



# The Journal of COBWS Education

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PLEASE NOTE:

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## EDITORIAL

At long last, here it is - the first Journal of COBWS Education on issues of gender. The Response to my query for articles and letters in the last issue was high - this Journal contains most of the responses.

The articles and letters included here each takes an unique approach to the discussion of gender issues. Ann Hawkins, member of the COBWS Board of Directors, acknowledges Outward Bound for effectively reducing status differences attributed to gender. Rebecca Holcombe challenges Outward Bound to look more closely at the problem of working with men and women who are socialized differently from one another. Val Beale, Instructor and Course Director at the VOBS, presents an alternative to the heroic quest model in an attempt to better identify and capture the experience of women on an Outward Bound course. Bill James, a professor at Queen's University, extensively explores the canoe expedition using both literature and experienced informants to identify the masculine and feminine qualities of the activity. Moon Joyce, Instructor and Course Director at the COBWS, using a variety of metaphors, challenges us to explore and value the feminine qualities of our courses and working communities. Finally, Daniel Vokey, Instructor and Course Director at the COBWS, brings the issues of feminine and masculine qualities in Outward Bound into a philosophical context, arguing that feminine qualities have been largely left out.

Why all this talk (verbiage) on gender issues? Above all, I believe we have a responsibility to continue looking at what we do with an open heart and a reflective and sometimes critical eye. Outward Bound originates from roots that addressed the needs and interests of men; it makes good sense now to look at it in light of women. Also, the response to my open letter in the spring Journal (volume 3, number 1) reflected a great deal of interest and concern with respect to gender issues. The 1988 "Honeybee" meeting in Greenwich Conn. on women's issues is further testimony to the importance of this topic. This Journal though, is simply a beginning. Its purpose is to promote dialogue, questioning, and further articles and letters. In this regard, we heartily welcome your response for our next issue.

The publication of this Journal would not have been possible without the contribution of Gary Yee who, through his computer wizardry, single handedly compiled and designed the volume. Thanks also must go the contributors and to a wonderful editorial board that included Philip Blackford, Steve Thomas, Andy Orr and Jane Mead. All volunteered their time to the effort. In addition, I would like to thank Philip Blackford and Steve Thomas for their generous financial contributions which enabled us to provide the Journal to COBWS staff at no cost. It has been a pleasure to coordinate this issue.

Nancy Suchman

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## LETTERS

To the Editor:

I must admit that I had a strange approach/avoidance reaction to responding to your request for dialogue on exploring gender issues in Outward Bound.

In attempting to understand my reaction, I came to the realization that it is this very willingness to explore gender issues that sets Outward Bound apart from most of the organizations in which I operate. Gender issues, while they are always operating in the corporate domain, are not easily addressed there. The high anxiety triggered by Ontario's new Pay Equity legislation illustrates this point most clearly. The issue is not so much money but power. Indeed, researchers in this area Kanter (1977), Morrison, White and Van Velsor (1986) point out the danger to women in management positions of appearing concerned with equity for women.

My experience at Outward Bound was a refreshing respite. Our brigade leaders, Jeff Wilson and Jill Bennett, modelled shared leadership in a very powerful way. The work itself: canoeing, rock climbing and just setting-up camp, was the over-arching factor and competency, not gender formed the leadership focus in our group. How freeing it was to learn that fear of heights is not gender specific.

The opportunity to experience the power of the "work itself" and the added uncertainty of carrying it out in an unfamiliar environment were very meaningful aspects of my Outward Bound journey.

My life at Outward Bound from the "Loose Moose" brigade to the Board of Directors has been full of wonderful and sometimes frustrating inconsistencies, contradictions and paradox just like the rest of my life.

The Journal of COBWS Education in which your letter appeared reflects some of these very contradictions. The Outward Bound motto: To

Serve, To Strive and Not to Yield, if taken out of context is very hard to reconcile with Vic's wonderful reflections on the river as a metaphor. In Vic's reflections, I definitely see the feminine value of connectedness, while the Outward Bound motto emphasizes more masculine approaches. For me, the real challenge was in the struggle to accept them both.

I would very much like to join with you in exploring new ways to bring to light, celebrate and effectively use the femaleness nestled in the very essence of the personal experience we call Outward Bound.

Ann Hawkins  
Toronto, Ont., Canada.

To the Editor:

This summer, I worked with Thomas James, a Brown University professor, on a feasibility study for the New York City Outward Bound Center. Throughout the course of the summer, I listened to various people struggle to redefine Outward Bound in a way that was sensitive to the needs and wants of its urban constituents. As I listened, I was struck by the extent to which some of the rhetoric and metaphor used to describe minority experiences with Outward Bound paralleled that used by feminist psychologists to describe women's development of a sense of self in a male-centered society. They talked of the need for Outward Bound to listen to the voices' of minorities, and to recognize and encourage minority contributions and accomplishments. Many of the minority instructors that I talked to saw validation of minority experiences as one of their primary responsibilities. Thus, they may design programs that build cultural pride and self-respect in cultural minorities, at the same time as they promote compassion and respect in others.

Just as inner-city students come to Outward Bound courses with different expectations than



most middle class, upwardly-mobile students, some of the most recent research on the development of self-concept in women suggests that males and females may bring different expectations to certain experiences. For example, women tend to view themselves as an intersection in a net of relationships, while most men view others from a position of personal autonomy, a position of separation. This view could suggest that the experience of personal development is different for many men and women, indeed, a recurrent theme in my readings is that while women identify affirmation and acceptance into a community as prerequisites for the development of self-confidence and self-definition in many women, such a sense of belonging is the carrot at the end of the development process in male-centered institutions. Upon graduation from university, having developed certain epistemological skills, students are welcomed into the "community of scholars". In *Journey to the East*, Herman Hesse has to complete a personal pilgrimage before he can fully appreciate the importance of a community of others.

While these general dichotomies have their limitations, they also could illuminate Outward Bound's discussion of the role of service in its programs. For example, "service" may generally be perceived as a universal ideal. But it also may mean very different things to a woman who grew up subservient, whose every action was governed by the needs and wants of others, and to a man who is accustomed to making his own decisions, independently of the demands of others. It means different things to a girl whose intellect is not nurtured, who is "self-effacing". Again, these generalizations are somewhat crude, but they suggest that if an Outward Bound course does not build the differences in the experiences of its constituents into its pedagogy, it forfeits some of its strength as a paradigm of personal and group empowerment. To what extent do most Outward Bound courses address these differences? How should they address these differences? I don't know.

In a new book called *Women's Ways of Knowing*, M. Belenky, B. Clinchy, N. Goldberger and J. Tarule outline a "housewifery" model of education, in which the *"teacher respects(s) the students own rhythms, rather than imposing an arbitrary timetable."* This model is

based in question posing and flexibility; *"good mothering requires adaptive responding to constantly changing phenomena, it is tuned to the concrete and particular. A response that works with a particular child at a particular moment may not work with a different child or the same child at a different moment."* It is a model based on affirming the worth of the child's experience, supporting them when they falter, but never dictating the way in which the child interacts with the basic Outward Bound philosophy.

Rebecca Holcombe  
Providence, R.I., U.S.A.

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# MEN'S JOURNEYS & WOMEN'S JOURNEYS

## - A DIFFERENT STORY? -

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by Valerie Beale

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Perhaps one of the reasons that people keep coming on Outward Bound courses is that they are fascinated with the idea of going on a journey. The thought of a journey into the unknown seems to nourish a yearning deep within our spirit to challenge ourselves, explore ourselves, and remind ourselves that there is something great out there -- and that we are more than the everyday routines of our life may suggest.

As instructors we lead expeditions into remote mountain regions, deserts and waterways. We use the outdoor environment as a classroom for the physical and emotional development of our students. Often our students have chosen an Outward Bound course because they are dealing with questions of meaning and purpose. When this happens the course may become a journey of self discovery.

Our job as instructors is to help students interpret the experiences of the course and shape those experiences into a pattern that has meaning for them. We do this with varying degrees of skill depending on how much we have in common with our students, and how objective we can be in recognizing and articulating the events on a course as they ensue and our own skills and abilities as counselors. Much of the way we see the world will inevitably rub off on our students. It is hard to stop ourselves from unconsciously imposing our own myths and values onto other people. We are all products of our upbringing, and our lives are imbued with the images, myths and stories that have given our lives meaning. As we become more aware of our own style as instructors it is worthwhile for us to think carefully about the metaphors that we may be molding onto our courses.

This journal is about "gender issues", and in this article I wish to examine how gender relates to the myths and metaphors about journeys that are written by men are qualitatively different from those written by women. This leads me to

wonder whether men and women have different understandings of what journeys are all about. I will begin by considering the traditionally male model of journey -- the "heroic journey" metaphor -- and I will explain how this model has tended to dominate our understanding of journeys. I will then discuss a model for journeys that has arisen in recent women's literature. I will end by discussing briefly how this information might be incorporated into Outward Bound courses.

### The Heroic Journey Metaphor

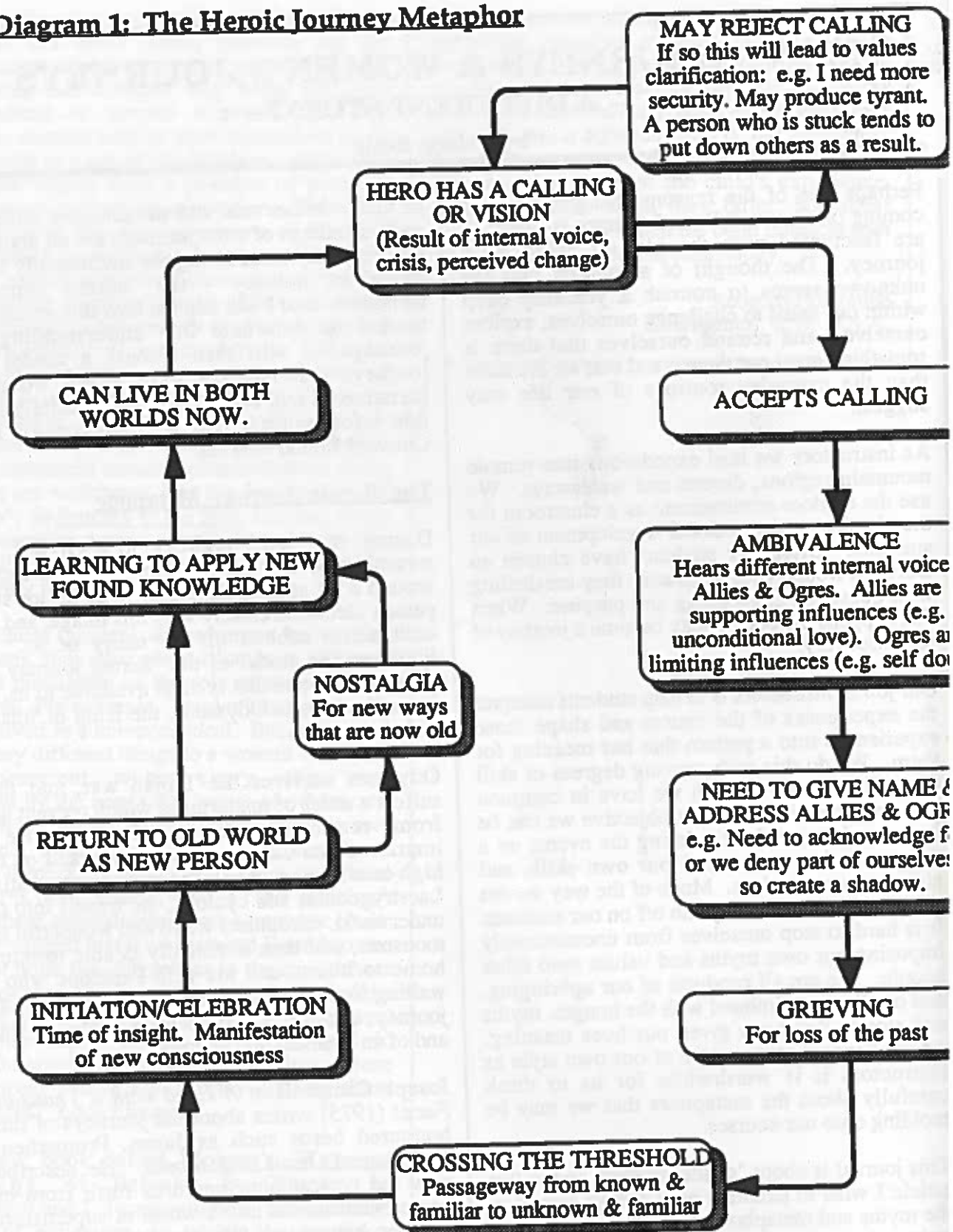
During the early eighties at COBWS the metaphor of the "heroic journey" was tossed around a lot at staff trainings. One senior staff person identified closely with this image, and his enthusiasm rubbed off on many of us. In literature the model of the "heroic journey" is probably the one that is most available to us. A favourite hero is Odysseus, the King of Ithaca. This is his story.

Odysseus survives the Trojan war, and then suffers a series of misfortunes which prevent him from returning to his island home. He is imprisoned on Calypso and shipwrecked on the high-seas, he escapes from the man-eating Laestrygonians and cyclops; he travels into the underworld, encounters weird and wonderful sea monsters, and then eventually is able to return home to Ithaca, and his wife Penelope who is waiting for him. Odysseus' tale is the story of a journey, of trials and tribulations along the way, and of an eventual homecoming.

Joseph Campbell in *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1975) writes about the journeys of time honoured heroes such as Jason, Prometheus, Mohammed, Jesus and Moses. He describes how the typical hero ventures forth from his home environment into a world of supernatural wonder, encounters fabulous forces there, and with the help of his allies, is able to confront the various ogres that beset his path. He is then free



**Diagram 1: The Heroic Journey Metaphor**





to cross the threshold of experience into and enlightened world. At the end of the journey the hero comes back having acquired supernatural abilities which he is eventually able to integrate into the everyday environment whence he came. The "heroic journey" is depicted in diagram 1.

William C. James (1981) compares the career of Campbell's typical hero with the experiences of modern day canoeists in the Northwoods. Both journeys, he maintains, can be divided into three main stages: (i) separation and departure; (ii) the trial and victories of initiation; and (iii) return and re-integration into society. Both, he maintains, are the expression of a spiritual quest which occurs as the traveller aligns his individuality with the greater forces of nature.

Jung suggests that these journeys reflect a pattern deep within the human spirit, which is a pattern of departure and return – and the journey implicit in between. He describes how the archetype of the hero is most likely to emerge in periods of uncertainty and personal challenge, when the individual is wrestling with negative feelings and attitudes. If, despite these negative feelings, he can locate and express that part of himself which is noble and valiant, he becomes enlightened. He writes (1968):

*"In mythology the birth of the hero... is synonymous with an increase in self-consciousness. It is as if a stone lying on a germinating seed were lifted away so that the shoot could begin its natural growth."*

The development of the heroic side of the personality is a breakthrough that represents a key stage in the individual's growth toward greater self awareness and conscious living.

In the past I have found the metaphor of the heroic journey very satisfying as I have watched groups progress through an Outward Bound course, wrestling with that part of themselves that doubts their abilities and eventually being amazed at what they can actually do. The ritual element of some key events such as a sweat lodge or sauna, post-solo feast, and end of the course that is devoted to thinking about the transfer of the experience and re-entry into the home environment may also apply to the model of the heroic journey.

However, for all the richness inherent in the model, I am wondering increasingly to what extent it presents a limited view of life. Does the idea of a heroic journey adequately describe women's experience on an Outward Bound course? Is it appropriate to think of women's spiritual quest as "a journey"? Do women adopt the model of a heroic journey that we present on an Outward Bound course just because their own experience has yet to be fully articulated and they have no other? A survey of the literature that gives rise to the heroic journey metaphor reveals a distinct focus on male experience, and where women do emerge, they tend to either take on traditional "male" qualities, such as Joan of Arc, or alternatively they take supportive roles such as wives, lovers, assistants, and whores. Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Bunyan's *Pilgrims' Progress*, even Castenada's apprenticeship with Don Juan, are laudable examples of heroic quest where the protagonists overcome substantial barriers on both inner and outer levels... but they're all men! As a woman I am unavoidably and powerfully confronted with the question: "What of women's experience?" Where in our immensely rich culture are the stories of women's journeys, women's friendships, women working with women, women's love for women? What of the heroine? Is there a comparable experience? Are women's stories still waiting to be told? These are questions that we must ask ourselves more and more as we develop Outward Bound courses for women. What metaphors can we use that will resonate with women's experience.

The issues are complex, and they involve political and social perspectives that both confuse and give depth to the task at hand. At this point in history the female version of journey and quest are less clearly defined. The thought systems that have dominated the Western World are the product of patriarchy and have neglected female experience. Old testament religions, traditional psychology, the notions of power that undergird our economic institutions, all betray the pervasiveness of patriarchy. Gerda Lerner (1981) points out the importance of examining female's experience in its own terms:

*"Women have been left out of history not because of the evil conspiracies of men in general, or male historians in particular, but because we have only considered history in*

*male centered terms. We have missed women and their activities because we have asked questions of history that are inappropriate to women."*

She stresses the importance of asking the right questions, and perhaps for a time focusing on a female centered enquiry to redress the balance. Judith Kegan-Gardiner (1982) expresses a frustration echoed by other women writers (e.g. Schaefer, 1980; Christ, 1980) that our conscious understanding of the differences between men's experience and women's experience is limited because we have so very few words and concepts available to express our inner experience. Carole Christ, in *Diving Deep and Surfacing* comments: "If the hero has a thousand faces, the heroine has only a dozen". She suggests that a problem arises when women live out unauthentic stories that they did not create.

### Women's Journey

In my search to learn about themes that are important to other women, I have delved into some of the books recently written by women. In the process I have been struck by two themes. First, if the hero's quest is typified by an outer journey and overcoming overt challenges, the heroine's journey is primarily an inner one which involves self doubt and learning to love herself. Second, there is almost always an underlying certainty that deep within the human spirit lie healing, integrative and transcendental forces. Often women's stories are centered around reclaiming these inherent nurturing capacities. For example, in *Journal of a Solitude* (1977), May Sarton records in intimate detail the progress of her inner quest:

*"In this journal I hope to break through to the rocky depth, to the matrix itself... My need to be alone is balanced against my fear of what will happen when suddenly I enter the huge empty silence if I cannot find support there."*

Though it appears on the surface to be a quiet book, a violence and fear emerges that portrays Sarton as a warrior who has battled every inch of the way to a share of serenity.

The focus on inner journeys also emerges in the Martha Quest series by Doris Lessing. In the final and most complex of the series, *The Four*

*Gated City* (1983) the central character, Martha, is occasionally able to experience herself as "a soft, dark, receptive intelligence". She also talks of "a quiet empty space behind which stood an observing presence". The book is about her journeys into that space. It involves her wrestling with a search for identity, struggling with the practicalities of living, experiencing depression and emotional chaos, and eventually travelling through this confusion to find out that indeed she does have visionary powers.

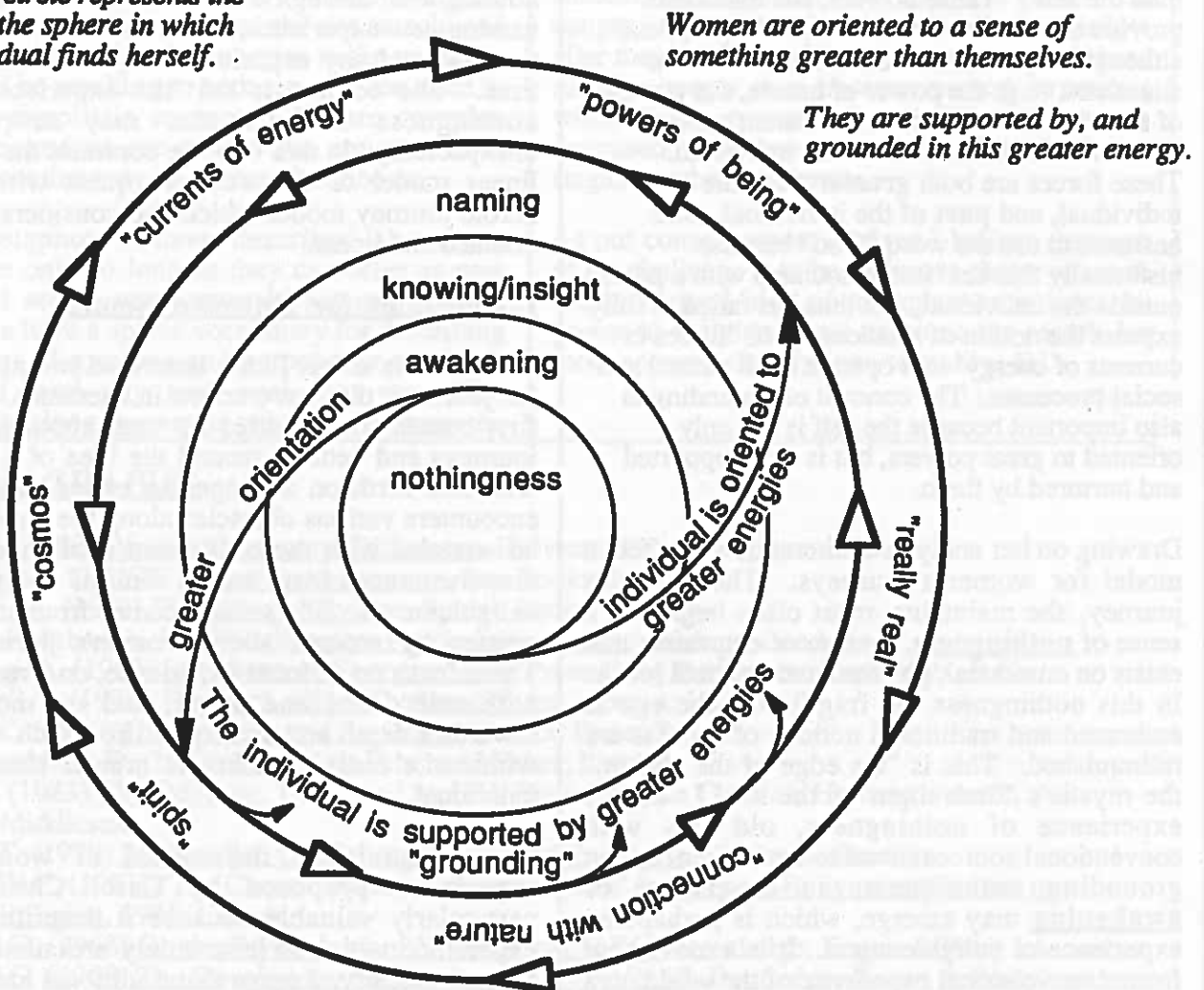
Doris Lessing has been a student of Sufism for some time now and the impact of this is evident in *The Four Gated City*. Christ (1980) quotes Lessing's comment that the book might be thought of as a Sufi teaching story, designed to assist the "interior movement of the human mind". As I read the book, two outstanding themes emerge: firstly, Martha has to accept and trust the experiences of her own senses; secondly, Martha has the capacity to develop her abilities with E.S.P. The ideas at the end of the book center around her developing capacities to see and hear beyond normal sensory perception. Whilst this theme is by no means limited to women's literature, it certainly recurs in it. For example, in *Bradley's Mists of Avalon* (1983) the priestesses nurture and develop such capacities; in Cameron's *Daughters of Copperwoman* (1981) similar abilities are referred to.

Carol Christ is one of the few women who has analyzed modern women's literature, and tried to formulate a model for women's journeys. Her Model is depicted in diagram 2. She maintains that women in the eighties have two separate yet connected quest the social quest and the spiritual quest. The social quest, she argues, concerns women's struggle to gain respect, equality and freedom in work, politics and relationships. She defines their spiritual quest as "awakening the depth of their souls and position in the universe." These two quests are dimensions of a single struggle. She maintains that it is important that women become aware of the ways in which their spirituality can support and undergrid their quest for social equality. If women experience a grounding of their spiritual experience in forces that are greater than their own personal will, this knowledge may support them when their personal determination falters.



**Diagram 2: A Model for Women's Journeys**  
 – developed from work by Carol Christ in "Diving Deep and Surfacing"

*The outer circle represents the cosmos: the sphere in which the individual finds herself.*



*Women are oriented to a sense of something greater than themselves.*

*They are supported by, and grounded in this greater energy.*

**NAMING**

expressing the experience in words. Validating similar experience for those who have kept silent. Learning to value the feminine experience.

**AWAKENING**

An experience of enlightenment. A movement away from convention to a direct experience of the "really real". A gaining of inner power. The self begins to recognize its true nature and potential.

**KNOWING/INSIGHT**

A way of seeing the world that goes beyond words; a sense of illumination, revelation, transcendence, union. For females, this is an empowering experience. Self awareness leads to self confidence. Greater power is often felt in nature.

**NOTHINGNESS**

A sense of emptiness on emotional, spiritual and physical levels. The edge of the chasm; the dark night of the soul. Ties have been broken with conventional sources of value, but no grounding has yet been found in new sources. A hole in the solar plexus.



A concept central to her analysis is the notion of "great powers" or "forces of being that are larger than the self." These powers, she maintains, provide orientation for the women's quest, and although they may look different in different situations, (e.g. the power of nature, the power of sisterhood) they offer a consistent sense of orientation and direction for the individual. These forces are both greater than the individual, and part of the individual. She hesitates to use the word "God" because historically this has been associated with a power outside the individual, and thus has failed to fully express the notion of relationship of "forces or currents of energy" that operate in all natural and social processes. The concept of grounding is also important because the self is not only oriented to great powers, but is also supported and nurtured by them.

Drawing on her analysis of literature she offers a model for women's journeys. The women's journey, she maintains, most often begins in a sense of nothingness, a sense of emptiness that exists on emotional, physical and spiritual levels. In this nothingness the fragility of the ego is embraced and traditional notions of success are relinquished. This is "the edge of the chasm," the mystic's "dark night of the soul." In this experience of nothingness, old ties with conventional sources of value are broken, but no grounding nothingness, an experience of awakening may emerge, which is perhaps an experience of enlightenment. It is a movement from a conventional experience of the world, to a "direct experience" of the "really real." It is gaining of inner power as the self begins to recognize its true nature and potential. As this experience of awakening and enlightenment is integrated into the woman's self concept, she may then gain a capacity for knowing or insight, which may be considered as a way of seeing the world that goes beyond words. Christ describes this as a sense of illumination, revelation, transcendence and union which is empowering; self awareness leads to self confidence. After to express her new knowledge by naming it. By expressing her experience in words she may validate similar experiences for those who have kept silent, and create other stories for women to reflect on as they experience their own personal journeys.

Christ maintains that although there may be a natural progression from an experience of nothingness, through awakening and insight, to naming new experience, this does not have to be the case and any experience may come at any time. She comments that the experience of nothingness in particular may crop up unexpectedly. In this way she contrasts the non-linear model of the women's quest with the heroic journey model which she considers goal oriented and linear.

### Implications for Outward Bound

So far in this article I have described two models for journeys that have arisen in literature. The first comes from stories by men about men's journeys and centers around the idea of a hero who sets forth on a dangerous expedition and encounters various obstacles along the way. As he wrestles with these different challenges he also overcomes fears within himself and gains enlightenment. The second comes from stories written by women about women's journeys. These focus on an inner experience, on wrestling with self doubt and anger, and on moving towards a depth and quality of life which exists within the individual but is greater than the individual.

In my opinion, the model of women's experience proposed by Carol Christ is particularly valuable because it describes an experience which is less widely articulated in Western society. I agree that traditional ideas of journeys have focused on male experience, on overcoming overt challenges, wrestling with obstacles that we find, and in gaining insight and enlightenment along the way. Our stories of women's journeys are less available, and our vocabulary for inner experience is less well developed. Christ's model focuses on a sense of knowing and power which exists within the universe. Whilst women are not the only ones who have sought a greater connection with this power, I do believe that our spiritual journeys have often had something to do with diving into the vast space within us and searching there for knowledge.

When all is said and done I think it is important to remember that these different ways of seeing journeys are just models, and as such they are tools to help us explore our own experience. I

do not wish to suggest that every man gains enlightenment by double packing across the longest portage, and that every woman will gain an inner sense of knowing as she sits on solo and sensitizes herself to the energies in the universe. It would be insulting to both sexes to see them in such a simplistic manner. We are complex creatures and we are greater than any models or metaphors that may be used to describe us.

The metaphors I have described above are valuable only so long as they can offer us new ways of seeing our personal journeys through life. We have a sparse vocabulary for describing questions of meaning and purpose, or our ideas of God, and any new tool that can offer signposts along the way is valuable. Perhaps the

notion of "allies and ogres", or the concept of "nothingness" will be useful to one of our students this summer. If it is, this is good. The danger only arises when we hang on to concepts after their initial usefulness disappears, and these same concepts then become mental structures which begin to control us. When ideas are overused they become cliches in which we stagnate rather than grow.

As our consciousness evolves I believe that part of the challenge is to be willing to throw out each neatly formed idea of metaphor as it loses its power to enlighten, and continue the search for more accurate descriptions of reality. □

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# CANOEING & GENDER ISSUES

by Bill James

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How easily we fall into and accept the myths of masculine prowess as applied to canoeing. I once took advantage of an offer in an Algonquin Park brochure and sought advice from a park employee on how to pack a pack. The young man gave some very useful general guidelines along the lines of not placing sharp articles so they would stick in your back. He also stressed how desirable it was to be able to get across a portage in a single carry. To accomplish this, the male should carry the canoe and one pack, while the female should carry a smaller pack. Because women are significantly weaker than men, he explained, they should not be expected to carry very much. I began to wish I had not asked for help.

I already knew of course, that it is "easier" for one person to portage a canoe than two people (because, I guessed, the canoe somehow became lighter when carried by a single person). The person carrying the canoe should therefore make up for that decrease in weight by carrying the heavier pack. Thus, it came about that at the beginning of a mile-long portage a canoe and a heavy pack. I believed that I had already compromised my masculinity by not carrying the heaviest of the available packs, the food pack (lots of canned goods along in those days). But I did tie paddles and life preservers to thwarts and seats, all in the effort to complete the portage in a single carry.

In an earlier paper, *The Canoe Trip as Religious Quest*, I began in this way – reflecting on my own experience and how the features of the classic paradigm of the heroic quest fit the testimony of various people about the canoe trip. One of the perplexing problems arose when canoe tripping was used as an initiatory rite, especially of the "trial-by-ordeal" variety, and especially in an all-boys school, to reinforce masculinity. I also developed a distinction between one kind of canoe trip that was

indigenous, harmonious, and adaptive – and female – and another kind that was assaultive, immigrant – and masculine.

This part of my earlier work demands and invites more consideration. I am now inclined to think, for instance, that the model of the heroic quest derives basically and perhaps exclusively from male experience. The major question to tackle here is whether canoeing is an exception to the general picture of the relation between masculinity and sport as developed, for example, by Bruce Kidd in a recent article. Kidd describes how the most popular sports in the nineteenth century were termed "*the manly sports*." Further, the qualities they developed – "*courage and stamina, ingenuity, close friendships, and leadership*" were traditionally associated with the dominant norm of "*maleness*" (p.119). Sports, he continues, have developed as male preserves (p.119), and thus, by "*preventing girls and women from learning in the same context, sports confirm the prejudice that males are a breed apart*" (p.121). Especially it is to be wondered whether canoeing should be seen within this context of the development of other modern sports as particularly masculine enterprises, or whether the development and history of canoeing is different or exempt from the general rule. Since we know that men and women canoe together, then canoeing is not – at least not always – an exclusively male or female preserve. What might that mean? For Kidd states: "*The effect of sports is ... relational – they perpetuate patriarchy by powerfully reinforcing the sexual division of labour*" (p.120). Considering this background, then, let us examine the evidence as well for a sexual division of labour among male and female canoeists.

In search of such evidence I checked several books on canoeing, in search of either women's contributions and understandings, or else, portrayals of a masculine identification with the



activity. Not very far into *The Canoe*, by Shackleton and Roberts, one reads the following account of the canoe's possibilities, seen in broadly historical terms, for enhancing its "owner's" mobility: "[The canoe] put the fisherman out on the water and extended the hunter's range. It carried braves to war and was freight vessel for Indian traders. It was a vehicle for one person to cross a stream or for a migrant people to cross the continent" (p.2). All of these appear to be basically male endeavours: fishing, hunting, making war, doing business, exploration, and migration. In the last chapter, entitled "The Modern Canoe," we learn how delayed, in both the United States and Canada, was the acceptance of women into canoeing organizations. Similarly slow in coming was the participation of women in competitive canoeing events in regattas. The canoe has usually been associated with such male activities as hunting, and only occasionally with such female activities as food gathering, for instance, the harvesting of wild rice, or with female competition in regattas (among native women, for instance), or in exploration in which women were at best passengers. Even the typical turn-of-the-century photograph of a woman in a canoe shows her wearing her white dress and seated amidships, and perhaps carrying a parasol.

Another set of possibilities may be represented by the discovery of what the "boat" in general symbolizes. It is, of course, in the first instance, a "vehicle," as the above range of activities suggests, and a vehicle that provides mobility. Another possibility finds expression in the boat as the "cradle rediscovered," and therefore, the mother's womb. From Moses in the bullrushes to the pages of recent issues of *WoodenBoat* magazine, cradles have been made deliberately boat-like in form, or else boats are imaged as being like cradles.

"There is a connexion," states Cirlot in *A Dictionary of Symbols*, "between the boat and the human body" (p.30). This womb-like, cradling aspect of the canoe might be illustrated from Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing*, where one of the narrator's earliest memories is "lying in the bottom of the canoe" as her parents paddled. The canoe went backwards through rapids, but the narrator remembers, in spite of the danger, "the hush of moving water and the rocking motion, total safety" (p.17-18). Later,

when she dives from the canoe in search of rock paintings, the narrator refers to the canoe as a "mediator and liferaft" as it hangs "split between water and air" (p.141).

One thinks, too, of the fact that people (men?) give boats and canoes women's names, or of the fact that in Maori mythology women are identified with canoes, in continuity with the womb aspect of the symbolism, because women ferry the precious cargo of new life from another world to this one. Here, actually, the symbolism of the boat as cradle or womb and as vehicle come together.

Staying with *Surfacing* for a bit longer, the male-female distinctions inherent in the dualities of the symbolism of the canoe are perceptively and brilliantly contrasted in an essay by Rosemary Sullivan in which she shows how the differences in the relationship to nature and to power in Canada and the United States are set forth in *Surfacing* and in James Kickey's 1970 novel, *Deliverance*. In *Deliverance*, the white-water canoe trip taken by the four men who set out becomes an escape from the civilized and domestic world of women with its boredom and "normalcy" into the primitive and instinctive world of nature: "The flight into nature becomes a flight into a closed masculine world where a man can recover the heroic dimension normally lost to him" (p.9). By contrast, Atwood has the return to the natural world restore an individual not to the "god-like role of hunter" in which others are brought under the control of his will, but to a position in which the energy absorbed from nature restores one to the role of suppliant, bringing about a position not "of power, but of awe, the capacity to worship" (p.13).

Whereas Dickey has his characters discover no moral insight, but only an exhilarating freedom, a cult of sensation and the mythification of violence – rape and three murders take place in the novel – Atwood's narrator undergoes self-scrutiny and reflection emerging finally in transformation of the self. As nearly as I can find, the canoes in Dickey's novel have few symbolic associations. They are seldom more than vehicles. The only possible exception occurs towards the end when Lewis Medlock, lying wounded and exhausted in the bottom of the beached aluminum canoe under the hot Georgia sun, tells Ed Gentry: "Go and get somebody. Anybody. I want to get out of

*this goddamned roasting oven. I want to get out of my own coffin, this fucking piece of tin junk"* (p.199). And that is as close as I can recall any character in the novel coming to an imaging of the canoes, and the imagery is negative at that. Otherwise they are as impersonal as the violence in the story. (One aside in connection with Dickey's *Deliverance*: a friend was disgusted to find that when the film was shown in a Winnipeg theatre, a local outdoor store used the occasion to display whitewater canoes and equipment in the theatre's lobby, presumably hoping to attract purchasers wanting to emulate the feats of the men in the film.)

As part of the attempt to get at, define, and examine gender issues in canoeing, and wanting to escape the limitations of my male's perspective on the question, I enlisted the help of a number of female canoeists by means of a questionnaire. My thanks go to Sarah Morgan Balint, Helen Mathers, Danielle Michel, Ruth Studd, and Eleanor Zegers for their generous participation. I wanted to see if men and women described their experience of canoeing in different terms, if women felt that males' use of the canoe reflecting a masculine code of sport, whether the canoe was symbolized in male or female terms, and so on. My method of gathering data would be scorned by social scientists as unscientific, and the results dismissed as "merely anecdotal." So be it: I understand myself to be dealing with, and collecting, perceptions.

### I. Canoeing and the Masculine Code:

The women who responded to my questionnaire generally reported that they did not associate canoeing with the promotion of masculine code of sport. The reasons varied: several pointed out that canoeing was exempted from the general connection between men and sport because it is an activity (unlike hockey, for instance) that is more inclusive of women. Someone pointed out that canoes in racing competitions could promote that masculine code, or regarded the speedboat-and-water-ski types as more likely to exhibit a macho mentality than male canoeists. Another associated not canoeing, but sailing, with men – chiefly on the basis of her personal experience, but perhaps also because of sailing being high tech, expensive (implying yacht club membership), intellectual. Women, especially single women, who generally having less

financial resources than men, are likely to find canoeing the more accessible and practical way of getting on the water. One respondent said that she "fantasized that men who prefer canoeing would be the gentler, more nurturing, more sensitive and responsive types."

Someone whose experience of canoeing was chiefly solo, with children or with other women, reported that on several occasions a man who was an inexperienced canoeist came along as "the passive or subordinate partner," an experience she described as "neutral." On other occasions she had unhappy and "conflict-ridden" experiences when the man, though "less experienced and less skilled,... insisted on being 'skipper.'" She writes: *"Against my protests they led me into dangerous and uncomfortable situations. We argued constantly. The pleasures of canoeing were wiped out."*

Another woman who paddled principally with her husband described canoeing as "an example of cooperation – complete partnership. At the best of times we were in tune with each other, the canoe, the elements – even the universe." In these two instances it would seem that the canoeing experience may reflect the already existing relationship between the particular couple, although perhaps intensifying it – for better or for worse. One person put it well: *"Initial assumptions of canoeing are, I think, that if people want to participate in this activity, they will do it in [a] way that invites mutuality."*

It was observed by one woman that although it was not generally true in the groups she had canoed with, there were a few cases she could recall in which the men were *"pushing harder to go further on a trip, or faster, as compared with the women."* Male teenagers especially *"have wanted to use the canoe to demonstrate their strength more than the girls would have."* She goes on to say that *"the teenaged boys also tended to assume that any male could paddle harder than females, even though in the specific situations they were in, the female 'counsellors' were actually paddling faster than they could."*

Now of course one of the obvious points that emerges here is that all of my "informants," who report that in their experience canoes have not been used to promote a code of masculinity, would know little of what goes on when



canoeing takes place exclusively among males. That is, in the instances they are reflecting on perhaps canoeing has already been "feminized" by the presence of females. In my earlier paper I was indicating at one point how when a canoe trip is used as an initiation rite for adolescent boys, ostensibly to make men of them, the group leaders in their pre-trip pep talk make the "exclusion of females" a defining mark of the exercise. The boys were told that "mummy won't be along" to take care of them. Masculine self-reliance was being promoted: this was a trip not for girls, not for sissies, not for the weak, or faint-spirited.

As Walter Ong shows in *Fighting for Life*, men have always had to find ways of proving that they were not women. But it is a waste of time for women to prove that they are not men (p.63-64). Since we all begin in the feminine world (p.70) boys must differentiate themselves from the given backdrop of femininity through contest, challenge, and proving themselves to be men. Bruce Kidd writes about how he "teased his mother and sister to tears to confirm that I had succeeded in being different from them" (p.258). He goes on to say: "I would have been devastated if a girl had played on any of the teams I was so proud to belong to." The adolescent son of a friend of mine steadfastly refuses to go on a canoe trip if there are going to be girls or women along.

When Don Starkell headed off with his two sons on a canoe trip "that would take us further than anyone had ever gone by canoe" (p.16), a 12,000-mile trip from Winnipeg to the mouth of the Amazon River, he worries that one of his sons, Jeff, has a less than total commitment to the trip. An aunt and uncle on his mother's side had told Jeff that if he wanted to leave the trip at any time he could stay with them. The elder Starkell writes:

*"I knew that if the trip was going to work we needed singleness of mind, not options. We'd even agreed to give up all but the casual involvement with women for the duration of the venture. To do otherwise, I felt, would compromise our sense of purpose... This trip was going to need total dedication if we were going to succeed."* (p.210)

On the Starkells' trip the push is constantly on, the goal always before them, while major obstacles and discouraging setbacks threaten almost daily at times to end the expedition or kill them. Their trip stands, to paraphrase the book's subtitle, as a classic instance of the ultimate male canoe adventure. Their relationship to the environment is fundamentally adversarial; the relationship between Don and Dana Starkell, father and son, is also adversarial. Frequently a fight breaks out between them: Dana throws a tantrum, dumps food around or destroys equipment; Don wrestles with him, gives him "a sharp whack with the back of [his] hand." Then they apologize and continue. The elder Starkell finds all this "discouraging and wrenching": *"Here we are, father and son, isolated in South America, 8,000 miles from home, and what are we doing? - fighting instead of supporting each other. I've reached a point at which anything that separates us is unbearable for me - far more draining than any of the other hazards on the trip"* (p.207). But the goal - the completion of the trip successfully - remains more important than the relationship between the Starkells, father and son.

As Carol Gilligan indicates, for males self-enhancement matters more than affiliation (169). In one study she cites it was discovered that men, *"like pious Aeneas on his way to found Rome,... steady their lives by devotion to realizing their dream, measuring their progress in terms of their distance from the shores of its promised success"* (p.152-53). The Starkells' journey to the mouth of the Amazon is measured in terms of miles achieved and miles left to achieve, with regular maps to gauge what has been accomplished and what is left to accomplish. Or, as Ong states: *"In real life across the world, ceremonial physical contest between father and son - wrestling, boxing, dueling - helps to bring sons to normal maturity, establishing the friendly agonistic distancing the male psyche needs"* (p.85). In the December 1987 issue of *Atlantic American* novelist Philip Roth writes that it was imperative for him to leave home to go to college in order to avoid a fight with his father; he went, but they had the fight nonetheless.

Mothers and daughters do not do this. In fact, it would be difficult to imagine two women even wanting to attempt the kind of trip the Starkells made, given its length and duration, its goal



orientation, and the continual measuring of distance travelled, the checking of the calendar, the emphasis on performance under stress, and the exclusive dedication and commitment to the task make this a male challenge of the adversarial kind. One of my female informants writes:

*"The reason it's been almost exclusively men who have opted to pit their wit and strength against the sea to cross it (or drown in it) and not women – is because women have the sense and the realization that it's a fight not worth fighting – that the sea has a strength neither mortal wit nor mortal strength can better; that one needs luck too. Furthermore, women don't feel a need to fight the sea. They can love it from the shore."*

One of my female informants whose experience of canoe-tripping has been exclusively co-ed reports that she has been on trips *"that had a real push-for-mileage ethic and those which did not."* She contrasts two camps offering canoe trips, the one having a *"more 'macho,' mileage, and difficulty-conscious program and the [other] as being much more conscious of the social elements of a canoe trip – of its potential for developing positive relationships with others, teamwork, appreciating nature, etc."* She observed that both sexes exhibited or participated in one ethic or the other, but that the first was designed and directed by a man, and the second by a woman. Further, she writes, *"while I definitely prefer the less-mileage, more looking around kind of a trip I have been caught up in the other approach when on such a trip."* *"I think everyone feels a sense of satisfaction and pride upon finishing a long day with lots of mileage put on the water and portage – whether male or female – but there are some trips for which that seems to be the central theme and others for which it is not."*

These words exemplify what Carol Gilligan calls "the different voice" with which women speak: nurturance, giving, care, and generally, relationships, are more significant than individual achievement, self-enhancement, or attaining freedom and self-expression through separation.

## II. "Sociology" of Women and Canoes:

In an effort to get at what could be termed the sociology of men and women and canoeing, I

asked whether on canoe trips where men and women were both present there seemed to be a role division of labour: *"Do men plan the trip, arrange the equipment, paddle and portage the canoe – chiefly – while women do the meals, look after the kids, are concerned about shelter needs, etc."* Most of those who responded said that *"the labour was quite evenly divided,"* that *"there are overlapping roles,"* that *"jobs of all kinds have been shared,"* or that *"canoeing [was] an example of cooperation – complete partnership."* Beyond that it was commented that if one broke down who did what *"we'd find that some of the women did proportionately more cooking and some of the men did proportionately more portaging – but generally these jobs were shared and any unequal division of labour came out of individuals' preferences rather than an imposed division of labour."* Another mentioned that the *"lifting of very heavy loads [was] usually done by, or at least, with assistance of men."* Another found that *"men do tend to prepare certain kinds of equipment at times, such as tents."* And another whose canoeing in mixed company had been with her husband, stated that he did the steering *"but that seemed to work best – it needed the strongest (physically) paddler."* That last observation was shared by another who had noticed that when she *"paddled with a couple, the man is often at the stern of the canoe."* (It might be worth pursuing further whether there is a kind of hierarchy of seating in a canoe: assuming height and weight and experience are roughly equal, do males readily share the stern position with females?)

One person commented that her own needs for greater security than many people meant that she was concerned for *"how the details of the trip will work before a trip."* She tentatively ventured the generalization that women might therefore be more concerned with the food to be taken, knowing the route ahead of time, and the assurance that *"the trip is getting off in an organized state."* My own experience has been that I have seen equal or even greater concern on the part of men, when women and children were along on a trip, in regard to such details as route planning, the viability of the distance and difficulties to be encountered, the safety and comfort of all. In fact, I would think that one might see the same patterns if a family were planning a regular vacation, by car, for example. The details and arrangements would fall to the

one better adapted to organization and arranging such things.

One of the things that I have wondered about is whether there is a kind of role reversal that takes place on canoe trips, such that males take on tasks they might not normally do, such as cooking, looking after children, setting up tents, preparing bedding, while women similarly take on jobs that would in the ordinary world be left to men, such as lifting heavy loads, engaging in strenuous physical activity over a long day. If so, this would accord with my previous hypothesis about canoeing providing access to another world set apart from the ordinary. As the anthropologist Victor Turner states in *The Ritual Process*, we live in fixed and in floating worlds; in the fixed worlds we impose classifications to keep chaos at bay, but fail to invent or discover. So we generate spaces and times, in rituals, carnivals, and drama, for instance, to subvert the normative, escape routine, and generate novelty. Such areas, writes Turner, "*are open to the play of thought, feeling, and will; in them are generated new models, often fantastic, some of which may have sufficient power and plausibility to replace eventually the force-backed political and jural models that control the center's of a society's ongoing life*" (p.vii). Seen in this way, then, canoeing can provide an "anti-structure" to challenge, correct, supplement, and perhaps overturn the structures of ordinary social life, including patriarchal structures.

A woman with experience as a counsellor with Camp Outlook, a program to provide city teenagers in difficult circumstances, or tending towards trouble with home, school, or the law, says that the program gives these boys a chance to see women – who on the canoe trips are active and sports oriented – in a different light from what they are used to. Such women may pose a threat to a value system in which women are seen as passive (sitting at home or not involved in sports) or as sex objects (though interestingly, on such trips women seen wearing bikinis aboard motor boats became the boys' sex objects). While one might guess that many of these boys have been raised solely by working women, the canoe trip experience gives them an opportunity to see a blending of male and female roles "*in cooking, planning, setting up camp, in steering a canoe.*" She concludes: "*This is therefore one way that canoeing is being used as*

*an overall positive influence on incorporating masculin/feminine qualities.*"

Again, this area invites commentary about the "uses" to which canoeing is put by males and females, or what it brings out in them that might be sex differentiated. Here I found a contrast in responses. One woman said that she thought that in the exclusive company of females "there is more relaxation involved in canoeing, perhaps more observing of the environment, scenery." She continues: "*Perhaps (?) more tendency to stay with the experience of canoeing than seeing it as a goal to something such as swimming, fishing, campsite.*" Someone else, however, did see the canoe more in instrumental terms, "*as the necessary, important, and pleasurable means of getting where I wanted to go.*" But it seemed that for her, the destination, that is, the wilderness, and not the canoe, was thought of in mythological terms...

...As a final question I asked my female informants how the feminine values and characteristics of canoeing could be incorporated alongside the masculine ones, actually a paraphrase of a question I found in a recent issue of the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School *Journal of Education*. Outward Bound schools all over North America are currently reconsidering their motto and philosophy, perceived by many within the organization as promoting a macho image to the neglect of "receptive, yielding, co-operative side of the Self" (Wilson 4). I was asking out of the assumption that women's experience of canoeing has not been articulated as often or as fully as men's, and that we all could be enriched and our experience deepened if those perceptions were articulated. Several women did not like the question because of its (to me unconscious) assumption that canoeing was a male sport. One person responded that she saw canoeing as a "couple-oriented thing," a "romantic symbol as well as an adventure symbol." She spoke of the romance of "peaceful companionship alone in the vastness" – "just the two of you amidst the glories of the great outdoors."

One woman suggested simply that the female contribution to the understanding of canoeing would be to "substitute cooperation for competition." Another urged that "the mentality of 'conquering' lakes and rivers must be defeated



and canoeing enjoyed by both sexes as a sport and for pleasure." Still another objected to "chopping up the experience of canoeing into male and female components. That diminishes it." She writes: "Canoeing is wonderful – joyful, self-affirming, expansive – and one very good reason why this is so is because it allows people to be *whole* – not divided into gendered categories, as most of society's institutions and activities require of people." Though this woman relates that "generally I'm interested in analyzing anything in terms of gender categories, and trying to relate what may be wrong about something to its masculine characteristics (possibly)," she declares that she "won't be part" of gendering canoeing. (This response may amount to another way of saying that canoeing is to stand outside the normal patterns of everyday social life – as anti-structure to structure.)

I will give the final word to one woman whose response to the question how feminine values could be incorporated alongside masculine ones was:

*"Slow it down. Don't have the distance covered and the number and length of portages be the only measure of success. There should be time and energy at the end of each canoe day for other things besides a quick meal and crashing out. Chances for quiet, private time; close-up looking time; hiking time; swimming time; water fights and digressions; star gazing; let's-stay-here-another-day-time; canoe sailing...; good meals; floating lunches and basking in the*

*sun. There should be a focus on the social aspects of canoe trip – on the times shared together, as a group or in one-to-one situations. In the canoe, on the portage, at the fire. Having a bit more time at the end of a day (and/or in the middle of it) allows for private time to be alone, to find a quietness for whatever your soul is needing then: to walk feeling the moss under your feet; to crouch watching the waves lap the evening shore or an ant carrying a wasp wing over the uneven ground; to write; to think or not think; to wonder. I think it is these moments of wonder and awe and joy during those quiet times alone on a canoe trip that I value most. Just you in a secluded spot and the sky, and the greens and blues of the setting sun and the knowledge that you are a part of it, but such a small part of it, overwhelmed in the joy of the enormity and power and beauty of it. It makes me cry just to sit here in my living room and think about it. It's time for a canoe trip...!"*

These comments encompass both the social and individual aspects of canoeing, though even the solitary aspects of canoeing are social to the extent that they incorporate a relationship to the natural world. Like the narrator of Atwood's *Surfacing*, here is a person who finally comes to nature as pilgrim and suppliant, not as hunter or conqueror, and whose words are an example of how the female experience of canoeing may enrich and correct, challenge and complement, deepen and transform the male experience. □

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# ROCKS & RIVERS, MEN & WOMEN:

## Learning From Each Other at Outward Bound

by Moon Joyce

I was delighted to read Ken Victor's article in the "Journal of Education" on the metaphors of rocks and rivers. Reminds me of a former conversation on the Black Sturgeon River... I'd love to build on the thoughts he presented, possibly start a dialogue on the subject.

Along with this, I would also like to address Nancy Suchman's letter calling for input on the issue of gender dynamics in Outward Bound. So, in reality, this letter is a response and dialogue for both.

There is a game I like to play with my friends called "Broad Generalizations". We indulge ourselves by making up broad generalizations about "anything" in search of a truth about "something". This article will also be a little like that. So please, indulge me here and draw your own conclusions.

Climbing is an easy metaphor to grasp (excuse the expression), as Vic pointed out. The river, ironically, is more of a challenge. To me, where climbing is a male metaphor, the river is a female one. It has been said, "To know it, one must become it." I wanted to explore the truth of this, and in so doing, bring light to the necessity of balancing masculine and feminine dynamics in the Outward Bound community and experience.

I'd like to start by sharing a theory I have about musicians: I've always wondered why so many of the greatest instrumentalists are male, and so many of the greatest vocalists are female. To watch an instrumentalist embrace the instrument and become one with it – manipulating the strings, allowing it to communicate through the language of music and by the resonance of the sounding board is a beautiful, moving thing to witness. Similarly, to hear a blues singer bring forth tones and passages from her very toes to boil and swell up within her chest and explode in the air past her lips is electrifying.

My conclusions then, is that men create through a mechanism or extension outside of their bodies and women create from and within their bodies: external/internal, tangible/intangible. As a further note, an instrument outside the body is a thing, made of wood, steel and bone, and as such is consistent and can be altered, repaired, protected and manipulated. The sounds created are limited by the instrument's capabilities and the unique abilities of the player, i.e. the sound of a violin is the sound of a violin, and the greatest player in the world cannot make it sound like a trumpet. Violins will always sound like violins albeit with the artists sentiments and variations. The human voice, however, is unique in all the world – like fingerprints. There will only be one Edith Piaf in this world, one Aretha Franklin, one Billy Holiday, etc. The human voice is also vulnerable and ephemeral. It is here for only a short time and when the singer dies – so too does the instrument. The human voice is a fragile and frustrating thing. It has to be trained, cared for, fed, housed in health, and kept happy. It has good days and bad – sometimes failing completely when you need it the most. Characteristically, it evolves over time and as part of a living organism, it has it's own life.

In thinking about this, I've wondered at the differences between men and women and why one gender is naturally drawn to one discipline and the other to another? Neither discipline is greater or lesser than the other – they are different. And both men and women have the need to create and manifest it in one way or another. At Outward Bound, we watch people in the act of creation, solving problems, communicating deeply, making decisions in a new way, being stretched in mind, body and spirit. My point is that men have a predilection to expressing themselves and relating through an external vehicle and women have a predilection to do the same through the body and intuitively.

Through similar observations, I've come to understand that the metaphors of rocks and rivers



are deeply imbedded in our psyche – they are part of Carl Jung's concept of the anima and the animus; male and female. And from the microcosm of the human psyche to the macrocosm of the world and the universe, there must be a balance of the two, healthy conflict notwithstanding, to germinate and perpetuate creation. Loss of that balance of male and female powers will precipitate sickness. In the larger picture, I believe the psyche of our world is imbalanced and is consequently and dangerously pursuing self-destruction. In the smaller picture, the COBWS community is imbalanced. Something is wrong, and it is obstructing our growth: not the financial/tangible kind, but the spiritual/emotional kind.

This question of gender dynamics and politics (power) arose again at COBWS in the summer of '86. It was not surprising to me that the people who raised the issue as an important one that affected our health were 90% female. At a discussion on gender issues, 6 things were discussed:

1. We had a brainstorming session where men listed the things that irritated them about women, and women listed the things that irritated them about men. A picture evolved revealing men were often poor at "soft skills" and women were often poor at "hard skills".
2. Hard skills are easily taught and easily evaluated because they are tangible and visible. Soft skills are difficult to teach and even harder to evaluate because they are intangible. Vic reminded us that competence in technical and physical skills comprises one quarter of that which makes a good instructor. Yet, the majority of attention in staff training and general "worthiness" is given to the teaching and recognition of hard skills.
3. We talked about what hard skills and soft skills are. I have difficulty accepting the idiomatic comparison of hard skills and soft skills. Hard and soft, although male and female, do not do justice to the beauty and value of each – nor do they say much about what they are and where they come from, such as:

**HARD**  
forceful  
external  
physical  
identifiable  
visible  
measurable  
finite  
rock  
fire  
sun  
stimulating

**SOFT**  
yielding  
internal  
emotional/spiritual  
mysterious  
hidden  
immeasurable  
infinite  
water  
air  
moon  
calm

4. As a result, the qualities that women bring to the community and experience are often overlooked and definitely undervalued in the face of the tangible proof and heroics of "hard skills". (I must qualify this by stating that not all women are inherently skilled at soft skills as not all men are born coordinated athletes.)
5. If women are genuinely sought to remain at COBWS and move into senior positions at par with men, then they must be recognized and valued at par. If the gift is not valued, the giver's got better places to be. As a result, we lose good female staff because they know intuitively if they are valued less.
6. In order for women to be recognized and valued, men have to invest themselves in learning about who we really are. Consequently, the point was not missed at this meeting that 90% of the participants were women. Clearly, the vast majority of men in our community at the time did not have a vested interest to either a) recognize that something is wrong at this level or b) do something about it.

These concerns were brought to a community meeting where we presented them. We also travelled on to the topic of diversity in our community. If we are going to respect the Native, non-white, immigrant, differently-abled, elder or gay members of our community, we have to get to know them. And to know them we must invest ourselves. And in doing this effectively, I believe that this makes one vulnerable and ultimately humble. It's a risk, and it's probably scarier than many of us would like to admit. But it's the only way.

The values and institutions of our world have been male-dominated for several centuries. Patriarchal concepts of ownership, power and the morality of might being right have manifested themselves and now leave our world in a terrified panic state praying for peace and compromise. Our COBWS community is no less a reflection and product of our dominant culture, and the same issues are here. We would like to think that we have no racism, sexism, homophobia, or intolerance among our community members – but we do.

Where should we look for this kind of inspiration and strength?

Perhaps it is time to return to the metaphor of the river.

There is one thing I would like to expand on for the purpose of this argument. The river is not just rapids. Indeed, rapids are but short stretches or moments in the whole physical and metaphysical entity. They are action based. Rapids are also created because rocks are there which, in turn, create fast currents, obstacles, and speed. If rocks are hard and water is fluid, is there not a male/female dichotomy to the metaphor? Whitewater kayaking is still considered a "hard skill" because it is physically challenging, technical, action-packed, visible, and outside the body. It is man against the elements again; except in this case, it is futile to fight the river. Rather, one must move with it like a good dance partner.

In the formation of a metaphor for the river, I would like to see it appreciated for the its "other part"; the calmness, the unknown depths, the hidden currents, mysterious inhabitants, and the power of accommodation. Often seen as flatwater, slow-moving and possibly the boring part by whitewater enthusiasts, it is also the relief, the shelter, and the force of life itself.

Siddhartha spent his lifetime extending himself outward to know the river – the mate of his psyche, only to discover that it was within him all the time.

The river is an ancient metaphor that has so often been referred to in the feminine; i.e. "She's a mighty river." A river is cyclic; from its origin

to the sea and back again through the "death of evaporation and the "rebirth" of rain.

She nourishes, irrigates, carves the earth in graceful curves,  
She carries teeming life within her – and the ashes of the dead,  
She is like Kali the destroyer – ever changing yet constant,  
She has terrified and taunted,  
She has comforted and calmed,  
She is mysterious, dangerous, gentle, life-giving and sustaining,  
And she has carried her passengers on her waves throughout the millennia.

Who are we then but mere fragile leaves upon her flowing body? – moving as she sees fit.

No force can stop her flow. Men (it's true) build dams to stop her. But dams break down in time. (Even rocks are worn smooth.) And men build industries that gorge her with poisons and garbage. But even that too gets flushed out to the sea. As long as there exists a path of least resistance, a river will flow and give and nourish and cleanse.

There is something very exquisite about that kind of gentle power that is taken for granted. And yet, like the child's game of rock, paper, and scissors\*, a rock can still be crushed, a mountain excavated, but a river never disappears. She only moves somewhere else where she can move more freely.

Vic made a wonderful start in using the whitewater experience of the river as a teaching metaphor. But, like climbing, the most valued lessons seem to remain where the action is; in the rapids. As a teaching metaphor, I believe the river can be used to touch the "feminine" halves of our psyches, but not if it is confined to the experience of whitewater paddling. To me, whitewater is too much akin to rock climbing in that it is action-oriented, external, a "hard skill." The femaleness of the metaphor is its most valuable feature in my analysis, but this can be lost or overlooked.

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\* rock destroys scissors, scissors destroy paper, and paper envelops a rock



Which leads me to return to the issue of men and women at COBWS.

Like the river, I believe women do not, by nature or conditioning, seek adversity and resistance. I believe that men do.

Women are vessels: we accommodate, we receive, we hold, contain, nurture life within and give birth to it. Men are the substance: they enter, they deposit, they leave their mark, they go forth, conquer, claim, provide the spark and seed to create something outside their own bodies. Where men are the hunters, the builders, the planners, women are the gathers, the maintainers, the survivors.

At Outward Bound, we use physical experiences to illustrate lessons for living, for wellness and for wholeness. We use the natural environment as our classroom. It never complains or demands of us. It accommodates us, allows us to use her, to visit her, to climb her rock face, and ride and drink her rivers. We, as men and women have both mountain and river within us. And we need both desperately, e.g. The hero must also be servant for there to be wholeness.\*

In our present white male dominant culture, women who have typically masculine competencies are valued. Men who have typically feminine abilities are not. To me, this says something about how hard it is for men to embrace their vulnerability and for women to gain recognition. Here at COBWS, a woman who excels at climbing is marvelled at and appreciated/respected. But a man who cries with his students or reveals his fears of intimacy is hardly marvelled at – yet his may be the greater risk.

So where do we go from here? Does the COBWS community a) recognize that there is a problem/challenge and b) really wish to change? And if so, then whose responsibility is it to change? What will we do?

If we, as a community, recognize the need to bring a balance to what we do and how we do it, then we must accept the fact that we will be

anarchists in a world that devalues females and the female half of our psyche. If we choose to change, then we, will be entering into a struggle against centuries of patriarchal values, beliefs, institutions and ideologies that uphold the status quo of our dominant culture. We will have to be willing to dig very deep in order to recognize our culpability and our responsibility. Our souls, our community and our world are out of balance, disproportioned and deeply wounded.

I, for one, believe we cannot afford not to change. □

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\* Austin Clarkson

# GENDER ISSUES: A Question of Balance

by Daniel Vokey

*The girl and the woman, in their new, their own unfolding, will but in passing be imitators of masculine ways, good and bad, and repeaters of masculine professions. After the uncertainty of such transitions, it will become apparent that women were only going through the profusions and vicissitudes of those (often ridiculous) disguises in order to cleanse their most characteristic nature of the distorting influences of the other sex. Women, in whom life lingers and dwells more immediately, more fruitfully and more confidently, must surely have become more fundamentally riper people, more human people, than easygoing man, who is not pulled down below the surface of life by the weight of any fruit of his body and who, presumptuous and hasty, undervalues what he thinks he loves. This humanity of woman, borne its full time in suffering and humiliation, will come to light when she will have stripped off the conventions of mere femininity in the mutations of her outward status, and those men who do not yet feel it approaching today will be surprised and struck by it... Some day there will be girls and women whose name will no longer signify merely an opposite of the masculine, but something in itself, something that makes one think, not of any complement and limit, but only of life and existence: the feminine human being.*

— Rainer Maria Rilke,  
*Letter to a Young Poet*

In what follows I will propose that working towards a balance of "feminine" and "masculine" qualities — both in our courses and in our organization — is an essential part of Outward Bound's mission. I will try to show (a) how Outward Bound's mission of promoting compassion entails working against the military, political, and economic warfare that causes untold suffering in the world; (b) how our global history of warfare is related to the glorification of qualities traditionally associated with men, and the disregard of qualities traditionally associated with women; and (c) how working against

warfare is related to working towards a balance of these "masculine" and "feminine" qualities.

I think it is crucial that COBWS clarify its position on gender-related issues at this time. The issues are complex, and it seems unlikely that an adequate response could be formulated without careful discussion among people comparing different viewpoints. Accordingly, my purpose in writing is to contribute towards dialogue on these issues, in hopes that the position COBWS eventually takes will reflect the perspectives of a representative selection of members of the community.

To begin: Promoting compassion through service has traditionally been Outward Bound's highest ideal and first priority. The preeminence of this objective has recently been reaffirmed in the draft of the COBWS Mission Statement produced by the "Working Committee". It is therefore worth a moment to consider what "compassion" actually means. What, in other words, are we committing ourselves to when we proclaim our dedication to compassion and service?

As it is used in the Outward Bound context, the meaning of compassion is rooted in the Judao-Christian tradition. In the Old and New Testaments, to be compassionate means to be moved in one's heart (or in one's very bowels) at the sight of suffering.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the word compassion derives from the Latin *pati/passi-*, meaning "suffer", and *com*, a prefix meaning "with, together, completely". Thus in its most basic sense, compassion means to identify with others in their suffering.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Matthew Fox, 1979, Chapter One, for a discussion of "compassion" in biblical usage.

<sup>2</sup> Mike Seaborn, portrayed this very powerfully in his article "Compassion and Outward Bound" in



In the Judao-Christian tradition, compassion's solidarity in feeling has been seen to entail solidarity *in action*. It is not surprising, then, that to illustrate what he meant by such phrases as "aristocracy of service", Kurt Hahn would often tell the parable of the Good Samaritan. For it is precisely the line between empathy and action which underlies the Outward Bound tradition of promoting compassion through *service* – action for the benefit of others, particularly others in distress.

In this context, it is clear that to affirm the importance of compassion is to affirm the importance of identifying with the sufferings of others, and acting to relieve that suffering. Now, it also seems clear to me that, whether one looks at individuals, communities, or the entire globe, the most basic direct cause of suffering is the military, economic, and political warfare that perpetuates an unequal distribution of power and material resources. It follows (if one accepts this view of the direct cause of suffering) that working against military, economic, and political warfare is an essential part of Outward Bound's – and COBWS's – mission.

This conclusion is not alien to Outward Bound's traditional perspective and practice. Service in the first Outward Bound Schools was *rescue* service precisely because Hahn believed that someone who had experienced saving a life, or even training to save life, would not wish to *take* life. Indeed, promoting peace on a global scale may be seen to be *the* underlying vision of Hahn's educational endeavors. It seems no coincidence that "Salem" – the name of the School Hahn opened in 1920, and directed until 1933 – is the German rendering of "shalom", which means peace.

What does this have to do with gender issues?

The history of our species (at least for the last 3,000 years or so) has been one not only of warfare, but also of the domination of women by men. At the same time (not surprisingly), qualities associated with masculinity have been glorified, and qualities associated with femininity

have been disregarded (if not despised). I would like to begin to explore the interrelationship of these two aspects of our history by summarizing what I mean by "warfare", by way of a few definitions.

First, I think of "power" as "the capacity to actualize one's intentions". Second, I use "conflict" to refer, to the emergence of mutually exclusive intentions among people involved in a concrete situation. Third, "warfare" refers to any attempt of one group of individuals to actualize their intentions at the expense of, or in total disregard of, the intentions of others individuals.<sup>3</sup>

What, then, is the relationship between warfare and our history of domination by men?

Consider the lists below of a few of what are generally seen as gender-related qualities in our culture:

Feminine	Masculine
Process-oriented	Product-oriented
Receptive	Aggressive
Emotional/spontaneous	Rational/calculating
Intuitive/holistic	Intellectual/analytic
Other-oriented	Independent
Compassionate/merciful	Just/equitable

One could easily add to the lists. However, without doing so, I would like to suggest that the qualities which are usually designated "feminine" in our culture are those which presuppose or emphasize "connectedness": connections between individuals and their environment, between process and product, etc. In contrast, the qualities usually associated with masculinity in our culture are those which presuppose or emphasize autonomy: the independence of different aspects of an individual, of individuals from each other, of individuals from their environment, of process from product, etc.

<sup>3</sup> One might argue that "warfare" most often refers to attempts to achieve collective goals through physical force. Without denying that, I use the term "warfare" to include political and economic strategies as well as military. Precedence for this usage is found in such phrases as "the cold war", or "the war on poverty".

I would further like to propose that *the experience of connectedness leads to the breakdown of the distinction between good for self and good for other, and to an affirmation of the intrinsic worth of what one is connected to.* If this is granted, then it is here that the interrelationship of masculinity and warfare lies: the attempt to impose one's intentions at the expense or in total disregard of the intentions of others requires, and constitutes, both a denial of connections with and of the intrinsic worth of the others, and an unconditional affirmation of autonomy.

This interrelation of warfare with the denial of connection and intrinsic worth is evident, for example, in the various fictions invented to justify killing in war. The distinction between war and murder is always founded upon some variation on the "us/them" theme: It is permissible to exterminate "the others" because they are not fully human. They are not fully human because they are (choose one) (1) from a different tribe; (2) godless worshippers of the devil; (3) genetically inferior; (4) completely immoral, aggressive, and out to get us; etc. Similar examples of the relationship between aggression and "denying connection" could be drawn from the portrayal of nature as "the enemy" in the contexts of efforts to dominate it.<sup>4</sup>

Whether the prevalence of warfare has engendered the glorification of autonomy/masculinity, the domination of men and masculine values is responsible for our history of war, or both of these are symptoms of some deeper malaise, I would suggest that an important moral can be drawn for Outward Bound: *the objective of promoting compassion,*

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<sup>4</sup> There is a "modern" variation on the us/them theme that is worth noting. Since the Enlightenment, to be human means to be rational, and to be rational is precisely to be autonomous: self-governed, in control of one's "passions". It is therefore sufficient to justify overriding or ignoring the intentions of others, in pursuit of one's own, to demonstrate they are not quite "rational". Hence, one might argue, the portrayal of "dumb beasts", women, children, and different racial/ethnic groups as insufficiently capable of reasoning to grant them their autonomy.

*will be served by promoting experiences of connectedness, and the accompanying affirmation of the intrinsic worth of that to which one is connected.*<sup>5</sup>

I have stated that working towards a *balance* of feminine and masculine qualities is essential to Outward Bound's mission. I would like to elaborate on this statement, and explore what it might mean to promote experiences of "connectedness", by taking a close look at our mission.

The Mission Statements adopted by COBWS, by the US Outward Bound Schools, and by the representatives of the International Outward Bound movement all share similar statements of purpose: to develop respect for self, care for others, responsibility to the community, and sensitivity to the environment (my emphasis). It seems fair to say that the capacity for respect, caring, responsibility, and sensitivity presuppose affirming the intrinsic worth of the object of each of these qualities. Consequently, if it is true that affirmation of the intrinsic worth of something is engendered by the experience of "connectedness" with it, then Outward Bound's mission clearly entails promoting such experiences.<sup>6</sup>

Why then the need for balance? If it is those qualities traditionally designated feminine which presuppose and emphasize "connectedness", then why bother with those qualities designated masculine, particularly since they (on my own

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<sup>5</sup> "The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness

<sup>6</sup> My grounds for proposing a relationship between affirming the intrinsic worth of, and experiencing connection with, something is based essentially (though not only) upon personal experience. The depth of the experience establishes the strength of the affirmation: the intellectual grasp of my connection with something engenders an intellectual appreciation of it, hence the value of experiential education! Obviously there are metaphors other than "connection" one could use to evoke a sense of this relationship. My interpretation of my personal experiences in these terms reflects my interpretations of others reflecting on their personal experiences, e.g., Martin Buber, 1970.



argument) have been related to a history of domination?

My answer is that respect, caring, responsibility, and sensitivity presuppose both connection *and* autonomy. Consider responsibility: to accept responsibility *to* those whom one's actions affect presupposes identification with them. To accept responsibility *for* one's actions presupposes autonomy, that those actions arise from one's free choice. Even the notion of "connectedness" presupposes a distinction between what is related.<sup>7</sup>

The argument sketched above linking the promotion of peace with the need to redress the disregard of "feminine" qualities and values is neither original nor well-developed. It has been made more eloquently and persuasively in other contexts. However, I do think it is important to make the point, even in a preliminary way, that commitment to working out the implications of an affirmation of both feminine and masculine qualities is essential to the successful pursuit of Outward Bound's mission. I think that COBWS has been a leader among Outward Bound Schools in North America in asserting in concrete ways the necessity and value of both "feminine" and "masculine" qualities. I think it is important to ensure that this is continued and expanded, behind in the development of the School.

What would establishing a commitment to gender equality entail?

First, I am aware that I have spoken a lot about "femininity" and very little about women. I take it for granted that those qualities which have traditionally been associated with either men or women can, in fact, be cultivated by both. I also agree with those who argue that most women today have developed certain qualities and capabilities more fully than most men. Examples of these are compassion, empathy, caring, intuition, sensitivity, tolerance, and patience. Regardless of the underlying cause of these associations, COBWS needs to explore the concept of gender-balance in concrete terms. For

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<sup>7</sup> The opposite of complete autonomy from something is actually complete identification with it; in neither case is true relationship possible.

example, what are the ideal male/female ratios in different courses, and in different levels of the School administration? What does that entail for such things as marketing, promotion, staff recruitment, hiring, and training?

Second, if I am correct in proposing that the development of "feminine" qualities and values necessarily entails an affirmation of "connectedness" – what I would call a relational view of the world – then the implications of a relational view also need to be explored for how we run both our courses and the School.<sup>8</sup>

Third, if I am correct in proposing a link between "connecting" with something and experiencing/affirming its intrinsic worth, then how could such experiences be promoted (or even talked about)? What would it mean to "connect" with oneself, with other individuals one-on-one or in groups, and with the environment? My own background instructing suggests that already at COBWS we facilitate such experiences in powerful ways (not unrelated to the "It" we keep worrying about losing) that need to be recognized and cultivated. Similarly, I agree with those who think that we need to acknowledge more explicitly the special strengths and qualities that women (typically) contribute to the School.

Finally, it has been remarked that there are certain structural affinities between an Outward Bound course and the "heroic quest". It has also been argued that the metaphor of the heroic quest does justice more to a "masculine" spiritual journey than to a "feminine" one.<sup>9</sup> If this is so, then what metaphors could do justice to the feminine experience? Would Outward Bound courses have to change to accommodate them, and if so how?

I would like to acknowledge that what I have written is unreservedly idealistic (and rather abstract). I recognize that implementation of

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<sup>8</sup> I have expanded upon this point in my M.Ed. thesis, *Outward Bound: In Search of Foundations*, particularly Chapter Six.

<sup>9</sup> I am grateful to Val Beale for bringing this point to my attention in a workshop she presented on the topic during the 1984 Educator's Course Seminars.

such ideals is not a straightforward matter, and is constrained by the exigencies of the present situation. For example, whatever one's views of the ideal female/male ratios in courses or administrative positions, and however scrupulous one might be in marketing and recruitment, one is in the end constrained by who signs up and who applies. Moreover, I think it also should be recognized that affirming qualities traditionally associated with femininity – particularly, asserting their relevance for the "real world" of the marketplace – will require something of a struggle. Masculine biases are still very much embedded in our culture, and will not be reversed without difficulty. But is not the courage and conviction to stand up for what one believes is right – "not to yield" to the pressures of circumstances – what we preach at Outward Bound?

I would like to conclude with a quotation that I received in the mail during the process of writing this paper. The quotation is from Starhawk's *Dreaming the Dark*, and was sent to me by our very own Queen of the Vegetable Kingdom, Bertha B.

*"And so we move towards one another, if only because the battle is too large for any one of us to fight alone. In community, we call forth power in a dimension that moves beyond the interests of the personal self, for the power-from within is more than a feeling of individual enlightenment or insight; it involves our sense of connection with others. Power-from-within is the power of the give-away that comes from our willingness to spend ourselves, to be there for others at the price of risk and effort."* □

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# COMMUNITY

Talk about a word that gets a lot of use!

Every summer we seek to create community, to welcome students into the community, to bridge the gap between the homeplace community and the larger COBWS community. And every summer we expect things from the community – some of us expect it to foster our personal growth, others want it to be a wellspring of playfulness, still others want it to make us better OB instructors or to inspire us to come back for another season. We even worry about the health of the community – didn't you, at least for a moment this summer, try to put your finger on its pulse?

So... what is it?

What does it have to do with you,  
and what do you have to do with it?

What does it have to do with Outward Bound?

The next issue is inviting you to come along and talk about community. Whether it be your one sentence definition, a one paragraph reflection, a cherished anecdote or a longer piece, your thoughts are welcome. Perhaps with many contributions we can begin to articulate the essence of that word, to understand its tradition at COBWS, and to explore its present reality.

Some questions we might consider:

When does any collection of people, but particularly COBWS, become a community? How do you know? What makes it happen?

What has the community meant for you in the past?

What changes happened in the community during your involvement with the school?

Is an OB course a course in community building?

Is OB "education for community"?

How does Outward Bound's emphasis on self-reliance and personal responsibility fit with ideas of community?

What does it mean for an organization to think of itself as a community?

Are our OB courses somehow richer for our students because COBWS emphasizes community?

Should COBWS continue to emphasize community?

What helps to preserve and nurture community? What undermines it?

What's the purpose and function of community meetings?

Finally, COBWS is constantly changing and evolving. The strategic planning now happening will help to shape the school's future. Where should community be in that future? It is a timely juncture in the school's history to talk together about what we have, for so long, honoured and cherished.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Ken Victor

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