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decide not to call again. And there isn't the pressure to preserve your 'reputation' that there is when you're still in high school and living at home."

Not that the attitude toward sex is casual. Many girls do not expect their first love to be a lifelong partner because they believe that loving requires learning and a certain degree of experience. In one sense, committed couples are almost moralistic about sex, seeing "making out" as not only juvenile but cheap and dishonest as well. They are equally intolerant of loveless adult liaisons and therefore resent any suggestion that a relationship is the same as "having an affair." For them, an affair conjures up the image of something illicit, slick and superficial—the antithesis of what they themselves are seeking. A thoughtful Bard senior speaks for many of her generation: "What I'm looking for is basically the kind of relationship I'd want in marriage, but I don't want marriage just yet. I'd like to be with a man, not a boy, someone who is independent, who knows who he is and what he wants. The relationship should be exciting, though not formal. We would go out, but not under the strain of making mutual impressions. We would also stay in when we wanted—often, I hope. Yes, there would be sex, but not exploitation." Asked why she thinks in terms of a relationship rather than a marriage, she hesitates. "I guess because for the time being I've given up the search for an ideal mate and security ever after." As for love—"I'm not sure what the word means. I'd like to be *emotionally involved*." A genuine relationship is valued as something good in itself and not necessarily as a prologue to marriage. But, as one girl observes, "the qualities you want would suffice for a husband, and marriage is always a thought." In general, though, if the relationship is sufficiently absorbing and sufficiently free from hostility, there may be no leaning either toward or away from permanence.

Of qualities valued in a partner, genuineness is the most important. "You have to be yourself, not put on an act. You want someone to trust as a friend, not just as boy friend or girl friend."

Because the vitality of the friendship depends so much on spontaneous activities, a wide range of interests is desirable. "I like a girl who *does things*," says a nineteen-year-old Texan. "Someone who swims, sky-dives, collects coins, plays guitar." A Smith girl says simply, "He should be *curious*. Like: Why tides? Why bugs? Why everything?"

Though there's a strong element of palship, girls still want to be treated as girls. "If he sees a dandelion or a daisy on the way to pick me up, he brings it. And he shows that he's aware of me, even if it's only 'I like the way your braces glint in the sun.'"

Boys and girls both value humor, flexibility, a willingness to accept criticism. Twenty years ago, a "super" date was almost certainly good-looking, "smooth," a good dancer and an amusing companion. In 1969, the "really great" person is probably still physically attractive (though not

in a conventional way perhaps), but mostly he's described in terms of what he (or she) is, in himself. He is "deep," emotionally if not intellectually; he is generous; he is sensitive to the natural world as well as to other people and their needs.

The activities which nourish a real relationship tend to be simple and unstructured. On principle, the young people involved want to have fun without spending money; they make their own entertainment. Talking is a favorite sport, and the best talk is serious. In high school, usual topics are parents, college, life goals and always, always, one's own identity crisis. College couples spend a lot of time talking about high school (already a big joke), religion, politics (particularly sbs and student riots), the currently popular books like Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* and Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*. Everywhere there's much talk about *talking*. "I haven't been able to get through to you lately," a boy will say. Or in another mood, "We're really *communicating* now, and I'm *feeling* what you mean." Since the heart of a real relationship is soul-searching, there's not much trivial chatter. There will be talk about people but little gossip. "Superficial things never get into it," sighs a vivid University of Massachusetts coed. "Sometimes I would like a bit of that."

Listening to music together provides an important channel of communication. Sometimes it's a group activity. After coffee at the Student Union, six or eight people drift back to someone's room for a session of hard rock or soul music. Later, there may be "jamming"—a mouth harp and two guitars, possibly—or again, talk, this time about the music. Alone together, a couple is likely just to listen. "The nicest times," says a Clark freshman, "are lying on a soft rug in a dark room, playing a song that means something special to both. Like *To Emily Whenever I May Find Her*. A moment like that is very fragile, very beautiful, because the physical presence of the other person intensifies the effect of the music, and the music creates a bond between you." The same kind of experience, a deeply mutual response, may occur at a concert. "After we've heard Donovan, we don't even want to talk. We just feel happy."

Couples involved in a real relationship like to eat together; the shared meal becomes a kind of sacrament. If they can afford it, they may go to "some place where you can sit forever, like an Italian restaurant with candles, checked tablecloths, and somebody tinkling *Arrivederci Roma* on the piano." Or they may whip up a spaghetti dinner in her mother's kitchen, experimenting with clams and oregano. Or share a picnic.

Asked to recall an absolutely ideal occasion, young couples will often choose one involving an almost childlike innocence and naturalness. "On Plum Island—a bird sanctuary—we ran across miles of sand, gathering driftwood and bits of old bottles washed up by the sea." "We got up early Easter Sunday to see the sun rise. I gave him a pine cone and he gave me a tulip." "We were driving past this

waterfall in Vermont and got the idea of sliding through it." "On the way to a dance we saw an amusement park and decided to do that instead. Ferris wheel, merry-go-round, cotton candy—the whole bit." "If you're really close to someone," says a New Yorker, "you enjoy the simplest things. A coffeehouse is better than a bar. A concert in the park is better than Lincoln Center. Home cooking, or eating with friends, is better than the Copacabana. We don't like to dress up for formal occasions but just to feel good, to swing."

Some relationships come to an abrupt, wrenching end, while others finish amicably without either partner feeling bereft or betrayed. Everything depends on the nature of the people involved, on the quality and length of their association. While some relationships develop into marriage, the initial assumption is that the union is temporary. Both partners expect to be enriched by the experience of knowing each other completely. And if, like Nora and Mike, the couple has enjoyed a long, satisfying friendship, they can often break off without bitterness or jealousy even if one becomes interested in another person. Sometimes the couple drifts apart because the relationship has served its purpose. Several of the college girls interviewed said they had deliberately sought total relationships in their freshman year to prove their desirability after the misery of being high school wallflowers.

It is when either the boy or girl feels exploited that the rupture can be traumatic. Often the tension of constant emotional intimacy simply becomes too much. "You get tired of playing shrink or confessor. If he has too many hang-ups, he just dumps and you keep saying, 'I'm sorry. It must be awful.'" The trouble may be one person's getting serious when the other sees no possibility of a joint future. The girl may be overcome with guilt over sex or feel used because she gave something valuable of herself and was hurt and ultimately rejected. Worst of all—most damaging and most disillusioning—is to discover that the other person is "unfeeling" and has been "just playing you along." Lying or hypocrisy is the ultimate betrayal: "... if you trust someone and he shows, in some way, that the relationship means nothing to him—or her."

Why do so many young people seek "relationships" rather than mere "dates"? The most obvious answer is security. The world, to anyone under thirty, often seems a gigantic plastics factory where monstrous dies stamp each individual with a number. The traditional authorities—parents, school, church, police, government—are no longer automatically accepted; the problems to be solved (racial tension, overpopulation) loom immense. In the face of overwhelming complexity, a young person looks for someone to confide in,

someone who will recognize and respond to his unique, essential self. "I want to share deeply with one boy," says a Radcliffe girl. "I'd like to do things for him every single day—knit a sweater, have him over for dinner. If I'm shopping, I'd like to pick out a special surprise for him."

Closeness, sensitivity and individuality are cultivated. Formality, rigidity, artificiality and competition are held in contempt. Because there's less fear of sex, there's a greater freedom for boys and girls to know each other as friends. "I look for someone I won't have to play games with," says a Yale student. "A real person who won't hold back or cover up. Basically, we all want to hang loose."

Of ninety college students interviewed, the majority of those who had entered relationships felt the experience to be worthwhile. But how many can one sustain without emotional damage? It's possible for girls to switch high school steadies several times without pain, but the impact of a single relationship is much stronger and more enduring. "If you had too many after high school," one coed points out, "there'd surely be a sadness, a fear that something was wrong with you. Maybe you just aren't capable of loving?" And a young Columbia professor adds, "Among my college friends, the second or third relationship usually becomes a marriage. Each takes a certain toll, and if the experience hasn't been a happy one, you have to find a way to compensate for the emotional drain. You begin to insulate yourself against hurt and progressively become so self-sufficient you no longer contemplate marriage. I've seen this happen to men as well as to girls."

Social scientist David Riesman observes: "This new pattern which becomes in many groups monolithic can be as cruel to those who find it constraining as the older dating-rating game was to those who did not play it well. . . . And of course in such an intense environment, changing partners may be very difficult, and thus gaining experience may be difficult. One may be the captive of early (if not premature) experience, as under the older system people might be the captives of superficial 'lines' and mutual duplicity."

To many, however, it seems at least a more realistic preparation for marriage. "These kids have never had anyone rely on them before," says a Harvard tutor. "They're unaccustomed to the experience and a little scared—but want it desperately because it's a measure of maturity. Closeness and interdependence help them escape adolescent self-absorption. In a real relationship they learn to understand the space around themselves and how other people will affect that space . . . whether the space is indeed big enough for two."

THE END

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