

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

by

LINDA RABORN MITCHELL

B.S., Kansas State University, 1976

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Manhattan, Kansas

1981

Approved by:



Major Professor

SPEC
COLL
LD
2668
.R4
1981
M57
C.2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
DEFINITIONS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY	4
MASS SOCIETY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS	11
CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS	21
Kinds of Social Movements	22
Ideology	27
Group Cohesion	36
Organization and Status System	37
CAREERS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS	43
CONCLUSIONS	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY	54

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks should go to many people who have supported and helped me to arrive at this point of completion. Energy and enthusiasm often fail before finishing a project and I owe much to Dr. Stan Cross, my advisor, for his help and gentle hints to get on the ball and get finished. His friendship and guidance have been extremely valuable to me.

I also thank my other two committee members, Dr. Wayne Rohrer and Dr. Jim Miley, for their help and contributions.

Gary Foster has been a trusted friend and resource person. His comments have helped me to clarify many points and our discussions on social movements, organic gardening, and voluntary simplicity have been both fun and informative.

Jim and Craig have made it possible for me to finish this report. I took time from them for it.

Thanks also to Rose Korte, the typist, who took that load off my shoulders so I could concentrate on other things.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to determine if voluntary simplicity is an emerging social movement as its advocates claim. Newspapers and magazines frequently publish articles about people quitting high-paying jobs, abandoning the "rat race," and seeking peaceful, less demanding lifestyles. Many people feel that these press reports reflect a developing social movement which potentially could alter our society. Voluntary simplicity, a term first used by Richard Gregg in 1936, describes a way of life outwardly simple and inwardly rich. This lifestyle consists of frugality of consumption, a strong sense of environmental urgency, a desire for smaller scale living and working conditions, and a quest for higher human potential. Proponents of this way of life believe that voluntary simplicity has the ability to become a powerful economic, social, and political force and could change our values and habits in consumption patterns, institutional operations, and national policies.

I am personally interested in voluntary simplicity for two reasons. While I was a high school student, I was fascinated and repelled by the European Holocaust that occurred during the Second World War. I read everything I could find on the subject, both non-fiction and fiction. One question that was not satisfactorily answered was why the persecuted, both Jewish and non-Jewish, did not leave their home countries when it became clear what was to come. Obviously, leaving was possible only during the beginning of Hitler's rise to power and many took advantage of such opportunities. But many did not. Excuses given for not leaving were varied but the ones that have haunted

me were related to personal property. People didn't want to lose the things that they had worked so hard to obtain, so that possessions themselves came to be more important than life. One example of this was Anne Frank's family in Holland. They attempted to live family life as usual, but in hiding, which led ultimately to their discovery and death (Bettleheim, 1961: 84). The Franks and others like them lost their lives because they could not separate themselves from a comfortable, known environment.

The second reason for my attraction to voluntary simplicity is from personal experience, living with very little money during one period as an adult. While there were naturally some hardships associated with being poor, I discovered that my life was not qualitatively different than during more affluent times. In fact, there was a freedom of action that emerged when middle-class consumption was no longer possible, or even expected. Worries about the future were no longer realistic and life settled into an immediacy that left more time for family and friends. This experience, while only temporary, proved to me that a lot of money was not necessary for living a satisfactory, happy life. What seems important for a rewarding life is more valuable than money; good friends, a supportive family, and worthwhile work. When I discovered the concept of voluntary simplicity, as it was defined by others, I felt that it was proposing a better way of life. It advocates freedom from obligations to live in certain ways or define ourselves by what we buy. I think that voluntary simplicity has a tremendous potential to create not only a better life for us as individuals but to shift the focus of our society from quantitative concerns to qualitative concerns.

Since the purpose of this paper is to determine if voluntary simplicity is indeed a social movement, it first is necessary to include a working definition of social movements and voluntary simplicity. Next will be a discussion of mass society because social movements do not develop within a vacuum, they can only emerge from the culture of which they are a part. Voluntary simplicity will then be analyzed in terms of the required components of a social movement, such as change, organization, geographical scope and persistence over time. Additionally, there are various types of movements differentiated by goals that they pursue. All social movements are similar in that they have ideologies, group cohesion, and organizations. Careers of social movements will be discussed next. Concluding will be an assessment of voluntary simplicity as a social movement with an estimation of the possible affects of it in our lives.

DEFINITIONS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

Most definitions of social movements are very similar to Aristotle's statement: "Men journey together with a view to particular advantage, and by way of providing some particular thing needed for the purposes of life..." (Olson, 1965: 6). Neil Smelser's (1962: 270) definition of social movements in Theory of Collective Behavior is one of the most comprehensive, defining social movements as "Collective attempts to restore, protect, modify, or create norms (or values) in the name of a generalized belief." Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1957: 308) in Collective Behavior also have a broad definition of social movements as "... collectively acting with some continuity to promote a change or resist a change in the society or group of which it is a part." On the other hand, Herbert Blumer (1969: 8) defines the movement simply as "... a collective enterprise to establish a new order of life." This is similar to Mayer Zald and Roberta Ash (1970: 518) who call it "... a purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individuals or societal institutions and structures." Rudolf Heberle's (1951: 6) definition, in Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology, is in line with these by stating that it is "... a collective attempt to reach a visualized goal, especially a change in certain social institutions." "It's main criterion...is that it aims to bring about fundamental changes in the social order" (Heberle, 1951: 199). Hans Toch (1965: 5) says social movements "... represent an effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem that they feel they have in common." Wendell C. King (1956: 27), in his classic book, Social Movements in the United States, defines social movements as "... a group venture extending

beyond a local community or a single event and involving a systematic effort to inaugurate changes in thought, behavior, and social relationships."

As is readily observable, all of these definitions of social movements have two things in common. In a time of apathy and unwillingness to get involved, they all emphasize an effort by men/women to intervene in the process of social and cultural change by attempting positive changes in their society and developing new social or cultural expressions. Even Flack's (1976: 367) opinion that mass movements are efforts to resist threats of changes in everyday lives suggests a desirability for involvement in actively controlling the social system and their own lives. Men/women are viewed as actors/actresses, not only as passive respondents to the flow of life (Killian, 1964: 430).

The second essential element in these definitions, the action, is collective and not individual. People are acting together based on a shared viewpoint over an issue, or issues, that they think needs to be changed. In Heberle's (1951: 7) words, "When acting individuals think of themselves as united in action, then that acknowledges the existence of social movement." They share a common consciousness and are united in action by that sharing.

These two features, collective action and behavior to affect or resist change, form only the skeletal outline of a social movement. Many more features are needed for the whole, such as goals, ideology, a sense of membership, and an organizational structure (Killian, 1964: 430; Turner and Killian, 1957: 20; King, 1956: 30-38). These features will be discussed in detail later.

Voluntary simplicity as a term brings to mind many images. For me, it suggests a reduction in material objects that have cluttered my life and cause me to lose sight of the more satisfying aspects of my life. For others, responses range from highly personal concerns to attacking critical social issues on a local, national, or world level. Deciding to simplify our lifestyles is clearly an individual or family matter because what is simplification for some would not be for others. What is simplification for an American would seem far from simple for a Chinese or Guatemalan peasant. It becomes relative, depending on outside conditions such as culture, customs, climate, and personal natures. In India, for example, almost everyone sits on the floor. Thus, there are few chairs, so simplification regarding furniture would probably be fruitless. But in the United States, where many homes look like furniture stores, this could be an area for reductions. Other people feel that it is necessary to have many, many kinds of clothing for reasons beyond temperature changes and cleanliness. This could be an area of simplification for them. Simplicity, then, is in deciding what has the greatest meaning in your life and clinging to that while getting rid of other things. Regarding this, Gandhi said,

As long as you derive inner help and comfort from anything, you should keep it. If you were to give it up in a mood of self-sacrifice or out of a stern sense of duty, you would continue to want it back and that unsatisfied want would make trouble for you. 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, 1977: 27).

Voluntary simplicity is not a new idea. It has been advocated and practiced by many influential people throughout history. Many of these practitioners have been religious leaders, such as Buddha, Moses,

Lao Tse, Jesus, and Mohammed. Others have been philosophers or political leaders like Lenin, Gandhi, and Thoreau. In the United States, our tradition has been one of frugality and self-reliance. In addition, religious groups such as the Amish, the Mennonites, and the Friends (Quakers) have adopted simple living as a way to salvation. This concept has also been called voluntary poverty, functional poverty, or creative simplicity.

While there are diverse and individual ways of expressing a life of voluntary simplicity, there are five core values that are central to this philosophy. These core values are material simplicity, human scale, self-determination, ecological awareness, and personal growth (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977b: 5).

Material simplicity is probably the most visible value of a life of voluntary simplicity. The Quakers define simple living as "... a non-consumerist life-style based upon being and becoming, not having" (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977b: 5). People practicing voluntary simplicity would not identify or define themselves by what they own or buy. Since high consumption, as measured by an increasing Gross National Product, has been thought to be necessary as an indication of a healthy society, changing our life-styles in such a way would have a significant and lasting impact on our society.

A significant change in consumption patterns would not only reduce the GNP but would create a revolutionary challenge to modern capitalistic practices, which assume a dependency on experts, a conformity in consumption, coercive control, centralized technocratic decision-making, and personal deskilling (Luke, 1980: 101). Capitalism appears responsive to voluntary simplicity's interest in quality

goods rather than mere quantity. However, this is not due to any real concern with economic or resource scarcity but is a way to reap tremendous profits while at the same time not losing out on a share of the available, but reduced, spendable income.

A preference for smaller living and working environments, on a human scale, is another central value of voluntary simplicity. Believers tend to equate the gigantic scale of present institutions and technology with anonymity, incomprehensibility, and artificiality. Schumacher's (1977) Small is Beautiful raises the issue of appropriate technologies in response to this concern. Appropriate technologies are smaller and on a more human working scale. They also include the concept of decentralization to gain manageability and comprehensibility. They are more localized, more labor intensive, and more likely to use renewable resources. The reduction of scale is seen as a way to get back to basics by restoring a more human sense of proportion and perspective (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977b: 6).

Human scale is as significant in dealing with social issues as it is with technologies. Large scale social problems are just as incomprehensible and anonymous as large scale institutions and technologies. When problems are looked at on the proper human scale, they become manageable. For instance, unemployment becomes realistic and manageable only when we know how many are unemployed in our own neighborhood or town. A total of eight million unemployed in the United States is an incomprehensible figure. It can't be comprehended unless reduced to workable, sensible numbers. Then we can focus on the problem and attempt to solve it (Schumacher, 1977: 16).

Self-determination is another critical aspect of voluntary simplicity. When we depend on large, complex institution, we are less able to think for ourselves and to feel that we can affect our own environments. We are then forced to accept someone else's definition of craftsmanship, good food, pure water, and meaningful work because we have no other alternatives. Economic dependency is created when we become tied to installment payments, maintenance costs and the expectations of others to present ourselves in a given way. Food dependency is fostered on a regional level when certain crops are only produced in given areas of the country even though they might grow better in other areas. Broccoli is an example. It would grow better in the cool climate of New York but instead is grown in California and shipped to New York, 2,700 miles away. This used 950,000 gallons of fossil fuel in 1979 and on a national level, one dollar out of every three is spent for transportation (The Progressive, 1980: 3). We can attempt to become more self-sufficient by following the Puritan advice of growing our own, making our own, doing without, or exercising discipline in what we buy.

The fourth core value of voluntary simplicity is ecological awareness. This value acknowledges that our earth is finite and its natural resources cannot last forever. It recognizes the interconnections and interdependence of people and resources and the likelihood that resources will, in all probability, determine our future more than our political, economic, or social aspirations (Johnson, 1979: 54). As we greedily overuse and abuse our existing resources, we are guaranteeing that the earth will suffer as a result.

The fifth core value of voluntary simplicity is personal growth. Although it often has a spiritual aspect, voluntary simplicity is not

connected with any particular religion or philosophy. Personal growth could include activities ranging from biofeedback, humanistic psychology, fundamental Christianity or meditation. Freeing oneself from external hassles and clutter could allow greater freedom and time to explore non-material aspects of life that are often overlooked. As Simone de Beauvoir said: "Life is occupied in both perpetuating itself and in surpassing itself; if all it does is maintain itself, then living is only not dying" (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977a: 202). Voluntary simplicity wants to guarantee that life consists of more than just not dying.

These five values, or themes, in voluntary simplicity are not exclusive. They will be followed to different degrees and in varying combinations by different people, and there are others that could be added. Taken together, they have the potential for constituting a particular outlook or view on life that could provide a necessary bridge between a traditional, industrial world view and a more humanistic, steady-state world view.

It should be clearly stated and understood that living simply is not the same as living in poverty. Poverty on an involuntary basis rarely allows time for the development of the values inherent in voluntary simplicity. Poverty consists of a constant struggle to maintain a minimal standard of living with little or no time for anything else. In many ways, poverty totally opposes simple living.

MASS SOCIETY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The study of social movements and the settings in which they occur is important to sociology because a basic assumption in sociology is that human behavior is predominately shaped by the groups to which people belong and by the social interaction that occurs within these groups. Turner and Killian (1957: 3) state: "A major portion of sociology is the examination of groups and group life in terms of social organization and the normative order, of the group and its culture." Collective behavior, which includes group behavior, takes many forms, ranging from short-lived mobs to long-lasting movements advocating social change. Collective behavior offers a special opportunity for sociologists to observe human behavior that generally lies dormant.

Under conditions of stable interaction, many social elements - myths, ideologies, or the potential for violence - are either controlled or taken for granted and hence not readily observable. During episodes of collective behavior, these elements come into the open; we can observe them "in the raw". Collective behavior, then, like deviance, affords a peculiar kind of laboratory in which we are able to study directly certain components of behavior which usually lie dormant (Smelser, 1962: 3).

This behavior is affected by the society in which it occurs. Since individual or group behavior is so influenced, Cameron (1966: 21) suggests that the purpose of a social movement cannot be understood unless we clearly perceive the background of the society in which it develops. Given that we live in a heterogeneous rather than a homogeneous society, our task is more difficult in this respect. This diversity of subgroups and social structures creates a milieu in which social movements, as struggles for satisfactions, are nurtured in an environment that has generally allowed free expression.

Circumstances identified in an environment as conducive to the rise of social movements are social heterogeneity, cultural confusion, and individual discontent. Mass communication further helps by drawing these diverse groups and opinions together (King, 1956: 13).

Our mass society (social heterogeneity) has differentiated people on the basis of age, sex, marital status, and kinship, with other additional social distinctions, or subgroups. These subgroups are based on occupation, wealth, geographical locality, social class, political leanings, race, religion, and ethnic background. In addition to these classifications, there is also a societal emphasis on organizations and large numbers of formal associations. Although personal and intimate relations do exist, they have a tendency to be overshadowed by formalized and impersonal relations (King, 1956: 12). This variety of subgroups and associations leads Oberschall (1978: 285) to observe that we only share values on two things: consumption and aspirations to lead certain life-styles. On all other issues relating to social interaction, community, associations, and future plans, we are divided.

While disagreeing on many things, these varying subgroups also have diverse codes for behavior and systems of belief. While some might be held in common, it is likely that many are different.

Cultural confusion is partly a result of these varying subgroups existing side by side within our heterogeneous society. Conflicts arise when attempting to balance these opposing values and beliefs and then acting on them. If an individual is a member of several subgroups, the strain for consistency of values and beliefs will be severe. These personal strains can be further aggravated by the

appearance of new knowledge, deprivation of wealth, power or prestige, or changes that occur in norms or values (Smelser, 1962: 287-289).

Individual discontent also plays a role in creating circumstances conducive for a social movement to arise. Those people who play an active role, attempting to make changes in society, are obviously not just passive observers. Hans Toch (1965: 11-12) believes that in order to first become involved, a person must sense a problem. That alone is not enough though, for the person must feel that something can be done about the problem, a solution is possible, and that the status quo is not inevitable. In addition, the person must feel that s(he) personally can do something about it and then must be willing to get involved toward that end. From that point, a sufficiently concerned person will begin to search for meanings. Concern and searching combine to create susceptibility to social movements, which often offer solutions that appeal. This susceptibility is further defined as ranging from mild to highly susceptible. "A mild increase in susceptibility would involve a slight lowering of sales resistance to available solutions...a strong increase in susceptibility creates gullibility or suggestibility. It involves a tendency to jump at promising propositions, and a readiness to adopt them" (Toch, 1965: 12). (Susceptibility is influenced by education, past experiences, social influences, age, general outlook on life, etc.).

It generally is recognized that the discontent, the disenchanted, and the dissatisfied establish or join social movements (Heberle, 1951: 106; King, 1956: 17; Blumer, 1969: 8). While most literature suggests this dissatisfaction, Morrison and Steeves (1967: 427) say that participators differ from non-participators also about the nature

and sources of problems encountered while reaching aspirations, the means required to reach them, and beliefs on individual versus group action. For example, people who adopt an economic theory of the state believe basic services are provided only through compulsion. This type of person would more likely become an advocate for change, such as starting or joining a social movement, than would a person who believed that people get what they need and deserve without making any waves (Olson, 1965: 98).

Individual discontent can also be influenced by relative deprivation, how one's situation ranks in relation to where s(he) wants to rank. This highly subjective view has been called the social movement participation paradox and states: "... the degree of dissatisfaction with the situation is dependent on the extent to which one has available and takes points of comparison that are more desired as standards of reference for evaluating one's situation" (Morrison and Steeves, 1967: 423). In other words, the higher your reference groups, the higher your aspirations the greater your potential for dissatisfaction. Two dissatisfied subgroups that have seen a better way of life and think it should be possible for them are the disadvantaged minorities and college graduates who are unable to find meaningful work (Flacks, 1976: 267). Both of these groups, because of individual discontent, are ripe for social movement involvement.

The attraction to voluntary simplicity has been influenced by these three circumstances; cultural confusion, social heterogeneity, and individual discontent. It is seen by some as a rational response to an irrational situation in our world (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977a: 206).

Most thoughtful people now realize that their children's lives will be far different than their own. No longer can we expect them

to have a higher standard of living, and the reality is that it might even be significantly lower. The causes are complex but readily agreed upon, such as shortages of crucial natural resources, distribution problems with food, wars, toxic chemical use causing polluted water and air, overpopulation, and world inflation. These are just a few problems, of which an elementary awareness indicates the end of an era (Johnson, 1979: 236; Ehrlich, 1974: 219; Science Action Coalition, 1979: 180). While some would accept this as the end of an era, others would see it as the beginning of another. Yet, others would not even be concerned. This is an illustration of cultural confusion, where are we going and where we have been. One response is to suggest that we are now entering a new Dark Age of civilization, not unlike the Dark Ages after the fall of Rome (A.D. 476-1000).

The new Dark Age, like the original, will not be an age of affluence. The "jet set" celebrities and their playgrounds will become less newsworthy. Super-sonic jets and luxury steamers will be remembered as the dinosaurs of a bygone age. Bicycles will become more numerous than autos, even in the America of Henry Ford and General Motors. The old electric trolley will come back in modern streamlined form as the answer to the need for cheap pollution-free mass transit. There might well be a revival of sailing ships, which, making use of modern aerodynamics and light metal alloys, could transport cargos around the world cleanly and profitably in an era of high fuel costs. If less attention is paid to the "beautiful people", more will be paid to the plain ones organizing the self-sufficient Adams Morgan neighborhood community in Washington, D.C., painstakingly resolving the problems of worker control in Yugoslav factories, working in and managing the successful kibbutzim industries, managing themselves in Chinese communes and factories, and developing the techniques of organic farming and of self-sufficient housing in various countries of the world. In short, there will be a return to the New England adage: Use it up, wear it out, make it do, do without (Stavrianos, 1976: 188).

New knowledge, such as the dangers of pollutants in our environment or the threat of nuclear energy expansion, have caused us to question the wisdom of continuing to develop indiscriminately as we

have in the past. Others, feeling deprived of desirable attributes such as power, wealth, or prestige, encourage almost any kind of political or military action that will restore the United States to its "rightful" place as leader among the world powers. (I think this sentiment accounts for Reagan winning the Presidential election in November of 1980). Furthermore, as we adapt to the new stress of living with expensive and scarce gasoline instead of cheap and abundant gasoline, there will be continued chaos and confusion.

Norms and values are also changing. Fiscal problems are causing inflation, high credit use and increases in bankruptcy. It now appears wise to buy things and pay for them later with cheaper dollars. Values relating to work also are undergoing changes. There is little identification with a job when it is impersonal and automated or the only one that can be found. Our world is changing in many ways that are not understood or accepted. Turning to social movements like voluntary simplicity can ease the modern stresses for some, while others will find their answers elsewhere.

The middle-class is the strongest advocate of voluntary simplicity. It has been argued this is because they have already experienced the American dream with its storehouse of goodies, and found it wanting. The social movement participation paradox of Morrison and Steeves (1967: 423) would suggest that the middle-class, who generally are better educated, have a greater knowledge of the world and its available wisdoms. Thus, when their dissatisfaction causes a search for points of comparison that are desirable, the range of potential actions is greater. Philosophy and religion are possible sources of answers, as well as the traditional belief that happiness comes from buying more and owning more.

The roles played by communication in social movements range from that of creating further cultural confusion through introducing new ideas or standards to that of increasing awareness of the world beyond oneself. Furthermore, mass communication has the potential to relieve confusion and bewilderment through answers and solutions to problems. Experts, self-appointed authorities, and leaders of various movements are all ready to explain the world as they see it. If people are so inclined they can choose to follow a leader or join a movement that offers reasonable answers, tidy arguments and possible solutions.

Since the individual in a mobile and heterogeneous society may be entirely unaware of how many people share her/his ideas, one unique role of mass communication is to develop a wide-ranging camaraderie between strangers who have like ideas. This is an important function for voluntary simplicity since it is primarily an individual venture, and many advocates are united only through various modes of mass communication, either television, radio, or the press. Motion pictures, while another potent form of mass communication, have not yet picked up the theme of voluntary simplicity.

Journals dealing with themes relating to voluntary simplicity are numerous. Rodale Press currently has several publications with over a million subscribers each; they are Organic Gardening with 1.2 million subscribers and Prevention, with 2.25 million subscribers. Rodale Press is not surprising as a representative of values important to voluntary simplicity since they present a vision of the world as it could be...where technology works in harmony with the environment.

In addition, other journals involved with issues important to voluntary simplicity are Mother Earth News, Acres U.S.A., Countryside,

Manas, CoEvolution Quarterly, the Futurist, and Social Problems, just to name a few. Recent articles specifically about voluntary simplicity have been published in Manas (September 1974), the Futurist (Summer 1977), CoEvolution Quarterly (Summer 1977), and in Social Problems (December 1980).

Research revealed that Richard Gregg used the term "voluntary simplicity" in the 1930s. He wrote a pamphlet with this title for Pendle Hill Press in 1936, while he was acting director of Pendle Hill, a Quaker Center for Religious and Social Study. The pamphlet was reprinted in an Indian journal, Visva-Bharati Quarterly, in 1936. This article, reprinted in the September 4, 1974 issue of Manas and the Summer, 1977, issue of CoEvolution Quarterly seems to have renewed popular interest in voluntary simplicity.

Scott and Helen Nearing (1954) and Ralph Borsodi (1929) are early practitioners of a lifestyle advocating voluntary simplicity. The Nearings have continued to influence the advocates of simplicity with their books and examples that have almost created a cult following. Additionally, E. F. Schumacher has been responsible for the theoretical theme in voluntary simplicity of appropriate size, or human scale and a reduction in needs. He succinctly states:

The cultivation and expansion of needs is the antitheses of wisdom. It is also the antithesis of freedom and peace. Every increase of needs tends to increase one's dependence on outside forces over which one cannot have control, and therefore increases existential fear (Schumacher, 1973: 33).

Environmentally, Rachael Carson's Silent Spring (1962) was responsible for a new fear that our world was being rapidly and systematically polluted beyond repair. Both Silent Spring (1962) and Small is Beautiful (1973) have spawned other publications too numerous to mention but whose overall impact has been to educate the general public

as to the harms inherent in uncontrolled growth and expansion with no thought of the immediate or future hazards involved.

A strong voice for voluntary simplicity comes from religious groups such as the Quakers and Mennonites. Pendle Hill Press of Wallingford, Pennsylvania, published both Gregg's article (1936) and Functional Poverty by Mildred Binns Young (1938). Smaller publishers have printed religiously oriented books on voluntary simplicity, among them Herald Press of Scottdale, Pennsylvania; the William B. Eerdmans Co. of Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Augsburg Press of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Several of the references needed were only available through inter-library loan from Friends University in Wichita, Kansas, and the Mennonite Library and Archives in Newton, Kansas. An extensive network of books dealing with living simply is available.

But the ultimate achievement for an emerging social movement must be a novel way to incorporate the goals and ideologies of the movement. Voluntary simplicity has this distinction with the 1975 publication of Ectopia by Ernest Callenback. This novel is set in Ectopia, a country comprised of the former states of California, Oregon, and Washington after seceding from the United States in 1980. Philosophically, Ectopians do not believe in an ever-continuing growth rate at the expense of the quality of life. While Ectopia represents the values of voluntary simplicity translated into reality and government policy, it is too predictable because its ideology is so blatant. But as a precursor of a new, influential trend, it is clearly unique.

Another indication of the widespread interest with simple living is that it is being used as an advertising gimmick. While in Texas over Christmas, I noticed an article in the Dallas newspaper about

simplifying lifestyles. But simplifying lifestyles, according to this article, could only be done by getting rid of what you own and starting over with new, expensive, and clean-cut furniture that they happen to sell. The media is promoting simplicity because it is trendy, and this makes it valuable to use as an advertising ploy. A new idea is being twisted to convey the same old message to buy and buy.

Modern mass communication can be seen to contribute confusion and dissatisfactions as well as information and answers in a large, heterogeneous society. The press, radio, and television contribute to this dissimulation of information. In this role, they are very important for the general proliferation of social movements. Social movements cannot form or develop without methods for keeping in touch with scattered believers or potential followers throughout the country.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

As stated earlier, all social movements have common characteristics; namely, collective action and creating social change. But these two features, taken together, are not enough to distinguish a social movement from other groups or associations. Other factors are needed. Four unique characteristics needed for social movements have been identified as change, organization, geographical scope and persistence through time (King, 1956: 25-27).

Social movements are distinguishable from other mass movements on the basis of the goals that they pursue. The overall concern is with change, either of relationships, norms, values, or all of these together. Social movements in general vary a great deal regarding opinions about the portions of society that need to be changed, ranging from very narrow interests such as more humane treatment for animals to making major changes in the structures of society. There also are "totalitarian" movements that attempt to control the whole social structure. Other movements are concerned with specific segments of our lives, preferring to work for change in the areas of religion, economics, politics, art, dietary habits, or educational policies (Cameron, 1966: 17-18). If a movement loses its desire for change and begins to defend the establishment and status quo, by most definitions it would no longer be a social movement and has become institutionalized.

Like all worthwhile endeavors, social movements require organization to sustain themselves, grow, and achieve their goals. Movements, unlike other mass behaviors such as crowds and mobs generally have an organization that collects dues, dispenses ideology, and keeps records to help sustain itself. The role of leaders and followers

will be clarified later, but for a movement to succeed, it is necessary to have clear differences in power, responsibility, and prestige, or be working toward that in order to accomplish anything (King, 1956: 26).

Another requirement for a social movement is that it have a wide-range geographical scope. This is different than a local factory strike or community reform movement, for example. It extends beyond any single community and ignores state or national boundaries. A viable social movement will be widespread within a society, and its impact has the potential to reach in many places once it has become organized (King, 1956: 26).

Each of these three characteristics, singly or together, are possible in other group associations, but encapsulating all three is a distinctive sign of a social movement. Persistence through time is the final necessary ingredient. While some movements are relatively short-lived, others can be so long-lasting that they seem to be institutions. A permanence, then, rather than just the transitory nature of an audience or crowd, is required (King, 1956: 27).

Kinds of social movements

Obviously, there can be many different kinds of social movements. They are generally classified on the basis of their immediate and ultimate goals. The goals of a movement are the objectives toward which attention and activities are directed and are one of the shared values that gives a rationale for the movement itself. King says that some form of social change is always explicitly indicated in such an objective, unless the movement has been formed in an attempt to maintain the status quo rather than attempt change. More specifically,

goals can be general or specific. General goals lend flexibility to organizations and to the tactics available to meet these goals. At the same time, they have a broad appeal to members and non-members, but this general aspect can backfire. It is possible there would be problems differentiating several groups with the same broad goals, and potential followers could become disenchanted (King, 1956: 30-31).

Based on their overall goals or purposes, one classification for social movements has identified five general movements. These five classifications are reactionary, conservative, revisionary, revolutionary and escape (Cameron, 1966: 22). Other classifications have been developed but these five are the best, I think, since they explain the phenomenon of movements in the context of the society from which they developed. These classifications are similar to ones named by other researchers. Many times the names are the only features that have been changed and in all other ways, various groups really are the same.

Reactionary social movements are those which advocate returning to a way of life that used to be and exists no longer. The members of such a movement want to return to some part of the past which they define as "grand and glorious" or "the good old days" (Cameron, 1966: 22). Reactionary movements are like Blumer's (1969: 27-28) definition of revival or nationalistic movements. In revival movements, people idealize the past, think about it a great deal and would like to mold contemporary life in terms of what they have seen. Attractions to such movements have been explained, psychologically, as a response to frustration: "Since the future holds no promise for them to form a new, respectful conception of themselves, they turn to the past in

an effort to do so." Desiring a restoration of past values is one type of a value-oriented movement, according to Smelser's (1962: 313) typology. A current example of reactionary or revival sentiment seems to be President Reagan and his insistence on cutting social programs in an attempt to return to an America that he remembers from an earlier, perhaps more satisfactory time for him.

Conservative movements attempt to maintain the status quo, not to change. Since society is not static and changes constantly, this type of a movement senses that the current way of life is disappearing and organizes to obstruct this change. As such, they are similar to reactionary movements since they are value-oriented. In this case, they attempt to maintain the present values rather than to return to past values (Cameron, 1966: 22-23).

Revisionary movements are movements that accept some of the present purposes and methods of the existing order but want to alter or modify some of these structures in order to improve society. Change is wanted, at least of a particular kind, but the entire structure of society is not in jeopardy (Cameron, 1966: 23). This movement is identical to Blumer's (1969: 11) concept of reform as one type of specific social movements. Responses of the public to revisionary or reform movements range from tolerance and token support to ridicule and ostracism for a movement that seems peculiar (Turner and Killian, 1957: 329).

Revolutionary movements have as their goal the total change, or overthrow, of the entire existing social structure. Revolutionaries see the existing system as totally inadequate and want to replace it with one that is considered more suitable. Revolutionary movements

have two branches, the totality of their intended aim and the attack on the legitimacy of the established authorities that insists on suddenness and immediacy (Gusfield, 1970: 87). In Blumer's (1969: 11) terms, this also is a specific social movement, as is a revisionary movement, since there are specific, not general goals to achieve.

The fifth of Cameron's types of movements is that of escape. This type of social movement makes no direct attempt to deal with the existing culture, but members try to remove themselves from it (Cameron, 1966: 23-24). They do not directly attempt to change the institutions of society or its character, but are more concerned with individual behavior (this ignores the issue of society affecting individuals or individuals affecting society). Therefore, the desired change is within individuals rather than society. This style of movement has been called withdrawal by Gusfield (1970: 86) and expressive by Blumer (1969: 23).

It is my belief that, on the surface, voluntary simplicity would be defined as an escape or expressive movement. Advocates of voluntary simplicity practice self-sufficiency in order to free themselves from dependencies on forces or institutions beyond their control. Reductions in personal consumption by voluntary simplicity help individuals become more self-sufficient and less dependent on our economic system for their feelings of self-worth and happiness. Ecological concerns will be enhanced with a reduction in demands for consumption that should reduce the rush for non-renewable resources. At the same time, a return to human scale in living and working environments should further reduce dependencies on high energy use. Escapism as a movement implies individual responses to situations, and the writings on voluntary simplicity indicate that it also is an individual response.

But the goals of voluntary simplicity are more than just withdrawal from society. As stated by Elgin and Mitchell (1977a: 200):

We also believe that voluntary simplicity may prove an increasingly powerful economic, social, and political force over the coming decade and beyond. It could represent a major transformation of western values and signal shifts not only in values, but in consumption patterns, institutional operations, and national policies.

This statement is more than that of escapism. It clearly and concisely says that the goals of the movement involve more than transformation of individuals. The ultimate goals are to change society, and not just with minor changes. Instead, radical and complete change is suggested. Even though voluntary simplicity does not advocate a violent overthrow of the existing social order, their goals of change would completely alter society as we know it now. As such it is a revolutionary social movement rather than just escapism.

Some aspects of voluntary simplicity are not new to Americans, only to a generation that has grown up with total affluence since World War II. As such, voluntary simplicity incorporates some goals of a revisionary movement, specifically desiring only certain minor changes. These changes would be in economic systems, the size of institutions, and bureaucratic policies. Doing away with the various institutions is not advocated, only reducing their size. It does not desire an elimination of national policies but a change in direction, and it does not advocate changing the market system but using it for reform. Those items of lasting value will continue to be bought, while not purchasing less necessary or frivolous products will cause their no longer being manufactured.

Additionally, there are tones of reactionary goals within voluntary simplicity. In many ways, the future will be like our own past,

according to Johnson, author of Muddling Toward Frugality (Spieler, 1979: 29). Voluntary simplicity advocates reject the picture of the future as commonly presented and prefer for values to return to more enduring ones of our less-affluent past. Two researchers at Stanford University, Dorothy Leonard-Barton and Everett Rogers, say that Americans can adjust to the current situation of high inflation and enforced frugality because Americans once practiced frugality as though it were instinctive, or even religious. Before World War II, Americans recycled food, clothing, and other belongings so faithfully that what was left was really trash and not just something to sell at a garage sale. "Waste not" was considered a law, and everyone abided by that law (Trippett, 1980: 84). Returning to the "good old days" in conservation, self-sufficiency, and community involvement by advocates of voluntary simplicity is an indication that the goals of voluntary simplicity are also within the range of reactionary movements.

Voluntary simplicity contains aspects of several types of social movements. Its immediate goals would be considered escapism and reactionary, while its ultimate goals appear to be revisionary and ultimately revolutionary. It indicates far more complexity in its desired goals than initially indicated. If and when it becomes powerful enough and moves from escapism and reactionary concerns to more comprehensive changes, the movement itself is likely to attract far more attention from both potential followers and opponents than it has so far.

Ideology

The ideology of a group is its shared culture, either written or unwritten. It contains justification for the movements existence

and an explanation of its values and ideals.

Ideologies, in brief, are systems of thinking and talking about a situation which are set up on the basis of a partial view of that situation, and which tend to support action now being taken. They are not exactly true or untrue. They are reasoned out and they are reasonable, if we make certain assumptions (usually hidden) and omit certain observations. Their function is to provide an apology, a rationale, or a justification for something which we intend to do. We need not worry about which came first, the intent or the reason, because very likely they emerged together and one will almost certainly appear when we find the other. People in social movements use ideologies to convince themselves and others who share their position that the stand the movement takes is the "right" one, so that they can have their own way and feel righteous too (Cameron, 1966: 78).

The ideological sources of voluntary simplicity develop from three primary concerns; religious, economic, and environmental. Many books and articles dealing with voluntary simplicity or a closely related topic have been published in the past ten years. Several classics sharing the same concerns were published earlier: This Ugly Civilization (1929), Flight from the City (1933), The Value of Voluntary Simplicity (1936), Functional Poverty (1938), and Living the Good Life (1954).

Blumer (1969: 19-20) elaborates on ideologies and says they consist of the following: first, a statement of the objectives and purpose of the movement; second, criticism of the existing structure which the movement is attempting to change; third, a body of defense doctrine which is the justification for the movement; fourth, a body of beliefs dealing with practical issues such as policies, tactics, and operations; and fifth, the myths of the movement. While ideology provides these functions for the movement, it must at the same time provide respectability and prestige. Without these appeals for popular opinion through some respectability, the movement will not grow.

Since voluntary simplicity is primarily an individual or family response, statements of objectives and purpose from a social movement framework do not exist. Instead, the purpose or value of adopting a life of voluntary simplicity is expressed.

We believe that voluntary simplicity may prove an increasingly powerful economic, social, and political force over the coming decade and beyond...and could represent a major transformation of western values and signal shifts not only in values, but in consumption patterns, institutional operations, and national policies. It is driven by a sense of urgency and social responsibility that scarcely existed ten or fifteen years ago. This sense of urgency appears to derive from many serious societal problems, including the prospects of a chronic energy shortage; growing terrorist activities at the same time that developed nations seem increasingly vulnerable to disruption; growing demands of the less developed nations for a more equitable share of the world's resources; the prospect that before we run out of resources on any absolute basis we may poison ourselves to death with environmental contaminants; a growing social malaise and purposelessness which causes us to drift in our social evolution; and so on. These are but a few of the elements which converge to make voluntary simplicity a seemingly rational response to the current world situation (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977a: 200-201).

Thus it is by no means an abolition of possessions as such that is desirable, but merely a redefinition of the notion of fortune in men's lives. That the time is ripe for such a reevaluation can be seen in the increasing scarcity of those aspects which money cannot buy; fresh air, clean water, silence, peace of mind, health, and above all, freedom in the largest sense of the word...Wealth creates dependency and preoccupation with the fluctuations of markets and currencies, factors beyond any one man's control, and sources of worry concerning loss (VandenBroeck, 1978: 2-3).

For voluntary poverty could spring into action at the slightest evidence of excess, as soon as basic needs are fulfilled and the unnecessary begins littering our lives (VandenBroeck, 1978: 4).

The economic imperative for living simply is not only to save money, even though that is a worthwhile endeavor in this age of scarcity and inflation. Instead, voluntary simplicity builds upon that reason. Freed says:

In this book you will find much practical information for saving money, but telling you how to do so isn't my only goal. Frankly, I hope to inspire you to do some independent thinking about economics as it affects the course of your individual life, now and in the coming "age of shortages" (Freed, 1978: Introduction).

Scott Nearing, in his quest for independence from teaching positions that required him to teach non-truths, decided that riches corrupt, both on an individual basis, and more disastrously, on a national basis. "If an entire nation is rich in a world where so many are poor the corruption is often far more disastrous" (Nearing, 1954: 49). In the introduction to Small is Beautiful, Theodore Roszak says:

We need a nobler economics that is not afraid to discuss spirit and conscience, moral purpose and the meaning of life, an economics that aims to educate and elevate people, not merely to measure their low-grade behavior (Schumacher, 1973: 9).

Small is Beautiful has had such an impact on voluntary simplicity that the purpose of that book has almost become the entire rationale for the voluntary simplicity movement.

Reaching backward, this tradition (of smallness) embraces communals, handicraft, tribal, guild, and village lifestyles as old as the neolithic cultures. In that sense, it is not an ideology at all, but a wisdom gathered from historical experience. In our own time, it has reemerged spontaneously in the communitarian experiments and honest craftsmanship of the counterculture, where we find so many desperate and often resourceful efforts among young dropouts to make do in simple, free, and self-respecting ways amid the criminal waste and managerial congestion (Schumacher, 1973: 4).

America's hope, in my view, is this movement for voluntary simplicity - need less and live better - and no more nightmares about incomprehensible totals (Schumacher, 1977: 16).

Statements by Johnson and Slater continue the economic position.

It is primarily ostentatious consumption, the trying to keep ahead of the Joneses, that is so expensive. A movement that tended to ignore what the Joneses had and replaced it with the cultivation of simple pleasures would undermine the economic

pressures of our society. With the niche of industrial society filling up, this can be expected to happen; there will be fewer opportunities to make a fortune, just as the opportunities to secure what is currently considered a middle-class standard of living are being constricted. To carefully consider what is personally important and satisfying, in effect to "know thyself", would be a reasonable and deliberate step toward living successfully with scarcity (Johnson, 1980: 187).

It is the prudent thing to do - to find a secure source of income, to get by with less, to protect children during their most vulnerable ages, and to avoid being trapped in a hazardous situation in old age (Johnson, 1980: 26).

Wise people in every major culture throughout history have maintained that the secret of happiness is not in getting more but in wanting less - voluntary simplicity (Slater, 1980: 189).

Appeals for living a life of voluntary simplicity come also from a religious perspective as well as an economic one.

Voluntary simplicity involves both inner and outer conditions. 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, 1977: 20).

My thesis is that some of the means for freeing our lives lie in drastic limiting of material possessions and processes, in a discipline which paradoxically, has its reward in extension of our facilities and of our strength and insight to use them to the full (Young, 1938: 5).

The hard facts are that in order to raise significantly the standard of living of the many poor of the world it is necessary to lower the living standard of the rich. This means giving up some of the advantages the rich and powerful have in favor of the poor. It means a kind of political action and courage that has not yet been shown among nations (Longacre, 1980: 24-25).

Environmentally, the purpose of voluntary simplicity could be stated as a way to conserve natural resources and at the same time to illustrate the interdependence of our lifestyles with ecological limits.

Our lifestyles are the outward manifestation of exactly how much we have interiorized the growth ethic. When we are immersed in our consumer culture and uncritically accept materialistic goals, we find that our cars, clothes, food, and recreation reflect these values. When wasteful practices do not prick our consciences, then we accept energy inefficiency and ultimately environmental degradation-no matter what we say about ecology and sharing with the world's poor (Science Action Coalition, 1979: 201).

Modern economics does not distinguish between renewable and non-renewable materials, as its very method is to equalize and quantify everything by means of a money price. Thus, taking various alternative fuels, like coal, oil, wood or water power; the only difference between them recognized by modern economics is relative cost per equivalent unit. The cheapest is automatically the one to be preferred, as to do otherwise would be irrational and 'uneconomic'. From a Buddhist point of view, of course, this will not do; the essential difference between non-renewable fuels like coal and oil on the one hand and renewable fuels like wood and water-power on the other cannot be simply overlooked. Non-renewable goods must be used only if they are indispensable, and then only with the greatest care and the most meticulous concern for conservation. To use them heedlessly or extravagantly is an act of violence, and while complete non-violence may not be attainable on this earth, there is none the less an ineluctable duty on man to aim at the ideal of non-violence in all he does (Schumacher, 1973: 60).

The second purpose of an ideology is criticism of the existing structures that the movement wants to change. Voluntary simplicity has several values that it wants to change, for example, the Cowboy Economy.

The basic objective of the Cowboy Economy is to maximize the flow of production, to expand, to grow. The key measure is, therefore, production of goods and services, expressed in economic terms as the Gross National Product (GNP). The key to expanding production and growth is technological advance. In the presence of abundant resources, the Cowboy Economy succeeded well, providing the standard of living that now permits the questioning of its continued value. The questioning is not all aesthetics and environmental morality. The linear Cowboy Economy is running into problems at both ends. As resources become scarcer, the ability of established technologies to increase the flow of production is diminished. No matter how good the technology, if the oil is not there, it cannot be pumped out of the ground. The scarcity of key resources is taxing the system. Capital investments required for expanding the flow of production

are pressing the limits of current capabilities. Moreover, the uncertainty of the success of advanced technologies is raising the risks of investment. These problems are beginning to stimulate a search for a restructured or alternative economy. One alternative to the Cowboy Economy is what might be called the "Conserver Economy," which would be designed to achieve many of the same qualitative social objectives while minimizing the consumption of resources (Elgin and Mitchel, 1977a:256).

Voluntary simplicity also wants to change bigness in society and its institutions.

Bigness is the nemesis of anarchism, whether the bigness is that of public or private bureaucracies, because from bigness comes impersonality, insensitivity, and a lust to concentrate abstract power... (Schumacher, 1973: 4).

Defense doctrines are another purpose served by ideologies. They are developed as justifications for a movement's existence and are only formulated and articulated when, and if, a movement is attacked by the public. There is no reason to formulate defenses before such an occurrence takes place. A need by outsiders to attack a burgeoning movement will only occur when the movement has grown and spread in such a way as to be perceived as a threat to the established society. For example, when the goals of voluntary simplicity evolve from inward, personal change to openly revisionary or revolutionary goals, society will be more likely to begin an attack. This will result in the formation of defense doctrines. Voluntary simplicity has only had to deal with minor criticisms rather than institutionalized attacks so far. This indicates that it may be widespread but it not yet visible in such a way as to alarm or actually threaten the status quo.

The fourth purpose of an ideology is to elaborate on the policies, tactics, and practical operations of the movement - its day to day strategies. These policies and operations would only need to be

elaborated if the purpose of voluntary simplicity is to organize as a movement with the immediate purpose of changing society rather than the behavior of the individuals involved. Only if voluntary simplicity becomes powerful and widespread enough to arouse institutional attacks or change its immediate goals would tactics for continuation or survival need to be developed and distributed.

The myths of a movement are those stories that are told, or used as splendid examples of the values of the movement. Cameron (1966: 81) says they are utopian ideas to inspire action. In the case of voluntary simplicity, Walden (1854) by Thoreau is probably the most universal example of living simply. Statements like "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" (p. 10) and "beware of all enterprises that require new clothes" (p. 20) are known almost universally. Thoreau (1960: 14) is one of the first to advocate voluntary poverty: "None can be an impartial or wise observer of human life but from the vantage ground of what we should call voluntary poverty." More importantly, not only did he advocate this but he also practiced it by the side of Walden Pond for two years.

Gandhi has become another figure in the myths of voluntary simplicity. Material simplicity, one of the five basic values of voluntary simplicity, addresses the issue of Sarvodaya, the welfare of all. Sarvodaya suggests that justice in consumption should be in light of "... not wanting what the least of the inhabitants of this earth cannot have" (Gandhi, 1957: 299; Elgin and Mitchell, 1977b: 6). Functional poverty, as an example of Sarvodaya advocates accepting wider responsibility for helping the needy of the world and is a way of stripping off encumbrances in order to prepare for such responsibility (Young, 1938: 7).

While ideology serves the purpose of explaining the social movement, it does this in two diverse ways. Much of it is articulate and scholarly and consists of treatises of an abstract and extremely logical character. These usually are in response to intellectual criticism and are created in an attempt to gain respect for the movement within the intellectual world. The ideology serves a popular purpose, also. It attempts to appeal to the masses outside the movement and presents the values of the movement in a form that is more readily comprehended.

Since voluntary simplicity as a movement has not been widely attacked, much of the rationale for an intellectual response has not developed. This void has been filled with more popular writings, appealing either to people with a strong religious orientation or to people whose intellectual searches for meaning and answers to the world's problems lead them to this as a solution. While appealing to various groups of people, it appears that voluntary simplicity is particularly attractive to the well-educated, middle-class people who have some flexibility and leisure in their lives that allows them to consider and try out various options.

As voluntary simplicity only meets the definition of ideology in three out of five categories, this indicates that it is not a fully developed social movement as far as its impact on the rest of society and its need for all the functions that an ideology can serve. It has not yet been identified as a force to be concerned with and has not had to develop the defenses or tactics that a fully viable, active social movement will need for survival.

Group Cohesion

Beyond sharing a meaningful ideology, a sense of loyalty and similar consciousness are essential for holding a movement together. This cohesion, arising from common aims and values and sometimes inspired leadership, is what gives a movement its durability. When this cohesion is lacking, the movement will be in danger of failing at its goals (King, 1956: 33). One thing that holds movements together is that many members are alike. Most members of a movement are similar in demographic characteristics: age, economic class, sex, education, occupation, religion, politics, and so on (Cameron, 1966: 37). This could be from identifying like problems arising in a shared environment, or because members of a movement are attracted by "their kind of people".

The membership of voluntary simplicity is primarily composed of two sets of people. The first group are those individuals or families that have voluntarily taken up simple living after years of being actively involved in the mainstream of life - commonly classified as the rat race. While this group probably is not widespread, they do make good news stories and serve as important models for others.

The second group tends to be younger, more activated by philosophical concerns, and are more active politically. Their attributes have been surmised, based on other groups that similar people are likely to join. They share similar demographic characteristics such as being predominantly young, equally divided among sexes, generally white from middle or upper-class backgrounds, well educated, generally politically independent, and largely urban and bimodal in

income (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977a: 208). Many of these people are living in communities with close ties to each other or in communal living arrangements. Since the size of a group affects intimacy, these small, scattered groups are reinforcing the shared values of voluntary simplicity more than people living in more isolated, or restrictive, localities. A shared culture influences values and it is assumed that many people in their twenties or thirties have experienced enough in common that many of their concerns are similar.

Organization and Status System

All social organizations and social movements need to have an organization if they are to survive and accomplish anything. This organization defines the division of labor between leaders and followers with certain members of the group authorized to give orders to other members, expect obedience, and represent the group in relations with outsiders (Heberle, 1951: 269).

While all groups are not organized exactly by these standards, there will be a division of functions that is more or less agreed upon by the members themselves. Obviously, the most visible role is that of the leader since it carries the greatest potential for drama and visibility. King (1956: 35) identifies two kinds of leaders; charismatic and legal. A simple distinction is that charismatic leaders control by personality, while legal leaders exercise control because of their position. Killian (1964: 441) further identifies three broad classes of leaders - charismatic, administrative, and intellectual. Charismatic leaders are perceived to have an influence because of personal qualities that give them special qualifications for leadership. Heberle says that the typical charismatic leader

is often regarded as the creator of the movement and its ideas, and often believes this (Killian, 1964: 442).

The administrative leader tends toward pragmatism, and is willing and able to take care of the small details that constantly need to be done in any group. While acting as a conservatizing force on the values of the social movement, an administrative leader is likely to be more concerned with strengthening the power of the movement itself (Killian, 1964: 442).

The intellectual leader of a social movement elaborates on the values of the movement and justifies them. As explained earlier, the ideology of a social movement is an important feature for several reasons and it is the job of the intellectual leader to expand or elaborate upon this ideology. The job of an intellectual leader is to be well-informed, logical, and reasonable rather than to be an activist. According to King (1956: 71), the contribution of the intellectual adds a flavor of respectability and thus appeals to those thoughtful people to whom obvious propaganda might not touch.

The roles of charismatic, administrative, and intellectual leaders are in ideal terms and it is unlikely that they will ever be that clear cut and simple in reality. These three types of leadership roles demand skills and attitudes that are not only different but potentially conflicting, and few people would be capable of handling more than one of them (Killian, 1964: 443).

In terms of leadership of voluntary simplicity, E. F. Schumacher would definitely be an intellectual leader since his trend-setting Small is Beautiful (1973) has had such an impact on members of this movement. Some might feel that an intellectual leader should

identify herself/himself as writing to and for that specific movement. However, a leader who deals with ideology or intellectual issues can be a part of a movement without being identified as such. For example, Schumacher showed no indication in the early 1970s as being aware of voluntary simplicity, but by 1977 he was saying that it was the hope for America's future (Schumacher, 1977: 16).

Another intellectual leader is Richard Gregg, who wrote the first article on voluntary simplicity in 1936. It then was published in an Indian journal and only reappeared in Manas in 1974. Then it was reprinted in CoEvolution Quarterly in the summer of 1977 in the same issue that Elgin and Mitchell's first article on voluntary simplicity was published.

Voluntary simplicity does not have any charismatic or administrative leaders. This is not surprising when considering that it did not form under the leadership of any particular person, but is a movement that spontaneously erupted throughout the country during the early 1970s in response to numerous societal problems. Intellectual leadership, such as Gregg's, has been borrowed from the past. Religious values have been strong contributors in aiding this spontaneous movement, which was created by societal pushing rather than leadership pulling.

No social movement can exist without followers. Social movements are composed of members who are united about an issue or issues. A movement can exist without identifiable leaders, but it is entirely non-existent without followers. Among these followers a sense of membership or "we-ness" is necessary to sustain a movement. *Esprit de corps*, in Blumer's (1969: 12) terms, can be thought of as the

organizing of feelings on behalf of the movement. It is the feeling of being identified with each other in an involvement larger than themselves and with people with whom they are at ease. People inspire and reinforce each other, and their new identity as a group member is thus strengthened and solidified.

Developing esprit de corps can be accomplished in three different ways: developing an in-group, out-group relationship, through informal fellowship, and as a feature of ceremonial behavior (Blumer, 1969: 12).

Developing in-group out-group relationships is familiar to all of us. A classic example is defining a common enemy in order to unite heterogeneous factions within a country. It has been suggested that Iran's present war with Iraq is an example of this since Iran has such severe internal problems. A strong ideology also helps in this function. For a social movement, having an enemy imparts a sense of solidarity and cohesion.

When people meet together on an informal basis they can get to know each other as human beings. This is why informal fellowship rather than formality helps to create esprit de corps. People unconsciously impart and assimilate the gestures, attitudes, and values of each other when they trust them. This further contributes to solidarity and is even easier if members already have some characteristics in common.

Solidarity is further enhanced by the use of ceremonies. Mass meetings, rallies, and other large demonstrations have always had great value for developing esprit de corps among a group. Hitler knew this and so did Martin Luther King. On a smaller scale, ceremonies marking passages in life or joining organizations foster

feeling of common identity, with sentimental attachments developing which reinforce these feelings (Blumer, 1969: 14-17). Voluntary simplicity has not yet grown and developed to this position.

As far as absolute numbers of voluntary simplicity members, it is hard to get reliable data since there are no membership roles and no accurate way to estimate it. Elgin and Mitchell (1977a: 208) think that the number of people entirely and totally living a life of voluntary simplicity is perhaps four to five million adults, which was three percent of the adult population in 1977. These people are the active, vital edge of the movement, probably engaging in organic gardening, recycling, natural foods, simple clothing, bi-cycling, and back-packing on vacations. They are more family oriented and are likely to engage in meditation or some other form of personal growth.

Partial adherents to voluntary simplicity as a group are larger than the first group, with perhaps eight to ten million adults. They act on some of the basic values of the movement and are largely middle-class, middle-aged, white and urban.

Sympathizers are those in agreement with the values of voluntary simplicity but for various reasons do not act upon these values. Polls such as the Harris in 1975 and the Roper in 1976 indicate that at least fifty percent of all Americans were ready to cut back on production and consumption in order to conserve resources and keep the economy strong. Now with inflation and costs far higher than even then, it is reasonable to think that this percent has increased.

About half of all Americans would fall into the group of the indifferent, unaware, or those opposed to voluntary simplicity. This

group represents two subgroups. Those who are extremely poor (involuntary simplicity or poverty) are likely to see voluntary simplicity as a threat to their chances for striking it rich and living the materially good life. The other subgroup is highly achievement oriented and voluntary simplicity is seen as a threat to their personal lifestyles and achievements.

Of these four possible responses to voluntary simplicity, the largest and thus potentially most important group to the future of voluntary simplicity are the sympathizers. Depending on how they interpret events in the world and the culture around them, they will be the most likely to influence the eventual growth or decline of it as a social movement (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977b: 11).

CAREERS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Social movements do not spring forth fully organized with their goals clearly articulated. Instead, they fumble along, slowly gaining acceptance along the way and perhaps even changing goals. Since change is many times a slow process there is always a career, or natural history, of a social movement that can be viewed as a series of steps or a progression of phases.

There are two ways to look at social movements and their careers. One is to observe internal development, events within the movement itself, and the other is to observe external development, the relations with the outside world. Internal developments consist of steps from the incipient phase through the organizational phase and into the last, stable phase. External development consists of innovation, selection, and integration (King, 1956: 40-49).

The incipient phase of a social movement is an ironic phenomenon because it can only be recognized and defined in retrospect. The beginnings of a social movement are rarely identifiable, especially if it forms simultaneously in many places rather than as the result of a charismatic leader. An incipient phase can only be identified after its initial growth spurt. This initial growth will cause intense loyalty among members and group cohesion will be quite strong. Obstacles to immediate further growth are a lack of clearly defined and articulated goals, means to achieve these goals, and a precise organizational and status system. Limited size, experience, and resources are other factors to make this early stage tenuous. As a result, the mortality rate among new, young, social movements is very high during this incipient phase of development (King, 1956: 42-43).

The organizational phase comes into existence as the ideals, goals, and plans that caused the incipient phase to develop are elaborated upon and the movement toward functioning as an organization occurs. As a division of labor develops, the movement becomes more complex, and the ideology undergoes modification and rearrangement to meet this complexity.

Additionally, norms for members' behavior are developed. These norms govern the behavior of members toward each other and toward outsiders and express the values of the group. They range from unquestioning obedience to leaders to choices concerning dress, entertainment and culture, to the development of special languages. Adopting these norms symbolizes a member's loyalty while strengthening identification with the group (Killian, 1964: 437-438).

A desire for growth and expansion, even when wanted for strengthening the movement, has the potential for conflict because of possible differing viewpoints expressed by new members. Losing members during the organizational phase occurs as those with little of their initial enthusiasm leave, as well as those followers who feel that the movement is accomplishing its goals too rapidly or too slowly.

The organizational phase does not last long before a successful group develops into a stable phase. There are two primary reasons for stabilization. First, any group that remains unstable for long dissipates its energies. Second, converts will leave if normlessness and shifting goals are discovered in a movement rather than stability (King, 1956: 46).

Stability is the last internal development of a movement. This stability is in regards to its group development, rather than any

position or standing within society. Goals are no longer shifting, values have remained stationary, tactics have been developed, and hard work is more necessary now than inspiration. Division of labor becomes clearer and more orderly. At this point, charismatic leaders may limit the development of stabilization because more organization and direction is needed at this time (King, 1956: 47).

In addition to internal development, groups or movements also develop in light of the society in which they have occurred, that is, external development. Choosing or rejecting new elements of any movement will many times also indicate acceptance or rejection of the movement itself. However, it is possible for ideology or goals to be accepted by the general public while the movement itself is not. In the analysis of external development three stages will be used. They are innovation, selection, and integration. New ideas as well as new social movements go through this development process before being fully integrated in society (King, 1956: 49).

Innovation is the process of introducing something new such as a product, an idea, or a movement, into society. Innovation is the beginning of social change and as such is a complex issue. How and why it occurs is interesting, but of more consequence is what happens after a novelty is introduced because in a mass society many new ideas are constantly being introduced. They cannot all last and become normative. By definition, an innovation has to be a novelty and without some increase in its popularity beyond its initial proponents, an innovation will not survive to the next stage.

The next stage is one of selection. Here innovations are chosen or rejected by society. This acceptance rarely involves the entire

society but only certain people or subgroups. Even this selection is tenuous since an acceptance doesn't guarantee survival for the novelty since changes in attitudes can and do occur.

The last step, integration, is not entirely understood in the career of a social movement. When this does occur, though, it does not mean universal acceptance. Favorable selection of a novelty does not guarantee integration, but it is necessary in order for integration to occur. What is distinctive about many subgroups is that they have adopted innovations rejected by the rest of society and this sometimes sets them apart.

Voluntary simplicity has been adopted by several subgroups, the most highly visible ones to the general public are the Society of Friends, the Mennonites, the Amish, and other groups that practice frugality as a matter of faith and religion. These groups have traditionally been seen living a simple life. Other subgroups that have adopted voluntary simplicity as a lifestyle are not so visible, and are thus not so likely to be known. While there is beginning to be more exposure of these newer followers, it seems as if voluntary simplicity has not yet become integrated except as a feature of the religious groups that have practiced it for years and years. Society has considered this lifestyle as acceptable and customary for them.

Voluntary simplicity for groups other than religious groups is probably only barely into the stage of selection. Here the movement as an organization and the goals toward which it is working will be observed differently and can be accepted or rejected separately. This is a function of the selection stage, since voluntary simplicity should still be an innovation. But since the ideals and values of voluntary

simplicity are not entirely new and, for the most part, come from earlier traditions, this stage of innovation appears to have already been passed.

CONCLUSIONS

I think that voluntary simplicity is at the beginning of a career as a social movement that will show it to be a force of great change over the next few years. This change will initially be in personal values and lifestyles of individuals and families. As these changes become widespread, however, the results will be felt within society as a whole. As long as the initial change is not expected to come from society, the goals of voluntary simplicity are likely to be less threatening to dominant values and other institutions and there will be less personal threat for identifying with such a movement (Zald and Ash, 1970: 519). These characteristics suggest that it is likely to be left alone to develop and grow into a particular outlook on life that could provide a needed bridge from a traditional, industrial world view to a more humanistic, steady-state world view that acknowledges the critical issues of our times.

Common characteristics of social movements are change and collective action. The change desired by voluntary simplicity is complex in that it is on two levels, the personal and then societal. The first is an immediate goal while the second appears to be an ultimate goal of the movement, when considering the probable impact of achieving the immediate goal.

Collective action has not yet fully developed. This is a spontaneous movement protesting issues inherent in a modern, capitalistic society and adherents of voluntary simplicity are united because of similar views of the world and conditions that they feel should be changed. Irrespective of a religious, economic, or ecological motivation

for simplicity, advocates share a common consciousness and are united by that sharing. This is enough, in Heberle's views (1951: 7) to define the existence of a social movement.

Collective action and change are not enough to distinguish a social movement from other groups or associations. King (1956: 25-27) has identified three unique characteristics, in addition to change, that a social movement should have. They are geographical scope, persistence through time and organization.

Geographical scope means that a social movement extends beyond any single community and ignores state or national boundaries. Voluntary simplicity can be shown to have a wide ranging impact in several ways. First, Schumacher, an intellectual leader of voluntary simplicity, lived and worked in England although his impact has been worldwide. Gandhi lived in India, England, and South Africa, and his influence has also been worldwide. Newspaper articles from all over the United States indicate concern for the world's problems and are beginning to present voluntary simplicity as one solution.

Louis Harris in 1975 reported that 92% of Americans were willing to eliminate annual automobile changes, 91% were willing to give up meat one day a week, 90% were willing to eliminate annual fashion changes, and 82% were willing to reduce the amount of advertising. When the choice is between changing our lifestyles to have and consume less or enduring continued inflation and unemployment, the American people would choose a change in lifestyle by 77% to 8% (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977b: 11). This shows that the ideas expressed by voluntary simplicity are practical and widespread concepts in our lives.

Persistence through time can be easily seen with voluntary simplicity. As an ideal it has existed for centuries. It has been advocated and practiced by leaders such as Jesus, Mohammed, Thoreau, and Emerson. In the twentieth century, Gandhi, Gregg, the Nearings, and Borsodi have been influential in bringing this to the public's attention. More recently, Schumacher has reemphasized some of the concerns and voluntary simplicity has emerged again as a valuable movement. Its impact seems to be persistent and steady.

What voluntary simplicity does lack as a social movement is organization as a group into leaders and followers. It has emerged from several different philosophical and religious traditions that have in common a powerful sense of social justice and world concerns. While there is an attempt by various researchers to study this spontaneous gravitation toward voluntary simplicity, no one has been identified as a leader. Without administrative leadership to clarify ideology and formulate tactics, it is unclear if voluntary simplicity as a social movement will be able to develop into a state of stability required for it to create a lasting and significant impact. Perhaps, though, it does not even need leadership since it has developed spontaneously without it.

As stated by Killian (1964: 452), the significance of social movements lies in their consequences for the larger society rather than their development. Unless a social movement causes a marked social change, the movement has been one of curiosity rather than one of a major impact. But even those movements that originate and then eventually fail have an impact on society. For example, they may leave behind the seeds of another movement that will only need to wait for the

right circumstances to continue what was started earlier. The movements of the 1960s, now largely inactive, caused an intense examination and critical look at American society. This caused new and growing concerns for the environment, quality of life, and the rights of minorities (Oberschall, 1978: 283), all of which created the environment conducive for voluntary simplicity to reemerge.

Survival of a social movement is not an indication of either success or failure. A movement can cease to exist because its goals have been reached, because it has failed to reach them, or because its advocates have chosen to pursue other concerns. It can be institutionalized as pressure groups, political parties, or other public agencies.

In the United States the economy is a central institution, with private ownership and profit maximization as desirable and reasonable goals. At the same time, society allows undercurrents advocating public ownership and public welfare. Since these ideas and institutions are all intertwined, anticapitalistic protest movements will affect other areas of society as well as the economy (Useem, 1975: 51). Voluntary simplicity, with its goals of increased self-sufficiency, less concern with material objects or a high GNP, and a greater interest in defining and attempting to achieve a better way of life, is clearly anticapitalistic. These goals or values have the potential to radically change our future.

If voluntary simplicity is perceived as a threat to capitalism rather than just an idea to be used for marketing techniques, then it is possible that society will attempt to repress it. This is not likely unless it develops much faster and more vocally than it has to date.

Another possibility is what happened to many of the movements of the 1960s. If the economy gets worse and as advocates grow older, they could become weary of a life of simplicity and begin to be more concerned with jobs, careers, or responsibilities that force them to be more concerned with making a living (Oberschall, 1978: 283). In Flack's terms (1973: 265), they become committed to everyday life at the expense of political participation because there is not enough time, energy, or resources for both.

Irrespective of its ultimate fate, voluntary simplicity has the potential to be of great significance in our society for three reasons. First, our previous era in the United States has been one of abundance. This abundance is now beginning to shift to an era of scarcity. As we deal with our own decline in economic and resource abundance, we also must face the issue that our past has contrasted dramatically with the material poverty of the rest of the world. For many, this material abundance has been guilt-provoking and can only be eased when attempting to live in a way more in line with the majority of the world's inhabitants.

Second, voluntary simplicity makes a value statement about individual lifestyles and the fact that they can make a difference in dealing with the critical issues of the present. Lifestyles and the values that they express are more than symbols of what we are, they can become instruments for change (Science Action Coalition, 1980: 201). Issues such as ecosystem overload, alienation, unmanageable scale, complexity of institutions, world-wide conflict and so on can be dealt with in a unified and coherent way by voluntary simplicity.

Third, voluntary simplicity allows individuals to grow while at the same time not turning inward and ignoring the world around them. This kind of inner, fulfilling growth that is encouraged will potentially cushion the adjustment to the growing shortages that are inevitable. At the same time, the potential for developing an inner security that does not depend on external possessions or situations is created. People can grow in qualitative ways rather than quantitative ways. Briefly, then, the needs of the individual and society are meshed when adopting or advocating a life of voluntary simplicity. For these reasons, it will have an impact on our society.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bettelheim, Bruno
 1961 "The Ignored Lesson of Anne Frank," in David Evanier and Stanley Silverzweig (ed) *The Nonconformers*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Blumer, Herbert
 1969 "Social Movements" in Barry McLaughlin (ed) *Studies in Social Movements: A Social Psychological Perspective*. New York: The Free Press.
- Borsodi, Ralph
 1929 *This Ugly Civilization*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Callenbach, Ernest
 1972 *Living Poor With Style*. New York: Bantam Books.
 1975 *Ecotopia*. Berkeley: Banyan Tree Books.
- Cameron, William Bruce
 1966 *Modern Social Movements*. New York: Random House.
- Center for Science in the Public Interest
 1977 *99 Ways to a Simple Lifestyle*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Ehrlich, Paul R. and Anne H. Ehrlich
 1974 *The End of Affluence*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Ehrlich, Paul R. and Richard Harriman.
 1971 *How to be a Survivor*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Elgin, Duane and Arnold Mitchell
 1977a "Voluntary Simplicity. Life-style of the Future?" *The Futurist*. (August), 200-261.
 1977b "Voluntary Simplicity." *The CoEvolution Quarterly*. (Summer), 4-19.
- Eller, Vernard
 1973 *The Simple Life (The Christian Stance Toward Possessions)*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Flacks, Dick
 1976 "Making History vs. Making Life: Dilemmas of an American Left." *Sociological Inquiry*, 46 (3-4), 263-280.
- Freed, Dolly
 1978 *Possum Living*. New York: Bantam Books.

Gamson, William

1968 Power and Discontent. Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press.

1975 The Strategy of Social Protest. Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press.

Gandhi, Mohandas K.

1957 An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth. Boston: Beacon Press.

Gerlach, Luther P. and Virginia H. Hine

1970 People, Power, Change: Movements of Social Transformation. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Gish, Arthur G.

1973 Beyond the Rat Race. Sockttdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press.

Gregg, Richard

1936 The Value of Voluntary Simplicity. Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill (essay #3)

1977 "Voluntary Simplicity." The CoEvolution Quarterly. (Summer), 20-27.

Gusfield, Joseph R. (ed)

1970 Protest, Reform, and Revolt: A Reader in Social Movements. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Heberle, Rudolf

1951 Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc.

Johnson, Warren

1979 Muddling Toward Frugality. Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications.

Jurgensen, Barbara

1974 How to Live Better on Less. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.

Killian, Lewis M.

1964 "Social Movements" in R. E. L. Faris (ed) Handbook of Modern Sociology. Chicago: Rand McNally.

King, C. Wendell

1956 Social Movements in the United States. New York: Random House.

Linder, Staffan

1970 The Harried Leisure Class. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Longacre, Doris Janzen
1980 Living More with Less. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press.
- Luke, Tim
1980 "Radical Ecology and the Crisis of Political Economy." Telos, Vol. 46, (Winter): 97-101.
- Morrison, Denton E. and Allan D. Steeves
1967 "Deprivation, Discontent, and Social Movement Participation: Evidence on a Contemporary Farmers' Movement, the NFO." Journal of Rural Sociology, 32: 4 (December), 414-434.
- Nearing, Helen and Scott Nearing
1954 Living the Good Life. Harborside, Maine: Social Science Institute.
- Nearing, Scott
1972 The Making of a Radical. New York: Harper and Row.
- Oberschall, Anthony
1978 "The Decline of the 1960s Social Movements." Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change. Vol. 1, 257-289.
- Olson, Mancur, Jr.
1965 The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- The Progressive
1980 "24,000 Tons of Broccoli." The Progressive (December), 3.
- Schumacher, E. F.
1973 Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered. New York: Harper and Row.

1977 "Taking the Scare Out of Scarcity." Psychology Today. (September), 16.
- Science Action Coalition
1980 Environment Ethics. Garden City: Anchor Books.
- Simple Living Collective
1977 Taking Charge. New York: Bantam Books.
- Slater, Philip
1974 Earthwalk. Garden City: Anchor Press.

1976 The Pursuit of Loneliness. Boston: Beacon Press.

1980 Wealth Addiction. New York: E. P. Dutton.
- Smelser, Neil J.
1962 Theory of Collective Behavior. New York: The Free Press.

- Spieler, Joseph
 1979 "The Possible Crash of 1980...And How to Make the Most of It." Quest 79 (October), 25-35, 86-88.
- Stavrianos, L. S.
 1976 The Promise of the Coming Dark Age. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Stowell, Robert F.
 1955 Toward Simple Living. Hartland, Vermont: Solitarian Press.
- Thoreau, Henry David
 1960 Walden: or Life in the Woods and On the Duty of Civil Disobedience. New York: Signet Classics.
- Toch, Hans
 1965 The Social Psychology of Social Movements. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company.
- Turner, Ralph H. and Lewis M. Killian
 1957 Collective Behavior. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Useem, Michael
 1975 Protest Movements in America. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.
- VandenBroeck, Goldian
 1978 Less is More: The Art of Voluntary Poverty. New York: Harper and Row.
- Young, Mildred Binns
 1938 Functional Poverty. Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill. (Pamphlet #6)
- Zald, Mayer N. and Roberta Ash
 1970 "Social Movement Organizations: Growth, Decay, and Change," in Joseph Gusfield (ed) Protest, Reform and Revolt: A Reader in Social Movements. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

by

LINDA RABORN MITCHELL

B.S., Kansas State University, 1976

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Manhattan, Kansas

1981

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to determine if voluntary simplicity is an emerging social movement as its advocates claim. Voluntary simplicity, used first in 1936, describes a way of life outwardly simple and inwardly rich. This lifestyle consists of frugality of consumption, a strong sense of environmental urgency, a desire for smaller scale living and working conditions, and a quest for higher human potential. It has the ability to shift the focus of our society from purely quantitative concerns to qualitative concerns and seems significant now as a response to severe social and environmental problems.

Social movements require certain components to be considered a social movement rather than any other group or association. These components are change, organization, geographical scope, and persistence through time. Additionally, social movements need an ideology which is the shared culture of the group and give it direction and motivation.

Voluntary simplicity has a strongly articulated ideology, emerging from three primary directions, religious, economic, and environmental. Voluntary simplicity also meets the criteria for change, desiring both immediate goals of personal change and ultimate goals of societal change. Geographical scope and persistence through time are also both met. However, for it to emerge further as a powerful force for change it will need to develop an organization. Without leadership it is not likely to develop the division of labor necessary to actively grow and achieve its goals.

Our previous era in the United States has been one of abundance, which is now shifting to an era of scarcity. As we deal with our own decline in economic and resource abundance, we must face the issue that our past has contrasted dramatically with the material poverty of much of the rest of the world. Adopting lives of voluntary simplicity or some of its values deals directly with the needs of the individual, society, and our position in the world in the years ahead. Voluntary simplicity meets the definitions to be classified as an emerging social movement. Its future, however, depends on an active, unifying leadership to develop the potential that it has presented.