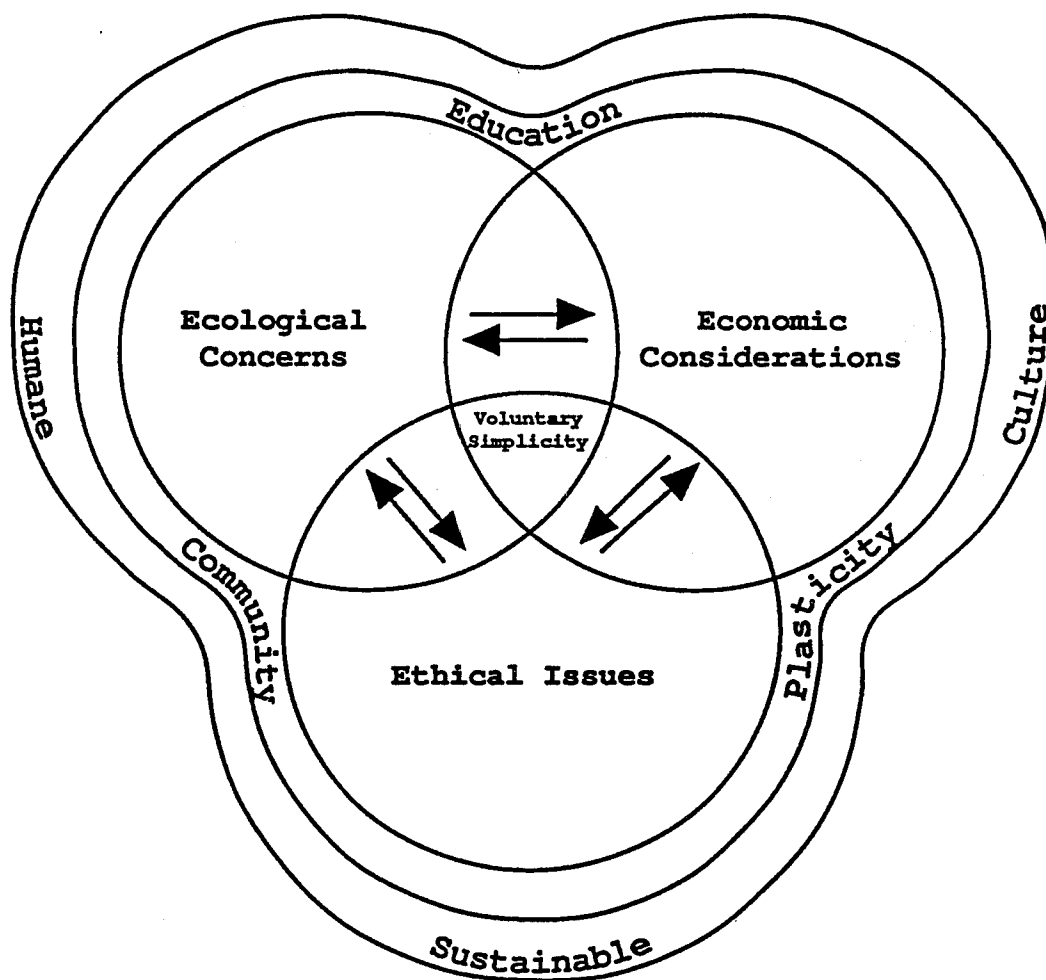
The model describes the interrelated nature of the ecological, ethical, and economic aspects of life. As each section becomes increasingly congruent with the others, the overlapping areas enlarge. Thus, illustrating the increasing awareness that provides impetus for the behavior changes as circles align more closely together, the space given to voluntary simplicity expands. Education, Community, and Plasticity undergird the shift in thinking and behavior. Education is a two-way process. Once new knowledge is internalized, behavior changes. The changed behavior then is an example for other's learning. This process can be formal (as in school settings) or informal (as among family or friends).

Community includes all interpersonal relationships or social networks for individuals or groups as well as the

larger context of humanity, or planetary consciousness. Plasticity refers to the multi-faceted approach to developing new modes of thinking which includes research, contemplation, and practice.

Within the model, as the three components overlap more completely, the global aspects of voluntarily simpler lifestyles coalesce into the phenomenon conceptualized as humane sustainable culture.

Figure 2. Model of Factors Influencing Voluntary Simplicity



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study investigated the factors which influence individuals and families to adopt voluntarily simpler lifestyles. The study was basically a descriptive survey consisting of two questionnaires mailed consecutively. This chapter addresses subjects, instrumentation, pilot study, procedure, and data analysis.

Subjects

All research subjects were participants in a Lifestyle Simplification Lab (Stover & Stover, 1992). LifeStyle Simplification: New Living Patterns for New Times is a program of the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) at Greensboro, NC. The ICA is a private organization whose aim is to embrace global development with a human perspective. The educational foci of ICA Greensboro during the 1990's include: ensuring sustainable development, utilizing participatory methods, and fostering global understanding. Co-directors Elaine Stover and Nelson Stover have lived a life of voluntary simplicity for 25 years. Elaine Stover holds a B.S. in Home Economics from Purdue University and a Master's in Human Ecology from Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium. Nelson Stover earned his baccalaureate

degree in computer science from Purdue University and his Master's in Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary. The Stovers each have conducted a wide range of human development training programs for individuals at all levels of society in five different cultures.

LifeStyle Simplification Lab is a one-day experience for individuals and families. Consisting of group and individual activities, workshops focus on "The Context for LifeStyle Simplification" and "What is Enough?" The one-day experience has been presented to several groups including the Institute of Cultural Affairs International quadrennial conference in Prague, Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, August 30 - September 6, 1992, and The Society for Human Ecology conference, "Human Ecology: Crossing Boundaries," October 2 - 4, 1992, in Snowbird, UT. Besides the conference settings, the LifeStyle Simplification Lab has been conducted at least three times in Greensboro, NC, reaching approximately 30 individuals between January, 1992, and March, 1993. It has also been presented at a retreat for the ICA East held in Wakefield, VA in October, 1992.

The subjects, therefore, consisted of 48 individuals whose names were obtained from Elaine and Nelson Stover. Forty-five had participated in the one-day LifeStyle Simplification Labs held in Greensboro, NC and Wakefield, VA. One outcome of the January, 1992 Lab was formation of a support group consisting of five couples (later called The

Couple's Club). The Stovers continue to serve as facilitators for the Couple's Club. Three spouses of participants in the LifeStyle Simplification Lab became active in the monthly Couple's Club support group. These three individuals were included as subjects in the study.

Instrumentation

Voluntary Simplicity Questionnaire

Modifying and enlarging upon instruments developed previously (Elgin, 1981; Shama, 1988; Stover & Stover, 1992), a Voluntary Simplicity Questionnaire (VSQ) was developed by the researcher (Appendix A). Reflecting the model, questionnaire items addressed three elements identified by the literature as related to choice of a voluntarily simpler lifestyle: ethical issues, ecological concerns, and economic considerations. Each of these was included in sections of the VSQ dealing with participants' definition and practice of a simpler lifestyle. Closed-ended items consisting of check lists and Likert-scale items, as well as open-ended items, were included in the questionnaire. Instructions encouraged elaboration on any of the items.

Factors in the decision to simplify. Section A of the VSQ asked individuals to examine a list of 18 factors and indicate on a three level scale (no, some, or major) whether each had been a concern in the decision to engage in patterns of simpler living. Using the same scale, respondents also were asked to rate to what extent each item was presently a

concern. Each item was related to a component of the model. Examples of items include: "Incongruence between values and lifestyle"; "Population pressure on the planet"; "Living beyond my means."

Information sources about voluntary simplicity.

Section B, items one to five, formed a checklist of sources of information on voluntary simplicity which had proved helpful. Respondents were asked to check all that applied and to give specific examples. The list of items included: books, classes, workshops, conferences, TV programs, friends, and organizations.

Family of origin compared to present life. The next section asked for descriptions about the respondent's family of origin in comparison to the present with regard to political leanings, religious/spiritual affiliation, family income, and practices related to voluntary simplicity. Parent's occupations were solicited with fill-in-the-blanks for mother's and for father's occupation.

Definition and practices related to voluntary simplicity. Determining how people define and practice voluntary simplicity was a major thrust of the VSQ. Tendencies leading toward voluntary simplicity mentioned by Elgin (1981) formed twenty-two items related to partial definition of Voluntary Simplicity. These statements were accompanied by two Likert-type scales. The first (6-point scale) asked for level of agreement with the item as part of

a definition. The second Likert-type scale (5-point scale) requested a rating on frequency of practicing the behaviors encompassed by the item. The three components of the model were represented by specific items. Examples for ethical issues: "Observe holidays in a non-commercialized and non-competitive manner"; "Use consumption politically by boycotting goods and services of firms whose actions and policies are considered unethical"; and "Pursue work (paid or volunteer) that directly contributes to the well-being of the world."

Examples of statements related to the ecological concerns component include: "Alter patterns of consumption in favor of products that exhibit some or all of the following characteristics: durable, easy to repair, nonpolluting in their manufacture and use, energy-efficient, functional and aesthetically pleasing;" "Shift one's diet away from highly processed foods, meats, and sugar and toward foods that are more natural, healthy, simple, and appropriate for sustaining the inhabitants of a small planet;" and "Change the pattern of transportation, i.e., take public transit, participate in a car pool, drive smaller cars, live closer to work, ride a bike, or walk."

Statements related to the economic considerations component include: "Lower overall level of personal consumption--buy less clothing, jewelry, and cosmetic products;" "Reduce clutter and complexity by giving away or

selling those things that are seldom used and could be used productively by others;" and "Develop skills for greater self-reliance or trade skills with others to reduce dependence upon experts to handle life's ordinary demands (for example, carpentry, plumbing, appliance repair, intensive gardening, various crafts, etc.)."

Participation in LifeStyle Simplification Lab. Section C of the VSQ was devoted to subjects' participation in LifeStyle Simplification Lab. Its three items inquired about the decision to attend, ways learning had been shared, and what changes may have been made as a result.

Consciousness vs. behavior change. Section D requested participants to indicate when and how their consciousness was first raised about the desirability of simpler living. They were also asked how long afterward they changed behavior in relation to the new consciousness.

Demographic information. Items about age, sex, family status, educational level, overseas experiences, income, and occupation were included in Section E of VSQ. In addition, items asked for participants to indicate whether or not their income was lower because of the decision to embrace some features of voluntary simplicity. They were asked to speculate about how life would be different if they earned more money. The last item concerned the level of anxiety experienced with regard to the future since the participant made the decision to live more simply.

Composite score. Specific items on the questionnaire corresponding to the components of the model were grouped for analysis into composite scores to allow computation of internal reliability. Besides the composite scores, a voluntary simplicity behavior score was computed for each subject. The Voluntary Simplicity behavior score (Volsimp) was the sum of responses to the behavior column of items B12 through B33 (Appendix C).

Internal reliability. Cronbach's alpha measure of internal reliability of the standardized variables in the VSQ composite score for ethical issues was 0.859; for the ecological concerns 0.910; and for economic considerations 0.702. The Cronbach's alpha for the composite scores of Voluntary Simplicity behavior was 0.897.

Voluntary Simplicity Questionnaire--2

The second questionnaire (VSQ--2), composed of open-ended items, was designed to flesh out the picture of the individual's previous and current lifestyle as well as the meanings respondents ascribe to Voluntarily Simpler Living.

Developing voluntary simplicity as a lifestyle choice. Section A of VSQ--2 asked subjects to indicate what level of simplification (moderate, substantial or full) they were presently living. Subsequent questions asked respondents to explain their development of voluntary simplicity as a lifestyle choice and what it meant to them.

Major concerns and their influence. Section B referred to the original VSQ responses which were major concerns in the decision to simplify lifestyle. Given a photocopy of their original VSQ section related to factors which had influenced the decision to simplify, respondents were asked to select their top three concerns and to elaborate on changes in practice, future outcomes, and current obstacles for each. Furthermore, a time line in relationship to personal/family goals related to voluntary simplicity allowed for introspection and projection one year, five years, and ten years hence. Family support may vary considerably among subjects. VSQ--2 also asked about the degree of family support received and the ways religious or spiritual beliefs related to voluntarily simpler living.

Group support. Although the literature mentions that group support is important for some individuals, it is not a criterion for all persons living a simpler life. To determine what role group support plays among the subjects, a four-part item regarding group involvement was included. The areas explored included: specific characteristics shared by group members, the importance of the group, and its effect on the subject's practice of voluntary simplicity.

Crisis. While some persons grow into new lifestyles gradually, some are forced by circumstances to adopt new patterns. These are not voluntarily chosen at the beginning, but could prove to be beneficial and therefore voluntarily

chosen at a later time. Item 8 was a 7-part section of VSQ--2 dealing with crisis. Types of information about the crisis sought were: when, how severe, duration, immediate effects, resources used to respond, ways the crisis influenced adoption of voluntary simplicity, and how the lifestyle alleviated the effects of the crisis.

Financial aspects. The Couple's Club originally focused on financial aspects of lifestyle simplification. Gaining control of debt and planning how to use life energy to create meaningful existence is the essence of simplification according to some authors (Dominguez & Robin, 1992, Levering & Urbanska, 1992, Elgin, 1981). Questions related to finances included items about financial skills developed, investment strategies practiced, and change in purchasing patterns. One item deals specifically with respondent's satisfaction with their current debt-load.

Motivation to continue. The VSQ--2 ended with some questions about motivation to continue in the direction of voluntary simplicity, benefits associated with the lifestyle, and what challenges remain. The final item asked subjects to respond philosophically as to their vision of the outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was designed to examine and improve the questionnaires and methods for analysis. Subjects for the pilot study were recruited from two churches in Greensboro

that promote "living simply so that others might simply live" (Schumacher, 1973). Three participants were chosen based upon the individual having examined her/his own lifestyle, made changes toward simpler living, and indicated a willingness to discuss the procedures of the study. The fourth and fifth participants were selected because they had written a book on their experiences in embracing a simpler lifestyle.

Pilot study subjects were asked to respond to the questionnaires as if they were participants in the study. They were also asked to critique the format of the questionnaires, the wording of the cover letter, instructions, and questionnaire items. Follow-up interviews explored any difficulties experienced during the pilot study as well as suggestions for improvement.

Subsequent modifications to the cover letters and the questionnaires were a direct outcome of the pilot study. Specific changes included insertion of an item about experiences overseas that may have led to the decision to live a simpler lifestyle and elimination or revision of items that seemed redundant. The cover letters were edited to more accurately reflect time needed to complete the questionnaires and to emphasize the importance of each person's returning the questionnaire.

Procedure for Data Collection

Questionnaires (VSQ) were mailed to the 48 subjects in July, 1993 using Dillman's Total Design Method (1978). A cover letter, signed by the researcher and the doctoral committee chair, explained the purpose of the study, request for participation, the confidential nature of the study, and the procedure for returning the completed questionnaire (Appendix B). It mentioned that some participants would receive a follow-up questionnaire. A postage paid envelope addressed to the researcher was included. One week after the original mailing, a follow-up postcard was sent to all non-respondents. Subjects whose questionnaires had not been returned were mailed a second letter and another copy of the VSQ on August 17. In August, telephone calls were made to seven respondents. In all, 44 VSQ questionnaires were returned. One was received too late to include in the consideration of subjects for the second level of the survey.

Selection of subjects to participate in the second level of the study was based on four factors: (a) a composite score (Volsimp) of the responses given to 22 items related to personal behavior (Appendix C), (b) responses to three open-ended items about changed behavior due to raised consciousness, (c) whether or not occupational change was related to "the decision to embrace some features of voluntary simplicity", and (d) whether or not information from Lifestyle Simplification Lab was being shared with

others. In September, 1993, 14 subjects scoring 83 or higher on the Volsimp composite were mailed the VSQ--2 questionnaire along with a cover letter and self-addressed, stamped return envelope. Follow-up postcards were mailed in early October, 1993. Telephone calls were made to non-respondents during the last two weeks of October. In all, eight VSQ--2 questionnaires were returned.

Data Analysis

VSQ responses were coded for data entry and preliminary analysis by the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) computer program. Frequencies were calculated for all items; whereas, means and correlations were computed for items related directly to components of the model. Composite scores on voluntary simplicity behaviors as well as items which addressed ecological, ethical, and economic considerations were used to determine internal reliability as indicated by Cronbach Coefficient Alpha procedure.

Analysis of VSQ--2 was conducted by compiling, for each item, all comments made by the eight respondents. From the grouped comments, themes emerged which were examined in relationship to the model. Specific themes were Connectedness with other people and the earth/stewardship, Interdependence, Struggle, and Commitment.

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that lead individuals and families to adopt simpler lifestyles, and to determine what people mean by voluntary simplicity and how they practice a simpler lifestyle. The sample participated in the LifeStyle Simplification Lab, an educational program of the Institute for Cultural Affairs--Greensboro. The data were obtained through questionnaires mailed to all 48 participants in LifeStyle Simplification Labs held between January 1992 and October 1992. A response rate of 92% was obtained with the initial questionnaire (VSQ). Data were examined in relation to the Model of Factors Influencing Voluntary Simplicity developed by the researcher. The second questionnaire, VSQ--2, was mailed to 14 subjects whose response on VSQ indicated frequent practice of behaviors related to a voluntarily simpler life. Eight respondents returned completed VSQ--2 questionnaires; the response rate was 57%. Information gleaned from telephone contacts with the non-respondents to VSQ--2 indicated they were committed to voluntary simplicity, but their current involvement in particular life events left no time or inclination to complete the second instrument. Examples of

respondents' circumstances included: serving as a volunteer flood-relief worker in the mid-west, recuperating from severe joint dislocation and subsequent surgery, and assuming new responsibilities in the re-organization of a business.

The chapter begins with a description of the respondents followed by discussion of: (a) factors leading to a decision to adopt a simpler lifestyle, (b) what people mean by voluntary simplicity, (c) how people practice a simpler lifestyle, and (d) the role of group support in the adoption and practice of voluntary simplicity as a lifestyle choice. The data are self-reported interpretations of individual opinion and behavior.

Description of Respondents

Demographic Information

Demographic information is displayed in Table 3 followed by narrative explanations of the data.

Year of birth. Respondents supplied their year of birth which was used to form age categories. The oldest of the 43 respondents was 81 years old, whereas the youngest was 23 years of age. Three-fourths of the respondents were in their 40's and 50's.

Sex. Respondents to the VSQ included 17 (40%) males and 26 (60%) females. Of the 14 subjects selected to receive the second questionnaire (VSQ--2), 3 (21%) were male and 11 (79%) were female.

Table 3

Distribution of Age, Sex, and Family Status

Variable	N	%
<u>Age</u>		
20-19	3	7.0
30-39	4	9.0
40-49	14	33.0
50-59	18	42.0
60-69	3	7.0
70-79	0	0.0
80-89	1	2.0
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	17	39.5
Female	26	60.5
<u>Family Status</u>		
Single	13	30.2
Married	29	67.4
Sharing housing	1	2.3

Family status. Twice as many respondents were married as were single. One shared housing with someone other than a marriage partner or children.

Table 4 displays information concerning respondents' education. It also indicates whether or not overseas experiences contributed to their desire to embrace a voluntarily simpler lifestyle.

Education. Respondents were highly educated. Nearly half (48.8%) had completed an advanced degree. Another fourth (23.3%) had pursued some postgraduate education and

Table 4

Respondents Educational Level and Overseas Experiences

Variable	N	%
<u>Educational Level</u>		
Some High School	0	0.0
High School Graduate	0	0.0
Some College	4	9.3
College Graduate	8	18.6
Some Postgraduate Education	10	23.3
Advanced Degree	21	48.8
<u>Overseas Experience</u>		
<u>Contributing to VS</u>		
Yes	26	78.8
No	7	21.2
Missing Data	10	

the remaining fourth had college degrees or some college.

Overseas experience. Twenty-six individuals indicated that overseas experience had influenced their desire to simplify lifestyles; seven had not traveled abroad. Ten respondents did not answer the question. The influence of overseas experiences was clarified by written responses to this item. It was typical for respondents affiliated with the Institute of Cultural Affairs to have lived in small villages in developing countries. Examples of comments from the 11 respondents who indicated ICA experience are:

- lived and worked on 5 continents in the past 25 years
- lived in Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines (birthplace), Indonesia, Jamaica as a staff of ICA for a period of 18 years working with communities in human development

projects. Visiting Africa and Egypt raised this consciousness to a higher level.

- worked in Kenya with ICA, January 1983-June 1984; work teams to Jamaica, Mexico. Travel to Jamaica, Grand Caiman, Canada, across USA

Four respondents indicated church affiliated mission projects:

- mission work team to Mexico (short-term 1 week), study tour to Puerto Rico (1 week)
- 1954-57 in West Africa with Methodist Church; 1974-82 in Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Philippines with Order Ecumenical
- United Methodist, Volunteer-In-Mission Work teams to Jamaica, Haiti, South Carolina and Alabama; ICA Village consult--Muliwada, India

Examples of other varied experiences include:

- I was a Peace Corps Volunteer and lived quite happily in "primitive" conditions.
- teaching 3 years in the Philippines
- trip to India Jan/Feb 1993.
- visit to Panama with my husband. We visited places where he served in the Peace Corps. Trip to Europe (1972) Realized how wonderful trains are and how much more simply Europeans live.
- US Army in Germany 1958-60

Personal annual income. Although at least one respondent placed his/her earnings at each of 10 levels provided by the item, the frequency distribution is bimodal with 11 (26.2%) individuals earning under \$10,000 and 10 (23.8%) individuals earning \$26,000-36,999. Each of the other income categories was indicated by between one to four individuals (Table 5).

Table 5

Personal Annual Income and Household Annual Income

Variable	N	%
<u>Personal Income</u>		
Under \$10,000	11	26.2
\$10,001-15,999	4	9.5
\$16,000-20,999	4	9.5
\$21,000-25,999	4	9.5
\$26,000-36,999	10	23.8
\$37,000-46,999	3	7.1
\$47,000-56,999	1	2.4
\$57,000-66,999	1	2.4
\$67,000-76,999	1	2.4
\$77,000+	3	7.1
Missing data	1	
<u>Household Income</u>		
Same as personal income	13	32.5
\$10,000-20,000	3	7.5
\$21,000-30,000	4	10.0
\$31,000-40,000	3	7.5
\$41,000-50,000	4	10.0
\$51,000-60,000	4	10.0
\$61,000-70,000	2	5.0
\$71,000-80,000	3	7.5
\$81,000-99,000	1	2.5
\$100,000+	3	7.5
Missing data	3	

Household annual income. Because of the number of single individuals, it was not surprising that 32.5% of respondents' household earnings were the same as reported Personal Annual Income. The range of combined annual incomes appeared to be almost evenly distributed with between one and four households indicating any given income level. Twenty

percent of the households earned between \$41,000 and \$60,000 per year. Another 21% earned between \$61,000 and \$100,000+

Number of people supported. Most families were small. Of the respondents, 28% were single-person households. There were 43% who reported two individuals being supported on the household income; whereas, 14% reported 3; 12% indicated 4, and 2.4% had five persons supported on the household income. One respondent failed to answer this item.

Occupation. Both current and previous occupations were coded using the U.S. Labor Department's Dictionary of Occupational Titles. The nine categories were assigned rating codes in ascending order with professional positions given the highest score (Table 6). Within the group of 43 respondents, 31 currently were engaged in professional occupations. When asked about their previous occupation, 33 respondents mentioned occupations in the "professional" category. Two did not answer the previous occupation item. Of the 39 who reported change in occupation, 17 (43.6%) did so in order to "embrace some features of voluntary simplicity"; 19 (48.7%) said the change had no relationship to their desire for simpler living. Three (7.7%) indicated something other than yes or no. Eighteen respondents related their occupational change to their desire to embrace some features of voluntary simplicity. Ten persons' comments seemed to focus on ethical aspects of the decision. Examples include:

Table 6

Current Occupation and Previous Occupation

Categories	<u>Current Occupation</u>		<u>Previous Occupation</u>	
	N	%	N	%
Housewife, volunteer or unemployed	6	14.0	4	9.8
Miscellaneous	1	2.3	0	0.0
Structural	0	0.0	0	0.0
Benchwork	0	0.0	0	0.0
Machine Trades	0	0.0	1	2.4
Processing	0	0.0	0	0.0
Agricultural	0	0.0	0	0.0
Service	0	0.0	0	0.0
Clerical/Sales	5	11.6	3	7.3
Professional/technical/ managerial	31	72.1	33	80.5

- Desire to contribute to the well being of the world. Use my creativity. Directly affect the lives of students--volunteerism as a response to life! A way of sharing lifestyle as another form of volunteerism to the earth.
- Yes. I chose to go into a low paying, public service occupation.
- This change was a result of me wanting to put my energy and strength into making a change in this world for the better. Definitely live very frugally since I became a VISTA because we live below poverty level since our primary job is to work with low income. It has definitely helped me to achieve a more simple life style
- I work essentially on behalf of the major organization that influenced my thinking about lifestyle.
- I recently shifted away from employment by a chemical company to employment by a minority college of nursing. This has little to do with "simplicity," more to do with ethics and interest.

There were four individuals who gave economic reasons for occupational change. Examples include:

- Somewhat--I needed steady income to allow simple living in the USA
- No, but now I work out of my home which does make life simpler. No commuting, not as many work-dress-up clothes, etc.
- More like responsibility in fiscal terms, e.g., growing children and college education and basic human services like health insurance, etc.

Income lower because of voluntary simplicity. Less than half of the group (19 or 45.2%) indicated that their incomes were lower due to their decision to embrace some features of voluntary simplicity. Slightly more than half (23 or 54.8%), indicated that their income stayed the same or even increased. Two wrote that this was because they were spending less and therefore had money left at the end of the month. Examples of written comments made by the ten individuals whose income was lower include the following:

- I sought meaningful involvement rather than research dollars and publications
- Got out of system of salary increments
- No promotions
- Less hours in less demanding fields, less competition for work/money
- As a V.P. and owner of a corp, my salary and fringes were much more than now. I am a local minister with 3 small rural churches.

The two respondents whose income did not change, but who felt that it increased, made the following comments:

- Actually, it seems higher because our being more careful about our spending is giving us money left over, something we haven't experienced in almost 20 years.
- Possibly higher, spend less and save more!!

Information Sources About Voluntary Simplicity

Subjects indicated sources of information which helped them learn about voluntary simplicity. Three-fourths of the respondents mentioned books; classes, workshops, and conferences; and friends. Organizations were listed by 25 or 58% of respondents. TV programs were mentioned least frequently as being helpful sources of information about voluntary simplicity. The column labelled "Total" is the sum of those who checked the item (Yes) plus those who actually supplied specific information (Specific). Table 7 includes information for the next five paragraphs.

Books. Eighteen (41.9%) respondents listed specific titles of books; 16 (37.2%) merely checked that they gained information about voluntary simplicity from books. Books mentioned more than once include the following: (Number in parentheses indicates the number of persons.) Dominguez &

Table 7

Information Sources About Voluntary Simplicity

Sources	<u>Books</u>		<u>Classes</u>		<u>TV</u>		<u>Friends</u>		<u>Organizations</u>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	9	20.9	10	23.3	37	86.0	9	20.9	18	41.9
Yes	16	37.2	16	37.2	3	7.0	25	58.1	6	14.0
Specific	18	41.9	17	39.5	3	7.0	9	20.9	19	44.2
Total*	34	79.1	33	76.7	6	14.0	34	79.0	25	58.2

*Total = Yes + Specific

Robin's Your Money or Your Life (6), Elgin's Voluntary Simplicity (3), In Context Magazine (3), and Bible (2).

Classes/Workshops/Conferences. Seventeen (39.5%) of those surveyed listed classes and workshops by name; 15 of these specifically mentioned the LifeStyle Simplification Lab. An additional 16 (37.2%) respondents checked this category as contributing to their learning about voluntary simplicity without giving specific examples.

TV Programs. Most of the respondents, i.e., 37 (86.0%) did not mention that TV programs had been helpful sources of information about voluntary simplicity. Of the six individuals indicating that TV programs had been helpful sources of information, only three listed specific programs. These were: PBS's "Local Heroes, Global Change," "Nature," "Jacques Cousteau," "National Geographic Specials," "Wild America," McNeil/Lehrer Evening News." One person volunteered that National Public Radio programs also were helpful.

Two respondents commented about their failure to seek information about lifestyle simplification from TV.

- I do not watch any TV
- TV promotes the antithesis of simplification. So called "nature" programs are just entertainment.

Friends. Thirty-four (79.1%) people indicated that friends were helpful sources of information on simplification of lifestyle. Of the written comments about friends made by

nine respondents, four mentioned that clients and co-workers (in work or volunteer settings) assisted in their learning about voluntary simplicity. These comments included:

- Clients of the homeless shelter I live in give daily lessons in doing more with less and in consumption.
- Many years of living in a semi-rural village of 1200 people, followed by relationships in urban/suburban places and noting regional differences on friends.
- Earth Day activities, local Shaklee efforts, Friendship Presbyterian Church people
- Fellow volunteers Human Service Alliance

Organizations. Indicating that organizations had been important sources of learning about voluntary simplification, 17 of the respondents named specific groups. The Institute of Cultural Affairs and its affiliated groups were mentioned 11 times, "church" was mentioned 3 times. Eighteen (41.9%) individuals did not check this item as a source of information.

Family of Origin Compared to Present Life

How much of one's behavior follows family tradition? Several items on the VSQ were designed to explore family background in political leanings, religious/spiritual beliefs, education, and occupation. Another five items compared prevalence of certain practices within the family of origin in relation to the subject's own choice of Voluntary Simplicity, i.e., frugality, religious commitment, charitable giving, ecological mindfulness and volunteerism. Table 8 displays the data related to family of origin.

Table 8

Family of Origin Compared to Present Life

Variable	<u>Family of Origin</u>		<u>Present Life</u>	
	N	%	N	%
<u>Political Leaning</u>				
Toward the right	28	68.3	8	19.0
Moderate	2	4.9	2	4.8
Toward the left	11	26.8	32	76.2
<u>Religious/Spiritual Affiliation</u>				
None	2	4.7	9	20.9
Catholic	4	9.3	0	0.0
Protestant	37	86.0	28	65.1
Unitarian/ Universalist/Unity	0	0.0	6	14.0

Politics. Political leanings toward the right were more typical of families of origin, whereas respondents' own political leanings tended to be toward the left. Although "Moderate" was not included in VSQ as a category for this item, two individuals in each case indicated that their family's and their own political leaning centers between right and left. Two respondents did not answer the item about family political leaning. One did not indicate his/her own political leaning.

Religious/spiritual affiliation. Protestant denominations were the most frequently mentioned religious affiliation among the respondents--both in their family of

origin (86%) and currently (65.1%). Four individuals reported that their families had been Catholic, although none practiced Catholicism at the time the survey was completed. Six respondents are Unitarian/Universalists or affiliated with the Unity Church. Two reported no religious/spiritual affiliation in the family of origin while nine indicated no current affiliation.

Family income. Lower middle and middle incomes characterized over 70% of the families of origin. Almost 12% each reported low or upper middle income levels. One person had had a high income family.

Parents' Occupations. Categories for occupations were listed in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles except for the category: housewife, volunteer or unemployed (Table 9). Clerical/sales and professional/technical/managerial occupations were predominate occupations among the respondents' parents. Seventy-eight percent of fathers held such jobs, whereas 41 percent of the mothers had held clerical/sales or professional/technical/managerial jobs. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that their mothers had not worked outside the home during their childhood years.

Table 10 is a rank ordering by mean scores of items relating typical practices within the family of origin to the respondents' own commitment to voluntary simplicity. Mean scores changed dramatically for the category "ecological mindfulness". Clearly, ecological mindfulness was rare

Table 9

Parents' Occupations

Categories	<u>Mother's Occupation</u>		<u>Father's Occupation</u>	
	N	%	N	%
Housewife, volunteer or unemployed	21	48.8	0	0.0
Miscellaneous	0	0.0	0	0.0
Structural	0	0.0	1	2.4
Benchwork	0	0.0	3	7.1
Machine Trades	0	0.0	2	4.8
Processing	0	0.0	0	0.0
Agricultural	1	2.3	3	7.1
Service	3	7.0	0	0.0
Clerical/Sales	8	18.6	11	26.2
Professional, technical managerial	10	23.3	22	52.4

during the respondents' youth ($\bar{M} = 0.12$), but had the highest overall mean ($\bar{M} = 0.95$) within the items in the question, "Practices Related to Voluntary Simplicity". Perhaps ecological issues have received enough attention in the past two decades that caring for the environment has become a mainstream idea. Two other categories--charitable giving and volunteerism--had higher mean scores for respondents' own commitment to voluntary simplicity and typical practices than were reported in their family of origin. Religious commitment and frugality showed little difference in mean scores for respondents compared to their families of origin.

Table 10

Practices Related to Voluntary Simplicity

Variable	<u>In Family of Origin</u>			<u>Led to Respondent's Voluntary Simplicity</u>		
	N	%	<u>M</u>	N	%	<u>M</u>
<u>Frugality</u>						
No	9	20.9	. . . . .	7	16.3	
Yes	34	79.1	0.79	36	83.7	0.84
<u>Religious Commitment</u>						
No	10	23.3	. . . . .	11	25.6	
Yes	33	76.7	0.77	32	74.4	0.74
<u>Charitable Giving</u>						
No	16	37.2	. . . . .	8	18.6	
Yes	27	62.8	0.63	35	81.4	0.81
<u>Volunteerism</u>						
No	23	53.5	. . . . .	7	16.3	
Yes	20	46.5	0.47	36	83.7	0.84
<u>Ecological Mindfulness</u>						
No	38	88.4	. . . . .	2	4.7	
Yes	5	11.6	0.12	41	95.3	0.95

Factors Leading to a Decision to Adopt a Simpler Lifestyle

Tables 11 through 13 display information related to deciding factors in the adoption of simpler living which were important in the past as well as the present. Responses for level of concern were coded: 1=no; 2=some; and 3=major. Ranked in order of mean score on present concern, the frequency data are enumerated for each level of the three levels of response for both past concerns and present concerns followed by mean score for each concern. Ethical

Table 11

Ethical Issues as Past and Present Factors in the Decision to Adopt a Simpler Lifestyle

Concerns Rank Ordered by Mean	Past Concerns				Present Concerns			
	<u>No</u> N(%)	<u>Some</u> N(%)	<u>Major</u> N(%)	<u>M</u>	<u>No</u> N(%)	<u>Some</u> N(%)	<u>Major</u> N(%)	<u>M</u>
Desire to contribute to worthwhile purposes	2(4.7)	12(27.9)	29(67.4)	2.6	1(2.4)	16(38.1)	25(59.5)	2.6
Desire for meaningful existence	3(7.1)	10(23.8)	29(67.4)	2.6	2(4.8)	24(33.3)	26(61.9)	2.6
Incongruence between values and lifestyle	5(11.6)	16(37.2)	22(51.2)	2.4	3(7.0)	23(53.5)	17(39.5)	2.3
Lack of family/ personal time	10(23.3)	19(44.2)	14(23.6)	2.1	9(20.9)	16(37.2)	18(41.9)	2.2
Increase consistency with religious teachings	10(23.3)	12(27.9)	21(48.8)	2.3	10(23.3)	15(34.9)	18(41.9)	2.2
Inequitable distribution of the world's resources	15(34.9)	14(32.6)	14(32.6)	2.0	8(18.6)	21(48.8)	14(32.6)	2.1
Desire to emulate others' simpler pattern	15(34.9)	21(48.8)	7(16.3)	1.8	14(32.6)	24(55.8)	5(11.6)	1.8

Table 12

Ecological Concerns as Past and Present Factors in the Decision to Adopt a Simpler Lifestyle

Concerns Rank Ordered by Mean	Past Concerns				Present Concerns			
	<u>No</u> N(%)	<u>Some</u> N(%)	<u>Major</u> N(%)	<u>M</u>	<u>No</u> N(%)	<u>Some</u> N(%)	<u>Major</u> N(%)	<u>M</u>
Unnecessary waste of resources	8(18.6)	17(39.5)	18(41.9)	2.2	4(9.3)	17(39.5)	22(51.2)	2.4
To counter environ- mental damage i.e., degradation of air, water, soil	13(30.2)	17(39.5)	13(30.2)	2.0	8(18.6)	15(34.9)	20(46.5)	2.3
Concern for species extinction	20(46.7)	15(35.7)	7(16.7)	1.7	12(28.6)	21(50.0)	9(21.4)	1.9
To reduce dependency on fossil fuel	18(42.9)	21(48.8)	4(9.3)	1.7	11(25.6)	25(58.1)	7(16.3)	1.9
Population pressure on the planet	18(42.9)	18(42.9)	6(14.3)	1.7	17(39.5)	15(34.9)	11(25.6)	1.9

Table 13

Economic Considerations as Past and Present Factors in the Decision to Adopt a Simpler Lifestyle

Concerns Rank Ordered by Mean	Past Concerns				Present Concerns			
	<u>No</u> N(%)	<u>Some</u> N(%)	<u>Major</u> N(%)	<u>M</u>	<u>No</u> N(%)	<u>Some</u> N(%)	<u>Major</u> N(%)	<u>M</u>
Desire for economic self-sufficiency	7(16.3)	17(39.5)	19(44.2)	2.3	6(14.0)	15(34.9)	22(51.2)	2.2
Concerns related to employment/career	13(30.2)	11(25.6)	19(44.2)	2.1	12(27.9)	15(34.9)	16(37.2)	2.1
Escalating cost of goods	11(25.6)	23(53.5)	9(20.9)	2.0	10(23.3)	26(60.5)	7(16.3)	1.9
Living beyond my means	16(37.2)	15(34.9)	12(27.9)	1.9	19(44.2)	17(39.5)	7(16.3)	1.7
Experience with personal/family crisis	27(64.3)	9(21.4)	6(14.3)	1.5	28(66.7)	7(16.7)	7(16.7)	1.5

reasons figured heavily in respondents' decisions to simplify their lifestyles as well as being influential in the present. A remarkable degree of consistency appeared in rankings of mean scores of past and present concerns. Within the ethics category, "Desire to contribute to worthwhile purposes" and "Desire for meaningful existence" were the most frequently selected past and present concerns. Four items had nearly identical mean scores for past and present concerns; "Incongruence between values and lifestyle", "Lack of family/personal time", "Increase consistency with religious teachings", and "Inequitable distribution of the world's resources". All but one of the items retained its place in the rank ordering within the ethical issues category of the model. The one exception--respondents ranked "Lack of family/personal time" higher than "Increasing consistency with religious teachings" as a present concern than as a past concern within the category of ethical issues. The least frequently chosen item, "Desire to emulate others' simpler patterns" had the same mean score ($\bar{M} = 1.8$) as both a past and present concern.

Ecological issues ranked by mean score appear in Table 12. All of the ecological concerns had slightly higher mean scores as present concerns ($\bar{M} = 2.4$ to 1.9) than as past concerns ($\bar{M} = 2.2$ to 1.7). The most frequently chosen item "Unnecessary waste of resources," ($\bar{M} = 2.2$, past; 2.4 present) was very close in mean score to "Counter

environmental damage, i.e., degradation of air, water, soil," (\bar{M} = 2.0 past; 2.3 present). "Population pressure on the planet" (\bar{M} = 1.7, 1.9) was placed last as both a past and present concern among this sample.

Economic issues retained the same rank order when respondents rated them as to past and present concerns. "Desire for economic self-sufficiency" was the top economic issue (M = 2.3, past; 2.4, present), whereas "Experience with personal/family crisis" was consistently ranked last (\bar{M} = 1.5 past and present).

The means of any of the top three items as past concerns within the category of ethics are slightly greater than the highest mean within ecology or economics. "Desire for meaningful existence" had the highest mean score of any item in the three categories. In summary, within the three categories, respondents' major concerns--both past and present--were "Desire for meaningful existence," "Unnecessary waste of resources," and a "Desire to become economically self-sufficient."

Tables 14 through 16 display the mean scores for both past and present concerns followed by the Pearson correlation coefficient. Correlation between the items within each category were calculated using the Pearson product moment computation. Correlations range from $r = .48$ to $r = .88$. All but one of the correlations between past and present

Table 14

Correlation of Ethical Issues as Past and Present Factors in Simpler Living

Mean Score	Past M	Present M	Correlation r
Desire to contribute to worthwhile purposes	2.6	2.6	0.55***
Desire for meaningful existence	2.6	2.6	0.74***
Incongruence between values and lifestyle	2.4	2.3	0.48**
Lack of family/ personal time	2.1	2.2	0.83***
Increase consistency with religious teachings	2.3	2.2	0.88***
Inequitable distribution of the world's resources	2.0	2.1	0.70***
Desire to emulate others' simpler patterns	1.8	1.8	0.71***

** p <.001

*** p <.0001

Table 15

Correlation of Ecological Concerns as Past and Present Factors in Simpler Living

Mean Score	Past M	Present M	Correlation r
Unnecessary waste of resources	2.2	2.4	0.66***
To counter environmental damage, i.e., degradation of air, water, soil	2.0	2.3	0.71***
Concern for species extinction	1.7	1.9	0.78***
To reduce dependency on fossil fuel	1.7	1.9	0.61***
Population pressure on the planet	1.7	1.9	0.78***

***p < .0001

Table 16

Correlation of Economic Considerations as Past and Present Factors in Simpler Living

Mean Score	Past <u>M</u>	Present <u>M</u>	Correlation <u>r</u>
Desire for economic self-sufficiency	2.3	2.4	0.56***
Concerns related to employment/career	2.1	2.1	0.76***
Escalating cost of goods	2.0	1.9	0.81***
Living beyond my means	1.9	1.7	0.55***
Experience with personal/family/crisis	1.5	1.5	0.87***

***p = <.0001

concerns were significant at the $p < .0001$ level; the one was significant at $p < .001$.

Meaning and Practice of Voluntary Simplicity

Elgin (1981) reported numerous trends or tendencies exhibited by adherents of simpler living. Twenty-two items on the VSQ were phrases adapted from Elgin's list. Respondents were asked to indicate, on a 6-point Likert-type scale, their level of agreement with each phrase as part of a working definition. Next respondents indicated, on a 5-point Likert-type scale, their frequency in practicing the stated behavior (Appendix C).

Tables 17 to 19 arrange the data for the components of the model by mean score on definition of voluntary simplicity followed by Pearson correlation coefficient r . Considering that the VSQ allowed selections from 1 = lowest to 6 = highest, level of agreement with the statements as definitions ranked quite high. Mean scores ranged from $M = 5.7$ to $M = 4.51$. Eighteen out of the 22 items had mean scores $M = 5.0$ or higher as part of a definition. Voluntary simplicity was typically defined first in terms of ecological issues. The average mean score within this category ($M = 5.3$) was slightly higher than for the other two categories (ethical issues $M = 5.05$, economic issues $M = 5.28$).

Both as a definition and as a behavior, "Recycle metal, glass and paper", ranked highest among all 22 statements in the three categories. Altering ones' patterns of consumption

Table 17

Ecological issues as a Definition of Voluntary Simplicity and as Personal Behavior

Statement of Trends or Tendencies	Definition <u>M</u>	Behavior <u>M</u>	Correlation <u>r</u>
Recycle metal, glass, and paper	5.70	4.16	0.45*
Alter patterns of consumption in favor of products that exhibit some or all of the following characteristics: durable, easy to repair, non-polluting in their manufacture and use, energy- efficient, functional and aesthetically pleasing	5.63	3.70	0.34
Cut back on consumption of items that are wasteful of non-renewable resources	5.44	3.53	0.49**
Change the pattern of transportation i.e., take public transit, participate in a car pool, drive smaller cars, live closer to work, ride a bike, or walk	5.42	3.00	0.41*
Work to develop one's potential as a well-rounded individual i.e., physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually	5.37	3.95	0.11
Employ appropriate technologies where-ever possible--use simple, rather than complex, resource-wasteful devices (for example, a regular knife vs. electric)	5.33	3.74	0.21
Involved with "compassionate causes"--such as ending world hunger, promoting peace, protecting the environment	5.19	3.47	0.27

Table 17, cont.

Ecological issues as a Definition of Voluntary Simplicity and as Personal Behavior

Statement of Trends or Tendencies	Definition <u>M</u>	Behavior <u>M</u>	Correlation <u>r</u>
Shift one's diet away from highly processed foods, meat, and sugar and toward foods that are more natural, healthy, simple and appropriate for sustaining the inhabitants of a small planet	5.09	3.56	0.67***
Participate in holistic health-care practices that emphasize preventative medicine, the healing powers of the body when assisted by the mind, and health as more than the absence of disease	5.09	3.42	0.54

* $p < .01$
 ** $p < .001$
 *** $p < .0001$

Table 18

Economic Considerations as a Definition of Voluntary Simplicity and Personal Behavior

Statement of Trends or Tendencies	<u>Definition</u> <u>M</u>	<u>Behavior</u> <u>M</u>	<u>Correlation</u> <u>r</u>
Lower overall level of personal consumption--buying less clothing, jewelry, and cosmetic products	5.47	3.84	0.46*
Reduce clutter and complexity by giving away or selling things that are seldom used and could be used productively by others	5.47	3.26	0.31
Develop skills for greater self-reliance or trade skills with others to reduce dependence on experts to handle life's ordinary demands (for example, carpentry, plumbing, appliance repair, intensive gardening, various crafts, etc.)	5.09	2.98	0.40*
Participate in consumer-and/or worker-owned enterprises (cooperatives) that meet a variety of needs such as child care, community agriculture, etc.)	5.02	2.16	0.59***

* p < .01
 ** p < .001
 *** p < .0001

Table 19

Ethical Issues as a Definition of Voluntary Simplicity and as Personal Behavior

Statement of Trends or Tendencies	Definition	Behavior	Correlation
	<u>M</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>r</u>
Pursue work (paid or volunteer) that directly contributes to the well-being of the world	5.53	4.14	0.41*
Participate in, and find support from extended families of either or biological and spiritual dimensions	5.28	3.84	0.39*
Prefer smaller scale, more human-sized living and working environments that foster a sense of community, face-to-face contact, and mutual caring	5.26	3.30	0.32
Support compassionate means (non-violence) in the realization of 'compassionate causes'	5.21	3.67	0.25
Engage in activities which allow greater use of creativity	5.00	3.42	0.35
Observe holidays in a non-commercialized/non-competitive manner	4.93	3.51	0.38
Open to nonverbal forms of communication, greater body contact, greater eye contact, more space in communication for periods of silence	4.91	3.47	0.56***
Alter male/female roles in favor of non-sexist patterns	4.86	3.60	0.47*
Use consumption politically by boycotting goods and services of firms whose actions and policies are considered unethical	4.51	2.63	0.70***

* p <.01
 *** p <.0001

in favor of ecological concerns ranked second as a defining statement within all categories. Respondents ranked third a statement related to ethical issues as defining the concept, "Pursue work (paid or volunteer) that directly contributes to the well-being of the world". Two statements defining voluntary simplicity within an economic issues framework placed fourth and fifth when ranked by mean score: "Lower overall level of personal consumption--buying less clothing, jewelry, and cosmetic products" and "Reduce clutter and complexity by giving away or selling those things that are seldom used and could be used productively by others."

In terms of definition, respondents agreed least with the statement, "Using consumption politically by boycotting goods and services of firms whose actions and policies are considered unethical." Furthermore, as a personal behavior, it also ranked last.

Is there a high correlation between how people define voluntary simplicity and how they behave? Column 4 of Tables 17 to 19 gives the Pearson's correlation coefficient. Twelve of the items are highly correlated with significance at $p < .01$ or $p < .001$ levels. Ten did not appear to have any significant correlation between definition and behavior. Notable examples include: "Work to develop one's potential as a well-rounded individual, i.e., physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually;" "Employ appropriate technologies wherever possible--use simple, rather than complex, resource-

wasteful devices (for example, a regular knife vs. an electric);" and "Support compassionate means (nonviolence) in the realization of 'compassionate causes'." Perhaps the more philosophical the concept expressed by the item, the more difficult it is to determine one's level of practice. For example, it is probably easier to determine the quality of one's diet or one's transportation (from an energy-use perspective) than the level of striving for well-roundedness within one's potential for physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual development.

Participation in LifeStyle Simplification Lab

Open ended questions asked respondents to explain their decision to attend, sharing of information from the lab, and changes in lifestyle made as a result of the lab. Coded for similarity, many of the respondents had already been interested in, and were practicing aspects of, lifestyle simplification prior to attending the workshop.

Reasons for attendance in the LifeStyle Simplification Lab. Half of the respondents (51.2%) had unique reasons for attending the lab. Examples include:

- Curiosity and interest in learning about it.
- Wanted to pursue lifestyle.
- Nelsons [sic] are friends and topic was already a part of my life
- I was at the time of the lab very interested in making a change in my life to simplify it. I still actively try to do this. It is a constant struggle.

Eighteen percent of respondents answered that they attended because of incongruence between their values and life practices. Some people (11.6%) attended because they were invited or because the lab was part of an Institute of Cultural Affairs retreat. Another 11.6 percent attended because they agreed philosophically with lifestyle simplification.

Ways participants had shared their learning from the Lab. Many individuals (40.5%) had shared with family and friends. Examples of comments written by those respondents include:

- Talked to most of my friends.
- Discussed with spouse.
- Talked with family and friends; we have done this as a couple with children.

Answers given by 31.0% of the respondents indicated specific actions. For example:

- Living it and tell others whenever I can.
- Passed brochures on and some handouts to folks I know who were struggling with making ends meet on two salaries.

Approximately 12% of respondents had not yet shared information from the lifestyle simplification lab. Nearly 10% had used the information in some form of speaking or teaching.

- Further developed the Lab.
- Developed teaching syllabus; organized monthly couples' club; 1 on 1 consultations.
- Use in speeches and workshops on fiscal planning. Use as a Board member on some occasions (couple of civic boards).
- Will be co-leading the Lab in Sept. 93 in Madison, CT.

Another 7.1% had shared through work related activities.

An example of comments written about work related sharing, "In my profession as a financial counselor, I have helped people understand that life and financial simplicity are related and can help them achieve their goals." One respondent did not answer this question.

Changes in lifestyle simplification made as a result of the Lab. Approximately half of the respondents wrote that they had made philosophical changes. Examples include:

- Economic prudence! Started saying no to things not in my "self vision", acknowledged parenting as demanding and lowered guilt about it. Decluttered.
- Nothing dramatic, only small changes but an ongoing rethinking of priorities.
- More acceptance of our present situation--less push for more and bigger.
- None except going into ministry full time in UMC.
- Stronger personal commitment. Included in business plans.
- Asking myself--Could everyone in the world live at the standard of living that we do? If so, what would the world look like? Could it survive environmentally?

Nearly 15 percent had made changes related to economic behavior. Examples included:

- We bought Your Money or Your Life (book).
- Sold property, reduced debt, changed clothing and cosmetic choices, improved physical condition for ease

in maintenance, take more time for just being, eat lunch at office, take time to make music.

- Bought simple house.
- Less conscious of clothing, more conscious of food purchases.
- Probably none as a result of the workshop. Appreciate it as a resource/will be sharing it as a resource with the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina.
- None, have been practicing simplification since 1975 and continue to try to do this to the best of our ability.
- I feel the lab reinforced my values and opened up some new intellectual options although no new habits have arisen because of the lab.

Two individuals had made job changes since the lab.

Their comments were:

- Reduced or looked for help with volunteer work. Looking for different full-time work.
- Not a direct result of the lab, however reinforced by the lab. Relocated household, changed careers, spend more time in community/volunteer activities.

Consciousness vs. Behavior Change

The 1970's seemed to be the time when many respondents first experienced a change in consciousness about voluntary simplicity. They cited such events as Earth Day, living in different cultures including inner city or third world communities, or engaging in alternative housing arrangements with others who lived simply.

Most respondents (57.2%) named living or working in other cultures and personal life events as experiences raising their consciousness about the desirability of simpler living. Examples of their comments include:

- Work in third world impoverished communities of Jamaica, Haiti, India, and South Carolina as well as here. See "Pilgrimages of Reverse Mission" by Ministry of Money, Gaithersburg, MD. Also, work of SIFAT (Southern Institute for Appropriate Technology, Lineville, AL).
- Moved to inner city to participate in program working to change a volatile situation. Earlier, "War on Poverty" work thru local church.
- Visit to 5th City Chicago West Side Campus of E.I.
- It was the communal workdays of the village--planting rice, building a dam.
- Living in community with shared resources. Living in Africa and Jamaica.
- Trips to India, Indonesia, Philippines, etc.
- Traveling world and doing vol. work in 3rd world villages.

Another 7.2 percent cited religious experience as having raised their consciousness. Examples of their comments include:

- Association with UU church and people in it.
- Reading. Sunday school class at Quaker Meeting.

Some people, 4.8%, credited the LifeStyle Simplification Lab with being that consciousness raising event. One person stated, "Attending the LSL, being in a lot of personal debt, having my income lowered."

The other 31.0% of respondents cited other experiences, such as personal contacts with particular individuals:

- Contact with a relative who practiced voluntary simplicity.
- My husband and I joined a small group of people interested in simplifying their lives. Series of articles in Utne Reader on this topic. Conversations with friends.
- Books, people.
- Teaching in a free school, 1 house community, good friends exploring this area.

Some, influenced by concerns about their personal well-being, stated for example:

- Increasing stress and anger, decreased physical health.
- Decided to put energy into service not stuff.
- Rat race, financial strains, family involvement.

Asked to explain when their behavior changed in relation to their new consciousness about simpler living, one fourth (25.6%) of the respondents indicated that changes had begun immediately. Comments made by those whose changed behavior occurred immediately include:

- Immediately--chose to remain in simpler lifestyle.
- Soon, but especially after the mideast oil crisis of early '70's.
- Same time, 1971. Always have practiced frugality, caring for the environment, and adding on as I am able to new ways of simple living.
- That summer of 1991, I started to change things like my diet and buying things that weren't necessary. I've been working in different areas of my life since then. It really is a constant, on-going thing, especially around a lot of people who don't think like that. And it's easy to be dragged down and not to stand up for your beliefs--but I'm learning every day.

An identical number reported that change had been slow or gradual, for example over a 5-10 year period. Comments made by respondents whose behavior changed gradually include:

- This has been a life pursuit.
- I've intentionally led a simple life for the past 20 years. For the first two years because I felt I had to, for the last 18 because I wanted to live a simple lifestyle.
- Began in 1980 with the decision to cut up all but 2 credit cards, pay them up, and be very intentional about what we bought on time. Moved into an apartment within

walking distance of husband's work. Since then have bought a house within 3/4 mile of apartment location. We are equipping the house with energy saving devices. We eat mostly fresh foods, less meat; continue to work actively in church and community affairs.

Eighteen percent mentioned that their behavior changed during a period of time from six months to 1 year or from 1-4 years. Examples of comments made include:

- I guess I've been changing in my thinking over the past 3 or 4 years. --But, again, the trip to India (January 93) made me most aware.
- In 1991~3 years.
- From 1991 to present.

One person was able to pinpoint stages in his behavior change, "I began riding a bicycle 20 years ago, moved toward vegetarianism 5 years ago. I got out of debt 1 year ago."

The VSQ asked respondents to envision ways life would be different if they earned more money. Primary responses included reducing debt, contributing to worthwhile causes, traveling, volunteering, etc. Thirteen respondents indicated their desire to help others. Examples of their comments include:

- We would give away more and probably invest in something like a community foundation or an affordable housing cooperative.
- Would create charitable foundations.
- I would be able to donate more \$ to causes. I would have the time to volunteer more.
- I would be able to increase my financial giving to organizations I now support with my human resource.

Improved prospects for savings and retirement income were mentioned by nine respondents. Examples of their comments include:

- Would save more, quit work, go to Matt Fox's Institute of Creation Spirituality, integrate that and Permaculture. Live it and lead workshops--Might still do it--even without more money.
- We'd probably travel to more expensive places and have a 'newer' though not necessarily new car. Otherwise we wouldn't change much. If we saved enough, I might want to retire earlier than I plan to now (55).
- Could save more money.
- In the short term none, I'd just have to work less years.

Seven individuals speculated about life with reduced debt. Examples of their comments include:

- Less debt, more security. Own home, work less hours.
- We would use the money I earned primarily for retiring indebtedness due to 3 children's education (this would enable my husband to retire earlier and we would be able to teach in a third world country for several years) and [contribute to] charitable organizations. Lifestyle would not change much.
- Get out of debt. Live more simply, which doesn't always mean less money some simple lifestyles are more costly initially.
- I would not have the debt I have. I would live in a similar way. Perhaps I would risk investing and living off my investments.

Four respondents mentioned personal goals that they would be able to achieve if they earned more money. Examples of their comments include:

- 1) Complete university on a quicker schedule--more classes per semester; 2) Spend weekends hiking, backpacking, or volunteering (travel); 3) Larger portion in savings/retirement.

- I would have air conditioning in my home, but other than that, I have all that I need. Sorry, I need the a.c.
- Dress somewhat better. Repair our house. Retrofit the house with some heat/cold conserving features. Travel to see family more often.

At least two respondents would prefer to travel, notably to live in other countries.

- I would travel for education and volunteer experience.
- Ability to travel extensively and live in different countries.

Two respondents were sure that more money would be a disadvantage citing, "More debts, more worries, more stuff"; and "More clutter".

The last item on VSQ inquired about any change in the respondent's level of anxiety about the future since deciding to simplify lifestyle. About half of the people (54.8%) indicated changed levels of anxiety. Whereas 21% had not experienced change in anxiety; 23.8% mentioned something else; 1 subject did not answer this question. Of 36 comments written, 19 respondents indicated that their anxiety level had decreased. Examples of their comments include:

- In a sense, I believe peace begins within and at home--to move away from a harried lifestyle to also living more ecologically in harmony and sharing--that feels like the will of God and does reduce my anxiety even though horrendous stuff may still happen. I am doing what I can do and there is peace in that.
- Yes. I don't worry much about not having money.
- I am calmer, more aware and more in control of my life (certain areas).
- I feel that I am less reactionary in my "living" and planning and more planned and purposeful.

Another ten respondents made comments stating no particular change in their anxiety levels. Examples include:

- Life simplification was not the reason I changed vocations to ministry in the historic church--it should and could be a by-product.
- Realization of the fragility of life and need to live it fully. Life is too short to be doing things you don't like.
- Yes and no. We have a long way to go esp. as a western community, but the awareness is growing and setting examples is challenging and necessary.
- Need to be very intentional about investments, taxes, etc.

Seven respondents' anxiety about the future had increased. Examples include:

- Increased concerns for cities.
- Anxious to make good decisions about the future.
- Greater concern for waste and ruin and want to help people learn ways to reduce and reuse stuff--then recycle.
- Cash income is reduced going from "temp" job to the permanent job in the institution I wanted to be a part of. We still have debts from a business that didn't "go" last year.

Overview of VSQ Responses

Through the VSQ questionnaire, 43 respondents shared aspects of their personal journeys toward a simpler lifestyle. Their answers and notations expressed their concerns, motives, experiences, and anxiety for the future. Although each person's responses were unique, there were many commonalities. These individual experiences and glimpses of life become the expression of a community and the larger culture. Perhaps stories such as these help explain the

"why" of life which leads to the "how" of life. The 43 handwritten responses on the pages of VSQ form a narrative that reflects relevant literature as well as the components of the researcher's Model of Factors Influencing Voluntary Simplicity: ethical issues, ecological concerns, and economic considerations.

Various sections of VSQ elicited information regarding (a) factors leading to a decision to simplify lifestyle, (b) definition of voluntary simplicity, and (c) type and frequency of voluntary simplicity behavior. In the section about the factors which influenced the initial and the ongoing decision to live more simply, each of the three components of the model was included. Ethical issues (\bar{M} = 2.6 to 1.8 both past and present) were somewhat more important than ecological concerns (\bar{M} = 2.2 to 1.7 past; 2.4 to 1.9 present) or economic considerations (\bar{M} = 2.3 to 1.5 past; 2.4 to 1.5 present) as factors leading respondents to adopt and continue living a simpler lifestyle.

In the section regarding definition of voluntary simplicity, level of agreement was measured on a 6-point scale. Respondents ranked ecological concerns as slightly more important (means ranged from \bar{M} = 5.7 to 5.09) than ethical issues (means ranged from \bar{M} = 5.53 to 4.51), and economic considerations (means ranged from \bar{M} = 5.47 to 5.02). When asked to rate the frequency of their behaviors related to voluntary simplicity on a 5-point scale, respondents most

frequently cited recycling ($M = 4.16$), pursuing work that directly contributes to the well-being of the world ($M = 4.14$), and reducing consumption ($M = 3.84$). Perhaps the composite scores on voluntary simplicity behavior were relatively high because few respondents realized the difficulty of practicing specific behaviors "always."

Ethical Issues

The concept of fairness in dealing with others is a basic tenet of all major religions and traditional cultural teachings (Durning, 1992; Finnerty, 1977; Schmookler, 1988, 1989). Historically, religious separatists formed communities to live with focused devotion to God (Kring, 1973; Peter, 1987; Shi, 1986). Modern writers have responded to humankind's search for meaning within the complexity of society and the environment (Bateson, 1989, 1991; Harman, 1988, 1990).

Answering the "why?" of life, VSQ respondents' most important concerns were "Desire to contribute to worthwhile purposes" ($M = 2.6$) and "Desire for meaningful existence" ($M = 2.6$). Correlations between the ethical issues as elements in the original adoption of VS and present practice of VS were statistically highly significant.

Respondents exhibited the capacity to care as explored by Colby and Damon (1992) and McCollough (1991). Among the 43 respondents, 26 had overseas experience which influenced their adoption of a simpler lifestyle. Cross-cultural

experiences such as this can foster the kind of compassion, respect, and personal resourcefulness that leads to rejection of overconsumption and wastefulness of resources.

Ecological Concerns

Reverence for the earth, understanding of the dilemmas facing all of life, and living as if one's personal actions make a difference characterized respondents' stance to VSQ. "Unnecessary waste of resources" (\bar{M} = 2.2 past, 2.4 present), was the most frequently selected item in the ecological concerns category as a factor leading to voluntary simplicity. When defining voluntary simplicity, high levels of agreement (\bar{M} = 5.7 to 5.09 on a 6-point scale) were expressed with statements describing ecological concerns as trends, tendencies, and attitudes. Responding to the same statements on a 5-point behavior scale, means ranged between \bar{M} = 4.16 to \bar{M} = 3.42).

When ethical grounding was in place, it appeared that ecological activity was more visible. Respondents could articulate more easily their habits in recycling, in reducing purchases, in obtaining more "earth friendly" products, etc.

Many were also able to contrast the wasteful practices of industrialized societies with the more conserving practices of other cultures and elected to support the more beneficial practices. Bateson (1991) interpreted the dialogue of 14 scholars at a 1968 conference held in Burg Wartenstein, Germany. Human activity, even with the best

knowledge at hand, creates some harmful results. Ecological dilemmas and humans' conscious response are never completely understandable. A holistic systems approach which honors diversity and community could be part of a workable solution to minimize the harm.

Mankind is not conscious, only individuals are conscious. A sense of shared consciousness in a small group might be the beginning of a model for patterns of communication that will one day allow us to speak of mankind as a whole as conscious, patterns for which we already have many of the tools (pp. 305-306).

The ecological models practiced by the respondents whose experience living in the ICA shared housing arrangements (called Order Ecumenical) for the purpose of mission in human development projects seems evocative of the approach described by Bateson.

Some respondents were able to recognize shifts in behavior due to specific consciousness-raising experiences. Debt and dissatisfaction with current life were motivations for some; others saw a need to conserve scarce resources to restore planetary health.

Economic Considerations

The economic consideration most influential in the decision to simplify lifestyle and to continue with the simplification was "desire for economic self-sufficiency" (M = 2.3 past, 2.4 present). "Lower overall level of personal consumption" was the item within the category selected most

frequently as a definition ($M = 5.47$) and as a personal behavior ($M = 3.84$). Other items included "reduce clutter and complexity....," "develop skills for greater self-reliance....," and "participate in consumer-and/or worker-owned enterprises..." Correlations between respondents agreement with the items as definitions and behaviors ranged from $r = 0.31$ to 0.59 .

In comparison to the total population where 26% of the U.S. civilians employed held managerial and professional specialty jobs in 1992 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993), respondents to VSQ were primarily engaged in professional/managerial/technical positions (72% current occupation, 80.5% previous occupation). Incomes fluctuated for a variety of reasons. Sometimes work was part-time or intermittent. Sometimes work changed voluntarily.

Faced with downsizing in many areas of employment, people once secure in jobs are threatened with change. New jobs may require a cut in pay. For some individuals, this situation threatens their senses of identity and self worth. Living with uncertainty, economic considerations become more critical. Block's (1988) critique of full employment showed "the pressing need...for a shortening of the work week....more equitable distribution of the workload" (p. 198). By focusing on becoming self-sufficient economically, individuals, families and other groups (such as business cooperatives) are able to reduce the stress of discontinuity.

Because occupations are in a state of flux, changing personal relationships with money was, for some respondents, both the method and the end result of taking a simpler approach to lifestyle. Following the frugality approach, some respondents were able to achieve goals, reduce debt, and become self-sufficient. Building a sense of security is easier when one's definition of self is not dependent upon acquiring status symbols and many material possessions (Bender, 1989; Durning, 1992; Elgin, 1981; Levering & Urbanska, 1992).

Even if hypothetically they earned more money, VSQ respondents didn't anticipate changes in lifestyle. Rather, they would contribute more to worthy causes and also spend their time volunteering. Respondents to VSQ also articulated many benefits of simpler living which can be considered economic or financial.

VSQ--2: An In-Depth Discussion by Adherents of Simpler Living

From the sample of 14 respondents who received the VSQ--2, a total of eight questionnaires was returned. Examining information from both the VSQ and the VSQ--2 for each of the eight respondents, the following vignettes were written to show how each person developed a unique yet connected expression of a simpler life pattern. Taken together, the vignettes present a more human view of the larger sample. The story has several emerging themes which further elaborate

the components of the Model of Factors Influencing Voluntary Simplicity.

Vignette 1

Simplifier #1 was a married female, 56 years of age with an advanced degree. Living in Greensboro, NC, she was an educational consultant/teacher trainer in the field of health education (also a realtor). She was engaged in a process of editing her life's script. Relinquishing a lifestyle typical of her family of origin, where primary focus was placed on habits of conspicuous consumption, she had evolved to living out a conscientious concern for global ecological limits. With a score of 98, (out of a possible 110), Simplifier #1 ranked higher than any other subject on a composite of 22 behaviors related to voluntary simplicity. On the five level Likert-type scale, a total of 14 of the 22 behaviors, trends or tendencies were always practiced. Another six were usually, one was frequently and one never practiced. In answering VSQ--2, Simplifier #1 described her lifestyle change as a "process that I am still involved with--my lifestyle has essentially been the same always--what has changed is my awareness, thinking, attitude, and relationships."

Perhaps her professional health education training caused "population pressure on the planet" to be her number one concern in the decision to adopt a simpler lifestyle. More aware than the average person of the ecological

ramifications of population growth, she worried about the future "environmental disaster--world population will double to 11 billion in 39 years--finite planet with finite resources--disappearance of rain forests, species extinctions--mass migration of 3rd World to the 1st World--wars over water, land, resources." Responding to that worry by becoming ecologically mindful she was "obsessed with reducing, reusing, recycling especially when I think that in Madagascar--they do not even have a word for "garbage!!" A tone of despair sounded in her enumeration of obstacles:

Caring too much--being only one person!! Public awareness is lacking, as is media attention--lack of U.S. population policy for our country and lack of sufficient foreign aid to UNFPA [United Nations Fund for Population Activities] and IPPF [International Planned Parenthood Federation], etc.--could write a book on this one.

Due perhaps to her involvement in the Couple's Club, which had been meeting for a year and a half at the time of the study, she had transformed her relationship with money. The group had "validated me and what I'm doing--a support group." Important as the group had been to her for over a year, she anticipated change: "My favorite couple is moving out-of-town and the group appears to be dissolving."

Consciousness-raising experiences included the LifeStyle Simplification Lab, group discussions, and studying an audio tape series about money by Joe Dominguez. She further described the process of adopting a simpler lifestyle by

creating a time-line: "20 years ago=>healthy pure foods; 5 years ago=>recycling; less consumption of energy (heating/cooling in home, more walking); 1 1/2 years ago--changed relationship with money." In regard to money, she began to regard money more as a tool for achieving a life purpose rather than the goal of life. Although she gave no details, she indicated that her economic practices had altered dramatically. Specifically, she contrasted her practices with those of her family having

reject[ed] my parents' value system regarding money--all that I was taught as a child -> equating success with money and caring about social status; it goes much deeper--being free from this mentally and emotionally.

Simplifier #1's family of origin held political views that leaned toward the right; whereas hers leaned toward the left. They were affiliated with the Methodist Church, and were the only family of origin in the study who were classed as "high" income. Her father was a corporate executive and her mother a homemaker. She noted that her family practiced frugality. However that practice is placed in a different perspective by the statement simplifier #1 made on VSQ--2 regarding level of family support of a voluntarily simpler lifestyle,

Parents (sister, too) are totally into consumerism--buying the most expensive things, country club living,--they live the affluent consumer life and promote it as money is no obstacle for them and their awareness level and frame of reference does not include 'simplicity". Their value system and mine are the opposite. My whole family of origin is this way!

Living in a simpler pattern, she saw herself gaining "inner peace and freedom--it has been a very hard struggle for many years." Specifically she was "trying to meditate more; trying to live in the present moment and not live in the future."

Relating her religious or spiritual beliefs to voluntarily simpler living she stated,

Spiritually, we are one with the Earth and in order to protect her and live in harmony with nature each person must live in such a way as to do the least amount of harm possible and to promote the concept of simple living.

Simplifier #1 was unaffiliated with a religious/spiritual body, although she mentioned that she was formerly Episcopalian.

Being in a new relationship with money, financial matters remained very private issues for Simplifier #1; she left blank most items about income, household income, and investment strategies practiced. She did answer that her income is not lower because of her decision to embrace some features of voluntary simplicity; in fact earnings were "possibly higher-->spend less and save more!!" Aspirations for travel and having more free time could be realized if she had more money. Yet, Simplifier #1 was motivated to continue in the direction of voluntary simplicity relishing, "the sheer joy of being off the consumer tread-mill-->(bigger house etc.) and being in tune with myself, my daily life, my

relationships with other people and with the Earth." She found her life increasingly unencumbered as she dealt with mental, emotional and physical clutter.

Asked to envision the ideal outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement she focused on the mutuality of global and personal environmental concerns,

Ideally--on all levels--internationally, nationally, locally and personally--people would become aware and understand fully the implications of overconsumption and overpopulation. People everywhere would begin to talk about these problems and understand and express their concerns. When public awareness reaches "critical mass" the tide will begin to turn away from overconsumption and toward sustainability. Each of us must reduce our individual impact on the environment. We must reach a point where our collective demand does not exceed the biosphere's ability to provide. Recycling and energy and resource conservation must be embraced by all and become universal ethics. We must each leave a smaller footprint.

The Model of Factors Influencing Voluntary Simplicity is supported by Simplifier #1's lifestyle. She clearly indicated she had shifted life patterns in relationship to all three components of the model. Ecological concern was her chief motivation, but that fit within her spiritual definition and vision for her own reduction in consumption. Economic patterns changed drastically from those practiced within her family of origin as did emphasis on status and appearance. She did not reveal many details of her financial life, but indicated that her debt load was "OK"; she sensed an increase in income although actual earnings had not

changed. Ethical concerns focused on living within the framework of accountability within a global scheme of fairness. She had had no overseas experiences but grasped the nature of the population problem and faulted the U.S. policy making system for failing to take proper steps nationally and internationally. Although crisis was not an influencing factor in lifestyle simplification, membership in a support group had been very important--as had the instruction provided by the LifeStyle Simplification Lab.

Vignette 2

Simplifier #2, a divorced male, 55 years of age, with some college education lived in Greensboro, NC, and classified his level of simplification as substantial. His austere lifestyle was chosen after a severe personal financial crisis coupled with a spiritual awakening that led him toward ecological mindfulness and unselfishness. He listed current occupation as "a soccer referee--for fun, income, and flexibility"; whereas previously he was an "investor, real estate and insurance sales (and soccer referee for fun)." Current personal income was under \$10,000, the lowest income choice on the questionnaire. On VSQ--2, he contrasted his past and current income and lifestyle. As a wheeler dealer, investor, and consumer, his main points of enjoyment were eating and traveling.

I ran a continuous race between time and rising costs, increasing losses, etc. and income. The bulk of my

time, energy, and focus was spent on pursuing more money and investments, taking care of my investments and client investments, eating and shopping, and traveling. If I stopped to write or enjoy something, everything else suffered. Today I do only what I'm lead to do, and the income for my meager needs is easy to come by--with no stress. Before I was making over 100,000 annually and I didn't have anything to give away. Now I make 3-5000 annually, give 15-20% to my church, and spend almost all the rest on helping others.

Altogether, he seemed grateful for the new insights and peacefulness of accepting spiritual direction in his life. He considered his financial reversal as positive.

The gift of my crisis allowed me the opportunity to spend time and energy doing the things that had significance for me, and others. I don't know how long it would have taken me to simplify my life without the crisis, but I would have missed out on some truly meaningful events in my life if I was still consuming the way that I was before the crisis.

In describing the level of support received from family members in relationship to a simpler lifestyle, Simplifier #2 wrote about the reaction of his wife and children to the financial crisis.

My change in lifestyle so completely bewildered her that we couldn't sustain our relationship. As it was happening, I couldn't communicate accurately because I didn't even have the words. Very painful part of my journey. My children were bewildered (and still are to some degree). I taught my children to consume and to see consumption as synonymous with success (my prior definition for a meaningful life). Now they see me frequently as a failure since I'm not consuming. My older son has come around some.

Within his family of origin, political views leaned toward the right; his leaned toward the left. His family were Catholic; Simplifier #2 was Quaker. He classified his family as middle income with his mother working as a waitress. His fathers' occupations varied because "mother remarried several times." Practices in the family related to voluntary simplicity included Frugality and Religious Commitment. These two practices plus Charitable Giving, Ecological Mindfulness, and Volunteerism characterized Simplifier #2's current lifestyle. Scoring 97 on the composite of behaviors relating to voluntary simplicity, Simplifier #2 always practiced 13 of the 22 behaviors. He usually practiced six, frequently engaged in two and occasionally did one of the listed behaviors.

Spiritual searching had replaced material consumption as his life's motivation. Writing about the relationship of his religious or spiritual beliefs to voluntarily simpler living, he claimed,

They are my life blood. Without being able to turn my life over to my greater power, I don't think I could live simply. The demands of the glittering world are both subtle and gross, and as a result have very strong pulls.

Because his financial world had become so restricted, economic skills and strategies focused on purchasing wisely and getting along without.

If I spend less, I don't have to make as much. Evaluate each purchase in light of my leading and the effect it will have on my life. I buy what I absolutely need, and then only after I'm led to do so. I have no investments or debt.

1. In decision making, I respond now to an inner leading, where before I made expedient or power oriented decisions.

2. Today I try to stay in the present where before I was striving for something in the future or in my past.

3. I'm now more oriented toward my community (church, friends and family) where before I was pretty self-centered.

Predicting a long term outcome, he envisioned stronger relationships, "I see a deepening and lasting relationship with my community that mutually supports (my) responding to (my) inner direction. I also see an increase in the joy in my life".

His obstacles "forgetfulness--due primarily to my diet and busy-ness" were repeated three times on VSQ--2 and figured in his goal statement. Goals focused on service and on providing his basic needs--housing, transportation, and companionship.

Next year: I'd like to find a more responsible way to use resources (the resources of the planet). Continue to live simply and respond even more appropriately and effectively. I'd like to arrange housing and transportation so that they support me more effectively. To work on my forgetfulness.

In 5 years: To more effectively channel the meaning of the creation into my activities and become even less forgetful. There is also a part of me that would like to have a small place with a garden, near where I can serve effectively.

In 10 years: I hope that by ten years I can overcome a lot of my forgetfulness and be in an empowered position to help wherever I'm led. Hopefully, I will have found

a way to maintain a deep relationship with a companion that will support my journey, and I hers.

Motivated to continue in the direction of voluntary simplicity by its meaningfulness he recognized as his greatest challenge, "not allowing [lack of] a car and possibly a permanent dwelling to interfere with my serving. Not having a set telephone where people can reach me." In an ideal situation what would you envision as the outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement?

1. That recreation and meaningfulness be described in terms of helping others and this earth.
2. That consumption of anything be viewed as it impacts the limited resources of this planet and the long term commitment that purchasing has on the purchaser or owner.
3. That ownership become secondary to enjoyment.
4. That taking care of others (and myself) be of more importance than taking care of my things.
5. That there be a direct and absolute relationship between an increase in income and an increase in my ability to serve others with less.

The model appears to be supported by Simplifier #2's journey, although, he has yet to achieve sustainability. Financial crisis accompanied by a profound spiritual shift caused his extremely frugal approach to money matters.

Vignette 3

Simplifier #3 was 59 years of age, married with an advanced degree. A college professor and engineer, living in Raleigh, NC, he had chosen a life of service rather than seeking research dollars and publications. Therefore, he

stated that income was lowered by his decision to embrace voluntary simplicity. Personal annual income was \$57,000-\$66,999, similar to household income \$62,000-\$70,000 that supported two people.

Coming from a family of origin whose political leanings tended toward the right, his own tended toward the left. Family religious affiliation was protestant, evangelical United Methodist, and his remained United Methodist. His father was a pastor, builder, and businessman. His mother was a public school teacher, preacher, and businesswoman. The family's income level was lower middle. Their attributes related to voluntary simplicity included Frugality, Religious Commitment, and Charitable Giving. Simplifier 3's own lifestyle encompassed the technological sophistication of engineering with an equally passionate call to service rooted in religious teachings.

Simplifier #3 adopted a simpler lifestyle twenty years ago. Using appropriate technology to benefit others was a response to his "call to live before a higher calling--use my life more for all of God's world and therefore not expect to have so many trappings of my 'own'."

Traveling with United Methodist Volunteer-In-Mission work teams to Jamaica, Haiti, South Carolina and Alabama, he also carried out a village consultation in Muliwada, India on behalf of the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). Reading Small is Beautiful (Schumacher, 1973) and "Pilgrimages of

Reverse Mission" by Ministry of Money, Gaithersburg, MD as well as the work of the Southern Institute for Appropriate Technology (SIFAT) Lineville, AL, linked with the mission trips as consciousness-raising experiences which clarified the need for voluntary simplicity. Subsequent to these experiences, his behavior changed "especially after the Mideast oil crisis of the early 70's".

Automobiles symbolized, for Simplifier #3, the contrast between living according to his beliefs vs. entanglement with elegance. Selecting "Incongruence between values and lifestyle", "Increase consistency with religious teachings", and "Inequitable distribution of resources" as chief concerns, his "reminding [him]self daily of [his] decision" to drive 3-10 year old cars kept lifestyle congruent with values. Long term outcome of his behavior was to "see more clearly how inequitably goods and services are distributed and encourage others to do likewise." He had given away two cars and two trucks to the needy and volunteered many nights at a homeless shelter.

Striving to live intentionally he is "no longer satisfied to have 2nd, 3rd, or 4th knowledge of my religious heritage. I want to know the history of my heritage." Ultimately, Simplifier #3 wished to "engage others of similar background in the prospect of better concern for the poor." Among his obstacles is the observation, "Many current religious leaders are satisfied to be 'sucked' into opulent

living at others' expense without any apparent pain of conscience. This tends to anger me."

Finding the most beneficial outcome of living more simply as being jealous of others less often, his greatest challenge nevertheless was "to be satisfied with the cars I currently have."

Scoring 91 on the composite of behaviors relating to voluntary simplicity, Simplifier #3 indicated that he always practiced six of the 22 items. Moreover, he usually engaged in 13 of the stated behaviors and frequently engaged in three of them. He added notes clarifying two items. Expanding upon item #22 about creativity: "Many activities related to simpler living require more rather than less creative work. Dishwashing for example. The key is learning how to grow and learn during this kind of obedient work." He also further clarified item #33 about appropriate technologies, "Complex and resource wasteful do not always go together. Example, pulsed gas furnace with 95% efficiency compared to 60%-80% otherwise."

Specifying his level of simplification as moderate, Simplifier #3 described his lifestyle prior to adoption of Voluntary Simplicity.

I was scrambling for new earning opportunities; looking forward to hobbies like restoring a classic auto; looking forward to owning a boat and a house at the beach--all this nevertheless in context of caring for my family well and rearing fine children.

He began simpler living, "little by little--after several courses taught by ICA on Foundations of Religion; Family & Community; World Dynamics, etc., and looking at basic questions of ethics growing out of that." Crisis and membership in a group promoting simpler living were not mentioned as motivating factors in Simplifier #3's adoption of simpler living. However his motivation to continue with VS was found in "the sure knowledge that many of my heroes (Mother Theresa, John Wesley and Jacob Schiere) found satisfaction."

His family's support of the lifestyle varied. His wife was "willing intellectually but not quite as willing to put legs to her claims of commitment." Among the children: "One is trying; two have not caught much of a vision". He also had "one sister trying to live simpler (selling house with swimming pool)--two sisters not trying much."

Simplifier #3 enumerated personal/family economic strategies which changed as a result of voluntary simplicity. He used a computer to track "a larger fraction of total money outflow"; he invested in "pre-tax payroll deductions, conservative stock purchases, and credit union financing of debt." Purchasing patterns had changed in that he "follows sales less. I go out to get what's needed more than what's available on sale."

Like nearly all of the subjects in this study his obstacles to living simply included "always [being] told by

my peers and society's signals that I 'should have better and more' things." His goals for the future in living more simply were: next year to be "holding our own and not getting more--beginning to have fewer clothes and using what I have for others too. Within five years he hoped to have "much less entanglement with elegance" and in 10 years to be "serving the poor much of the time." He summarized his vision for the outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement thus: "The more wealthy--from yuppies to Donald Trump would come to feel embarrassment about controlling so much that is used so little by so few."

This person maintained responsibility for his own actions. Acknowledging his religious inspirations, he put his technological know-how into creative and obedient service. He had grasped a vision of sharing so as to increase equity with poor people in the U.S. and elsewhere. Fitting into the model with almost equal attention to each of the three components, he also seemed to focus most heavily on ethical commitment, working to convince others with affluent lifestyles to identify with and serve oppressed persons. This simplifier also acknowledged his obstacles and the varying levels of support offered by his family members.

Vignette 4

Simplifier #4 was 57 years old, female, a widow, with an advanced degree, whose current occupation was marketing and sales of Shaklee Corporation products. Formerly a teacher,

being her own boss and expressing her increasing concern for ecological issues attracted her to Shaklee. She lived in Greensboro, NC. Earning \$16,000-\$20,999 per year, her income had not changed in spite of her shift in occupation.

I used to teach elementary math. I now teach about preventative health and healthy environment. I used to give my time and energy toward Women's Club activities which were useful for other purposes in our community--I now have an "adopted" highway and speak to civic groups on "reduce, reuse, recycle." My giving of words, deeds, money has evolved to lifestyle changes for our earth.

Although she had not traveled overseas, she nevertheless felt a kinship with other cultures and the natural world derived from watching TV programs and reading National Geographic magazine. Volunteering as an environmental education speaker for the Guilford Environmental Coalition's Education Committee, Simplifier #4 had been "the major promoter of the Guilford Environmental Directory (which Peggy Whalen-Levitt compiled) out in the schools and community." The education committee was very important as her source of focus and enrichment of ideas about voluntary simplicity. Her hope for the long term was that "educational sharing helps others begin to evolve along the same path--more people making lifestyle changes will benefit the future." Unfortunately she had encountered obstacles in delivering her ecological message, "People are not open to change. They must be loved where they are and encouraged to make gradual changes."

Scoring 90 on the composite of voluntary simplicity behaviors, Simplifier #4 selected seven items as always practiced. Moreover, 10 behaviors were usually and five behaviors frequently practiced.

Simplifier #4 was reared in a family whose political leanings tended toward the right; her present political leaning also was toward the right. The family's religious affiliation was Baptist, whereas her own was Presbyterian. Simplifier #4 rated her family as middle class. Her mother's occupation was homemaker; her father sold and repaired adding machines. Habits of frugality, within her family of origin, led Simplifier #4 to adopt and practice voluntary simplicity. Her childhood experiences encompassed "farming, animals, and nature that [she] felt more comfortable for health and happiness. I didn't see 'things' accumulation as all positive." She also was more likely, than her family of origin, to engage in Charitable Giving, Ecological Mindfulness and Volunteerism.

Support for lifestyle simplification was found in her religious or spiritual beliefs. "I believe we are stewards (not controllers) of this earth. It is not ours to destroy but to use wisely with future generations' needs as a major focus in how we choose to use it now." Level of family support was assessed in terms of the recycling habits of her children and other relatives. Although they lived out of state, they were beginning to operate within an increasing

ecological awareness. Her greatest challenge was "making further steps to enhance my beliefs. My children making more efforts for their children's earth lifestyle."

Indicating that her level of simplification was substantial, Simplifier #4 had integrated her purchasing patterns into a framework of loyalty to her business franchise which linked into her knowledge about and concern for ecological problems. When investing, she felt that "Cost is no longer the major factor, but comes after health and environmental concerns." She developed new habits of reducing the amount purchased--buying for quality and environmental considerations; reusing items for an extended period, and finally composting or recycling. As an example, she contrasted her previous habit of placing 50 gallons of "garbage" at the curb for twice-a-week collection with her more recent practice of setting out her garbage can every four months.

Voluntary simplicity means taking steps on my own toward a simpler lifestyle that takes into account my effect on the earth and people around me. My goal is to start a new habit that benefits positively my environment so I help create a better balance with nature and yet I am comfortable, clean, healthy, and happy. As that habit becomes mine and has a positive effect I then look for another step to take.

Specific goals for VS focused on "achieving career success by helping others learn more about healthy lifestyle changes." Focusing on goals beyond her own lifestyle,

Simplifier #4 predicted that increasingly over the next 10 years: (a) Greensboro's curbside recycling program would lead more people to reduce the amount of their consumption so collections could become less frequent and less costly. (b) watershed protection would become "fashionable" and effective, (c) people would begin showing concern for other people and the earth, and (d) she, personally, would become more informed. Envisioning the ideal outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement, Simplifier #4 hoped for "a healthier, happier population with everyone doing their part and receiving their share of the benefits of a healthier environment."

In summary, Simplifier #4 had worked diligently to establish a network of environmentally aware individuals who are also potential customers.

Simplifier #4's approach to a simpler lifestyle was to embrace wholeheartedly the ecological component of the model. She, like many entrepreneurs, had set out to capture an economic benefit from the ecological concern. Furthermore, she had staked her economic future on a company whose philosophical base was ecologically "protective" products distributed within a home-sales marketing structure. Simplifier #4 therefore, had ethical as well as economic reasons for educating the public about ecological issues: (a) she believed in the need for changed living habits to ensure ecological preservation; (b) she sold products which

she believed answered ecological concerns; (c) she wanted to build a successful business venture. With increased income, she would help others, travel to visit family, and contribute where she saw a need.

Vignette 5

Simplifier #5 was 56 years of age, female, married, with some postgraduate education. She lived in Bloomfield, CT. Two threads were interwoven in every aspect of her responses to the questionnaires: (a) occupational change to embrace VS with spiritual, cultural dimensions and (b) concern with financial security. Formerly working as a registered nurse in a "highly specialized acute care setting, with subsequent HIGH levels of stress," she had "participate[d] financially in supporting the college level education of our three children." Since becoming self-employed, as a spiritual director/retreat leader/folk artist, meant relinquishment of income, she wished "to be instrumental in persons taking responsibility for their own practice of lifestyle resulting in wellness not disease." Her current income had dropped to under \$10,000. With her husband's earnings, total household income was \$41,000-\$50,000 annually. Her chief concern had been to support her spouse's vocational goals; he planned to retire in November 1992 at age 58. Desiring to increase his volunteer activity, he had ceased commuting between two households; whereas "for 7 years, he was home only on days off." The 76% drop in family income, due to early

retirement, was another source of financial concern. But, she wanted to ensure "survival of the marriage covenant." Anticipating the sale of their second home by October 1993, she predicted satisfaction with their reduced debt-load: "the home we will live in...is paid for--one car family--it's paid for--all college expenses are paid." Although financial concerns created anxiety, the simpler lifestyle was embraced to allow greater self-expression and to help others through educational, preventive services.

The occupational change was a realization of a dream initiated in her early childhood years. Simplifier #5 had grown up in a family whose political leanings tended toward the right; her own views were toward the left. The family had been Christian Scientist and Episcopalian; she was affiliated with the United Methodist Church. Her mother had been a homemaker and her father a banker with an income level she characterized as lower middle. Practices related to voluntary simplicity in her family of origin were identical to her own practices. She checked all phrases that appeared in the item: Frugality, Religious Commitment, Charitable Giving, Ecological Mindfulness, and Volunteerism. Indicating a history of consciousness-raising, she had made progressive behavior changes toward simpler living.

As a very young child (2 years+) in taking walks with my Dad as a form of family entertainment and working in our family "victory" garden as a child in WWII. The great fun I have had as an adult, in the past 25 years in my

association with friends/colleagues involved in celebrations of human development as practiced in ICA. In the past 10 years I've been eating less and less meat--this is a change from my childhood when the meat we could most afford was hamburger in a zillion forms.

The dream was nurtured by several overseas experiences which contributed to her adoption of simpler living: Nam Wai (New Territories: China) Human Development Consultation; Nairobi, Kenya--World Council of Churches 1975; Mexico, 1988--ICA Global Conference; Czechoslovakia 1992--ICA Global Conference; and Berlin, W. Germany--Health Caretakers Trek. She credited involvement in Ecumenical Institute/Institute of Cultural Affairs as the beginning of her effort to simplify living, "I found fun, challenge, and colleagues in simplifying my diet, increasing my pro bono work." Her reasons for the change, "I enjoy a challenge. I believe it to be necessary for my own wellness, the wellness of my family and the survival of our planet." Belonging to the Institute of Cultural Affairs has meant a great deal to Simplifier #5, "a way of life for me." The members characteristically were willing "to embody what they espouse." The group challenged her "to continue to make necessary changes in my lifestyle" such that at the time of the survey she placed her level of simplification at moderate. Perhaps she is modest that their financial adjustments were not yet assimilated. They were also

currently responsible for her elderly mother with potential for extended care in a nursing facility.

Attracted to the LifeStyle Simplification Lab because of its inclusion in an ICA retreat, she wrote, "I have long been interested in the human development work of ICA, know the Stovers personally, and wanted to be part of the testing/refining of LSL." Making changes in response to the lab she had also committed herself to co-lead the Lab in September 1993 in Madison, CT. She anticipated the ideal outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement as "a healthy planet, healthy cities, more and more people articulating the values to themselves personally."

Simplifier #5 scored 88 on the composite of behaviors on VSQ. She had always practiced eight of the behaviors, usually practiced six of them, and frequently practiced eight of the trends/tendencies on the list of 22 items. Furthermore, she wrote additional notes for two items, #18 re: using consumption politically "I am attempting to become more educated in this arena. When I shifted my IRA, I chose the Calvert Socially Responsible Investment fund and have been pleased with their research" and #25: alter male/female roles,

I believe sexism is so ingrained in culture that there are many ways in which I am still in denial/unaware of its existence. As my awareness increases, I am attempting to make personal changes. This is a slow process, and I believe for me, a life-long task.

Sustaining a severe personal/emotional crisis in 1956, she journeyed toward a simpler lifestyle because "it caused me to examine my own beliefs and to re-prioritize every aspect of my life." Lasting many years and affecting "all dimensions of family life," the immediate effect was "lack of trust both in self/others." Responding to the crisis through individual/family therapy, support groups, and individual coping skills, her lifestyle helped alleviate the effects of the crisis.

I have learned the importance of paying attention to what I can control and take responsibility for; I have learned to identify my own needs. My lifestyle has made it possible to be with others who support me spiritually, emotionally, intellectually.

To Simplifier #5, voluntary simplicity meant:

In the midst of many options, I choose to delete or add dimension to my present situation which result in re-prioritizing in response to current, available data of which I am conscious. For me, this process is on-going and I seek to increase my awareness through contemplation, meditation and prayer.

Her spiritual and religious beliefs relate to simpler living through "sharing resources, stewardship of the planet, celebration of our given situation, and challenge to alleviate suffering." She listed short-range and long-range goals in relationship to VSL:

Next year: Financially independent, living within the constraints of our retirement pension; increasing both

blocks of time of engagement and blocks of solitary time.

In 5 years: Financially comfortable as a result of assessing/reinvesting 401K savings; continuing to be involved with others creating retreats/consulting re-voluntary simplicity.

In 10 years: Thriving on a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity others may be attracted to; Developing property/housing to sustain a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity for elders.

To summarize, Simplifier #5's life was one of simplicity and service. In the midst of transitional concerns related to major career shifts by both marriage partners, her philosophical and practical base was rooted in all three components of the model. Ethically, she had experienced life within the structure of ICA and religious teachings which heightened her resolve to live simply. Economically, she and her husband had taken care of previous life commitments to children and wished to support themselves on a minimal income by reducing expenditures. Ecological concerns were her prime motivation for centering on health issues encompassing mental, spiritual matters. Simplifier #5 seemed to have a realistic grasp on societal problems, as well as experience in coping successfully with her own personal crisis. The researcher would place her in the center of the VS model.

Vignette 6

Simplifier #6 at age 31, was the youngest in the case study group. A college graduate, she was married and self-employed as a music teacher in Greensboro, NC. Her personal income was under \$10,000, whereas total household income, of

\$10,000-\$20,000, was supporting three persons. Specifying her child's birth in 1990, as the consciousness-raising event that led to her simpler lifestyle, she had nevertheless practiced frugality throughout adulthood. Therefore, she placed her level of simplification as substantial, painting a picture of long-time adherence to that lifestyle.

As an adult (i.e., after college) my life has, by necessity, been simple. My childhood home and lifestyle were fairly typical of the middle class of the 60's and 70's. I grew up with many so called luxuries and [was] never really lacking in material goods. In college, I was financially on my own. I put myself through school by scholarships and work-study. Since I needed to stretch my \$ as far as possible, I became frugal by necessity. At that time, I also switched to a vegetarian diet. I did not own a car until age 23 and have often missed the freedom of biking and walking everywhere. After college, I earned so little money, that I was on food stamps for a year. My income has always been marginal so I lived simply by matter of my circumstances. In the past three to 4 years, however our income has begun to increase, we have had to begin to assess our goals and directions. We (my husband and I) prefer our time to increased income. Our future planning is based upon the fact that we enjoy our simple life even if we "fell" into it by accident.

The meaning of voluntary simplicity, for Simplifier #6 included:

Fixing broken things before buying something new-- recognizing when enough is plenty (i.e., how many shoes, objects, etc.); putting people and time before the pursuit of money; eating as low on the food chain as possible; consuming as little of the planet's resources as possible.

Her family of origin was politically moderate; her father's views tended toward the right and her mother's

toward the left. Simplifier #6's own political leanings were toward the left--with emphasis added, "very". Her father was a computer programmer for General Electric; her mother was a homemaker until divorce, when she became a clerical worker. Family religious affiliation had been Catholic; whereas Simplifier #6 had no affiliation with a religious organization, but linked voluntary simplicity to her growing spirituality.

Simpler living has helped to develop my spiritual side. I rejected my childhood faith (and still do) and considered myself atheist for many years. Simple living and childbirth have changed that.

Becoming more conscious of her decision making process, Simplifier #6 examined her "decisions--both big and small, personal and business. I am more willing to say no to those things that do not fit my goals spiritually and emotionally." Hoping to "make some positive changes on the planet; a step closer to 'oneness' in the next phase of existence," she acknowledged obstacles in "a tug to be an individual--to have 'things'--to be selfish; society doesn't understand or support non-consumer lifestyles." As she endeavored to lead a life of honesty and integrity she also worked toward becoming economically self-sufficient. Reducing debt, being able to pay cash for purchases, and having lots of time were chief goals. Next year, she planned "to pay off two more loans (student and piano)." In five years, she anticipated

"seeing progress to being debt free and fulfilling some of our goals." Eventually, within 10 years, "to be totally debt free." Strategies to accomplish the goals included: increasing skill in bookkeeping and building up personal savings in CD's and accounts. Frugality characterized her patterns of purchasing since adopting a simpler lifestyle: "buy less; buy food in bulk; grow as much of our own food as possible; barter."

Simplifier #6's responses on the behavior section of VSQ netted a composite score of 84. Eight of the listed trends, tendencies, or behaviors were always practiced; six were usually practiced; four were frequently practiced; two occasionally, and one never practiced. She added the phrase "I wish" by two statements describing behavior: "Prefer smaller scale, more human-sized living and working environments that foster a sense of community, face-to-face contact, and mutual caring" and "Change the pattern of transportation i.e., take public transit, participate in a car pool, drive smaller cars, live closer to work, ride a bike, or walk."

Both her spouse and other family members were very supportive of her practice of voluntary simplicity. Her husband "agrees completely in thought and philosophy. However, he is tugged more by commercialism and struggles with not buying new things." Parents and other relatives

were "very supportive even if they don't quite understand why we make some of the choices we do."

Neither crisis, nor belonging to a group has been influential in Simplifier #6's adoption and practice of a simpler life pattern. Motivation to continue in the voluntary simplicity lifestyle centered in her delight in having "time-time-time!" leading to more closeness within the family. Also, she "desire[d] to be a part of the solution to planetary well-being and not part of the problem." Given an ideal situation, she anticipated the outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement as,

Zero or negative population growth; reduced consumption of all resources, especially non-renewable; no wars; more equitable distribution of resources; time for family, friends, and volunteer projects; better care of the planet--i.e., organic growing practices.

To summarize, Simplifier #6's life seems to have integrated well the three components of the model. Ethical emphasis is present in her seeking of meaning in life and time to nourish human relationships. Economic focus is brought into her aims for self-sufficiency. Ecological mindfulness centered on desire to be part of planetary solutions, to use fewer resources, to eat lower on the food chain, and to reduce driving. This family seems secure in their life model and willing to sacrifice owning things now for the time to enjoy their family life.

Vignette 7

Simplifier #7 was female, 63 years of age, married, a college graduate, and living in Washington, DC. Making a number of transitions throughout her life, Simplifier #7 continually increased her understanding of the need for and practice of a simpler life, particularly since affiliating with the Order Ecumenical of ICA in 1970-71. Current occupation was preschool director; whereas she had been a facilitator/fund raiser. Personal annual income, at \$21,000-\$25,999, was the same as household income and supported two persons. Anticipating another of life's transitions within five years, she hoped "that at retirement, I won't have wished to have done it differently! I want to be about life now!" Goals during retirement included:

More freedom of time but still work. I would like to live in community again--besides the cost and energy efficiency, I like the mental and spiritual stimulation. I would also like a corporate vegetable garden opportunity.

Describing her lifestyle prior to simplification, Simplifier #7 wrote that she had always lived simply.

I don't know if there was "prior to". I grew up on the farm in the Depression. My father was a true steward of the land. After I married and we had children, we continued, partly out of necessity, to live simply. However, when we were transferred and provided a large ranch style home with a large yard in the suburbs there were more "demands" or expectations to keep up with the neighbors. I felt this especially with children's clothes, dance lessons, home decor, etc.

Following participation in a "seminar in which I realized that my own care for my family was not enough," she was "challenged by a movement to make a difference in the world." She further described her early change toward simpler living.

The shift from the "ranch" home to "two suitcases" was the challenge to work corporately with other concerned people about the future--how could we work together for a higher quality of life and not spend our time earning and consuming. We sold and gave away and moved to.. Chicago to be a part of the community, The Order Ecumenical.

To Simplifier #7, voluntary simplicity meant

spending less time and energy getting and spending and more time and energy on bigger concerns--welfare for all, community development, education, study, research and working together. It means being occupied with and for people rather than things.

Her adoption/practice of voluntary simplicity was influenced by the experience of living in several foreign cultures including Japan, Hong Kong, Liberia, and Korea. Family members, including her spouse and adult children, have been very supportive of a simpler lifestyle. Her parents and other relatives "do not affect our style--except elderly mother-in[-law] gives generous gifts for our use which we also can give away."

Describing her family of origin as holding moderate political views; Simplifier #7 had political leanings toward the left. Her family had been affiliated with the Reformed

Church of America which she noted as "rather fundamental" in contrast to her own affiliation with the United Methodist Church which she classed as "liberal". Her father had been a farmer; whereas her mother was "formerly a teacher but also a full-time mother." Family income level was classed as low during childhood and lower middle during her adolescence. Within her family of origin, practices related to voluntary simplicity were: Frugality, Religious Commitment, Charitable Giving, and Volunteerism. Her own practice remained the same with the additional practice of Ecological Mindfulness.

Desiring to contribute to worthwhile purposes, Simplifier #7 valued "the use of time--time for community concerns, for individuals, and that the way I earn my money is the way I want to use my time. I also like to use money for worthy causes." She cautioned against "getting caught up in the 'money' ethic--[when] more money earned or gotten is 'progress.'" Choosing "a simpler home style than colleagues--now we are not in a religious community, but we've chosen to live in a cooperative apartment building in the city." This freed time from obligatory home and yard maintenance chores. They also conserved resources in various ways.

Use of public bus rather than family car as much.
Smaller house size. Supporting legislation for change.
Home conservation of water--recycling of glass, aluminum and paper.

Lamenting wastefulness she wrote, "We have always been conscious of gas mileage but believe that, as long as gas is cheap, people will use their own cars." Simplifier #7 articulated ways in which her religious or spiritual beliefs relate to voluntarily simpler living. "I believe that we live simpler on behalf of others who have less than minimum needs and who do not have opportunities for quality of life." As she answered the VSQ--2, she indicated that no crisis, nor change in financial strategies had affected her practice of a simpler lifestyle. She did not answer some of the questions about debt-load satisfaction, motivation to continue in the direction of simplification, etc. Her vision of the outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement included:

Much more sharing together--in apartments, use of cars, shopping times, equipment such as vacuum sweepers. Work opportunities in humanities arts increased--decreased in manufacturing and consumption. Cooperation rather than competition as mode of operation.

Summarizing, Simplifier #7 seems to take an ethical approach nourished by years of experience within ICA settings which raised awareness of ecological issues. Economics seem less of a concern, with the anticipation of communal living during retirement. She did question comfort in elderly years, "How can one have adequate care without huge expenses?"

Vignette 8

Simplifier #8 was 57 years of age, female, married, with some postgraduate education. Living in Fairfax, VA, she was employed as a secretary, earning personal annual income of \$16,000-\$20,999 and household income of \$41,000-\$50,000, she wrote,

I recently shifted away from employment by a chemical company to employment by a minority college of nursing. This has little to do with "simplicity" and more to do with ethics and interest.

Responding that her income was lower because of her decision, she elaborated, "I decided not to be a legal secretary because of the wardrobe demands and money-grabbing climate." If she earned more income, she would "dress somewhat better. Repair our house. Retrofit the house with some heat/cold-conserving features. Travel to see family more often." She indicated that her anxiety about the future had increased because: "Cash income is reduced going from 'temp' job to the permanent job in the institution I wanted to be a part of. We still have debts from a business that didn't 'go' last year." She also wrote an extended note related to this answer:

Life would be considerably more simple and less complex if we lived in an apartment or condo, but we bought a house so we would have land to be with, care for, plant in. We have not yet unravelled the web of issues over time-energy-satisfaction: Church and church groups involvement, other groups, family relationships, friends, home cleaning and maintenance inside and

outside. Meal prep--whole grains, etc. take longer. Exercise for health. Where is simple recreation? We both work 40 hours and take extra hours daily to utilize public transport to our jobs. (We bought close to DC for this purpose).

Simplifier #8 retained the practice of Frugality, Religious Commitment, and Charitable Giving typical in her family of origin. In addition, she practiced Ecological Mindfulness and Volunteerism within her own voluntarily simpler lifestyle. Within her family of origin, political views tended toward the right; whereas her own tended toward the left. Her family were affiliated with Wisconsin Synod Lutheran; whereas Simplifier #8 was Unitarian Universalist. Her family's income level was low. Her father taught in a Lutheran school, her mother was a homemaker throughout her childhood, becoming a Lutheran school teacher when Simplifier #8 went to college.

Consciousness raising experiences of "living in a community with shared resources; living in rural Africa and Jamaica" led to behavior changes toward voluntary simplicity. Explaining the development of her simpler lifestyle, she described a major change which suggested a divorce.

1968--Husband, wife and 2 kids--moved 19,000 lbs. from house to house. New station wagon every two years, sailing canoe. 1969--Split household. I had over-stuffed 2 bedroom apartment.

Simplifier #8 began simpler living within the context of ICA,

join[ing] a "family" order--I and my two young children. Gradually shared furniture, etc., with corporate body, or otherwise disposed of many things; when assigned to Africa, took "two suitcases" and stored about 12 cubic yards.

Her reason for beginning living a simpler lifestyle was as "a spiritual discipline." On the VSQ--2, Simplifier #8 rated her present level of simplification as moderate and stated that, to her, voluntary simplicity meant

a social and moral responsibility. Not using more resources than necessary; modest house (and old); fuel-efficient car (Geo-Metro XFi); re-used furniture; recycling. Bonding with the earth and plants. Balanced work, play, relaxation, socialization, nutritious diet.

She described how her religious or spiritual beliefs relate to voluntarily simpler living.

I believe that I and all humans and animals and plants and the elements all live together within the Spirit of God. Therefore, all should have equal opportunity and respect. Waste and abuse are disrespectful. Excess use violates equal access by other beings.

Simplifier #8 scored 83 on the composite of 22 behaviors, eight were always practiced; six were usually practiced, two were frequently practiced, two were occasionally practiced, and two were never practiced. Explanations were added to #14: holidays "but we buy modest presents as acts of love"; #17: diet, "I eat (nearly always) whole grains, NO sugar, modest portions of meat, some legumes + fruits and vegetables", #20: co-op activities, "Used to be

in group housing, child care, mission", and #33: appropriate technologies, "But I DO use a computer, etc."

Numerous detailed descriptions of ways she is organizing her household--from decor, methods and products for cleaning, energy efficient light bulbs, composting of garbage and yard waste--all indicated a high level of ecological awareness and commitment. Unfortunately, financial worries, time constraints, and the stress of multiple allergies created concerns related to lack of family time and energy.

This aspect is still in crisis. Are trying a monthly major grocery shop to minimize shopping time. Am trying to eke out minutes at work and before leaving in A.M. Have started use of my holidays and vacation days and may sick days to de-junk and streamline the house. Discontinued some magazines.

My dream is to be able to work at my desk again, with no heaps and boxes of undone To-Do's; Eventually I want a hard-wood floor put in with area rugs to grace it, also more easily launderable drapes. Am working on my physical fitness and health to gain energy.

[Her obstacles]: Heaps of mail--hard to disregard enough of it. Decisions further involving us in the church (and other groups). I have multiple allergies, so SHOULD be cleaning often (and get rid of our 3-year old carpeting); Free-lance typing takes my available time at work, also necessary socializing with colleagues. House and yard require a LOT of time, but we want the relationship to land we care.

[We] take public transport to work, gas-conserving car; take toxics to designated receiving stations; composting to rebuild garden and lawn; use air and water filters in our home; select non-toxics for use in home and garden when possible; requested oak tree for our street side; support environmental groups.

Goals for the future included many projects for their home and for revitalizing her energy level. Within the next year she planned to have "dejunked; workable time design,

physical vitality; small garden plot; light bulbs changed over to special type." Within five years, she wanted "furniture of our choice in living room; learning, practicing Tai chi or Yoga and Shiatsu; meaningful food supply from garden; attic floor installed." Over the next 10 years, she wanted "carpet replaced with hardwood floors or the like; new streamlined heating system; outside walls insulated; lawn redone."

Attending the Lifestyle Simplification Lab because she was "part of the group that invited them [the Stovers]," Simplifier #8 was no longer a member of ICA because they do not have a local group. However, she credited her extended involvement in ICA with supporting her efforts to simplify. Family support of a voluntarily simpler lifestyle was forthcoming from her spouse and parents and/or other relatives, more than from her children. The children "do a few little things but don't really understand and have plenty [of] excuses. My daughter resents my life style during her childhood." The most beneficial outcome of living more simply was that "I am morally OK with myself. Probably [in] better physical and emotional health." Striving to master the challenges presented by lack of time and finances, Simplifier #8 was motivated to continue in the direction of voluntary simplicity.

Longing for relief, diminished sense of chaos
overwhelming, longing for having physical energy,

longing for an environment created by ourselves that produces inner peace.

Ultimately, Simplifier #8 would like to be one of the "'100 monkeys' that help turn the tide in society. Economics and pollution crises will also probably help to change society." In an ideal situation, she envisioned the outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement as: "People ecologically conscious. Clean air, water, land. A spiritually based society. Well-cared-for homes, gardens, communities. Eradication of the bases for crime."

Simplifier #8 has tried to live her life consciously within an ecological and ethical framework. Economic challenges and frustration with lack of energy, time and money erode her sense of fulfillment. Spiritual searching and attention to those aspects that diminish her sense of well-being are well documented by her responses to the questionnaires. She seems to be jumping from one component of the model to the next, juggling all three areas but not quite able to meld them into the central concept. Long time affiliation with the ICA, plus an equally committed spouse lends support for the voluntarily simpler lifestyle. Simplifier #8 seemed to be fully aware of the interrelatedness of all of life's many facets within the overarching theme of "a simpler lifestyle." She knew that living more simply, although not easy, would be a worthwhile and achievable outcome of her lifetime journey.

Discussion

Developing Voluntary Simplicity

The hypothetical simplifier was in her/his mid 50's, well educated, and exhibited long-term commitment toward creating equitable relationships with other people and the planet. Occupied in the field of education, this simplifier had at some time affiliated with a group of change activists such as the ICA or a religious mission. The simplifier is able to act independently but values group support as a form of reinforcement. The simplifier recognizes that the chosen lifestyle is outside the mainstream thought patterns of society. Adopting simpler living as much for the sake of others as for self, the simplifier is committed to life-long continuation in this pattern.

Although respondents were each striving toward a simpler lifestyle, there emerged no one definition, or specific goal, or a prescribed means for achieving it. Neither the LifeStyle Simplification Lab nor other sources of information about voluntary simplicity offered a recipe for implementing a simpler lifestyle. Rather, the Lab and similar programs raised questions which led to individual and family examination of life purpose and expenditure of life energy. There was some concern about longevity and health maintenance, current trends toward degradation in cities, and violence in society. Respondents realized that although ultimate decisions about life pattern, while solitary and

specific, generate a ripple effect. They appeared to have organized their lives in ways which, while still evolving, gave personal satisfaction and furthered larger goals. The three components of the model--ethical issues, ecological concerns, and economic considerations were in fact useful in explaining why they chose voluntary simplicity and how it was being carried out.

Investigation of the possible role of crisis in the eventual adoption of a simpler lifestyle was one of the original objectives of the study. Among the eight VSQ--2 respondents, crisis had played a major role for only two persons (Simplifiers #2 and #5). The crises described by these two respondents were severe and sustained and created major changes in lifestyle. Each of the two simplifiers used the crisis experience to move into a different relationship with at least one factor in the model.

Simplifier #2 experienced financial crisis that led to spiritually based reform of life pattern, "I lost almost everything...and chose to live more simply...to go a different route....began to listen to an inner calling."

Simplifier #5 faced a wrenching personal crisis "affecting all dimensions of family life...[resulting in] lack of trust in self and others." The eventual outcome was "to re-prioritize every aspect of my of my life."

In spite of the fact that only 2 of the 8 respondents to VSQ--2 identified and elaborated upon their experience with

crisis in their adoption of simpler lifestyles, it would appear that crisis is more of a factor than they indicated. For example, several persons referred to their marriages having ended, or being in other than first marriages. Job loss and similar transitions in life may have been influential in the development of simpler living although no longer primary considerations for the respondents.

Themes Emerging from the Voluntary Simplicity Story

Specific themes interwoven throughout the VSQ--2 narratives included, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) Connectedness with God, other people, and stewardship of the Earth;
- (b) Interdependence, with a focus on support and mutuality, inclusiveness rather than individualism,
- (c) Commitment to the beneficial aspects of a voluntarily simpler life and striving to help others; and
- (d) Struggle, or perseverance to continually redefine and practice a simpler lifestyle.

The following section enlarges upon the four themes tying conclusions back to the literature and excerpts from respondents' comments about their voluntary simplicity choices and experiences.

Connectedness

For purposes of discussion, the concept of connectedness focuses on mystical connection between God, other people, and stewardship of the Earth. A universal regard for spiritual

experience and mysticism is found among all religions as well as among native peoples worldwide. "A growing trust is developing among the contemplatives of all the living religions" (Yungblut, 1992, p. 10). Mystical experience contains a "built-in moral imperative based on love that is given and received" (p. 41).

The contemplative life of meditation and prayer opens persons to harmonious relationship as co-creators with God and nature. Marks (1989) explained,

We have evolved: our sense of identity; sense of self; relationship with nature; our bodies, and our masculine and feminine aspects; as well as our concept of spirituality or connection with a higher power, life force or God. (p. 30)

Persons led by spiritual experience into a moral mission are motivated to focus life energy toward their goal. Colby and Damon (1992) studied such individuals whom they characterized as moral leaders or exemplars.

Where there is perceived concordance between self and morality, there will follow direct and predictable links between judgement and conduct as well as great certainty in the action choices that result.

The general principle...applies generally in the course of normal human behavior and development. (pp. 304-305)

Respondents illustrated their journeys toward voluntarily simpler living with examples of connection. Whether or not spirituality was experienced within the

framework of an organized religious body, spiritual beliefs directed their actions and decisions.

Simplifier #1:

Spiritually we are one with the Earth and in order to protect and live in harmony with Nature, each person must live in such a way as to do the least amount of harm possible and to promote the concept of simple living.

Simplifier #2 said that his spiritual beliefs "are my life blood." He also desired a meaningful existence "in decision making, I respond to an inner leading."

Stewardship and concern for others who have less related to connectedness for three respondents:

Simplifier #4

I believe we are stewards (not controllers) of this earth. It is not ours to destroy but to use wisely, with future generations' needs as a major focus in how we choose to use it now."

Simplifier #5,

Sharing resources, stewardship of the planet; celebration of your given situation; [and] challenge to alleviate suffering....increase awareness through contemplation, meditation, and prayer.

Simplifier #7, "I believe we live simpler on behalf of others who have less than minimum needs and who do not have opportunities for quality of life."

Simplifier #8,

I believe that I and all humans and animals and plants and the elements all live together within the Spirit of God....all should have equal opportunity and respect....a spiritually-based society.

Although most of the respondents' spiritual beliefs led them toward simplicity, one felt that simpler living enhanced her spirituality. Simplifier #6

Simpler living has helped to develop my spiritual side. I rejected my childhood faith (and still do) and considered myself an atheist for many years. Simple living and childbirth have changed that....[I am] more willing to say no to those things that do not fit my goals spiritually and emotionally....step closer to "oneness" in the next phase of existence.

In his introduction to Elgin's (1981) Voluntary Simplicity, Ram Dass observed,

Many among a whole generation have turned within to the heart and have begun to move beyond intellectual alienation and despair to directly encounter the place where we all are connected, where we all are one. And from that place, many have felt drawn to life-styles in which their contact with their fellow human beings, with nature and with God could be renewed" (p. 17).

Connected to others and the Earth, the respondents had each developed personal missions. Simplifier #1 felt a concern for the population pressure on the planet;

caring too much, being only one person...we must reach a point where our collective demand does not exceed the biosphere's ability to provide.

Simplifier #2 stated,

I'd like to find a more responsible way to use resources (the resources of the planet)...able to respond to others (and myself) in a way that is helpful...a direct and absolute relationship between an increase in income and an increase in my ability to serve others.

Simplifier #3, sought to understand his religious heritage.

I felt called to live before a higher calling--use my life more for all of God's world and therefore not expect to have so many trappings of my 'own'....to engage others at similar background in the prospect of better concern for the poor.

Simplifier #4 "wanted to reflect the stewardship philosophy...about my relationship to the earth, life, and what I can accomplish in this life.

Simplifier #5 "deliver[s] educational, preventive services....[working toward]....a healthy planet; healthy cities; more and more people articulating the values to themselves personally."

Simplifier #6 preferred having time for relationships over increased income. As the mother of a three year old, she saw childbirth as the deciding point for adopting simplicity of lifestyle in order to have "more time for family--a closeness with family."

Simplifier #7 was challenged "to work corporately with other concerned people about the future...[to] work together for a higher quality of life and not spend our time earning and consuming."

Simplifier #8 chose simpler living as "a spiritual discipline...a social and moral responsibility...being occupied with people rather than things."

Rejecting greed, operating from a stewardship principle rather than an exploitative entrepreneurial mode, and cooperation rather than competition are phrases which seem to reflect the tone of the respondent's relationships. Although there was evidence that relationships are not perfect, there was definitely a sense of hopefulness that through becoming examples of ethical living, there seemed to be hope for wider adoption of the values associated with voluntary simplicity.

Interdependence

The second theme, interdependence, stressed community rather than individualism. Historically, individualism replaced community as the driving social force beginning with the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation. "The revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries all contributed in fact and theory to the eclipse of person-in-community by individual-in-society" (McCollough, 1991, p. 33).

Following the social change movement of the 1960's including the war protest movement, the development of the Shakertown pledge (Finnerty, 1977) focused on fairness and personal commitment to a sense of community. Promoting a new paradigm for social accountability and rethinking economic theory, Henderson (1991) defined social implications

of six emerging principles--all focusing on community rather than individualism and cooperation rather than competition.

An emerging paradigm...based on biological and systemic life sciences, rather than inorganic, mechanistic models. Its principles involve: Interconnectedness, Redistribution, Heterarchy, Complementarity, Uncertainty, and Change. (Henderson, 1991, p. 18, 66)

Elgin (1981) contrasted the prevailing notion of U.S. materialism as "'identity consumption'--we become possessed by our possessions...consumed by that which we consume" (p. 166) with the benefits of living "unadorned by superfluous and suffocating goods" (p. 167).

Being in control of one's own financial existence can be life affirming. For persons taking the frugality approach to simpler living, "being able to pay off debts and set aside some savings can bring about a shift in one's whole orientation to life" (New Road Map Foundation, 1993, p. 8).

Respondents to VSQ--2 presented both individualistic and collective motivations for developing a voluntarily simpler life pattern. Interdependence also means developing skills for self-reliance, coupled with reducing one's demands or needs. Through practicing self-sufficiency, resources are saved, money can be directed toward helping others, and relationships and communication can be strengthened. In contrast to survivalist groups who cut themselves off from society, those practicing voluntary simplicity remain committed to activism within society. Examples of responses

which illustrate their striving for interdependence make up the next section.

Answering the question "What is enough?" granted Simplifier #1 greater mental and emotional freedom with "'less clutter' [in my] physical environment." Her spouse was "fully supportive" of the simpler lifestyle. Although details were not given, Simplifier #1 indicated that economic patterns had changed drastically. She and her husband had gained control over expenditures so that although actual earnings had not increased, she felt as though there was more income.

Simplifier #2 changed purchasing patterns because, "If I spend less, I don't have to make as much. [I] evaluate each purchase in light of my leading and the effect it will have on my life....Ownership [should] be secondary to enjoyment." He continued to work on becoming self-sufficient in the areas of housing and transportation.

Simplifier #3 achieved a level of self-sufficiency by changing personal/family economic strategies "keeping current via computer with larger fraction of total money outflow....working to diminish debt load....using credit-union financing." He made investments through "pre-tax payroll deductions and conservative stock purchases." In purchasing, he "follow[ed] sales less...go out to get what's needed more than what's on sale."

Simplifier #4 was also working to "reduce [debt] to "0". She focused on her purchase, use, and disposal of waste. She practiced what she taught others "reduce, reuse, and recycle". "Cost is no longer the major factor, but comes after health and environmental concerns."

Simplifier #5 was reorganizing several aspects of life to become more self-sufficient. Goals for the short and long range included

[becoming] financially independent, living within the constraints of our retirement pension...financially comfortable as a result of assessing/reinvesting 401K savings....thriving on a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity others may be attracted to; developing property/housing to sustain a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity for elders.

Simplifier #6 practiced frugality to achieve the goal of debt reduction. Specifically voluntary simplicity meant:

fixing broken things before buying something new; recognizing when enough is plenty (i.e., how many shoes, objects, etc.); putting people and time before the pursuit of money; eating as low on the food chain as possible; and consuming as little of the planet's resources as possible.

She increased her skills in bookkeeping, built up savings, and changed purchasing to "buy less; buy food in bulk; grow as much of our own food as possible; and barter."

Simplifier #7 made a commitment to interdependence by "choosing a simpler home style than colleagues....us[ing] public bus" Anticipating retirement within the next five

years, she would "like to live in community again--besides the cost and energy efficiency, I like the mental and spiritual stimulation. I also would like a corporate vegetable garden opportunity."

Simplifier #8 had participated in communal living of Order Ecumenical. To her voluntary simplicity meant "spending less time and energy getting and spending and more time and energy on bigger concerns." She avoided "getting caught up in the 'money' ethic--more money earned or gotten is 'progress'." Among other practices, she "takes public transportation to work", bought a fuel efficient car, reduced use of toxic chemicals and disposed of toxics properly. Suffering from "multiple allergies....[I] am working on my physical fitness and health to gain energy." She was also working to organize her time, her desk, her activities and her home to increase self-sufficiency and satisfaction levels. "House and yard take a LOT of time, but we want the relationship to land we care for."

"What is enough?" was the key question answered by respondents as they examined their own lifestyles. Highlighting their sense of interdependence they were likely to streamline habits and reduce possessions.

Supportive relationships were important to this group of respondents. Although instances of non-support were related as well, all had found support for their efforts at lifestyle simplification from one or more of the following sources:

family, religious/spiritual beliefs, organizations-- particularly the ICA and its Order Ecumenical.

The Couple's Club, "a group of 4-5 couples who met once a month for the past 1 1/2 years...has been very important to me" (Simplifier #1). "My community (church, friends, and family)...a deep and lasting relationship...that supports my responding to my inner direction" (Simplifier #2). Simplifier #3 noted how his family, religious beliefs and ICA involvement supported the concept of voluntary simplicity. Simplifier #4 was active in the Guilford Environmental Coalition Education Committee and found it very supportive of her efforts to simplify. Her family and business were also sources of support. The ICA and Order Ecumenical demonstrated "willingness to embody what they espouse" (Simplifier #5). Simplifier #6 had support from her spouse, "he agrees completely in thought and philosophy." Her parents and other family members were "very supportive."

Simplifier #7 had experienced support from the Institute of Cultural Affairs whose characteristics include "concern for the whole earth, planet--peoples as well as all life." Specifically ICA was "important as my inspiration and continual challenge in study" Simplifier #8 "sold and gave away and moved to Chicago to be a part of the community, The Order Ecumenical."

Commitment

Beyond their overall belief that simplicity is beneficial for personal economic and emotional well-being was a motivation to be an example to others--to have a more global impact. Simplifier #5 was anticipating becoming a trainer to present the LifeStyle Simplification Lab experience to other groups.

Having examined their lives, acting upon decisions which countered prevailing trends in lifestyle, many respondents were also responding to ethical dilemmas. Moral behavior answers the question "What is my personal relation to what I know?" (McCollough, 1991, p. 91). Empathetic understanding leads to selfless efforts on behalf of oppressed persons, social causes, or other missions.

Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin (1992, 1993), of the New Road Map Foundation, operate within an altruistic framework. Annual investment income of \$6,000 each supports their voluntarily simpler lifestyle. All current income can therefore be given to non-profit organizations which operate within the Financial Independence structure set forth in their audiocassette series and their book.

A moral imperative to work for peace motivated Sam and Miriam Levering to devote half of their time and earnings to peace activities at the national and international levels (Levering & Urbanska, 1991).

Among the respondents to VSQ--2, many had devoted their lives to helping others, choosing vocations as educators. Five of the respondents credited foreign experiences with influencing their adoption of voluntary simplicity.

Simplifier #5 traveled to Nam Wai, New Territories, China for ICA Human Development Consultation; to Nairobi, Kenya for World Council of Churches, 1975; To Mexico, ICA Global Conference 1988; Czechoslovakia, ICA Global Conference, 1992; and to Berlin, W. Germany, Health Caretakers Trek. The full time and part time involvement in Ecumenical Institute/Institute of Cultural Affairs gave her "fun, challenge, and colleagues...increasing my pro bono work." ICA was described as "a way of life for me."

Simplifier #7 had "lived in Japan (1 room for family of 5), 1974-78; Hong Kong, 73-74; Liberia, 55-58 and Korea, 80-82. Discussing her connection to ICA, she had been challenged "to work corporately with other concerned people about the future." Voluntary simplicity meant to her, "welfare for all, community development, education, study, research and working together."

Besides working in "helping" professions, volunteering or otherwise being involved in social change processes, respondents exhibited other traits that can be classed as altruistic behaviors.

"Before I was making over \$100,000 annually and I didn't have anything to give away. Now I make \$3000-\$5000 annually, give 15-20% to my church and spend almost all the rest on helping others" (Simplifier #2).

"I have given away things to the needy (2 cars and 2 trucks). I serve with relish many nights at the homeless shelter....Motivated by the "my heroes (Mother Theresa, John Wesley & Jacob Schiere)" (Simplifier #3).

"Disgusted with conspicuous consumption and waste," Simplifier #4 has "taken into account my effect on the earth and the people around me....I have an 'adopted' highway....my giving of words, deeds, money has evolved to lifestyle changes for our earth." She envisioned the outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement as having ecological benefits including "city recycling...collections become less frequent and less costly....Watershed protection becomes 'fashionable' and effective."

Simplifier #5 was "sharing [her] expertise in pro bono situations of importance to myself and others....[seeking] a healthier society, including myself."

"Putting people and time before the pursuit of money; eating as low on the food chain as possible; consuming as little of the planet's resources as possible....a desire to be part of the solution to planetary well-being and not part of the problem. Our future planning is based upon the fact that we enjoy our simple life" (Simplifier #6).

"Time for community concerns, for individuals, and that the way I earn my money is the way I want to use my time. I also like to use money for worthy causes." In future, she envisioned the outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement as:

Much more sharing together--in apartments, use of cars, shopping times, equipment such as vacuum sweepers. Work opportunities in the humanities and arts increased-- [work opportunities] decreased in manufacturing and consumption (Simplifier #7).

Struggle

Developing their unique definition and practice of a voluntarily simpler lifestyle, respondents were continually faced with issues. Only personal exploration and commitment to changed habits can be successful. There was no recipe or prescription that emerged for those seeking to duplicate the lifestyles observed in the study although the literature revealed numerous case studies of persons adopting a simpler lifestyle for a purpose or mission (Bender, 1989; Borsodi, 1933; Colby & Damon, 1992; Levering & Urbanska, 1992; Nearing & Nearing, 1954). It was interesting to note that of the eight respondents to VSQ--2, those whose personal involvement with cultures in the third world or similar circumstances were more likely to rate themselves as leading a "moderate" rather than "substantial" or "full" level of voluntary simplicity. Perhaps, more aware of the contrast in lifestyles and the complexities of the issues involved, they

gave themselves a more modest rating. All of the simplifiers indicated that it was not easy to adopt and practice their simpler lifestyles.

Simplifier #1 noted that the adoption of voluntary simplicity "was not a decision as much as a process that I am still involved with...changed...awareness, thinking, attitude and relationships....it has been a very hard struggle for many years." Simplifier #3 evolved into his decision to simplify lifestyle, "little by little--after several courses taught by ICA on Foundations of Religion; Family & Community; World Dynamics, etc. and looking at basic questions of ethics growing out of that." Simplifier #5 mentioned that her lifestyle of simplicity was "a process that is on-going." Having control over the material things of the world was important to both Simplifier #2 who noted, "The demands of the glittering world are both subtle and gross, and as a result have very strong pulls;" and Simplifier #3 whose "personal beliefs do not allow me to let complex things dominate my life--though I use some complex things, I seek to use them and not let them use me." He was "reminding [him]self daily of [his] decision" to practice a simpler lifestyle. Simplifier #8 lacked funds, time and energy to accomplish some of her goals in living a more voluntarily simple, ecologically sound, and ethical life.

Simplifier #5 learned much about simplicity "from parents who survived the depression" in contrast to her

"brother [who] is in many ways my opposite." Simplifier #6 pointed out that "society doesn't understand or support non-consumer lifestyles." In spite of the difficulties, the simplifiers had persistently dealt with obstacles including, for some, lack of support within their families. They had successfully rejected many of society's norms and had arrived at their own lifestyle pattern of voluntarily simplicity. They had developed realistic views of their own personal energy levels and goals for the future.

Relation of Themes to the Model of Factors

Influencing Voluntary Simplicity

All of the themes--connectedness, interdependence, commitment, and struggle--are intimately related within each of the components of the model. As personal awareness, desire, and behaviors align with the conceptualization of voluntary simplicity the model realigns so that the center overlapping area of voluntary simplicity grows larger and the corresponding components--ecological concerns, ethical issues and economic considerations--diminish in size. The elements surrounding the components of the model are important links from the individual to the larger society.

Education is a two-way process. The simplifiers are affected by the learning experiences of their lives and the ongoing effect of media, reading, study, and conversation. They are motivated to educate others by their choice of occupation, volunteer activities, and living as examples.

They would like others to observe that living a simpler lifestyle is both feasible and satisfying.

Community in the sense of the model, and as revealed in the study, concerns interrelatedness of people everywhere. It is the effort to transcend the influence of patriarchal systems to arrive at a partnership model of behavior. It is inclusive rather than restrictive and causes sensitivity for other life forms and the ecological balance, spiritual harmony, and end to violence or warfare.

Plasticity refers to the fluidity of conceptual boundaries. New theoretical frameworks and clear thinking are necessary for creative solutions to the problems facing humankind.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the procedures for the study, major findings, and implications of research findings. It concludes with recommendations for further research.

Objectives

The purpose of this study was to further define the concept of voluntary simplicity as a means of developing a more global humane sustainable culture. A model of factors influencing voluntary simplicity consisting of ethical issues, ecological concerns, and economic considerations was proposed as an explanation of the process. The following elements comprise the study's objectives: (a) to investigate factors that lead individuals and families to a decision to adopt simpler lifestyles, (b) to determine what people mean by voluntary simplicity and how they practice a simpler lifestyle, and (c) to explore the role of group support in individual or family pursuit of voluntarily simpler living.

Methodology

A descriptive study was designed to investigate the adoption and practice of a lifestyle that is simpler than the U.S. mainstream society.

Sample. The 48 persons included in the sample had experienced the LifeStyle Simplification Lab (LSL). The LSL was an educational program of the Institute of Cultural Affairs-Greensboro.

Instrumentation. Two questionnaires were developed by the researcher to be used in sequence. First, the Voluntary Simplicity Questionnaire (VSQ) inquired about factors affecting the decision to simplify lifestyles, specific behaviors and the meaning associated with a simpler lifestyle, family practices related to voluntary simplicity, and demographics. The second questionnaire, VSQ--2, was constructed of open-ended items allowing respondents to disclose details about previous and current lifestyle, their journeys toward voluntary simplicity, and the meaning voluntary simplicity had for them. Inquiry was also made about support from family, groups promoting/practicing simpler lifestyles, and religious/spiritual beliefs. The role of crisis in the development of respondents' current interest in or practice of voluntarily simpler living was explored in some detail via seven open-ended items. Another section of the questionnaire dealt with personal/family economic strategies that had changed as a result of voluntary simplicity. The final item asked respondents to envision, given an ideal situation, the outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement.

Pilot study. The pilot study was conducted with five individuals whose lives reflected the values and practice of voluntary simplicity. The pilot was helpful in refining the instrumentation and procedures of the study.

Procedure. In late July 1993, questionnaires (VSQ) were mailed to a sample of 48 individuals who had participated in LifeStyle Simplification Labs conducted between January 1992 and March 1993. Total return of completed VSQ was 44.

After examining the responses to the VSQ, particularly a composite of 22 items related to voluntarily simpler behaviors, a sub-sample of 14 respondents was selected to receive the VSQ--2. The VSQ--2 mailing was in September 1993. A total of eight respondents returned the VSQ--2 which consisted of detailed accounts of simpler lifestyle development and current practice.

Data Analysis. The analysis of VSQ was both quantitative and descriptive. Frequencies, mean scores, and correlations were calculated using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) computer program. Internal reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha procedure.

Analysis of VSQ--2 was conducted in two ways. First, the respondent's answers to VSQ were combined with detailed descriptions given in VSQ--2 to obtain a clearer view of the individual and the particular avenue taken toward simpler living. Written vignettes presented an overview of each of the eight respondents and concluded with a comparison of the

individual's life to the model of factors influencing voluntary simplicity as a movement toward humane sustainable culture.

Major Findings from VSO and VSO--2

When examining factors leading to adoption/continuation of a simpler lifestyle, in general, ethical issues such as "desire to contribute to worthwhile purposes" (\bar{M} = 2.6) and "desire for meaningful existence" (\bar{M} = 2.6), came before ecological concerns such as "unnecessary waste of resources" (\bar{M} = 2.2 past, 2.4 present) and economic considerations such as "desire for economic self-sufficiency" (\bar{M} = 2.3 past, 2.4 present). When defining the term voluntary simplicity, respondents placed ecological concerns uppermost: "recycle metal, glass and paper" (\bar{M} = 5.7 on a 6-point scale). As they practiced voluntarily simpler lifestyles, characteristic behaviors also focused first on ecological concerns. The item "recycle metal, glass and paper" not only was most frequently selected as a definition but also as a personal behavior (\bar{M} = 4.16 on a 5-point scale). Economic considerations figured into the definition and practice with "lower overall level of personal consumption" receiving \bar{M} = 4.7 as a definition and \bar{M} = 3.84 as a behavior.

Vignettes, written narratives taken from both instruments, VSQ and VSQ--2, profiled respondents' personal journeys. The following themes emerged: (a) Connectedness with God, other people, and stewardship of the Earth; (b)

Interdependence, with a focus on support and mutuality, inclusiveness rather than individualism; (c) Commitment to the beneficial aspects of a voluntarily simpler life and striving to help others; and (d) Struggle, or perseverance to continually redefine and practice a simpler lifestyle.

Respondents' unique attributes and personal journeys had led them to adopt lifestyle simplification as means to larger goals. For example, empathy with the oppressed peoples of the world led many to a life-long commitment to changing societal attitudes and habits. All had found fulfillment more in human interactions than in materialism. Their self-assessed level of simplification seemed related to the length of time they had been practicing simpler lifestyles. Those who had lived and worked in third world countries felt that the level of simplicity they practiced upon their return to the U.S. was moderate rather than substantial or full. They had a clearer understanding of what simpler living is and found compelling reasons to struggle with counteracting the prevailing consumerist ethos.

Simpler living was seen as a hopeful and possible remedy for personal frustration over status, lack of time, and ecological problems of the planet. Humane sustainable culture is more achievable when people adopt simpler lifestyles as a means of living out of a new cultural story of connection and mutuality.

Implications of Research Findings

The respondents had created a lifestyle long before they attended the Lifestyle Simplification Lab. They were well-educated, had read widely on the subject, and seemed committed to continuing the voluntary simplicity approach. Able to articulate their own values, many were living so as to model the behaviors; several were planning to teach LSL in their own areas. They enjoyed the opportunity to be in dialogue about ethical issues, ecological concerns, and economic considerations.

Educational Approaches

It seems very important that curriculum design for voluntary simplicity be approached, not as a recipe, but instead as an examination of one's own lifestyle and goals. This was the approach taken by LSL.

Target audiences include mainly affluent individuals and families. This population has ample resources to sustain themselves although their habits may have thrust them into unwieldy debt or status seeking behaviors leading to dissatisfaction. These people may be ready to chose to simplify their lifestyles in response to ethical issues. This study found that the desire to do right and be fair seems to be initial motivation for simplification; whereas, ongoing behavior seems more related to ecological concerns. Understanding the ecological impact of behavior may be the reinforcement needed to continue when difficulties arise in

practicing simplification. For these reasons, it would seem practical to encourage adoption of new behaviors in a gradual progression of simplification. Economic considerations for reducing debt and operating within a framework of "enough" is an experience that brings freedom and satisfaction. Perhaps a beginning focus might be gaining control of monetary resources, understanding finances as a tool for accomplishing larger goals, and learning the impact on the earth of items purchased, used, and discarded.

Educationally, opportunities abound for integrating voluntary simplicity concepts into traditional formal and informal educational programs. Formal settings might include courses in Family Living, Family Finance, Ecology, Human Development, Sociology, Psychology, and Religion. Informal settings include Cooperative Extension programs for Extension Homemaker Clubs, 4-H Clubs, Volunteer Teacher Training, and the like. Talk show interviews with those living more simply as well as feature films or TV programs could reach new audiences.

The more that is learned about people who are creating satisfying yet simpler lifestyles, the more that information can become part of the new story and culture of sustainability. Desirable habits will be more ecologically sound, ethical in relation to other people and the planet, and economically feasible for individuals, communities, and perhaps businesses and governments.

Support groups. Group support was important for many, but seldom consisted of immediate family members. Formation of informal support groups would be particularly important when family support is minimal or absent. Characteristics of support groups would include sense of community, close-knit relationships among members, and an ethical orientation. Goals of the support groups might include fostering examination of individuals' life purpose and subsequent planning for lifestyle changes. Church groups would be a logical audience for educational programming as would environmental organizations. These groups may have theoretical understanding of ethical issues and be particularly eager to develop some practical applications and ongoing support groups.

All of these efforts would help to create a climate where overconsumption was frowned upon--not in a puritanical, punitive sense--but in a sense of caring for human and planetary welfare. Emphasis on the creative aspects of living with a purpose would counter the reaction that people will somehow be deprived of their entitlement to have whatever they wish. Many more would begin challenging the formerly established paradigms asserting that more is not better. They will make adjustments in personal habits based on a philosophical quest for sustainability (Elgin, 1981; Goldstein & Maresch, 1991). Durning (1991) wrote,

It would be naive to believe that entire populations will suddenly experience a moral awakening, renouncing greed, envy, and avarice. What can be hoped for is a gradual weakening of the consumerist ethos of affluent societies. The challenge before humanity is to bring environmental matters under cultural controls, and the goal of creating a sustainable culture--a culture of permanence--is a task that will occupy several generations. Just as smoking has lost its social cachet in the United States in the space of a decade, conspicuous consumption of all types may be susceptible to social pressure over a longer period. (p. 167)

Recommendations for Further Research

The literature elucidates cultural, economic, and ethical issues in present society stemming from patriarchal norms in history. It would be interesting to examine in greater detail the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of persons practicing simpler lifestyles in relation to the continuing influence of patriarchy in society. The concept of a partnership society is congruent with the themes of connectedness and struggle.

In future studies it would be useful to conduct interviews with subjects. Research using interpretive inquiry would increase understanding of the meaning of lifestyle simplification for those practicing voluntary simplicity. The sample surveyed received minimal support from immediate family members, yet credited group influence with helping them establish and maintain a commitment toward simpler living. It would be important to survey persons of varying age and socioeconomic status. Perhaps, individuals who have completed the audio-cassette course, "Transforming

Your Relationship With Money" or those who have participated in study circles around the topic "Voluntary Simplicity" might be surveyed.

The instruments developed, VSQ and VSQ--2, could be used in whole or in part for surveys of neighborhoods in newly developing planned communities that take an ecological approach to housing and land use. Examples might be the Ponderosa Village in Goldendale, WA, Winslow Co-housing in Bainbridge Island, WA, Sabin neighborhood in Portland, OR, and Village Homes, Davis, CA.

Another research agenda for the voluntary simplicity movement might be the development of indicators for family well-being that could be tracked within families, communities, and cities. These could be organized much as the indicators of sustainability which are being developed for specific cities. Indicators of individual/family sustainability would be useful for educating members of political organizations and leaders within local, state and national arenas as well as for individuals desiring to monitor their own situations.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRES

Voluntary Simplicity Questionnaire (VSQ)

Your participation in this study will further understanding of the movement toward simpler living. Please answer each question truthfully and candidly. If additional space is needed to fully explain an answer, please use the back of the page or add pages as needed. Thank you.

A. Deciding Factors in Simpler Living.

In remembering what led to your decision to choose to simplify your life, please indicate to what extent the following issues were a factor in the past. To what extent are they presently a factor?

	<u>Past Concern</u>			<u>Present Concern</u>		
	<u>No</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Major</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Major</u>
1. Incongruence between values and lifestyle						
2. Desire for meaningful existence						
3. Lack of family/personal time						
4. Concerns related to employment/career						
5. Desire to contribute to worthwhile purposes						
6. Concern for species extinction						
7. Desire for economic self-sufficiency						
8. To counter environmental damage i.e., degradation of air, water, soil						
9. To reduce dependency on fossil fuel						
10. Increase consistency with religious teachings ...						
11. Population pressure on the planet						
12. Escalating cost of goods						
13. Living beyond my means						
14. Experience with personal/family crisis						
15. Desire to emulate others' simpler patterns						
16. Inequitable distribution of world resources						
17. Unnecessary waste of resources						
18. Other _____						

B. Information Sources about Voluntary Simplicity

In learning about voluntary simplicity, what sources of information have been helpful? Please check all that apply. If you can, please list specifics.

1. ___ Books:
2. ___ Classes/Workshops/Conferences:
3. ___ TV programs:
4. ___ Friends:
5. ___ Organizations:

Family of Origin Compared to Present Life

Items 6 - 12 concern your family of origin in comparison with your life today.

6. My family's political leaning was basically (check one)
 - ___ a. toward the right.
 - ___ b. toward the left.
7. My own political leaning is basically (check one)
 - ___ a. toward the right.
 - ___ b. toward the left.
8. My family's religious/spiritual affiliation was:
9. My current religious/spiritual affiliation is:
10. What income level would characterize your family during childhood/adolescent years?
 - ___ a. low
 - ___ b. middle
 - ___ c. high
11. What were your parents' occupations?

Mother

Father

Practices Related to Voluntary Simplicity

12. Check the columns to the right to indicate practices you consider typical in your family of origin and which of those experiences you relate to your present commitment to voluntary simplicity (VS).

	<u>In family of origin</u>	<u>Led to my VS</u>
a. Frugality	_____	_____
b. Religious commitment	_____	_____
c. Charitable giving	_____	_____
d. Ecological mindfulness	_____	_____
e. Volunteerism	_____	_____

Items 13 - 34 describe tendencies that may contribute to a working definition of voluntary simplicity (adapted from Elgin, 1981). Please circle the letter that best indicates your level of agreement with the statement as part of a definition. Next, indicate your level of practice of the stated behavior as typical of your life style.

<u>AS A DEFINITION I</u>		<u>AS PERSONAL BEHAVIOR I</u>	
SD	Strongly disagree	N	Never
D	Disagree	O	Occasionally
SWD	Somewhat disagree	F	Frequently
SWA	Somewhat agree	U	Usually
A	Agree	A	Always
SA	Strongly agree		

13. Lower overall level of personal consumption--buy less clothing, jewelry, and cosmetic products SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
14. Reduce clutter and complexity by giving away or selling those things that are seldom used and could be used productively by others SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
15. Observe holidays in a non-commercialized and non-competitive manner SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
16. Alter patterns of consumption in favor of products that exhibit some or all of the following characteristics: durable, easy to repair, nonpolluting in their manufacture and use energy-efficient, functional and aesthetically pleasing SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
17. Recycle metal, glass, and paper SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A

AS A DEFINITION I

AS PERSONAL BEHAVIOR I

SD	Strongly disagree	N	Never
D	Disagree	O	Occasionally
SWD	Somewhat disagree	F	Frequently
SWA	Somewhat agree	U	Usually
A	Agree	A	Always
SA	Strongly agree		

- 18. Shift one's diet away from highly processed foods, meat, and sugar and toward foods that are more natural, healthy, simple, and appropriate for sustaining the inhabitants of a small planet SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A

- 19. Use consumption politically by boycotting goods and services of firms whose actions and policies are considered unethical SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A

- 20. Cut back on consumption of items that are wasteful of nonrenewable resources SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A

- 21. Participate in consumer- and/or worker-owned enterprises (cooperatives) that meet a variety of needs such as child care, community agriculture, etc. SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A

- 22. Pursue work that directly contributes to the well-being of the world SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A

- 23. Engage in activities which allow greater use of creativity SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A

- 24. Develop skills for greater self-reliance or trade skills with others to reduce dependence upon experts to handle life's ordinary demands (for example, carpentry, plumbing, appliance repair, intensive gardening, various crafts, etc. SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A

- 25. Prefer smaller scale, more human-sized living and working environments that foster a sense of community, face-to-face contact, and mutual caring SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A

AS A DEFINITION I

AS PERSONAL BEHAVIOR I

SD	Strongly disagree	N	Never
D	Disagree	O	Occasionally
SWD	Somewhat disagree	F	Frequently
SWA	Somewhat agree	U	Usually
A	Agree	A	Always
SA	Strongly agree		

- 26. Alter male/female roles in favor of nonsexist patterns of relationship SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
- 27. Open to nonverbal forms of communication, greater body contact, greater eye contact, more space in communication for periods of silence SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
- 28. Participate in, and find support from extended families of either or both biological and spiritual dimensions SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
- 29. Work to develop one's potential as a well-rounded individual i.e., physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
- 30. Participate in holistic health-care practices that emphasize preventative medicine, the healing powers of the body when assisted by the mind, and health as more than the absence of disease SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
- 31. Involved with 'compassionate causes' --such as ending world hunger, promoting peace, protecting the environment SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
- 32. Employ compassionate means (nonviolence) in the realization of those causes SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
- 33. Change the pattern of transportation i.e., take public transit, participate in a car pool, drive smaller cars, live closer to work, ride a bike, or walk SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A
- 34. Employ appropriate technologies wherever possible--using simple, rather than complex, resource-wasteful devices (for example, a regular knife vs. electric) SD D SWD SWA A SA.... N O F U A

C. Participation in LifeStyle Simplification Lab.

Items 1 to 3 are related to your having participated in the LifeStyle Simplification Lab conducted by Elaine and Nelson Stover.

1. What prompted your decision to attend the LifeStyle Simplification Lab?

2. In what ways have you shared your learning from the Lab?

3. What, if any changes in lifestyle simplification have you made as a result of the lab?

D. Consciousness vs. Behavior Change.

Items 1 to 3 related to changed consciousness about voluntary simplicity and subsequent behavior.

1. When was your consciousness first raised about the desirability of simpler living? (give an approximate year or period of time)

2. What experience(s) led to your raised consciousness?

3. When, in relation to the period of time mentioned in item D1, did your behavior change in relation to that new consciousness about simpler living?

E. Demographic Information

1. Year of birth: _____

2. Sex:
____ a. Male
____ b. Female

3. Family Status
____ a. Single
____ b. Married
____ c. Sharing housing

4. Educational Level

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Some High School | <input type="checkbox"/> d. College Graduate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. High School Graduate | <input type="checkbox"/> e. Some Postgraduate Educ. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. Some College | <input type="checkbox"/> f. Advanced Degree |

5. Overseas experiences that may have contributed to your desire to embrace a voluntarily simpler lifestyle. Please List:

6. Personal Annual Income

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Under \$10000 | <input type="checkbox"/> f. \$37000-46999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. \$11000-15999 | <input type="checkbox"/> g. \$47000-56999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. \$16000-20999 | <input type="checkbox"/> h. \$57000-66999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> d. \$21000-25999 | <input type="checkbox"/> i. \$67000-76999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> e. \$26000-36999 | <input type="checkbox"/> j. \$77000+ |

7. Household Annual Income

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Same as in item #6. | <input type="checkbox"/> f. \$51,000-60,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. \$10,000-20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> g. \$61,000-70,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. \$21,000-30,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> h. \$71,000-80,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> d. \$31,000-40,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> i. \$81,000-99,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> e. \$41,000-50,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> j. \$100,000+ |

8. _____ Number of people being supported on the household annual income

9. Your current occupation _____

10. Previous occupation _____

11. Is your income lower because of your decision to embrace some features of voluntary simplicity?

- a. No, I don't think so.
- b. Yes, because: _____

12. If you earned more money, in what ways would your life be different?

13. Has your level of anxiety about the future changed in any way since you made the decision to live more simply? Please explain:

3. Name the third major concern _____

a. What practice(s) has/have changed?

b. What do you see as the long term outcome?

c. What are your obstacles?

If you would like to make additional responses please answer on back or add an extra sheet of paper.

4. In relationship to voluntary simplicity, where would you like to see yourself/your family

a. Next year?

b. In 5 years?

c. In 10 years?

5. To what extent does your family support a voluntarily simpler lifestyle?

a. Spouse:

b. Children:

c. Parents and/or other relatives:

6. In what ways do your religious or spiritual beliefs relate to voluntarily simpler living?

7. Are you a member of a group interested in promoting/practicing a voluntarily simpler life?

_____ 1. No (*If no, go to item 8*)

_____ 2. Yes (*If yes, please answer items a - g below*)

a. What group?

b. What characteristics do group members share?

c. How important is the group to you?

d. What effect does the group have on your practice of voluntary simplicity?

8. Has crisis shaped your current interest in (or practice of) voluntarily simpler living?

_____ 1. No (*If no, go to item 9*)

_____ 2. Yes (*If yes, please answer section a - g below*)

a. When did the crisis occur?

b. How severe was the crisis?

c. Duration?

d. What were the immediate effects?

e. What resources did you use to respond to the crisis?

f. In what ways did the crisis influence your adoption of voluntary simplicity?

g. How has your lifestyle alleviated the affects of the crisis?

9. With regard to your personal/family economic strategies, have financial management patterns changed as a result of your voluntary simplicity?

_____ 1. no (*If no, go to item 10*)

_____ 2. yes (*If yes, please answer section a - c below*)

a. Financial skills developed include:

b. Investment strategies I/we practice include:

c. I have changed patterns of purchasing in the following ways.

11. How satisfied are you with your current debt-load?

12. What motivates you to continue in the direction of voluntary simplicity?

13. What have you experienced as the most beneficial outcome of living more simply?

14. What remains as your biggest challenge?

15. In an ideal situation what would you envision as the outcome of the voluntary simplicity movement?

APPENDIX B
CORRESPONDENCE

LifeStyle Simplification

New Living Patterns for New Times

May 27, 1993

Teris P. Nolen
818 Walker Avenue
Greensboro, NC 27403

Dear Teri,

Nelson and I are pleased to offer our full support to your research. You have our permission to contact the individuals and couples who have participated or will participate in future LifeStyle Simplification Labs and/or other programs. Enclosed are the names of the Virginia participants in the LifeStyle Simplification Lab to add to the previous lists.

Good luck to you. Please keep me informed as to how your research is progressing.

Sincerely,



Elaine K. Stover
Co-Director, ICA-Greensboro
5911 Western Trail
Greensboro, NC 27410
Phone: 605-0143

School of Human Environmental Sciences

Department of Human Development and Family Studies

104 Stone Building, UNCG
Greensboro, NC 27412-5001
(919) 334-5307

July 27, 1993

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
NORTH
CAROLINA
AT
GREENSBORO

Dear

"Think globally, act locally" has remained a popular slogan. Individuals and families are increasingly modifying their lifestyles to match their values. Many find that, in order for their lives to reflect their values, they must reject, to some degree, our American emphasis on status, economic wealth and "more is better" living. In this study we are particularly interested in voluntary simplicity as a social phenomenon. Questions being asked are: why and how people are becoming interested in lifestyle simplification, what they mean by simpler living, what they do, and what problems and satisfactions go along with such a lifestyle choice.

You are uniquely qualified to participate in this research since you attended a LifeStyle Simplification Lab conducted by Elaine and Nelson Stover, Institute of Cultural Affairs-Greensboro. Because you are one of only 48 participants, your reply is essential to this study. We ask that spouses (or significant others) answer questionnaires independently. It is important that your questionnaire be thoughtfully completed and returned by August 14, 1993.

The number on the questionnaire is our system for assuring confidentiality. Your name will never be used in reporting findings. Responding to the questionnaire will take approximately an hour or so of your time. When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to me in the postage paid envelope provided. A small group of respondents will receive a second questionnaire which will take about an hour to complete. If you are among that group I will contact you.

Findings will be shared with such groups as: Context Institute, New Road Map Foundation, and Worldwatch Institute. To obtain a copy of the aggregated data, please write your name and address on the back of the return envelope. Do not put it on the questionnaire itself. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to call me at home (919-272-8951). Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Teris P. Nolen

Teris P. Nolen
Doctoral Candidate

Barbara N. Clawson

Barbara N. Clawson, Ph.D.
Dissertation Advisor

School of Human Environmental Sciences

Department of Human Development and Family Studies

104 Stone Building, UNCG
Greensboro, NC 27412-5001
(919) 334-5307

THE
UNIVERSITY
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NORTH
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AT
GREENSBORO

August 17, 1993

Dear

Individuals and families are increasingly modifying their lifestyles to match their values. Often changes reflect a need to cut expenses, to care for the environment and to seek equitable distribution of resources in this country and globally.

You are one of only 48 persons qualified to participate in the study on lifestyle simplification. About two weeks ago, you received a questionnaire related to the study. If you have already completed it and mailed it, you may ignore this letter.

As of today, we have not received your questionnaire. Another one is enclosed for your convenience. Please fill it out and send it back by return mail in the envelope provided. If you would like a copy of the aggregated responses to the survey, you may write your name on the back of the return envelope. Please do not write your name on the questionnaire itself. Note that the number is part of our system to ensure confidentiality. At no time will your name be used in relationship to the results of the survey.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Teris P. Nolen
Teris P. Nolen
Doctoral Candidate

School of Human Environmental Sciences

Department of Human Development and Family Studies

104 Stone Building, UNCG
Greensboro, NC 27412-5001
(919) 334-5307

THE
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September 11, 1993

Dear

Thank you so much for responding to the questionnaire about Voluntary Simplicity. As we mentioned in the earlier letter about this study, a small group of the participants in the study are being selected to respond in more depth.

Your responses to the Voluntary Simplicity Questionnaire (VSQ) indicate that you have been practicing a lifestyle that is simpler than the mainstream. We ask that you complete the second questionnaire (VSQ--2) which, like the VSQ, is numbered to insure confidentiality. The VSQ--2 may take between 1 and 2 hours to answer. It asks about previous lifestyle, specific changes made, family influence, the possible role of crisis and group support in the adoption and practice of simpler living.

The more information shared by you, the clearer and more meaningful the description which will emerge from the data. Please use the back of the pages or add sheets to fully answer the items. It is important to return it promptly. Should you have any questions, you may contact me at home (919) 272-8951. To obtain a copy of the aggregate data, please write your name and address on the back of the return envelope. Do not put your name on the questionnaire itself. When you have completed the questionnaire, please mail it to me in the enclosed stamped envelope. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Teris P. Nolen
Teris P. Nolen
Doctoral Candidate

Barbara Clawson
Barbara Clawson
Dissertation Advisor

Last week a questionnaire seeking your input about voluntary simplicity was mailed to you. You were selected because you participated in one or more LifeStyle Simplification Labs conducted by Elaine and Nelson Stover of ICA.

If you have already completed and returned it, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Because it has been sent to only 48 individuals it is extremely important that yours also be included in the study if the results are to accurately represent the opinions of the groups.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaire, or it got misplaced, please call me right now, collect (919) 272-8951 and I will get another one in the mail to you today.

Sincerely,

Teris Nolen

10-6-93

About three weeks ago a questionnaire, VSQ--2, was mailed to you. Because you have been practicing a lifestyle simpler than the mainstream, you are uniquely qualified to respond. If you have already completed and mailed it back to me, thank you very much. If not, please complete and mail it today. In case you did not receive a VSQ--2, or it has been misplaced, please call right now (919) 272-8951. I will put one in the mail today. You are one of only 14 selected to participate in the second level of the study. If important ethical, ecological and economic problems can be alleviated through more widespread adoption of simpler living; current adherents, like yourself, are a most valuable resource. Thank you very much for being part of the solution to these problems--and for participating in the study.

Sincerely,
Teris P. Nolen
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C

DATA ON VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY COMPOSITE SCORE

VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY COMPOSITE SCORE

(Mean scores \bar{M})

Items 13 - 34 describe tendencies that may contribute to a working definition of voluntary simplicity (adapted from Elgin, 1981). Please circle the letter that best indicates your level of agreement with the statement as part of a definition. Next, indicate your level of practice of the stated behavior as typical of your life style.

AS PERSONAL BEHAVIOR I

1=	N	Never
2=	O	Occasionally
3=	F	Frequently
4=	U	Usually
5=	A	Always

		1	2	3	4	5
13. Lower overall level of personal consumption--buy less clothing, jewelry, and cosmetic products (Economic)	$\bar{M}=3.84$	0	1	12	23	7
14. Reduce clutter and complexity by giving away or selling those things that are seldom used and could be used productively by others (Economic)	$\bar{M}=3.26$	0	14	9	13	6
15. Observe holidays in a non-commercialized and non-competitive manner (Ethical)	$\bar{M}=3.51$	1	8	10	16	8
16. Alter patterns of consumption in favor of products that exhibit some or all of the following characteristics: durable, easy to repair, nonpolluting in their manufacture and use energy-efficient, functional and aesthetically pleasing (Ecological)	$\bar{M}=3.70$	0	4	12	20	7
17. Recycle metal, glass, and paper (Ecological)	$\bar{M}=4.16$	0	3	7	13	20
18. Shift one's diet away from highly processed foods, meat, and sugar and toward foods that are more natural, healthy, simple, and appropriate for sustaining the inhabitants of a small planet (Ecological)	$\bar{M}=3.56$	0	6	11	22	4
19. Use consumption politically by boycotting goods and services of firms whose actions and policies are considered unethical (Ethical)	$\bar{M}=2.63$	6	17	9	9	2
20. Cut back on consumption of items that are wasteful of nonrenewable resources (Ecological)	$\bar{M}=3.53$	0	6	14	17	6

21. Participate in consumer- and/or worker-owned enterprises (cooperatives) that meet a variety of needs such as child care, community agriculture, etc. (Economic)	<u>M</u> =2.16	12	13	12	3	1
22. Pursue work that directly contributes to the well-being of the world (Ethical)	<u>M</u> =4.14	1	3	2	20	17
23. Engage in activities which allow greater use of creativity (Ethical)	<u>M</u> =3.42	0	7	14	19	3
24. Develop skills for greater self-reliance or trade skills with others to reduce dependence upon experts to handle life's ordinary demands (for example, carpentry, plumbing, appliance repair, intensive gardening, various crafts, etc. (Economic)	<u>M</u> =2.98	4	15	6	14	4
25. Prefer smaller scale, more human-sized living and working environments that foster a sense of community, face-to-face contact, and mutual caring (Ethical)	<u>M</u> =3.30	3	9	11	12	8
26. Alter male/female roles in favor of nonsexist patterns of relationship (Ethical)	<u>M</u> =3.60	2	5	10	17	5
27. Open to nonverbal forms of communication, greater body contact, greater eye contact, more space in communication for periods of silence (Ethical)	<u>M</u> =3.47	2	6	10	20	5
28. Participate in, and find support from extended families of either or both biological and spiritual dimensions (Ethical)	<u>M</u> =3.84	0	6	8	16	13
29. Work to develop one's potential as a well-rounded individual i.e., physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. (Ecological)	<u>M</u> =3.95	0	4	4	25	10
30. Participate in holistic health-care practices that emphasize preventative medicine, the healing powers of the body when assisted by the mind, and health as more than the absence of disease (Ecological)	<u>M</u> =3.42	1	11	10	11	10

31. Involved with 'compassionate causes' --such as ending world hunger, promoting peace, protecting the environment (Ecological)	<u>M</u> =3.47	1	11	8	13	10
32. Employ compassionate means (nonviolence) in the realization of those causes (Ethical)	<u>M</u> =3.67	2	8	5	15	13
33. Change the pattern of trans- portation i.e., take public transit, participate in a car pool, drive smaller cars, live closer to work, ride a bike, or walk (Ecological)	<u>M</u> =3.00	3	15	10	9	6
34. Employ appropriate technologies wherever possible--using simple, rather than complex, resource- wasteful devices (for example, a regular knife vs. electric) (Ecological)	<u>M</u> =3.74	0	4	10	22	7