A TRIBUTE TO ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE RESEARCHERS AND EXPLORERS

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It is both difficult and encouraging to write a final commentary as the first Editor of Alternative Lifestyles.

In 1977, Barry Singer and a few other devoted professionals joined with me to launch a journal that would publish research, theory, and informed commentary on alternatives to monogamous relationships and the traditional nuclear family. We recognized that most journals were (and still are) focused on conventional conceptions of gender roles and "marriage" and "the" family.

We planned to emphasize interdisciplinary research leading to a holistic understanding of intimate-sexual expression in various kinds of relationships and lifestyles. We wanted to relate the impact of feminism on initiatory behavior and the demise and growth of other-sex and same-sex relationships. We hoped to publish articles on the scripting of gender roles as they affect sexual overtures and lifestyles.

We were aware of the lack of financial and social support for research within academia and from funding agencies. We knew
that the narrow disciplinary reward system with separate psychological, sociological, human development, and clinical approaches could not allow for a full grasp of intimate relationships.

In short, we had a common vision—a vision to explore the many motives and meanings for sexual exchanges. We realized that cross-cultural and subcultural research of both a qualitative and quantitative nature would provide a more comprehensive view of alternatives. Since most journals are heavily quantitative and since they publish little or no in-depth behavioral-observational research from the field, we decided we would “open the gates” to encourage articles that might not be accepted by other journals.

*Alternative Lifestyles* is now well known and widely cited in professional and popular media. Although I will no longer be Editor due to a divergence in goals and work patterns with Sage Publications, I sincerely hope the journal will expand and become even more prestigious. I hope that more professionals will contribute sophisticated articles building on those in the first three volumes.

I salute the editorial board and the contributors for their willingness to help shape our journal. My energy and spirit are with the future of alternative lifestyles and those who courageously research them.

As I cross the North Sea from London to Holland, and as I head north to Scandinavia, I feel a sense of accomplishment from the first three years as Editor of ALT. I envision a world where academia will finally move beyond its ivory tower so that it can relate more to real feelings, beliefs, and conduct of real people—so the social sciences will *really* be behavioral sciences and not just reports about behavior.

I yearn for open acknowledgement of the compatibility of humor and scholarship. Now is the time for compassionate research and theory. We cannot allow the fear of traditional people and institutions to bind us to mediocrity and “more of the same.” Progress would be a fresh and innovative approach to multi-method data collection over time, comparing what we believe with what we *say* we do and with what we *really* do in our intimate lives.

Economic hardships and political repression need not stop those who are determined to create and maintain alternatives to possessive and male-dominated relationships. It is time to support