

project, it's lost a lot of this complexity and stuff that made it interesting in the first place." Even when meaning is not lost in methodology, Margaret is "plagued by the idea that nothing I'm doing research-wise is ever going to have any relevance to anybody's life." The hope of becoming a person able to help others change their lives for the better guided Margaret toward a career as a therapist. But efforts to do so have all too often proved inconclusive, and sometimes simply hopeless, especially if their recipient was not "a YAVIS—young, anxious, verbal, intelligent, and sensitive." And, she adds, even "if you've done a really good job, they don't think you've helped them at all, and they think they've done it all themselves—and in a sense they have."

By most sociological measures, Margaret's work is much more rewarding in terms of prestige and meaning than the work her parents do. Yet she asks much more *from* work and *for* herself than they do, she says, and that may be one reason she finds less "fulfillment" in work than they do. "Work is really what they do with their lives," she observes. "Working is what makes them feel worthwhile." She agrees with them that "people should work for what they get" and that "once you get into doing it, it kind of becomes an end in itself as well as a means to get your money or whatever it is that you want." But she does not fully share her parents' conviction that work is simply good and "what we're supposed to do." Nor does she always feel, as they seem to, that "work is a pleasure in itself." "I'm not as convinced of the all-importance of working as they are," she concludes. "It's important for me to do nothing sometimes, to relax," and so the big shift in her life is "doing more things for myself, taking more time for myself than I think that either one of my parents take for themselves. So to that extent I have succumbed to the 'me decade,'" she jokes, secure in the knowledge that compared to her peers the extent is minimal.

Compared to representative figures of our biblical and republican past, however, Margaret is less than fully committed to her calling. She has not given up her dreams of clarifying the mind and making the world a better place, but she now wonders at times if psychology is "really the most fulfilling place for me to be." She looks back wistfully to the tangible creativity, discipline, and sense of completion she found in the pottery and craftwork she did as a student. Doing therapy does give her a sense of fulfillment: "Just the opportunity to get close to people in the way that you do in therapy is real nice and you grow a lot. You get better and better at sharing your emotions and giving to other people." But asked how therapy contributes to the larger social world or community, Margaret shakes her head and smiles ruefully, "The only community I ever think I'm adding to is the one of people who have been in

therapy and talk like psychologists, you know, and that's not particularly positive."

For employed Americans, work offers not only the basis of a decent material life but a great deal of self-esteem. Unemployment is peculiarly painful for those to whom what one does is what one is. Yet even for quite successful Americans, such as Brian Palmer and Margaret Oldham, work as job or career does not seem to be enough. To identify *wholly* with work in that sense is suffocating, even if the higher rewards are not limited by narrowing opportunities in the upper echelons. The absence of a sense of calling means an absence of a sense of moral meaning. When they do not find it in their work, people like Brian and Margaret seek for such meaning, as we might expect, in some form of expressive individualism, to be pursued with the like-minded and loved ones. But the ties one forms in the search for meaning through expressive individualism are not those of the moral community of the calling. They are rather the ties of what we might call the lifestyle enclave.

The Lifestyle Enclave

At some point in midlife, many Americans turn toward sharing with others in intimacy instead of striving to outrace them. Thus, nearing forty, Brian discovered in the wake of an abrupt divorce that "I didn't like being alone. I like to be with someone." During an interregnum of single-parenting and evenings spent alone with music and books, he realized that "self-reliance is very important to me, but I am not an island, and I'm not satisfied as a human being as a single entity." A second marriage of "sharing, openness, and communication" with a "creative, challenging, totally self-reliant" woman ensued, as if according to the script of a well-resolved "midlife crisis." According to Gail Sheehy's enormously popular book *Passages*, midlife is the time to move "out of roles and into the self" in order to discover "an enlarged capacity to love ourselves and embrace others."¹⁴ Once epitomized by youthful romance, the expressive self is now supposed to revive in midlife and ripen in retirement. And, it seems, for increasing numbers of Americans, the sooner the process begins, the better. By the end of 1981, 57.1 percent of all male retirees had gone on Social Security pensions before they were sixty-five, and 60 percent of all retirements were voluntary.

The very possibility of retirement on a mass scale is a recent one, sponsored by the social insurance systems of the modern welfare state and built on the broad back of a national industrial economy. A keen

observer of life in a flourishing "retirement community" reports how few of the men there seemed to regret leaving their jobs. They took pride in their career success as executives, civil servants, school teachers, and small businessmen. Yet they retired as soon as they could afford to because they were "sick of working," hated "the pressure," had "paid their dues," wanted "to get out of the rat race"—and, finally, because they "never thought their work was socially necessary." Their work "seemed only a means of achieving a satisfactory private life—a 'life style,' as some put it," concludes Frances FitzGerald. They "had had jobs, but they had no work in the sense of lifelong interests," or a calling. Yet what leisurely pursuits do these freedom- and privacy-loving individuals most enjoy? Golf and bridge, games for sociable problem solvers who love rules as much as competition, who want "security within a fixed social order" as neatly laid out and tended as the harmonious landscape of a golf course.¹⁵

The term "lifestyle," which Frances FitzGerald heard in Sun City Center, Florida, turned up frequently in our interviews. It is worth pondering its meaning. FitzGerald is certainly right in seeing it as an expression of private life. It is linked most closely to leisure and consumption and is usually unrelated to the world of work. It brings together those who are socially, economically, or culturally similar, and one of its chief aims is the enjoyment of being with those who "share one's lifestyle."

Though the term "community" is widely and loosely used by Americans, and often in connection with lifestyle, we would like to reserve it for a more specific meaning. Whereas a community attempts to be an inclusive whole, celebrating the interdependence of public and private life and of the different callings of all, lifestyle is fundamentally segmental and celebrates the narcissism of similarity. It usually explicitly involves a contrast with others who "do not share one's lifestyle." For this reason, we speak not of lifestyle communities, though they are often called such in contemporary usage, but of lifestyle enclaves. Such enclaves are segmental in two senses. They involve only a segment of each individual, for they concern only private life, especially leisure and consumption. And they are segmental socially in that they include only those with a common lifestyle. The different, those with other lifestyles, are not necessarily despised. They may be willingly tolerated. But they are irrelevant or even invisible in terms of one's own lifestyle enclave.

The lifestyle enclave is in important respects an outgrowth of the sectoral organization of American life described in chapter 2 as resulting from the emergence of industrialization and the national market. For a long time, private life and its leisure and consumption patterns were expressions of social status, in turn linked to social class, as in more

traditional societies. But as social status and social class came to depend more and more on a national occupational system and less and less on local communities, a degree of freedom became possible in private life that would not have been conceivable in the small town or even for older urban elites. By the 1920s, a concern for lifestyle expressiveness was clearly evident in the more affluent sectors of American society, though public opinion remained ambivalent.

The massive immigration of ethnically and linguistically unfamiliar groups that accompanied the industrialization of the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exposed Americans to cultural diversity, and so also might seem to lie behind the current phenomenon of lifestyle enclaves. While the presence of immigrant groups did accustom Americans to the presence of the culturally different, and eventually to toleration of those who remained morally irrelevant to them, ethnic groups themselves were communities or quasi-communities rather than enclaves in our sense. They attempted to reproduce the entire institutional complex of a functioning society in rural and even, as far as possible, in urban settings.

The contemporary lifestyle enclave is based on a degree of individual choice that largely frees it from traditional ethnic and religious boundaries. Among those to whom we talked, largely middle-class and similar in occupation, we found a variety of lifestyle enclaves. The newer kind of lifestyle enclave was perhaps first visible soon after World War II in what was called the "youth culture." Patterns of recreation, dress, and taste in matters such as music or food characterized young people more or less independently of ethnic or class background. These emerging youth patterns were interpreted as reactions to the "strain" of prolonged education and delayed participation in the adult world. Whether the emergence of lifestyle enclaves in midlife and among the retired can be interpreted as a reaction to the "strain" the adult occupational system places on older people is an open question. Certainly we have some evidence that that is the case. We might consider the lifestyle enclave an appropriate form of collective support in an otherwise radically individualizing society. Or, to put it somewhat differently, since the purpose of individuation has always been linked to the ability to find others who reflect and affirm one's selfhood, perhaps the lifestyle enclave is the necessary social form of private life in a society such as ours.

Although lifestyle enclaves may be most obvious in large cities, where groups of people have little in common except the way they spend their leisure time, many aspects of American life today can be viewed as incipient lifestyle enclaves. Romantic love is a quintessential form of expressive individualism. When it becomes not only the basis for the

choice of a life partner but the condition for the continuation of a marriage, it tends to make of marriage itself a lifestyle enclave. Brian Palmer's second marriage has something of that flavor. Many once genuine communities, though still referred to as communities, may be well on their way to becoming lifestyle enclaves. Joe Gorman's Suffolk, for example, has long ceased to be a community in the sense that the traditional American small town was a community. For its inhabitants, most of them recent, it is largely a residential enclave chosen as a place in which to pursue appropriate private lifestyles. In this it is no different from thousands of other American suburbs.

Wayne Bauer's Santa Monica is far from a typical suburb. His own sense of himself and of his work is very much related to an ideal of community. He sees his life as that of a full-time activist contributing to the community by organizing its members in efforts to create a more equal and just society. According to Wayne, a self defined by success on the job or in a career obscures the "truly meaningful values that will never desert" a person and "will lead to a stronger, saner world." His passion for "politics as a way of life" has crystallized the rebuilding of a once-shattered life, rescued at least a little of "what we used to dream about in the sixties," and laid the foundation for what he perceives as his lifelong calling. It does not denigrate Wayne's aspirations to point out that Santa Monica is a very special kind of place with a very high concentration of people like Wayne. Even more to the point is that Campaign for Economic Democracy activists share a lifestyle, even down to similar tastes in music, wine, and food. Thus even those who would most like to think of our society in organic communitarian forms cannot avoid the lifestyle enclave as the effective social expression of our personal lives.

To take a contrasting example, we talked to many conservative Evangelicals who have their own version of what an interdependent organic community ought to be, but who end up just as unmistakably members of lifestyle enclaves as do Wayne and his CED activist friends. This is not the whole story about either activists or Evangelicals. To the extent that their serious commitments carry them beyond private life into public endeavors, they do indeed transcend the lifestyle enclave and represent genuine community. But the tendency of contemporary American life is to pull all of us into lifestyle enclaves of one sort or another.

We should not exaggerate this tendency, however. Probably most groups in America today embody an element of community as well as an element of lifestyle enclave. The distinction is more analytic than concrete. When we hear such phrases as "the gay community" or "the Japanese-American community," we need to know a great deal before we can

decide the degree to which they are genuine communities and the degree to which they are lifestyle enclaves.

When the existence of a "youth culture" was first discovered, one of its functions was thought to be providing identity symbols for adolescents engaged in the process of separation from their families but not yet prepared to go to work as adults. Those symbols would define them, however marginally, as distinct from others, and thus as having an identity of their own. In a period when work is seldom a calling and few of us find a sense of who we are in public participation as citizens, the lifestyle enclave, fragile and shallow though it often is, fulfills that function for us all.

Grounding the Self

We have looked at various ways Americans today separate out their ideas of the self from family, religion, and work, and how they seek lifestyle enclaves to find the self-expression missing from the rest of their lives. We have also seen how their forebears left their homes, churches, and careers in order to begin again. Breaking with the past is part of our past. Leaving tradition behind runs all the way through our tradition. But how is such a separate self to be shaped and grounded? Do we have answers today that correspond to those provided by Winthrop's God, Jefferson's nature, Franklin's progress, and Whitman's poetic feeling? Almost everyone who talked with us spoke of "values" in reply. Some of them, like Joe Gorman, make no bones about what those values "really" are and should be for everyone. Those who don't know better need to be told, like children, "Shut up and listen!" Those who do know need to pitch in to stem the chaos and "cooperate with each other for the good of the community." Others, like Wayne Bauer, return repeatedly to "this value question" to emphasize that we should be "helping one another and working together" instead of seeking our own success. Margaret Oldham is more conscious of the fragile basis of her "values." "It really sort of comes down to the authority I say I give my values . . . all those sorts of goals I've set up for myself, that kind of motivate me and tell me which way to go, what to avoid."

If the self is defined by its ability to choose its own values, on what grounds are those choices themselves based? For Margaret and many others, there is simply no objectifiable criterion for choosing one value or course of action over another. One's own idiosyncratic preferences are their own justification, because they define the true self. Brian Palmer