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**WOMEN AND OUTDOOR AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION:
FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON ENCOUNTERING THE SELF**

by

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ABSTRACT

Connecting with Courage (CWC) is a three-day Outward Bound self-discovery programme, designed by women for women. It was developed to bring feminist theory to bear on outdoor and experiential education (OEE). The re-thinking of OEE research from a feminist standpoint is less than two decades old. It began by challenging previous assumptions about participants in OEE as male and set out to explore women's different experiences and needs in OEE programmes. However while this new literature criticised the standard OEE literature for universalising male participants' experiences, it tended to provide a universalist and essentialist view of women's experiences and needs in OEE. More recently, this latter tendency has been criticised by a small number of writers within the women-and-OEE literature. This study examines women's experiences during and after four of Outward Bound's CWC courses in light of some branches of contemporary feminist theory. The study employs qualitative methodology placing the researcher at CWC as both a participant and observer, and carrying out individual open-ended, semi-structured, in-depth, ethnographic interviews with 21 women. The study explores the limitations of the standard OEE framework and the women-and-OEE literature. Its central contribution is to show how women's experiences at CWC and their subsequent understanding of these experiences can be interpreted differently depending on the theoretical framework used. The study highlights the potential of contemporary feminist theory in

four respects. First it illustrates the value of re-thinking the universalist concept of woman by exploring how sexual identity, as one example of social difference, is relevant to experience. Second the study validates Carol Gilligan's notion of the self as relational while examining contemporary feminist theorisations of the self. Thus, third, it also demonstrates how far more nuanced and rich insights can be derived by employing a postmodern-inspired feminist conceptualisation of the self as multiple, contradictory and in process. Finally, it illustrates how these insights can be used to re-think some of the core concepts of OEE theory and practice.

RÉSUMÉ

Connecting with Courage (CWC) est un trois-jour programme de découverte de soi, conçu par des femmes pour des femmes. Il était développé afin d'appliquer la théorie féministe à la '*outdoor and experiential education*' (*OEE*). La repense de la recherche *OEE* d'une perspective féministe commençait il y a moins qu'une vingtaine d'années. Elle commençait avec une mise en question de la supposition que les participants en *OEE* étaient des hommes et visait à explorer les expériences et besoins différents des femmes. Mais, même que cette littérature nouvelle critiquait la littérature établis de *OEE* comme universalisant les expériences et besoins des hommes, elle avait elle-même une tendance d'offrir un image universaliste et essentialiste des expériences et besoins des femmes en *OEE*. Plus récemment, cette tendance a été critiquée par quelques auteurs au sein de la littérature "femmes et *OEE*". La présente étude examine les expériences des femmes durant et après quatre des cours Outward Bound "*CWC*" à la lumière de certains courants de la théorie féministe contemporaine. L'étude utilise une méthodologie qualitative, mettant la chercheuse à *CWC* comme participante et observatrice, et exécutant des entrevus individuels ouverts semi-structurés, en profondeur et ethnographiques avec 21 femmes. L'étude examine les limitations de la structure établie d'*OEE* et de la littérature "femmes et *OEE*". Sa contribution principale est de démontrer comment les expériences des femmes à *CWC* et ses compréhensions subséquentes peuvent être interprétées

différamment selon des approches théoriques différentes employées. La présente étude met en lumière le potentiel de la théorie féministe contemporaine sous quatre égards. Premièrement, l'étude éclaire la valeur de repenser la conception universaliste de "femme" en examinant comment l'identité sexuelle, comme un exemple de différence sociale, est pertinente à l'expérience. Deuxièmement, l'étude prouve la justesse de la notion de Carol Gilligan du soi comme relationnel, tout en examinant des théorisations féministes contemporaines du soi. Ainsi, troisièmement, l'étude démontre comment des compréhensions beaucoup plus nuancées et riches peuvent être achevées à travers d'une conceptualisation du soi comme multiple, contradictoire et en cours. Finalement, l'étude démontre comment ces compréhensions peuvent être utilisées en repensant quelques-unes des conceptions clés de la théorie et de la pratique *OEE*.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROJECT: BACKGROUND AND METHOD

1.1 - Introduction: Mapping the Terrain

In the 1980's, a women focused literature emerged in response to the failure of the standard outdoor and experiential education (OEE) literature to take into consideration women's particular experiences in OEE programming. This new women-and-OEE literature focused upon women's 'different' needs, and explored and advocated the benefits of women-only programming to meet these needs. In 1998, this literature remains largely unchanged in the focus of its examination of women's experiences in outdoor programmes. With some exceptions, this literature, although feminist in outlook, has remained insular and has not engaged with contemporary feminist theory outside of the OEE field. Contemporary feminist theory helps us identify the "irony" of the "recurrent pattern" (Nicholson, 1990, p. 1) in the women-and-OEE literature. In replacing the notion of the homogeneous participant that it had challenged in the standard OEE literature with a notion of a homogeneous female participant, much of the women-and-OEE literature fell into the same trap of "falsely universalising" its theory, the very thing it was criticising. This criticism is not unique to the women-and-OEE literature: it is a key problem identified by Linda Nicholson (1990, p. 1) within western feminist theory in the

late 1960's to mid 1980's. Therein lies a central problem of the women-and-OEE literature: more than a decade later, it has still to break out of its own "recurrent pattern." Also, and perhaps most remarkably, the women-and-OEE literature has generally failed to draw upon insights of contemporary feminist theory¹ that are directly relevant to its central concern, the experience of women in OEE programmes. One particularly pertinent example is the failure to explore contemporary feminist theory on the self.

In this work, therefore, I set out to explore two layers of untapped potential. First, the untapped potential of contemporary feminist theory for enriching and opening up new spaces in the women-and-OEE literature. Such a broader theoretical framework for the women-and-OEE literature allows us, second, to see some of the untapped potential of OEE experiences themselves. The setting for this exploration is Connecting with Courage (CWC), a three-day Outward Bound (Chapter 2, p. 48) programme, "designed by women for women" (Outward Bound, 1995a), which advertised its curriculum as:

¹ Contemporary feminist theory is a term that I use throughout this thesis. I employ it to distinguish between the earlier work of Carol Gilligan (1982) which, 16 years later, remains the 'feminist theory' most frequently cited within the women-and-OEE literature (see Bell's 1997 criticism), and the theories of other feminists such as Seyla Benhabib (1992), Susan Bordo (1990), Morwenna Griffiths (1995), Alison Weir (1996), who have broken out of the "recurrent pattern" that Linda Nicholson (1990, p. 1) identified within western feminist theory in the late 1960's to mid 1980's. Branches of contemporary feminist theory are discussed in Chapters 3 and 5.

. . . a unique blend of the physical challenges that are the hallmark of Outward Bound, and dynamic creative and expressive activities. Over the three days you may challenge yourself on our ropes course; navigate a 30 foot sailboat through the Harbor Islands; or experience rock climbing. Blended with these activities are powerful creative exercises and discussions, journal writing and time for personal reflection. You will be camping and cooking on Thompson Island, where 157 acres of meadows, hills, beaches and salt marshes lie in a different world just one mile from Boston. (Outward Bound, 1995a)

In 1995, I was a participant observer in four CWC courses. I went 'into the field' with three main questions: why women attended the CWC programme; how they experienced the CWC programme, commenting as it unfolded and immediately after; and, what resonance, if any, their experience at CWC had in their lives four to six months later. These questions were very much in keeping with those previously raised in the women-and-OEE literature about why women attended all-women's programmes and what they derived from their participation (e.g., Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a; Holtzwarth, 1992; McClintock, 1996b; Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, 1983; Yerkes & Miranda, 1985).

It was apparent from the outset of my experiences as a participant observer that women looked to and participated in a

CWC course at a time of transition or with a sense of being stuck in their lives. Also evident was that women hoped their participation would "provide clarity," "provide some answers" to questions they brought with them (that brought them?) to the course; or would "help me jump-start," "give me confidence," "light my fire," "provide me with some momentum" to make some adjustments or changes in their lives. Soon after each of the CWC courses began, women were offered the opportunity to say a few words about why they came to the course and what, if any, their hopes and fears for the course were. Such questions were asked with a view to encouraging women to "begin to open up" (Outward Bound, 1994). It was through choosing to disclose at the outset of the course such pieces of information (paraphrased here) about their selves and their lives that the themes transition, feeling stuck, in limbo emerged as something more than idiosyncratic:

I'm about to be made redundant at work. I'm 'headed toward' divorce. I have two young children. I worry about them and being able to support them;

I've just turned 40, and my youngest child is about to enter school. 'It is finally time for me to grow up.' I have a fear of the unknown because my focus had been centred around bringing up my family;

When my husband left me, I didn't know who I was, what I liked and what I didn't like. I'm hoping this weekend to find out a little more about me;

I started out as a child with low self-esteem. I found my self-esteem in college. Lost it in my late 20's; what I had developed was ruined. I made some bad choices. I want to find the young woman who got lost along the way. I saw the advertisement and found myself described; I have been a business entrepreneur, worked for myself and have recently sold my business. I want to experience being part of a team, instead of the leader.

That women would look to a challenging and unique experience during a time of uncertainty at a specific period in their lives is not at all revelatory. Nor are such choices unique to women. It often takes some recognition of feeling stuck, isolated, unsettled to push us to step outside of our normal life and challenge ourselves differently. Some people never get to the place where they recognise or feel the need for such a decision, or understand the potential benefit that it might bring. For others, it is not feasible for economic or practical reasons. My focus here, however, are the experiences of the 35 women (including myself) who did have the financial resources and were able to make the necessary arrangements to attend CWC in 1995.

After struggling with contemporary feminist theory in completing this thesis, I have come to conceptualise the notions 'stuck' and 'transition,' the vagueness of searching for 'something' rather differently than I did during my fieldwork. My reading and interpretation of the data evolved and unfolded with insights this

literature has provided. Contemporary feminist theory about the self and identity shifted my thinking about the questions women brought to the CWC course. Morwenna Griffiths (1995) suggested that the “newer version” of a self:

is made and makes itself in the changing circumstances in which she lives, and in a direction strongly affected by her own understanding of herself. Circumstances include those which arise just because of the politics of our gender, race, class, sexuality, disability and world justice. (p. 78-9)

Questions roughly formulated as ‘who am I?’, ‘how did I come to be my self?’, ‘where did this self come from?’, ‘what influence did gender/race/class/sexuality have?’ are relevant to this “newer version” of a self (Griffiths, 1995). Seen in the CWC context, such an opportunity to make a selective disclosure of the self for a group of strangers is more than CWC’s identification of it as an activity to encourage women “to open up” (Outward Bound, 1994). Applying the above questions about the self to women’s disclosure of personal stories and the self at CWC can be seen as a questioning of the self, for the self and for others. The above paraphrased snippets of information used to highlight the notion of transition, when looked at through a feminist-inspired lens can also be thought of in the following way (in drawing upon the first of the above questions): ‘Who am I’ heading towards divorce and unemployment with two small children?; ‘Who am I’ now that my husband has left, I’m not

sure what I like; 'Who am I' now my children have all started school?; 'Who am I' now I have sold my business?

Several women came to the CWC course at a time of transition, searching for 'something,' because of the Outward Bound organisation's 'brand name.' These women thought Outward Bound was synonymous with physical challenges and were hopeful that challenging themselves in a physical sense would "complement," "solidify and reinforce" the "figurings" and "work" they had been doing emotionally:

(Carol²) I had a friend who went on an Outward Bound course in North Carolina and she had described that experience as 'life changing.' . . . I knew from her that it would be a positive experience in that I would have to dig deep down into myself. And connect with myself and my feelings, which has been a struggle. So I felt like the work I had been doing on my own in the past few years was like a prelude to this Outward Bound programme. But it was the prospect of physically challenging myself that I thought would complement the figurings I had gotten from therapy.

(Liz) I just felt, what little I knew about Outward Bound, that there would be physical challenges and I anticipated that I would have difficulty with that because I don't see myself, and I was always told, that I am not an athletic person. I

² Names of both participants and instructors have been changed.

was a dancer and bent my legs. I hate camping, I hate cooking over a fire. I'm not kidding when I say that my idea of a good time is to sit at the Ritz for a dinner with good wine and good company, and geez Louise, I could have done that twice for that money! But I had a feeling that it would solidify and reinforce the work that I was doing emotionally. And it did it much more than I ever thought it would.

Hannah thought of Outward Bound in a more historical sense as a "survival test":

(Hannah) After the breakup I really felt like an earthquake had totally levelled my life. I felt completely shattered and I walked around literally feeling like I was in a state of shock, like a zombie. By the beginning of the second week I felt like I was in survival mode, functioning and doing what I had to do, but definitely survival mode. And I think that brought me to call Outward Bound, as I had always thought of it as a survival test. . . . I knew the sort of change that it helped bring along. . . . I think that was a part of my attraction to Outward Bound because it was outdoors and physically challenging, and part of me knew that it would be a good thing to do.

Ros also thought of Outward Bound as a way of "testing" herself, but for very different reasons than Hannah:

(Ros) A friend of mine had breast cancer. . . . In the midst of some of her chemo, while she was still feeling up to things, had gone on a week with Outward Bound. . . . and it had been a tremendous boost for her in the midst of this terrible trial she was going through. So in hearing about her experience, and having had a naive and general knowledge about the concept of Outward Bound for a while, I was interested in experiencing it too.

(Louise) What was it about the concept that appealed to you?

(Ros) The idea of testing yourself, of working with a group, of trying to prove that you could manoeuvre in the wild, I suppose. Thompson Island is hardly the wild, but it's a compromise!. . . . Camp memories. It seemed to me that I would be put back in touch with something I hadn't done in a long time.

(Louise) Why did you feel that need to test yourself?

(Ros) I guess to prove, somehow, that one has validity. Physically - I am nearly 70. . . . My feeling was that I'd better do it now, if I'm ever going to do it, you know, because of age.

The central identifying feature of CWC's advertising in local Boston newspapers was that it was an Outward Bound programme for women only. Many of those women who had not heard of CWC specifically and who did not call the 1-800 national Outward Bound number, learned of the CWC programme through an advertisement

in the education section of *The Boston Globe* or their local tabloid paper. The wording of CWC advertisements included: "OUTWARD BOUND," "all women," "self-confidence"; "three day self-discovery adventure"; "Boston." Women's interest was piqued by any one or all of these features. Several women identified themselves in the programme's brochure and advertising material, thinking, like Hannah, "gee, they made this course for me!"; or Jane, "I read the advertisement and saw myself in what they were saying"; or like both Liz and Carrie who thought their self-esteem needed building back up. Another aspect, raised above by Liz, and by several other women, including Carrie: that part of their interest in attending CWC was because it was "diametrically opposed" to their normal frame of reference:

(Carrie) I'm in no physical shape; I've never camped a moment in my life. This weekend was diametrically opposed to anything I've ever done before, and diametrically opposed to what my life is normally. When I got the acceptance, and it said in there that they would give me a sleeping bag and an insulite pad. . . . And I needed polypropylene long underwear! It was to my therapist that I said something like, 'they're going to give me a sleeping bag and something called an insulite pad. My god! They want me sleeping on the ground!' And she said, 'did you think you'd be staying at the Boston Harbour Hotel, ferrying over for cocktails?' Which--obviously, I didn't think *that*, but I hadn't thought it

through at all, really. So it was really quite an adventure for me to do this!

As can be seen from the selections above, women came to CWC for a variety of reasons. Yet if we left the inquiry at this snapshot level - that women came to CWC at a time of transition in their lives and looking for a 'different' experience; that women thought the programme might shake-up normal; jump-start the process toward change; that the physical might shed light on the emotional - we would paint a uni-dimensional picture. When we recognise that women are objects of social construction (Rogers, 1993); objects that are constructed in significantly different ways (Frye, 1992), this uni-dimensional picture is seen to be more complex. We see that women's sense of transition (part of the reason why they signed up for CWC in the first place) is related to their being a woman. But, as Marilyn Frye (1992, p. 62) tells us, there is no

rubber stamp replica of the prevailing concept of woman. . . .
 Woman is not the only concept or social category any of us lives under. Each of us is a woman of some class, some color, some occupation, some ethnic or religious group. . . . One is lesbian or heterosexual or bisexual or off-scale. . . . Nobody observes and theorizes simply as a woman.

To understand the complexity of our difference, Frye recommends that we "speak of and to and from the circumstances, experience and perception of those who are historically, materially,

culturally constructed by or through the concept woman" (p. 62). Consideration of Marilyn Frye's and Annie Rogers' (1993) observations renders the OEE picture more complex and takes up the criticism that Martha Bell (1993a) levelled at the women-and-OEE literature for attempting to create a collective definition of women's experiences, ignoring the ways in which women's experiences in OEE programmes may have radically different meanings depending on each woman's location. The view of what was taking place at CWC becomes more textured, more multi-faceted when we consider that each woman arrived at CWC bringing her own vantage point and social location to the experience. Given that we live our lives within socially, culturally, discursively constructed (Griffiths, 1995; Probyn, 1993; Weir, 1996) expectations and restrictions, the questions that women brought with them to the course were shaped through what Jane Flax (1990, p. 220) referred to as women's "differentiated yet collective experience." Differentiated due to their particularities and specific locations, but also collective due to their shared experiences as white, middle-class, able-bodied women living in the socially constructed expectations of what it means to be a woman in the (North Eastern) United States of America in the mid-1990's. In paying attention to women's particularities, this work will make visible the multi-faceted nature of women's experiences and explorations of self and identity in an Outward Bound programme, "designed by women, for women" (Outward Bound, 1995a).

As described in brief terms above, there were a multitude of questions that women came to the programme with, questions that possibly brought them to the programme. In addition, many questions about the self arose for women *because* of their participation in the programme. 'Who am I?' "trusting women after my break-up?" 'Who am I?' being successful at climbing to the top of this tower and being instrumental in my partner climbing it too when I am normally the wimp in my relationship with my lover, and she is the one who is the jock. 'Who am I?' roughing it when "my idea of a good time is to sit at the Ritz for a dinner with good wine and good company." 'Who am I?' among these "dyke bitches" when I love the support of the group and I'm "digging the whole woman thing." 'Who am I?' clinging to this tree in sheer terror. 'Who am I?' among feminists, strong women "when the whole women's movement has screwed me. . . . being a mother . . . I have to go to work and take 100% responsibility for my children." 'Who am I?' without a shower, clean clothes, the comforts of home. 'Who am I?' being successful in this activity . . . now what?

Informed by contemporary feminist theory, I realise that I am now thinking about women being stuck or in transition as one aspect of uncertainty about the self. That is, the transitional phase or circumstance in women's lives might describe one part of their sense of self, but it is not all encompassing. Contemporary feminist theory describes how our sense of self is constructed in social, relational and material circumstances, and is fragmented, even contradictory. The question of who the individual is, is the very

subject of contemporary feminist questioning. Until quite recently, the existence of a 'self' as such has not been considered a particularly problematic proposition, and the normative model has been of a 'self' that is relatively unitary and fixed after childhood (Allport, 1961; Maslow, 1971; Rogers, 1950). In the 1990's, the self is theorised very differently: as always under construction and deconstruction. Seyla Benhabib stated that "a self can only be understood as constituted intersubjectively, in interaction with others in a process of becoming" (1992, p. 14).

Judith Davidson (1994) challenged the OEE field to move beyond reproducing and recreating existing values and assumptions. Because the process of defining the self is not a private or individual matter but a social and contextual one - achieved through communities, institutions, systems of meaning - it seems fitting to ask, then, whether women encounter the self / selves at CWC in a way that differs from what was previously familiar. By approaching women's experiences in the outdoors from a feminist standpoint and in supplying a 'cultural mirror' to reflect women's experiences at CWC, this project will go on to highlight the potential of shared experiences to enable a process of reclaiming the power to define ourselves as women and redefine our identities. It is precisely because an OEE programme such as CWC, is, itself, a social experience, that it is a vehicle with rich potential to engage in this process of encountering, discovering, challenging old and new shared meanings about the self in the body - including sexuality, size, strength, cultural expectations, abilities, age.

1.2 - Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine women's experiences during and after four Outward Bound courses in light of some branches of contemporary feminist theory. The study explores the limitations of the standard OEE framework, and the women-and-OEE literature. It examines the new insights that can be derived by relying upon conceptions of the self as social and relational, multiple and contradictory, and evolving through time. Finally, in light of the data collected, this study revisits core OEE concepts and practices to suggest ways in which contemporary feminist theory insights can be drawn upon to open new spaces, not only in theoretical approaches to women-and-OEE, but in the practice of OEE programming for women.

1.3 - Organisation of the Thesis

In order to render visible the two layers of untapped potential - theoretical and practical - mentioned at the outset, I will proceed as follows. A description of the research setting and how the data were collected in Chapter 1 will be followed by a brief summary of salient features of the standard OEE literature (Chapter 2.1). I will then provide an overview on the women-and-OEE literature, showing that its challenge to the standard OEE literature has been limited, by and large, to explaining women's different needs, and to exploring the resulting need for women-only

programmes (Chapter 2.2). In Chapter 3, I review contemporary feminist theory and explore the challenge it poses to the women-and-OEE literature's largely homogeneous concept of 'woman.' In this chapter, I will juxtapose review of literature and discussion of data collected at CWC which serve to flesh-out and validate relevant theoretical points. As an example of how diversity and difference are found within the collective notion of 'woman,' and to illustrate the importance of sensitivity to this diversity and difference, I present data relating to the participation of lesbians in CWC. Theory and data are also juxtaposed in Chapters 4 and 5, which focus on feminist theory on self and identity. Data are presented to illustrate two theoretical themes: the notion of the social / relational self (Chapter 4), and the notion of the self as evolving through time and as fragmented (Chapter 5). Finally, in Chapter 6, I revisit OEE's core-concepts and practices. Both review of theoretical literature and data analysis are used here to demonstrate the aforementioned untapped potential in OEE programming.

1.4 - "What I Did" and "How I Did It"

Feminists have been stern critics of 'hygienic research'; the censoring out of the mess, confusion and complexity of doing research, so that the accounts bear little or no relation to the real events. But many of our accounts are full of silences too. (Kelly, Burton, Regan, 1994, p. 46)

In the remainder of this chapter, I describe the setting of the study, how I gained access, who the participants were, the techniques used to collect the data (participant observation, interviews immediately after the CWC course and four to six months later) and the research experience. I provide a review of the theoretical issues that are related to this study's methods separately in the Appendix (p. 350).

1.4.1 - The Setting

Connecting With Courage (CWC) for adult women is a three-day Outward Bound programme. It is one of several Outward Bound programmes offered at Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Centre (TIOBEC), located one mile off-shore in Boston Harbour (information regarding the history and evolution of the Outward Bound organisation can be found in Chapter 2, p. 48). Because CWC for adult women was planned for a select group of women as a 'taster' of the extended (14 day) programme for 12-13 year old girls (also called Connecting With Courage), it was heavily influenced by the same programmatic elements and philosophy. The CWC girls' programme was inspired by the findings of Carol Gilligan, Lyn Mikel Brown and Annie Rogers, researchers from Harvard University's Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development, and designed to build confidence and self-esteem at what had been discerned as a critical time in girls' development. In 1993, as a method of raising money to support the girls' programme, a

condensed version of their course was offered to women philanthropists and executives from the Boston area (H. Fouhey & A. Kohut, personal communication, February 24, 1995; Porter, 1996). At the time of the women's invitational, the girls' programme had completed two summers. The weekend invitational was not only successful in raising money for the girls' programme. The personal value that the invited women derived from the condensed weekend programme did not escape the attention of TIOBEC's administration, who quickly realised that the weekend format for adult women was a marketable programme in and of itself. CWC for adult women (hereafter referred to as CWC) had an audience, and programmes have been offered on various spring and fall weekends since the 1993 invitational.

Here is a brief description of a standard CWC course, based on the four courses CWC offered in 1995, all of which I attended as a participant and observer. Further information regarding specific activities ('Take-Five,' 'Portrait,' 'Solo') is provided at various places in the text where it is more usefully read alongside a discussion of participant's actual experiences. In this chapter, by way of example and because women make only sporadic reference to them in talking about their experiences at CWC, I will describe only the 'Alpine Tower' and 'Dangle Duo' in more detail.

In general, each of the activities at CWC followed a standard experiential education model (e.g., Gass, 1993; Joplin, 1981, 1995; Nadler & Luckner, 1992) whereby the purpose or goal of the activity was explained to the participants along with safety

information prior to the activity (in OEE-terminology, the activity was 'framed'), women experienced the activity; reflected on their experience; and debriefed the activity in a group format.

Participants set sail from South Boston on the morning of day one on a "three-day self-discovery adventure" (Outward Bound, 1995a), and travelled to Thompson Island on a small ferry operated by Outward Bound. The first few hours were spent getting acquainted through a variety of cooperative games, opportunities to share personal information such as reasons for coming to CWC, hopes and fears for the weekend. Comfort issues were also addressed through the distribution of various items of equipment that would be needed for the weekend. In essence, the first morning's schedule followed a standard OEE format: women were involved in activities designed to establish the foundation for cooperation, support and trust, and quell their concerns by providing a safe opening to be playful.

After a 'trail' lunch, the afternoon was spent doing a progression of trust exercises culminating in various elements of the high-ropes course. One course made an exception to the high-ropes course routine, the instructors choosing instead to work entirely on various low-ropes course initiatives ('Spider's Web,' 'Teeter-Totter,' 'Nitro-Crossing' - Rohnke, 1984). The high and low ropes courses consist of a variety of activities that are performed at varying levels of height, and require participants to work together. The courses are made of configurations of rope, wood and wire, which are secured to trees or other upright structures. The 'dangle duo' was

the first of five high-ropes course elements that women had the chance to participate in. The dangle duo is a ladder-like object, suspended by wire between two trees. At CWC, the first rung of the ladder was about 1.3 metres (4 feet) off the ground, and the top rung approximately seven metres (20 feet) high. Each rung of the ladder was about 15 cm (6 inches) deep, and about 1.5 metres wide. The space between each rung varied, being closer together at the bottom (approximately 1.3m), and progressively further apart (approximately 1.65m between the two top rungs). The height between the rungs required climbers to work together to figure out how to pull, push, balance, support each other's body between rungs. The objective, presented at the outset of the activity, was for women to work together and for each to set their own goals. At CWC, belaying on the dangle duo was a six person effort, three belayers for each climber. The two climbers were secured by separate ropes, one end of which was clipped with an aluminum climbing device called a 'carabiner' into the front of their seat-harness, and the middle was threaded through a device at the top of the dangle duo. On the other end of the rope were three carabiners, one of which was clipped into the front of each of three belayers' seat-harnesses. Belaying in this activity worked like a counter-lever: as the climber climbed up, the belayers took a corresponding step backwards (known as the 'Australian Belay'). The belayers' task was to keep the climber's safety rope taut, so that if she slipped, the tension in the rope would stay her fall.

As can be seen through this brief description of day one's pre-dinner schedule, women attending CWC covered a lot of ground in the first few hours: arriving at the ferry dock at 09:00 as strangers; and less than four hours later needing to depend on each other for their physical and emotional safety.

The campsite was at the southern end of the Island, where we also cooked and ate dinner and breakfast. During one of the courses, we slept in three person tents because the platform tents had not been set-up. A platform tent is, as the name suggests, a tent erected on a platform, which at CWC slept 12 comfortably. We returned to the campsite each night in time to set up our belongings, and cook dinner in varying degrees of darkness. Evening activities varied with each of the courses, but all were group focused.

Day two began with a choice of a run, walk or yoga. Breakfast was quickly prepared and eaten, dishes washed and a prompt departure was made from the campsite to catch the 08:30 ferry back to South Boston. On the mainland, we briefly re-entered 'real' life, travelling by van on a six-lane Interstate Highway to Quincy Quarries, the rock climbing site. Six hours were spent climbing the rock at the disused quarry, returning to Thompson Island in time to complete the portrait activity before dinner. The portrait activity involved each woman's depicting herself between ages 10-14 and in the present, as well as depicting her hopes for herself in the future (Chapter 5, p. 203). There was one exception to this routine of leaving the Island to climb. The instructors of one course chose to remain on the Island and utilise the alpine tower for

the climbing portion of the course. The alpine tower (frequently referred to by women in the following text as "the tower") was a wooden, tripod-shaped structure, the apex of which was approximately 15 metres (45 feet) off the ground. There were three sides to the alpine tower, each with a separate belaying station. While the principle of belaying was the same as previously described in the dangle duo, the technique used in the alpine tower and rock climbing was slightly different: one climber was supported by various pieces of technical equipment and 'belayed' by one woman. Simply put, the combination of technique, technical equipment and due care and attention ensured the safety of the climber. Each of the tower's three sides had a unique set-up, providing women with the choice of varying degrees of challenge in the form of ropes, swinging logs, nets, wires, and foot and hand-hold spacings attached to the tripod's actual structure to climb up and swing across from level to level of the alpine tower.

Day three began like day two. After breakfast we returned to the high-ropes course to perform the 'zip-wire' activity, involving women, clipped into a harness attached to the wire, to travel down the wire which was suspended between two trees (Chapter 6, p. 256). The last major activity at CWC was a solo experience, in which women spent time alone reflecting on their experiences at CWC and of themselves between the ages of 10 and 14 (Chapter 5, p. 210). Depending on how efficient the instructors had been in moving the group through the morning procedure, and how much time women spent doing the zip-wire itself, the solo lasted between two and

three hours. Then, all that was left, was to debrief the solo experience, eat lunch, return equipment, say good-byes and depart on the 3:00 ferry, 'homeward bound.'

1.4.2 - Gaining Access for Research

My interest in CWC was triggered by a presentation about the CWC girls' programme that then Programme Manager, Amy Kohut, gave at the 1993 Association for Experiential Education (AEE) Conference. During this time I was an Assistant Professor in the Outdoor and Experiential Education Bachelor of Education programme at Queen's University, Ontario, Canada, and was fortunate to learn more about this programme during the summer of 1994 when a student I was supervising spent a two-month internship as an instructor at CWC. Through talking with Janet Dyment, reading her assignments, and visiting her at Thompson Island, I came to understand more about the girls' programme and its staff. In January 1995, I spoke with Amy Kohut about the CWC programme for adult women, and my interest in conducting my doctoral research within the programme. The following month, I travelled to Boston and met with Amy and then director of TIOBEC, Helen Fouhey. During this meeting, I became more acquainted with the adult women's programme, and also had the chance to explain my research interests and what I envisioned my role would be in more detail. It was through this meeting that an agreement for my participation in the CWC programme was reached.

Women who signed-up for CWC courses in 1995 received with their registration materials a covering letter detailing in brief, my role and interests. Women were informed in this letter that while Outward Bound had given me permission to be present on each of its CWC courses in 1995, they had the choice of whether to interact with me around my research interests or not. Also included in this cover letter was an invitation to contact CWC for further information about my participation and research. Amy Kohut received no such calls.

1.4.3 - The Women

Thirty five women ranging in age between 21 and 69 attended the four CWC programmes that ran in 1995. I attended each of the four courses along with, on two of the courses, seven other women, and the other two courses, ten other women. We were all white, christian-raised and able-bodied. All but one of the women were from at least middle-class backgrounds. Nine of the 35 women were mothers, and one was a grandmother. Eight women had graduate degrees, and all but three of us had completed a bachelor's degree or were in the process of doing so. Three women were full-time homemakers. I was one of six participants who identified themselves as lesbian and made this disclosure to the group. Two instructors led each course; all eight of them were white and ranged in age between mid-twenties and mid-fifties. Three

were lesbians; one of whom disclosed this on course in the presence of the other lesbians.

1.4.4 - Who I am

The above information describes me as a white, christian-raised, able-bodied lesbian from a middle-class background. I spent my pre-adolescent years on the Isle of Man in the British Isles, and then went to boarding school in Somerset, England. I got my undergraduate degree at the University of London in sports studies and educational studies. From there, I went on to complete a master's degree in leisure studies at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada, after which I taught in the undergraduate programme for a year. I then enrolled in a Ph.D. programme in educational psychology at McGill University, Quebec, Canada, and spent the entire second academic year as a counselling intern at Montreal Children's Hospital in the Outpatient Psychiatry Department. I spent all of my summers during these nine years of university education working at an eight-week residential summer camp for girls in Lenox, Massachusetts. At the time I conducted my field work, I was 31 years old and had been working for three years as an Assistant Professor of Outdoor and Experiential Education at Queen's University, Ontario, Canada.

1.4.5 - Data Collection Techniques

As suggested above, women attending CWC courses in 1995 had been advised by Outward Bound of my presence and role in advance of their participation. The CWC Course Director gave me the opportunity to identify myself as 'the researcher' at the outset of our interaction, and soon after arriving on Thompson Island I had further occasion to explain my role in more detail. I informed the other CWC participants that I was a doctoral student at McGill University in Montreal, and interested in women's experiences in outdoor programmes. I also introduced them to my research 'tools' - a 'walk-person' tape-recorder, and my journal. I showed pages from my journal, and invited women to feel free to look at it at any time. I also mentioned that I would remove myself from the group periodically during the weekend to record my observations on my tape recorder, and that I would take notes during each of the activity's debriefs. In addition to the information about my role, I also emphasised that I would be a fully-fledged participant during the weekend, and that while my presence was unavoidable, that women were under no obligation to interact with me around my research interests. Reproduced below is an exchange I had with Heather the day after the course ended about my role, and about what my journal and tape-recorder captured:

(Heather) A couple of times I was a little intimidated by your writing. I thought--what is she thinking? What is she writing about me?

(Louise) [I give my journal to Heather to look at, and show her what I had written about her] In my journal I tried to record women's exact words, but often they spoke so quickly that I had to summarise, much like a student being in a lecture. I did not place any judgment on their words. I just tried to capture them. On my walk-person I also tried capture the action; who had said what, who had done what--kind of reporting on what we had just done. I've noticed from my previous recordings, I tend to record what seemed note-worthy to me at the time that I muttered into it. I tried to capture my interpretation of women's experiences as well as women's spoken words, and a sense of the emotion and mood of individuals and the group's dynamic.

Fieldnotes

What I captured on tape and what I wrote in my journal of course, could not be, as Gary Fine (1993, p. 278) points out, anything other than "along the lines' of what was said." Unless "trained in short-hand or court-reporting," Fine contends that it is impossible for researchers to be anything other than "playwrights, reconstructing a scene for the insight of our readers. . . . Notetaking and writing demand transformation and recontextualization" (Fine, 1993, p. 277). Margery Wolf (1992, p. 86) referred to the kind of retroactive observations I recorded on tape as:

a partial description of an activity, a conversation, a scene. It cannot be otherwise, for the action is frozen, and so few words cannot capture all the activity that occurs in a few minutes of observation and the social and material context that gives that activity meaning.

These limitations notwithstanding, given the time that elapsed between leaving the field and the formulation of the data interpretation as reported here, the kind of information I committed to tape or fieldnotes then, proved useful in reminding me of the nuances of each of the CWC courses, my impression of each group, and the events to which women referred in interview.

Participant Observer

I participated in all activities at CWC on each of the four courses. As mentioned above, I frequently removed myself from the group by stepping a few metres away to record my observations on tape. I tried to do this after each activity, and often recorded some observations during activities when I was not involved as an active participant. This was possible during several of the physical activities that required that participants take turns, and other activities which involved participants spending time alone during activities involving introspection (see Portrait, p. 203, and Solo, p. 210). Also, as described above, I took notes in my journal during group debriefs. Both the tape-recorded observations and the field

notes from the journal were later transcribed. Many women offered unsolicited comments during interviews after the weekend about my presence on the CWC course. In response to the following question, Heather, above, admitted to feeling "intimidated" by my writing, and then went on to say:

(Louise) Before I rush off to meet Liz, are there any questions you want to ask me? Anything else that you want to add?

(Heather) At first I thought that you might just sit back and take all of this in, that you would not open up to us, but you did. And that I found very refreshing. The fact that you did hold hands with us, laugh with us, cry with us, that you were connected with us. I thought you handled yourself in a very very professional way.

Gillian suggested that she was aware of my presence, because she too was involved in research. But as Heather suggested above, I became a full member of the group also in Gillian's eyes when I exposed myself as being vulnerable and a novice. In the activity that Gillian refers to below, I was scared by the process and elated by the outcome:

(Louise) Any questions you want to ask me? Any comments?

(Gillian) Given my own graduate work, and the research work I am doing now . . . , I was very interested in watching you go about your research. My masters work, and all of the

stuff I do now is quantitative. . . . I think that the experience was too intense to be affected by trying to do anything other than be real about what I was experiencing. I never once thought about altering what I said or did because you were there as a researcher. . . . You really became a participant for me when I saw you get to the top of the Tower tied together with Claudia [Claudia and I climbed the alpine tower tethered by a two metre long loop of webbing]. We were pretty wowed by that, and there was a lot of energy around that, and a lot of us felt, 'oh, she must have done it a million times.' And when we learned that you hadn't, we were like 'wow, she really is one of us.'

Interviews

After thanking the group for their support and inclusion at the end of the weekend's final debrief, I also stated my interest in meeting with women who were willing to speak with me about their CWC experiences. I stressed that this was completely voluntary, that I would travel to meet each woman at a time and place of her convenience, and that I anticipated the interview would last between one and one and a half hours. I informed the group that this was the only occasion I would state my interest in doing this, and asked that women who were willing to talk with me to indicate their interest before the ferry docked in Boston.

Twenty seven of the 34 women volunteered. On one of the courses, only two of seven women volunteered, from another course, all ten women volunteered, and from each of the other two courses, all but one woman volunteered. Since I wanted to do interviews in person, and my budget was not unlimited, location and accessibility became criteria for selecting who I would interview. This approach excluded three women who had travelled from outside of the New England States to attend CWC. Scheduling problems prevented my meeting with a further three women, resulting in my conducting interviews with 21 participants. With the exception of four interviews which were conducted two weeks after the course, interviews were carried out between one and five days following the CWC programme. Just over half of the interviews were held in women's homes, others in restaurants, coffee shops, and various outdoor places around Boston. Most interviews lasted 75 to 90 minutes, though some were considerably longer. All interviews were taped and later transcribed.

I also taped my immediate thoughts about each interview as I walked or drove away, and later that same day captured in my journal what seemed at the time to be the most remarkable recollections of my day's interviewing. Such impressions are, as Margery Wolf (1992, p. 91) tells us, "the first ordering of what we know":

Fieldnotes are bits and pieces of information filtered through the minds of those who observe and record them . . . are highly selected. . . . They cannot be pure descriptions of

reality, no matter who collects them or writes them down. . . .
The fact that we choose to write down a particular piece of information implicates it in the beginning of an analysis. Our fieldnotes are the first ordering of 'what we know.'

There is much written in feminist research texts about establishing and maintaining trust between the interviewer and interviewee (e.g., Andersen, 1987; Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992; Wolf, 1992). Given that we had spent an intense weekend as members of an Outward Bound programme framed by a 13th century definition of courage "To speak one's mind by telling all one's heart" (Rogers, 1993, p. 265), [this definition, adopted by CWC, differed from the general Outward Bound motto "to serve to strive and not to yield," see Chapter 2, p. 48] there was a high level of pre-established trust between myself and the women who volunteered to speak with me in interview. Although we had only spent 54 hours together, CWC's rich blend of activities had generated a degree of intimacy that was unusual, given the short time we had known each other. During the CWC programme, we had seen each other laugh and cry, had felt each other's trust in physical activities such as rock climbing that demanded dependency on the other, had heard each other share feelings, had seen each other with 'bed-head,' unshowered for three days, had shared a tent, cooked and eaten meals together, etc. As Heather and Gillian's above comments suggest, some women considered me to be 'one of them' when I exposed my vulnerability or myself as a novice. While I have

highlighted Heather and Gillian's comments here, other women expressed their appreciation of my participation, others acknowledged the importance of the work I was carrying out, and some women did not offer any comment on my role in their CWC experience.

For the interviews, I had a sketch of general topics I wanted to cover, but the actual exchange unfolded much like a conversation. Rather than serving as questions to be asked verbatim in a particular order, the list of topics served to remind me, prior to conducting the interview, what I wanted to cover during the interview. I framed the questions I asked each woman from the standpoint of her own experience as she had told it, and I had observed and interpreted it, during the CWC course. Methodologically speaking, I conducted open-ended, semi-structured, in-depth, ethnographic interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Janice Raymond (1979, p. 16) encouraged consideration of "the 'unstructured research interview' employing open-ended questions" because it "maximizes discovery and description" (Reinharz, 1992). In actuality, I asked questions, listened to answers, asked questions out of answers. Like Pauline Bart and Patricia O'Brien (1984), I believe that attentive listening enabled me to ask questions out of women's responses and musings to previous questions. Where appropriate, I shared my experience from the CWC course and from my life. What I mean by 'appropriate' is that I disclosed information about myself only when I considered that it enabled the conversation about our mutual experience at CWC.

While there is lack of agreement among feminist researchers about the purpose, integrity and the outcome of researchers' self-disclosure (Reinharz, 1992), my prior interaction with women on course led me to believe that the way in which, and what, I shared was entirely fitting given our shared experiences at CWC.

When I thanked women for sharing their experiences and for their time at the end of the interview, several acknowledged, similar to the women Janet Finch (1984) interviewed, that the opportunity to talk had been beneficial for them personally:

(Hannah) I think our meeting and this conversation is very timely for me, because, as I mentioned to you earlier, it is very much a time of transition, confusion, and just struggle for me personally and professionally. I think it is very good for me to be reminded of not only the good things that I have experienced, but also the lessons that I have learned and that I want to keep applying. I mean, just this morning I was very distracted by some of the things that I am finding overwhelming right now, and just talking about CWC is a reminder for me to go away from here and think, 'All right, this is an overwhelming situation, just like the rock-climbing, but just take it one foot-hold or hand-hold at a time, and just make your way up.' So thank you for this opportunity to think about all of this!

(Emma) Talking with you has been very useful for me. I realise that the more I talk about not only the weekend, but

about myself that I understand more. The challenge is to keep pushing myself to talk. So don't thank me for my time, thank you for the insights this conversation has helped me uncover!

As Janet Holland and Caroline Ramazanoglu (1994, p. 131) observed: "by taking interviews to be social events, we can envisage interview research as a learning process both for researchers and for those who are researched."

Follow-Up Interviews

Immediately prior to the abovementioned 'thank you,' I informed women of my interest in meeting with them again in three to six months to talk about CWC, and their experiences in the intervening period. All 21 women indicated interest in this proposition. Approximately three weeks before each of the occasions that I returned to Boston, I wrote to the women, re-stated my interest, informed them of the dates I would be in Boston, how they could contact me while I was there to arrange an interview, and that I would contact them when I arrived in town. The actual elapsed time between the CWC course and the second interview varied between four and six months depending on entirely pragmatic considerations. The CWC courses took place in May, June, September and October, 1995. I met again with the women who attended the May course in September, the women who attended

the June course in October, 1995, and the women from the September and October courses in March, 1996. Two women had moved, and one did not return my call, resulting in my conducting follow-up interviews with 18 of the original 21 women.

I was interested in doing follow-up interviews to explore how the CWC experience had carried through into the lives of these women four to six months later. I again conducted open-ended, semi-structured, in-depth, ethnographic interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Once more, I actively listened, and asked questions out of answers. These conversations took place in the same mixture of outdoor and indoor, public and private locations, and each lasted about one hour. I also recorded my own immediate thoughts about each interview immediately after it had taken place.

1.4.6 - The Research Experience

In 'The Field'

Given my prior experience in the OEE field as a participant, instructor, and as a university professor at Queen's University, I was cognisant of my background relative to the other CWC participants and instructors. As I previously stated, I introduced myself to women on course as a "student researcher." However, as the course unfolded, several programmatic opportunities as well as personal exchanges presented themselves requiring that we share aspects of our professional identities. While I attempted to minimise my

background in the outdoors, I did not conceal it. As a result of this, some women looked to me for my professional experience. The two oldest women attending CWC in 1995, who were friends and both members of the same course, articulated their decision to share the tent I had claimed "because Louise will know what to do." My 'knowing what to do' was anticipated by other women also:

(Hannah) On Saturday night in the tent we were sitting across from each other. And I was thinking at that time how at times you were a participant like the rest of us - camping out in the same tent, rock climbing, drawing the pictures - but at other times you very much stood out as one of the leaders. When I went down the zip-wire, I noticed when I was standing on the platform before I jumped that you were at the end, and that was reassuring because I knew that you would know how to get me down safely at the end.

(Louise) What was your sense of Judy and Chris' [instructors] role during the weekend?

(Barbara) I thought the group looked to you a lot for steadiness. We knew you had been through this before. I know I was glad to have you there when we were learning how to belay. I felt more confident about your helping me with the technique. . . . There were different times that you could have told us about stuff, we tried to get you to, and it was annoying that you just shrugged your shoulders and pulled your 'wait and see' face. I felt that you let us feel it

for ourselves. I thought you were really good at experiencing it in real time. But I appreciated your sureness at different points. You didn't take over. And yet you were very helpful when it came to the basics about the stoves, putting out the fire, different things like that. I guess I liked your style, I liked that you taught me how to light the stove by making me read the damn directions rather than doing it for me!

As the above quote also suggests, women were curious about my experiences within other CWC courses, and those of other women. By the time I completed four CWC courses for research purposes (five including the staff training course) I found that I did have a good sense - from a women-and-OEE perspective - of women's experiences within the programme. This sense of certainty notwithstanding, I did not feel that I became prosaic or complacent about what I was observing or doing. The women who attended each of the CWC courses created their own chemistry and dynamic. The experiences the participants brought with them and those they shared, in combination with fact that there were different instructors on all of the 1995 courses, made the flavour of each course and group unique. Personally, I credit my ability to see each of the four courses with a fresh perspective to my own experience of transition and change in the four months that the CWC courses spanned. During this time, I left my job, re-located 4500 kilometres to Vancouver, and resumed my status as a full-time student. I participated in two courses on both sides of this transition: two

before moving, and two quite soon after. Course cancellations meant that I returned twice to Boston from Vancouver. This back and forth brought about the unsettling impression of Boston and my role at CWC feeling more familiar and comfortable than my new role, city and home. The feelings that this transition created meant that, within my own experiences as a participant, I experienced the CWC programme quite differently each time. Although I felt this transition viscerally, and mentioned the *facts* of this transition during the portrait activity (Chapter 5, p. 203) on each of the CWC courses, I did not readily share with women at CWC the *feelings* that were associated with this transition. This observation is not limited to my reluctance to share my feelings related to my sense of transition; it is also applicable to my not volunteering a great deal of information about my feelings related to my experiences within the CWC programme in general. Claudia's question below gives me the opening to talk about my own experience, but as will be seen, I defer this opportunity:

(Louise) Are there any questions you have of me?

(Claudia) I wonder what you got out of this weekend? I wonder if this weekend was any different from the others that you have done.

(Louise) Umm. I think that, having done four other CWC courses before this one, that I am very aware of the potential power of this programme. I have been incredibly privileged to have interacted with many wonderful women - not only that, but, more specifically, to be entrusted with their stories,

strengths, fears, hopes, perspectives, vulnerabilities. I realise that by putting private to public in the spirit of sharing a piece of my self on these courses, that I gain some clarity about my own strengths and struggles. But that doesn't really answer your question about me and this weekend. . . .

At the follow-up interviews which mostly took place in women's homes, some women cooked scrumptious meals, others got out their 'best china' for the cup of tea we shared, others told me what I considered to be very private information. What I said to Claudia above, did leave a feeling that remains: I do consider it to be an unmitigated privilege to have been trusted with women's stories, experiences, confidence. At a personal level, participating in a programme that utilised the 13th century definition of courage also brought me face-to-face with myself and my quirks. The way in which I initially avoid the question about myself in the above example is quintessentially me. When Claudia gave me the opportunity to talk about my own experience, I avoided her question by talking about the 'potential power' of the CWC programme, and the privilege that I felt my research role had provided. That such a definition of courage framed the activities at CWC, was, in part, what intrigued me about the programme when I first heard about it. To speak my own mind by telling my heart, was (and remains), something I do not rush to do. Through this research experience, I have become, however, at least more conscious of my own patterns of avoidance behaviour. Helen's

observation about my participant-observer role at CWC captured this:

(Louise) Any questions you have of me?

(Helen) I viewed you as a full-participant; but I also saw you in your observer role. And I remember wondering on the weekend whether you were reserved personally, or was that you playing a role. . . . I guess I just noticed that you were often reserved when you could have been more outspoken.

(Louise) That's a very interesting and astute observation! . . . I am reserved, perhaps it's one of the remaining characteristics of my British heritage. Amy³ [CWC's Programme Manager] was joking only yesterday about my formal, reserved side. I do tend to survey the scene before I invest myself in my personal interactions. You might have interpreted that as my researcher or observer role . . . but I think you saw the real Louise Cowin this weekend. When I was feeling vulnerable, or things got a little emotional it was actually very convenient for me to hide behind my observer role!

³ I have (with her permission) left Amy Kohut's name unchanged. On page 23, I referred to Amy as "CWC's Programme Manager." It is important to note, however, that while Amy was not an instructor in the 1995 CWC programmes, she did interact with the participants in an active role. She frequently 'checked-in' with the instructors, and observed each course in action. Amy was also present at the entire climbing portion of the course, either at the rock site, or the alpine tower.

My fear of mediocrity was another personal quirk that being a participant in five CWC courses (four as a participant observer and one as a participant in the CWC staff training weekend) provided me the opportunity to further understand. This fear sometimes showed up in the physical activities, when a woman had been successful in achieving something that I was not sure that I too could be successful in. This can be seen in the following thought, tape-recorded immediately after I had finished a difficult climb:

(Louise) Helen . . . said casually to me 'why don't you try it, I'll belay you.' I certainly wasn't totally keen to try, I guess because I felt some precedent had been set in terms of others' success. . . . I was very stuck in the tricky part of the chimney, squatted in between the wedge in the rock for five, maybe 10 minutes trying to psyche myself up to turn around. But I couldn't--somehow I couldn't muster what it took to make that one dicey manoeuvre of turning 180 degrees, from facing the rock to getting my back against it. Objectively I know the system is safe . . . then why was I so scared? Was it because I was afraid I wasn't going to be able to do what Helen, Pam and Hannah had done? It's a good question, Louise! Literally and figuratively wedged between a rock and a hard place . . . I finally mustered up the courage . . . turned around. . . . up I went. . . . It did feel good! I also felt good about 'putting myself on the line.'

'Out of the Field': The Data Analysis Procedure

At the time I completed my fieldwork I was well-versed in the OEE and women-and-OEE literatures, but the contemporary feminist theory was still very new to me. In the ensuing weeks, I discovered just how partial my understanding had been as I began to work systematically at analysing my data through the lens of contemporary feminist theory. This process became increasingly interesting to me at a personal as well as academic level. I began to see that when I interviewed women and was 'in the field,' I had been working with the standard OEE framework; the questions I asked women relate to this, and so does what I took notice of in each of the CWC courses. However, later, in viewing the data through a feminist inspired lens, I began to ask very different questions of it, and found things there that had been invisible to me before. While I describe this 'shift' in my perception in a few paragraphs here, it actually took what seemed like an inordinate amount of time to 'get inside' the contemporary feminist theory texts as a way to understand my own and others' experiences at CWC.

Some of the difficulty I had lay in the fact that the standard OEE and the women-and-OEE conceptual frameworks were not a good background for the theory I was trying to use, so I was without familiar moorings or a template for the analytic process. However, with time and persistence, my capacity to understand the implications of the feminist theory began to shift. The 'penny (finally) dropped,' and what had been a frustrating and

disconcerting experience became satisfying: what had been invisible came into focus. In particular, I became interested in the ways in which contemporary feminist theory has concerned itself with issues of self and identity. It struck me, initially perhaps simply in an intuitive way, that feminist theory of the self had much to offer to an exploration of women's experiences in OEE programmes. As this work will show, I found my intuition confirmed in rethinking the OEE framework, and in the data gathered 'in the field.'

I can now see this shift illustrated clearly when I juxtapose my sense of what was happening 'in the field' during the time of the CWC courses, the first sketch of what I thought the CWC experience was about, and what I was later able to see aided by my exploration of the contemporary feminist theory literature. My initial attempt to classify women's experiences at CWC largely resembled the categories of the women-and-OEE literature, summarised in Chapter 2, section 2. It is not that what I was seeing during and immediately after my fieldwork was inaccurate, but I now understand that it was certainly partial.

As my grasp of the contemporary feminist theory deepened, I found myself launched on a rather messy, non-linear process of immersing myself in the data. For a lengthy period of time, I found it challenging to keep my understanding of what was happening in the data be guided by contemporary feminist theory. My instinct was to retreat to what felt familiar and obvious, to allow my vision of the material to be guided by the women-and-OEE literature.

I spent a long time re-training my instinct, carefully re-reading the data, keeping in abeyance the women-and-OEE-theories that had taught me how to interpret women's experiences in the outdoors. I made detailed notes of my understanding of the material on a regular basis. I managed with more and more confidence to be cognisant of, and, more importantly, hold onto, the difference between what I saw when I looked at women's experiences at CWC through the women-and-OEE inspired lens, and when I looked at the same experience through the contemporary feminist inspired lens. I eventually reached the point of 'saturation,' meaning that I was more consistently able to distinguish the difference between the two views, and was no longer noticing anything new in my reading of the data. By this time I had formulated 'categories' by which I identified sections of the data in the margins of the transcripts. Several readings of the data resulted in finally cutting-and pasting the transcripts, first manually and then electronically, and eventually establishing the categories that became the basis for the analysis presented here.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE OUTDOOR AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION LITERATURE

I am convinced that OEE activities have the potential to provide powerful personal insights into aspects of the individual self and to build trust and support among groups of strangers. This conviction is a result of my experience as an outdoor experiential education (OEE) practitioner, teacher of student-teachers in an outdoor and experiential education Bachelor of Education degree programme, and researcher within a women-centred Outward Bound programme. However, my reading of contemporary and 'second wave' feminist theory has led me to the conclusion that the standard OEE literature (e.g., Ewert, 1989; Gass, 1993; Kraft & Sakofs, 1985; Miles & Priest, 1990; Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988; Warren, Sakofs & Hunt, 1995) gives only partial consideration to several important issues relating to the experience of women participants in OEE activities. Much of it also relies upon a limited conceptual framework, premised on psychological theory and a behaviourist research paradigm which has come under increasing scrutiny in the 1990's (e.g., Bell, 1993a, 1993b; Brookes, 1993; Davidson, 1994; Lenskyj, 1995). Martha Bell (1997) recently referred to what I call the standard OEE literature as the "dominant narratives."

In this literature review, I first provide a brief history of the Outward Bound movement. I then illustrate the similar features of experiential education and adventure therapy, and go on to examine the basic elements of experience, reflection, processing and application. I also consider the OEE claim that it is the fact that this OEE experience usually takes place in a "novel setting," which, together with the "unique problem-solving situations," contributes to participants experiencing "disequilibrium" in a "cooperative environment" (Nadler & Luckner, 1992, p. 9). I have chosen to present these aforementioned aspects because I believe it is due to the presence of these factors that participants in OEE programmes are provided with the possibility to gain new insights into the self and new self-understanding. According to the OEE literature, these factors give rise to "feelings of accomplishment" and "learning," and, according to the adventure therapy literature, "functional change." After the review of the standard OEE literature regarding the OEE process, which is not intended as a comprehensive review of the field but as a backdrop to the following discussion, I will present the literature written by women, about women's experiences in outdoor programmes. I will present both the standard OEE and the women-and-OEE literatures largely without critique. Critique will be offered in later chapters.

2.1 - The Standard Outdoor and Experiential Education Literature

2.1.1 - Outward Bound

The expression "outward bound" is a nautical term, and was originally used by seamen to describe the moment a ship left its moorings, committing itself and its crew to the unknown hazards and adventure of the open sea (Bacon, 1983). The Outward Bound™ organisation advertises itself as having been "the world leader in adventure education for more than half a century" (Outward Bound, 1995b). To shed light on how the Connecting with Courage programme differs from the 'traditional' Outward Bound model, a brief history of Outward Bound is necessary to provide a framework for comparison. A detailed history of the United States Outward Bound movement can be found in Greene and Thompson (1990) and Miner and Boldt, (1981); and of the Outward Bound International Organisation in Vokey (1987).

Outward Bound began during the second world war, in Aberdovey, Wales. It was started in an attempt to stem the loss of young British merchant seamen, who were dying in numbers disproportionate to their older, more experienced colleagues. Although the young men were skilled mariners, they had not been trained to survive in lifeboats after their ships had been torpedoed. The advice of Kurt Hahn, who had been instrumental in launching two famous schools, Salem School in Germany (1920), and Gordonstoun School in Scotland (1934), was sought to improve this statistic. Hahn blamed the younger sailors' mortality on their lack of fortitude, self-reliance and confidence (Bacon, 1983; James, 1990,

1995; Miner, 1990; Miner & Boldt, 1981). Later, modelled upon his successful advice, the adventure-based educational programme, Outward Bound, was created to counteract these shortcomings in young men more generally.

Hahn's vision to "impel people into value-forming experiences," so as to ensure the survival of "an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and, above all, compassion" (Bacon, 1983, p. 99) has continued to inspire Outward Bound for over half a century (James, 1990, 1995). Physical adventure-based challenges continue to be the main stock of Outward Bound programmes. Today, there are over 50 Outward Bound schools and centres on five continents (Outward Bound, 1995b). Since 1980, Outward Bound's primary purpose has been:

to develop respect for self, care for others, responsibility to the community, and sensitivity to the environment. The Outward Bound process assumes that learning and understanding takes place when people engage in and reflect upon experiences in challenging environments in which they must make choices, take responsible action, acquire new skills, and work with others. (Outward Bound, 1995b, p. 3)

Members of the public and the OEE field generally associate Outward Bound with physically challenging programmes that take place in wilderness settings. The fact that CWC took place on an Island in Boston Harbour, two miles from the city of Boston, and is

one of two Outward Bound Urban Centres, is only one of its distinguishing features. Another was its short duration (3 days compared to 7, 14, 21 or 28 days). Perhaps most important is a third difference. Connecting with Courage was "designed by women for women . . . grounded in research by Carol Gilligan, Lyn Mikel Brown and Annie Rogers at Harvard's Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development" (Outward Bound, 1995a). Differences between CWC designed around the aforementioned 13th century definition of courage "to speak one's mind by telling all one's heart" (Rogers, 1993, p. 265), and Outward Bound's motto "to serve to strive and not to yield" will be further elaborated on in upcoming chapters.

More generally, the first women's Outward Bound course in North America took place in 1965 at the Minnesota Outward Bound School (Miner & Boldt, 1981). Such an enterprise went 'against the grain' of prevailing views - "(the) President's Commission on Physical Fitness down through the cartoonists who draw the junior-miss comic strips, agreed that the country's teenage girls are soft, pampered creatures" (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 154). According to Miner and Boldt, the 1965 pilot-programme (mostly 16 and 17 year olds) was essentially the same as the boys' in which they "penetrated the same total wilderness . . . while the pace of the expeditions naturally accommodated lesser female strengths in paddling and portaging, the Quetico wilderness did not mitigate the rigor of its challenges" (p. 155).

There had been concern that women were not capable of withstanding hard physical stress or meeting "traditionally male kinds of physical challenge" when Bob Pieh introduced women to Outward Bound 33 years ago (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 160). A second apprehension about including women in Outward Bound was referred to as the 'Amazon syndrome' - that such hard physical challenge might have a "defeminizing" (p. 161) effect on the women and attract "Amazon type" (p. 161) staff. Given that "Amazon" is sometimes used as a 'code' word for lesbian, Mary McClintock (1996a, p. 244) pointed out the "assumption" that Outward Bound was concerned about the presence and influence of lesbians. Also of concern was that women's success in Outward Bound programmes would lessen the 'machismo' image some males were not keen to relinquish. Such resistance to women participating in what had formerly been a male strong-hold, was not unique to the Outward Bound movement. Helen Lenskyj (1986, p. 11) argued that women's full participation in sport was long hindered because it had the "potential to equalise relations between the sexes." Male medical experts effectively excluded women from participating in many sports by way of various tenuous, biologically based arguments (Griffin, 1998; Hall, 1996; Lenskyj, 1986). Also, according to Lenskyj, because sport was contrary to women's socialisation, being portrayed as unfeminine and unattractive to men, and was a protected male bastion, women were hesitant to involve themselves in sports activities.

Similarly, it was not easy for women to become equal participants in the general Outward Bound organisation as discussed above. One of the 1995 CWC instructors had been a participant in the first course women were admitted to at Hurricane Island Outward Bound School (HIOBS) in Maine in 1971, and was the first female instructor at HIOBS the following year. Beth recalled the male resistance to women's inclusion: "they admitted a few women on an experimental basis to see whether the boat would sink if we were on it. It turned out that nothing terrible happened, and the next year the School became fully co-educational." Not only could women sail and instruct, today, Outward Bound would not be financially viable without women students. More than 40 percent of the current United States Outward Bound enrollment is female (Outward Bound, 1995b), and the majority of courses combine the sexes.

2.1.2 - Adventure Therapy and Experiential Education

Adventure therapy and experiential education build on many similar principles and both see process as central. Therefore, I will preface my discussion of experiential education by drawing attention to the similarities of experiential education and adventure therapy. Michael Gass (1993, p. 4) conceptualised experiential learning as:

predicated on the belief that change occurs when people are placed outside of positions of comfort (e.g. homeostasis,

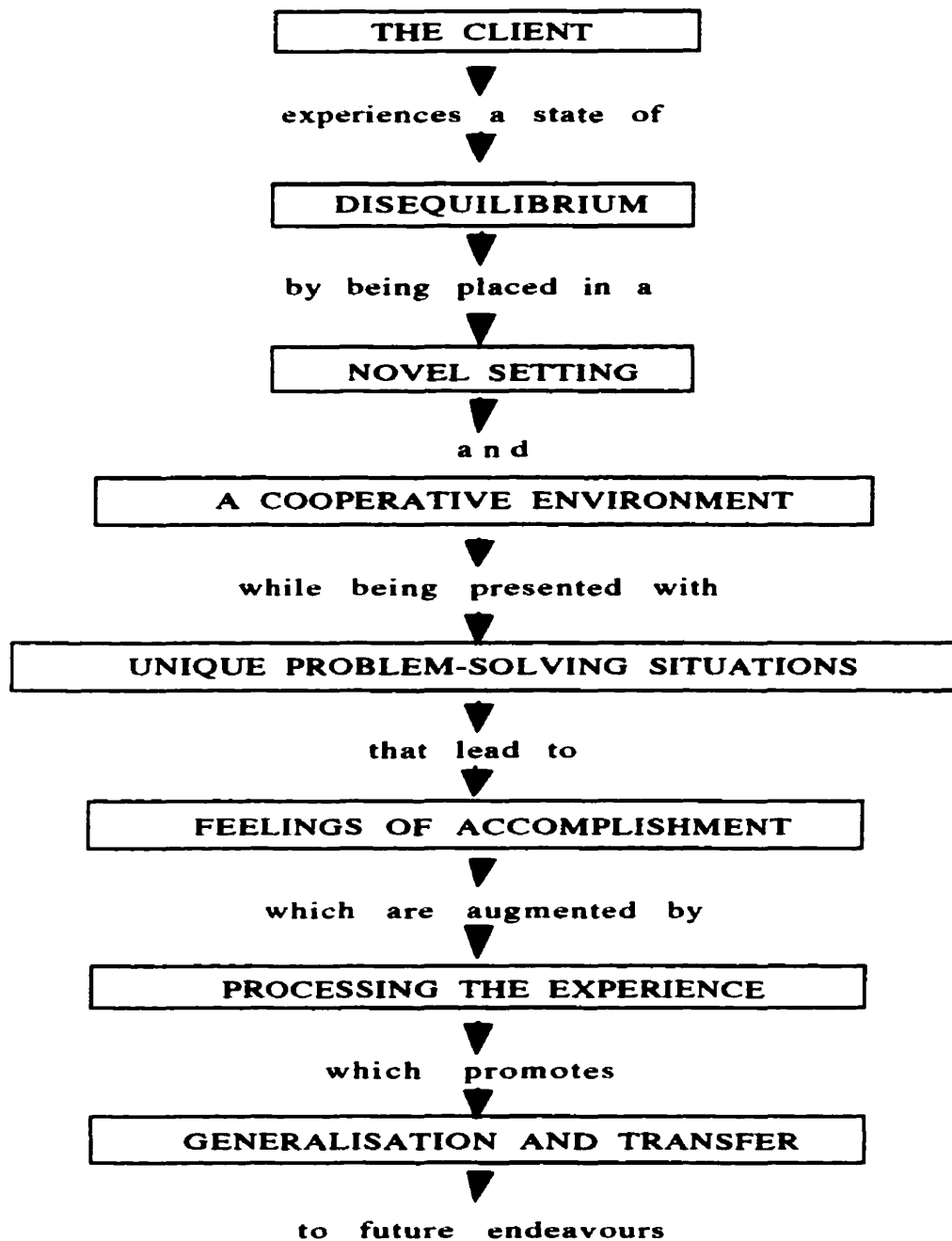
acquiescence) and into states of dissonance. In these states, participants are challenged by the adaptations necessary to reach equilibrium. Reaching these self-directed states necessitates change with its resultant growth and learning.

In OEE programmes, participants are encouraged to do things they would not ordinarily do. First, they leave the knowns of their lives behind, often exchanging feelings of safety, familiarity, control, predictability and comfort for the unknown places, people and activities (Nadler, 1995). The novel setting does not have to involve a multiple day course in the wilderness; it can involve a corporate group in a five hour ropes course at a site away from the office. Nadler (1995) explained that when participants leave their familiar and predictable environments and enter the uncertain and uncomfortable, unique answers or outcomes may emerge (White and Epston, 1990). The change in environment is believed to contribute to the awareness that a "mismatch" exists between familiarity and new information, something Nadler and Luckner (1992) term "disequilibrium." This possibility for new learning as a result of disequilibrium is supported by Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch (1974) who suggested that unfamiliar events often result in spontaneous change because unexpected, unusual, or uncommon solutions are found, when "more of the same" efforts have failed (Nadler, 1993). Disequilibrium is a central ingredient in learning from OEE activities. According to Nadler (1995), participating in novel activities in a new environment can cause a range of

emotions, including feeling scared, anxious, awkward, unfamiliar, and at risk. Nadler and Luckner (1992) provided a description of the specific adventure-based learning process, reproduced in Figure 1. with permission, below.

Gass (1993) stated that adventure therapy, like experiential learning, "focuses on placing clients in activities that challenge dysfunctional behaviors and reward functional change" (p. 5). Drawing on the principles of experiential learning derived from Kraft and Sakofs (1985), Gass suggested that experiential learning provided a template for adventure therapy. Presented below is Gass' reading of defining features of experiential learning culled from Kraft and Sakofs (1985). The underlined words presented in parentheses are the words Gass (1993, p. 4-5) suggests provide the differentiation between experiential learning and adventure therapy:

1. The learner (client) is a participant rather than a spectator in learning (therapy).
2. The learning (therapeutic) activities require personal (client) motivation in the form of energy, involvement, and responsibility.
3. The learning activity (therapeutic activities) is real and meaningful in terms of natural consequences for the learner (client).
4. Reflection is a critical element of the learning (therapeutic) process.



The Adventure-Based Learning Process
Nadler & Luckner (1992)

Figure 1

5. Learning (functional change) must have present as well as future relevance for the learner (client) and the society in which he/she is a member.

Denise Mitten (1994) reduced Gass' (1993) definition of adventure therapy to "a therapy that places the client in activities that challenge dysfunctional behaviors and reward functional change" (p. 56). Like OEE programmes, adventure therapy involves participants in 'doing' rather than just talking. Activities are unique and often take place in novel environments where (eu)stress⁴ is used, the group is small and often involves participants working together to solve problems which can result in intense and, when well facilitated, positive interaction. It is this mixture, the standard OEE literature claims, that makes OEE activities powerful, and can lead to learning or, in adventure therapy, therapeutic change. I will later go on to argue that it is possible, when thinking about participants' "learnings" through the lens of contemporary feminist theory, to see this learning as providing new insights into the self and enhancing self-understanding.

Comparing adventure therapy to experiential education, the terminology of "clients" (adventure therapy) rather than "participants" (experiential education) is one distinction. Adventure therapy's "challenging dysfunctional behaviours and rewarding

⁴ Eustress, according to Estrellas (1996), was named by Dr. Hans Selye (1974) for the Greek prefix "eus" meaning good, and is a term that appears in OEE literature as an important dynamic of risk taking (Priest, 1993; Schoel et al., 1988).

functional change" (Mitten, 1994, p. 56) and experiential education's defining itself as "a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experience" (AEE, 1995, p. 1) suggest other differences. While adventure therapy has its roots in the field of OEE, over the past 16 years it has developed as a discrete addition to the mental health field (Gass, 1993). Today, within the Association for Experiential Education (AEE), there is a separate Therapeutic Adventure Professional Group "committed to the development and promotion of experiential education in therapeutic settings" (Gass, 1995, vii).

Like the adventure therapy literature, the OEE literature uses its terms of definition interchangeably. It is not my aim to provide an 'ultimate' definition for the field. My intention is simply to describe the components of outdoor experiential education activities as a process, and to distinguish them clearly from adventure based activities for their own sake (for example, a group of friends going ocean kayaking). Also, when I refer to OEE here, I am speaking of the experiential education process involving adventure-based content that takes place in an outdoor setting, as opposed to simply adventure education. In trying to identify the difference between experiential education and adventure education, Scott Wurdinger (1994) suggested that experiential learning involves a *process*, in which the learner comes to know ideas. By comparison, adventure activities revolve around *content*, primarily requiring physical skill (Wurdinger, 1994).

Although the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) had been in existence since 1977, it did not provide a definition of experiential education until 1994. Acting on Karen Warren and Michael Gass' observation that the experiential education field needed to better define itself in order to evolve and develop in relation to the rapid social and educational changes (Gass, 1992a), the AEE Board of Directors struck a committee named "Project Define." In 1994, "Project Define" came up with the aforementioned definition: "Experiential education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill and value from direct experiences" (AEE, 1995, p. 1). However, this effort at a succinct 17 word definition required further elaboration in 11 accompanying "principles of experiential education practice" (AEE, 1995). It is only in the fleshing out of these principles that the notions of process and reflection are clarified. What follows is a closer examination of the experiential education process.

2.1.3 - The Experiential Education Process

While there might be some discrepancy in the way experiential learning and adventure therapy models are diagrammed, or variations in the use of terminology contained within their depictions (Gass, 1993), it is generally agreed that there are several distinct phases - at times called experience, reflection, processing and application - involved in experiential learning (Gass, 1993). For the purposes of this text, I will focus on reflection,

debriefing and application in more detail. The way in which the OEE field conceptualises experience as “created” and the assumption that participants experience the “created” activities in similar ways will be critiqued in Chapter 6 (OEE: Central concepts revisited).

Reflection and debriefing

John Dewey (1938) was instrumental in guiding the development of theory and hence practice of reflection in the OEE field. In 1938, Dewey commented:

There should be brief intervals of time for quiet reflection provided for even the young. But they are periods of genuine reflection only when they follow after times of more overt action and are used to organize what has been gained in periods of activity in which the hands and other parts of the body beside the brain are used. (p. 63)

Bert Horwood, as guest editor of the Summer 1989 *Journal of Experiential Education* issue on reflection, mused on the definition of reflection as “bending back”: “There is something importantly backwards about reflection. The thinking involved must scan memory of the past, seeking connections, discrepancies, meanings. . . . The goal of reflection is for students to construct meaning out of their experience” (1989, p. 5). According to Bacon, 1987; Gass and Gillis, 1995; Nadler and Luckner, 1992, the evolution of processing

adventure experiences has passed through several distinct stages of development, and various models for reflection.

According to Michael Gass (1993), Stephen Bacon's (1987) the "Mountains Speak for Themselves" model (MST) was the first type of processing used in adventure programmes. Doughty (1991) suggested that "letting the experience speak for itself" is a method where the "facilitation associated with programming consists of providing well planned experiences and leaving clients to sort out their own personal understandings" (Gass, 1995, p. 2). As Gass (1993) noted, the MST model involves learning by doing, period. Here rests the main difference between outdoor programmes and outdoor and *experiential education* (OEE) programmes.

The "Speaking for the Experience" model is the latest offering of the standard adventure therapy / OEE conceptual framework. To ensure that the participants 'get it,' the facilitator interprets the experience for the participants (Gass, 1995). According to Gass, this interpretation can go as far as informing the participants "what they learned and how to apply their new knowledge" (p. 2). Gass noted that this model involved "learning by telling" (p. 3), period.

The "Debriefing the Experience" model is what Gass (1995, p. 3) called "learning through reflection." Debriefing is what the OEE field typically thinks about when describing experiential education as Gass' (1993) "learning by doing combined with reflection." In the standard OEE view, participants are asked by the facilitator to reflect on their adventure experience and discuss the learning they derived. This discussion is guided by the facilitator, the purpose of

which is to assist participants in discovering their own learnings. Although debriefing frequently involves talking, it is not the only method. What is important in a debrief is not the method used, but as Joplin (1981, 1995) suggested, to maximise the construction of meaning. To do this, Joplin believed that participants must make their thoughts public. It is the bringing of the private reflection of an activity into the public forum (the group, dyads, section of the large group) under the guidance of a facilitator that debriefing refers to. Strategies for debriefing activities are reviewed in more detail in various OEE publications (Gass, 1993; Nadler & Luckner, 1992; Quinsland & Van Ginkel, 1984; Schoel et al., 1988).

However, effectively facilitating a debrief requires skill (Bacon, 1987; Gass, 1993; Schoel et al., 1988). Schoel et al. suggested that debriefing conjures up negative memories of "let's talk about it," reminding us that, while "adults tend to talk a lot, (they) resist real talk" (p. 165). Due to the "disequilibrium" that is created as a result of participants being in a "novel surrounding" and doing novel activities, the talk during a debrief can often get very "real" (Schoel et al., 1988). Pushing one's "comfort zone" (Nadler & Luckner, 1992) and succeeding in a physical or emotional challenge was suggested by Michael Gass (1993) to be inherently therapeutic. Debriefing is something that many instructors shy away from because it can bring up varying degrees of intensity and disclosure (Schoel et al., 1988).

The "Mountains Speak for Themselves," "Speaking for the Experience," and "Debriefing the Experience" models involve

reflection techniques that typically occur after the experience. Writers in the field of adventure therapy suggest that there may be added (therapeutic) value to an activity by "frontloading," "framing" or "prebriefing" the experience (Gass, 1993; Gass, 1995 ; Gass & Gillis, 1995; Priest & Gass, 1993).

The idea of giving attention to the activity before it begins is not new. In her five-stage experiential education cycle, Joplin (1981) identified "focus" as the first stage, and in their three stage model, Project Adventure called this stage "brief." Joplin's intention was that the focus to be "specific enough to orient the student, but not too specific so as to rule out unplanned learning" (p. 17). Joplin's view of the pre-activity stage is quite different to Gass' (1993) therapeutic application of "frontloading," "framing" and "prebriefing" which, according to Gass, can be used, among other things, to help "clients" focus or increase their awareness on issues prior to the experience, facilitate or direct change while an experience is actually occurring. In guiding participants (clients) toward distinct objectives, and advising them of relevant metaphoric connections prior to the activity, "prebriefing," "framing" or "frontloading" techniques can be prescriptive, and need to be used carefully when working with non-therapeutic populations. I see danger in these methods for reasons similar to those associated with "speaking for the experience." This concern will be expanded and critiqued in Chapter 6, 'OEE: Concepts and practices revisited.' In pointing out the strengths of "prebriefing," "framing" and "frontloading" in working with therapeutic populations, Gass (1995,

p. 4) conceded that they "may be more appropriate in therapeutic training and development programs, where specific prescriptive changes may be the intent."

Transference of Learning

What is referred to in Nadler and Luckner's (1992) model as application, in much of the experiential education and adventure therapy literature is called "transference" - a term I will use in the following discussion. I am speaking of the application of transference of learning from an experiential learning experience to another situation. I am not speaking of transference in psychoanalytic terms; although the idea of participant-instructor power differential and the similarity between this and issues of patient-therapist transference is valid, and has been raised by Denise Mitten (1994).

Evaluating the efficacy of the learning experience has been important to educators in attempting to determine how learning will assist students in the future (Gass, 1985, 1995). In the OEE literature, the effect that a particular adventure-based programme has on future learning experiences is called the transfer of learning or the transfer of training. Gass described the importance of learning being transferable to other experiences, as programme funders often base their continuation of funding on the effect the programme has on the future of their students or clients. To illustrate the importance of the successful transference of learning

in the funding of adventure-based programmes serving delinquent youth, Gass used what the United States Department of Justice had to say in evaluating adventure programming:

Despite having some plausible theoretical or correlational basis, wilderness programs without follow-up (transfer) into clients' home communities should be rejected on the basis of their repeated failure to demonstrate effectiveness in reducing delinquency after having been tried and evaluated (Gass, 1995, p. 131).

While there is much agreement about transference of learning being a critical concern in the OEE field (e.g., Gass, 1991; Gass, 1993; Gass & Gillis, 1995; Nadler & Luckner, 1992), there is little information about the actual transference of learning from a novel setting to real life. I therefore explored the notion of transference with the majority of women who participated in the 1995 CWC courses through follow-up interviews between four and six months post-course. (The results of this inquiry are interspersed throughout the data, and also contained in Chapter 6).

Michael Gass first wrote about the transference of learning from adventure-based programmes in 1985 and has been the central figure in developing the OEE field's understanding of the concept since. Gass (1985, 1995) borrowed from psychology to explain the transfer of learning from OEE experiences to future situations. He used Bruner's (1960) description of "specific" and "non-specific transfer," and Milton Erickson's (1980) development of

therapeutic metaphor which Erickson termed "metaphoric transference," something which Stephen Bacon (1983) had explored within the Outward Bound model before Gass (1985). Gass (1993, p. 245), explained the three distinctions of transference as:

Specific transfer occurs when the actual products of learning (e.g. skills such as canoeing, belaying) are generalized to habits and associations so that use of these skills is applicable to other learning situations;

Non-specific transfer occurs when the specific processes of learning are generalized into attitudes and principles for future use by the learner (e.g. cooperation, environmental awareness);

Metaphoric transfer occurs when parallel processes in one learning situation become analogous to learning in another different, yet similar situation.

In suggesting that many experiences at Outward Bound could be understood as metaphors for real-life experiences, Bacon (1983) identified "The key factor in determining whether experiences are metaphoric is the degree of isomorphism [having the same structure] between the metaphoric situation and the real-life situation" (p. 4). According to Gass (1993), isomorphism is present when "two complex structures of different situations can be mapped on to one another so that similar features can be linked together" (p. 247). This "mapping" is believed to be powerful in adventure-based therapy programmes when the connection between similar features is made because the similarity

of roles they play in their respective structures creates a medium for change (Gass, 1993). It is in this medium that connections for the transfer of learning in one environment for future use in another are made possible (Gass, 1993). The way in which the CWC programme utilised metaphoric transference via the 'zip-wire' activity will be discussed in Chapter 6 (p. 254).

2.2 - Review of The Women-and-Outdoor and Experiential Education Literature

The re-thinking of OEE research from a feminist standpoint is less than two decades old. It began with the work of Wilma Miranda and Rita Yerkes (1982), joined by Denise Mitten (1985) and Karen Warren (1985), then by Karla Henderson and Deborah Bialeschki (1986) whose work had been previously focused in the organised camping, recreation and leisure literatures.

What this literature has provided, in essence, is a collective definition of women's experiences in the outdoors (Bell, 1993a). Thus, research in the OEE field has focused on the reasons why women choose all-female trips (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a; Holzwarth, 1992; McClintock, 1996b; Miranda & Yerkes, 1983); and on the benefits they derived from OEE programmes in general, and all-women's programmes in particular (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a; Holzwarth, 1992; McClintock, 1996b; Mack, 1995; Miranda & Yerkes, 1983; Warren, 1985, 1996; Yerkes & Miranda, 1985). Also considered are the philosophical foundations of women-centred

(designed by women for women) programmes (Mitten, 1985, 1992, 1996; Warren, 1985, 1996); why women-centred programmes are empowering for women (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a; Holzwarth, 1992; McClintock, 1996b; Mitten, 1992; Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, 1983; Warren, 1985, 1996); issues concerning power (Mitten, 1994), stress (Mitten, 1994), fear of failure (Dal Vera, 1996); feminist perspectives on outdoor leadership (Bell, 1993a, 1996; Henderson, 1996a; Jordan, 1988, 1992; Mitten, 1992); what distinguishes ethics in OEE as feminist (Mitten, 1994); sexual harassment and experiential education programmes (Loeffler, 1996); wilderness/adventure therapy as healing (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, (eds.), 1994; Mack, 1995, 1996); wilderness/adventure therapy for 'survivors' (Mitten & Dutton, 1996; Rohde, 1996; Tippet, 1993).

It is important to note at the outset that when the literature reviewed in the following pages speaks of women's experiences in OEE programmes, these women are primarily white, from at least middle class backgrounds, and their sexuality has not been considered an important factor. More recently, some of the literature has expressed unease with this universalised framework (e.g., Bell, 1993a, 1993b, 1996, 1997; Davidson, 1994; Henderson, 1996a; Henderson, Winn & Roberts, 1996) and has addressed issues of sexuality (Davidson, 1994; McClintock, 1992, 1996a), culture (Roberts & Winiarczyk, 1996), and particularly the lack of representation of women of colour (Ashley, 1990; Roberts, 1996; Roberts & Drogin, 1993, 1996; Roberts & Henderson, 1997).

However, as I will explain in subsequent parts of this work, these issues have not been sufficiently problematised, nor, with the exception of Martha Bell (1993a, 1993b, 1996, 1997) and Judith Davidson (1994) and Karla Henderson (1994a, 1994b, 1996a; Henderson, Winn & Roberts, 1996), has the women-and-OEE literature engaged with contemporary feminist theory outside of the field. Indeed, while the body of literature is growing, the majority of writers use and explore the same ideas. For example, Hornibrook, et al. (1997, p. 156) reported that "the all-women adventure experience provides women with independence, support, acceptance, cooperation, and an opportunity to express feelings." Thus in December, 1997, the literature is still expanding on conclusions that have been confirmed and reconfirmed in the two preceding decades. In fact, Hornibrook et al. derived the questions they asked participants in their survey from this previous literature, and referenced the findings of Henderson (1992); Jordan (1992); Mitten (1992); Nolan and Priest (1993) as supporting their conclusion. An effort will be made in the following chapters to move the women-and-OEE literature beyond its current discourse. In this section I will simply present the main themes of the women-and-OEE literature, so as to provide a context for the subsequent critique.

While any such ordering is necessarily arbitrary, the following discussion will review the literature organised around two broad themes: women's specific needs, and the benefits of women-only programmes. I will not provide a definitive review of all

writing by and about women's experiences in OEE programmes (see Roberts, 1997 and 1998, for an annotated bibliography of topics beyond the scope of this project). I will simply offer a review of some of the literature's central themes, necessary to provide a setting for the issues raised in this work and illustrated by the data presented. After a survey of the two above mentioned themes, I will return to, and expand on, my observation that even the very recent women and outdoor literature is primarily engaged in a confirmation and re-confirmation of established ideas and arguments.

2.2.1 - Women's Different Needs

While Karla Henderson (1996a) provided "feminist perspectives on outdoor leadership," her assessment of that literature is transferable to the women-and-OEE literature. Henderson (p. 108) coined the term "the womanless phase" of research and practice. Referring to evidence provided by Kaufmann (1986); Lynch (1987); Bialeschki (1990) and Simpson (1991), Henderson demonstrated that, their invisibility in outdoor literature notwithstanding, women had for a long time participated in outdoor activities. Using a repeatedly cited example by Kaufmann (1986), Bialeschki (1992), Henderson (1996a) and Henderson and Bialeschki (1995) reported that of the 112 people who ascended Mt Rainier in 1905, 46 were women (Kauffman, 1986). Nonetheless, as Bialeschki (1992) pointed out, because of the incompatibility of their

participation with traditional ideas about women's roles, their achievements either went unrecognised, were concealed in the literature by the exploits of male colleagues, or were relegated to a help-mate role.

Following the "womanless" era, Henderson (1996a) identified the "add women and stir" phase. During this phase, there was recognition that women's experiences ought to be acknowledged. But, as Henderson pointed out, this acknowledgment was not much more than an assessment of women's contributions relative to male standards. It was the failure of the OEE literature to recognise that women as a collectivity entered OEE programmes from starting places that are differentiated from those of men as a collectivity that was the jumping-off point for a more feminist consideration of women's experiences in outdoor programmes.

Henderson (1996a) suggested that the literature tried to correct itself in the 1970's and 1980's by stating that women were "different" from men. This led to what Henderson named a "dichotomous sex differences" phase of research. The core assumption of this approach, as Bell (1993a, p. 23) pointed out, is that "women and girls are different from boys and men, and the differences need to be recognised and taken into account by mainstream programs, camps and leaders" (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987b; Jordan, 1992; Warren, 1985, 1996). For example, Warren (1985, p. 10; 1996, p. 10) maintains that providing a few women instructors and adding women to the standard male OEE model "ignores the specific needs of this special population." Similarly,

Mitten (1985, p. 24, 1996) stated that women "grow up with different acculturation than men" and that "women often bring different strengths and have different expectations for outdoor programs." She concluded that "adding women to men's programs does not automatically mean that the strength of women will be felt." Referencing Nancy Chodorow and Margaret Mead, Mitten suggested that this is so because of a "difference in gender role identification from early socialization. . . . An important factor contributing to this difference in socialization is that women have been almost exclusively responsible for early child care" (1985, p. 20). In continuing to sketch these differences as "cultural differences" between men and women, Mitten (1985) referenced Carol Gilligan (1982) when pointing out that women choose to sacrifice self-interest for the well-being of others.

Further exploring the differences between women's and men's acculturation, Henderson and Bialeschki (1986, p. 36) quoted from Eckert and Canon (1981) in saying that "women tend to perceive wilderness through their rhythms and styles incurring all the elements of nurturance, caring, community, sustenance, and wholeness." Clifford Knapp (1985, p. 17) observed that:

Females in our culture have traditionally been associated with the following assigned characteristics and nature: caring, nurturing, cooperating, expressing feelings, empathizing, following, giving, self-sacrificing, yielding in conflict, dependent or interdependent, gentle, emotional, passive, and intrusive.

Moon Joyce (1988, p. 22) emphasised that “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.” She continued in an essentialist fashion (p. 25):

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 gather[er]s, the maintainers, the survivors.

While Henderson (1996a) had placed the ‘dichotomous sex difference’ phase of research in the 1970’s and 1980’s, the discourse continues along very much the same lines in the 1990’s. For example, Nolan and Priest (1993) quoted Knapp (1985) in providing a “variety of typical female and male characteristics” (p. 14). Similarly, urging outdoor leaders to consider the adaptation of standard OEE principles to women’s needs, Mack (1996) referenced Warren’s (1985, 1996) notion of the “specific needs of this special population” (p. 10).

Indeed, Henderson herself (1992, p. 49) observed that “the closeness of women and nature as evidenced by their shared cycles suggest a nurturing and important connection between the natural environment and females.” This is not to say that Henderson did not flag some of the difficulties of this approach. In her aforementioned analysis of leadership, but directly relevant to the larger women-and-OEE literature, Henderson (1996a) pointed to the danger in the tendency of that literature to “preserve and develop what has been identified to be typically female” (p. 113).

Henderson pointed out that the:

characteristics normally ascribed to men in the outdoors, such as competitiveness, aggression and authoritarianism, are rejected and replaced with characteristics popularly defined as female, such as cooperation, nurturance, and consensus. This approach addresses a ‘pro-woman’ stance that reasserts women’s difference from men and strives to create an environment where women feel free from discrimination and sexism, and where a greater sense of control and autonomy is felt. (Henderson, 1996, p. 113)

Focusing on ‘femaleness,’ say Henderson (p. 113) and Bell (1993a), gives credence to “distinctive biological natures” as males and females. When biological natures become the organising reference, distinctly feminine and masculine become culturally and historically appropriate. Such an approach, says Henderson, universalises ‘feminine-appropriate’ and ‘masculine-appropriate’ as a natural

phenomenon, and in so doing, ignores changing gender relations and changing feminine and masculine identities (Hargreaves, 1990). This approach also ignores the fact that some women did not meet the 'feminine' norm in their particular era. Henderson (1996a) identified the failure of the women-centred approach to recognise difference within women as a problem:

The experience of males in the outdoors has been a dominant paradigm, but not necessarily universal for all males. . . . a female perspective may not represent all female perspectives any more than all males have been represented by the traditional male approach. (p. 113)

Henderson went on to point-out that such a dichotomous distinction of difference between women and men based on sex, oversimplifies the identification of difference as being inevitable or natural. Along with Martha Bell (1993a, 1993b, 1996, 1997), Karla Henderson is thus a rare voice in pointing out the limitations of the dichotomous approach in the literature. The need to break out of the dominant essentialising framework will be further explored in 'The women-and-OEE literature in 1996 and 1997' section below.

2.2.2 - Women Only

A decade ago, Henderson and Bialeschki (1986) were bemused that men still questioned that women went to the woods without them, a fact, according to McClintock (1996b), men still

don't seem to comprehend. Rachel Holzwarth (1992), operator of Alaska Women of the Wilderness, captured Henderson, Bialeschki and McClintock's bewilderment "why just women? I am often astounded and somewhat amused that a large percentage of men in this state who go hunting and fishing with their male buddies could ask that question" (p. 8). As Miranda and Yerkes (1983) ascertained, women do not choose all-female trips because they will be easier. Rather, women seek and need the temporary retreat into all-female groups for support or permission to engage in activities not generally ascribed to women (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986). McClintock (1996b) believes that women value playing and being themselves, and are also drawn to women-only programmes because of the opportunity to develop close connections with other women.

In this section, I will first explore a further reason why, in addition to the assumption of "specific needs of women," women-only programmes are seen to be necessary: the impact of patriarchal society. I will then review what are seen to be the central benefits of such women-only programmes: freedom from gender-roles; development of trust; promotion of self-awareness and self-esteem and empowerment.

Impact of Patriarchal Society

Several writers in the women-and-OEE literature have recognised ways in which "women take on culturally defined

characteristics which are not historically feminine" (Bell, 1993a, p. 24). Courage, competition or spiritual quest, are examples, and are frequently defined differently in women's programmes than their masculine equivalent (Beale, 1988; Lichtenstein, 1985; Mack, 1995).

Many women OEE authors have suggested that men see adventure as a heroic quest (Bialeschki, 1990; Henderson, 1992; Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Mitten, 1985, 1996; Mack, 1995; Simpson, 1991; Warren, 1985, 1996). Warren (1985, p. 14, 1996, p. 16) emphasised that the myth of heroic quest where the student leaves home in response to a call from the wilderness, where he encounters and slays legendary dragons, reflects on triumphs in which he comes to a clearer understanding of himself, and returns home a hero does not fit women: "a woman is more likely to ally with the metaphoric dragons than to conquer them." This led Warren to conclude that a new heroic needs to be crafted for women's adventure programming, "based on bonding with the natural world rather than conquering it" (1985, p. 14, 1996, p. 16).

Bialeschki and Henderson (1993) quoted Clare Simpson (1991) who suggested that women tended to think of their experiences in the outdoors as a process, or "journey," rather than a "quest." For women, the focus of this journey is on the "inner-experience of self-realisation and aesthetics" (p. 36). The same point was made by Bialeschki (1992) quoting Simpson (1991) and Beale (1988), and also by Henderson (1992) quoting Simpson (1991).

The idea of "heroic quest," of course, is implicit in Outward Bound's motto: "To serve, to strive, and not to yield." Warren (1996)

recalled the prevalence of the usage of the "hero's quest" when she instructed at Colorado's Outward Bound School in the early 1980's. It was during this time that Stephen Bacon's (1983) *The conscious use of metaphor in Outward Bound* was published. Beale (1988) referred to the overusage of the hero quest image at the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School (COBWS) during the 1980's also. In acknowledging that she had previously found the metaphor of the heroic journey "very satisfying" in working with Outward Bound groups, Beale (1988, p. 9) identified a shift in her thinking about Outward Bound as a journey. "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 experiences on an Outward Bound course?" Beale juxtaposed two ways of thinking about Outward Bound as a journey. She first described the masculine heroic journey, written by men about men, as built:

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. (p. 12)

Beale then described journeys about women, written by women:

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. (p. 12)

Beale also made clear that she was not suggesting that every man would find resonance in the notion of journey as a heroic quest nor would there be unanimity among all women in the notion of journey as an inner-experience, wrestling self-doubt. "It would be insulting to both sexes to see them in such a simplistic manner" (p. 12).

It is noteworthy that the concept of Outward Bound experiences as 'quest' is absent from the Connecting with Courage programme's adopted definition of courage: "To speak one's mind by telling all of one's heart" (Rogers, 1993, p. 265). I asked Programme Manager, Amy Kohut, how this definition of courage fitted into the broader Outward Bound motto "To serve to strive and not to yield." Kohut responded that the CWC instructors continually validated through their teaching and modelling that to "yield" to oneself is a personal strength. According to Kohut, CWC participants are encouraged to acknowledge their limitations when confronting a physical or emotional risk, by pushing themselves to their personal limits and being proud in saying "I'm done."

Obviously this approach also involves a departure from the standard conceptualisation of risk and stress in OEE activities. A common practice in OEE activities is to design activities where the risks are perceived to be greater than the actual or objective risks (Gass, 1993; Hunt, 1990; Mitten, 1994; Nadler & Luckner, 1992). This is done, according to Gass (1993) and Hunt (1990) and Nadler and Luckner (1992) to give the participant a sense of success in overcoming fear or of undertaking a risk (Mitten, 1994). From a

programmatic perspective, however, the objective risk is managed via a pre-determined standard set of procedures. Jasper Hunt (1990) described it this way:

I have a picture on my office wall of a student doing a high rappel. Faculty members not knowledgeable about experiential education come into my office and marvel at the daring-do represented by this picture. . . . What they do not know is that the student is tied into ropes that will hold several thousand pounds of weight; he is wearing a very expensive helmet; he is anchored to solid rock; and on top of all that, he has a completely independently-rigged backup belay system, just in case something were to happen. Yet, to the uninformed, the high rappel appears to be quite risky. The high rappel pictured on my office wall is perceptually very risky and objectively very safe. (p. 38)

This same sense of 'appear[ing] quite risky' is present for the participants also. Kimball and Bacon (1993) stated that: "stress is often magnified by the students' tendencies to exaggerate the level of risk inherent in adventurous activities. Certainly rock climbing . . . entails some genuine danger; however, these potential risks can be managed more simply than the novice imagines." In questioning the ethical basis of misleading participants, Mitten (1994) suggested that it is necessary to examine whether "the means justified the ends" (p. 64). For example, Mitten cautioned that such a standard method used in OEE actually might mislead students to feel

successful and heroic. Such manipulation, pointed out Mitten "is reminiscent of the untruths women have been told over time" (p. 64). In line with feminist critiques of paternalism in teaching, Mitten argued that "a respectful teaching opportunity is to explain the difference between perceived and objective risks and teach the client how to use her own judgment as to which risks to undertake" (p. 64).

Mitten (1994, 1995) also stated her belief that it is not possible for people to develop self-esteem under stress. In fact, Mitten (1994) pointed out that she has observed the opposite; that women "resort[ed] to the defensive and protective behaviours they need to get through the situation" (p. 66). Mitten went on to report that when women could freely choose a challenge, and complete it, they derived a sense of enjoyment and exhilaration. Mitten has noticed that, under the same conditions, when women did not complete the challenge, they were able to take responsibility for that and work through the disappointment (Mitten, 1994). Similarly, Ruth Rohde (1996) suggested that a "challenge" model which offered individuals the chance to challenge themselves at an individually comfortable pace instead of a pre-determined, stressful pace, provided an environment that was conducive for participants to try out new behaviours instead of reacting defensively and habitually. As Mitten (1994, 1995) pointed out, there is no evidence that individuals develop self-esteem through exposure to stress or danger. In responding to Mitten's (1994) conclusion, Helen Lenskyj (1995) expressed suspicion that the assumptions that

Mitten (1994) criticised seemed like the male military model, where physical and psychological hardship are believed to produce "moral fibre." Perhaps activities involving stress are particularly problematic, because as Mitten (1994) pointed out, the risk that creates the stress does not exist; the feelings therefore, are created under inauthentic circumstances.

Freedom from Gender Roles

One focus of the literature advocating women-only outdoor programmes has been on the need for girls and women to have opportunities to experience the outdoors free from gender-imposed roles. Miranda and Yerkes (1982) were the first to identify the need for research on outdoor programmes for women. They speculated that women were motivated to choose all female groups because of the "chance to live in a stereotype-free environment," and because of the "opportunity to set goals which may aid in the struggle toward independence and self-acceptance" (p. 83). Miranda and Yerkes hypothesised that, because women felt caught between the "public-private split" (which they described as "two worlds" - "the public-instrumental world of work and the private-expressive world of relationships") they "seek adventure experiences to help heal the splits and contradictions in their feelings and thoughts. The question 'who am I?' becomes very confusing in a split world" (p. 84).

Much of the other literature focusing on the need to provide for freedom from gender-roles refers to this and subsequent work by the same authors (Miranda and Yerkes, 1983; Yerkes and Miranda, 1985), in particular Miranda and Yerkes' (1983) article in *Camping Magazine* the sub-heading for which was as follows: "Survey reveals an emerging outdoor adventure audience interested in freedom from gender-imposed roles" (p. 19). This reliance on Miranda and Yerkes in the literature is perhaps remarkable in light of the fact that Yerkes and Miranda (1985) observed about the responses of women they had surveyed: "We are not entirely clear what "gender imposed roles" meant to them, but in their write-in comments it had to do with getting equal time to practice and an equal amount of attention and feedback from leaders" (p. 49).

These ambiguities notwithstanding, a plethora of arguments for the need to provide freedom from gender roles have been made (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986). Some of this writing suggests that one of the benefits is the opportunity to confront the social construction of women as "weak." Mitten (1992, p. 57) suggested:

Women often see being a woman as a weakness. Some women feel that they are hindered having to go through life as a woman. After successfully facing challenges together as part of a women's group, however, participants often see their perceived weakness as a strength and can get rid of self-imposed limitations. As a result, women's attitudes towards women and towards themselves change. In a

nurturing and structured environment born of group support, participants gain confidence, competence, and strength as well as new options. They discover they can accomplish and enjoy unfamiliar activities and tasks and also think in new ways. Women often discover their own power and expand their self-images. Women often go past self- and society-imposed ideas of what is possible, both as individuals and as women. Going beyond ideas results in higher self-esteem and more self-reliance, enabling women to return home more actively involved as responsible community members, family members, and or relationship partners.

Henderson and Bialeschki (1993, p. 37) observed: "In a society where being a woman is often perceived as a weakness, successfully facing challenges encountered in outdoor settings may help women rid themselves of self and societally imposed limitations." Participating in outdoor programmes for women also provides opportunities to resist:

social conditioning [that] inundates a woman with the insistent message that the woods is no place for her. Not only must she reconcile her own doubts on a personal level (i.e. guilt at leaving the family alone, economic stress, etc.) a woman faces substantial societal risks in pursuing adventure experiences. Historically a masculine domain, the wilderness trip is painted by the message bearers of the media and tradition as a scary, uncomfortable and intimidating event.

The moment she steps into the woods her femininity is in question. (Warren, 1985, p. 11; 1996, p. 12)

According to Henderson (1996c)

outdoor experiences for women may also be the response of some women to resisting gender expectations so they can get in touch with their "true" self. Many of us spend our lives taking care of others; going to the outdoors offers an opportunity to remove those ascribed roles and find the "wild" self that sometimes is covered up with gender expectations. (p. 196)

Suggesting that "the outdoors can provide an escape from roles and responsibilities," Henderson (p. 197) pointed to the experience of "Denise Mitten (1992) [who] concluded that concern for nature, as well as with others, through group-centered values is a common description of female ways of being in the outdoors." Henderson and Bialeschki (1987a, p. 28) concluded from their participant observer roles and interviews with women who attended a women only seven day camp, that:

Women want to feel a sense of control over their lives and the roles they choose to fill from day to day. Outdoor experiences such as Women's Week can meet some of the needs for self-understanding, personal growth, and recreation.

A majority of writers suggest these benefits can best be provided in an all-female setting. Rachel Holzwarth (1992, p. 8) referenced Henderson and Bialeschki (1986) in stating that:

Women and men are also physically different. Yet in mixed groups, the focus seems to be on brute strength skills (rock climbs, portaging a solo canoe) and success relies on mastering these skills. Women-only experiences provide a variety of options for women to try new physical skills.

Henderson and Bialeschki (1986) suggested that "women tend to behave differently in the presence of men. . . . In female-only groups, women are given a chance to ask questions, to try skills, and to have equal time to practice" (p. 37). In 1993, Bialeschki and Henderson suggested that "a constraint to women's involvement may have to do with the way in which they conform to gender expectations. We cannot deny that women's roles in society have changed, but a sense that gender expectations are important still remains" (p. 38). Indeed, participants in mixed gender outdoor experiences often unconsciously fall into gender expectations. Agnes Grant (1989, p. 29) describing her Outward Bound experience as a "mid-life adventure," found her sense of her own limits as a menopausal 53 year old woman challenged and expanded. Yet in her descriptive account of her experience, she also mentioned that "the men do play a different role in portaging, carrying more and heavier loads while women arrange and load canoes."

Before moving on to the next section, I should flag that in addition to the prevalent view about the importance of women-only settings to facilitate escape from gender roles, some voices suggest that this may also be achieved in co-educational settings. For example, Barbara Humberstone (1995) reported that outdoor programming can challenge oppressive gender relations between high school aged boys and girls. She quoted findings from her previous research (Humberstone, 1986, 1990a, 1990b, 1993) to conclude that "under certain identified circumstances, coeducational physical education within an outdoor education context can challenge oppressive gender relations and promote greater understanding and respect between girls and boys" (1995, p. 153). Yet, as reflected in the above quote by Agnes Grant (1989), it has been argued by Karen Warren (1985, 1996) that simple efficiency will often lead female and male outdoor participants to take on tasks they are familiar with, thereby falling back into gender roles.

Emotional Sharing and Trust

In many OEE programmes, involving both all-women and mixed gender groups, get-to-know-you activities are used to enable the group to feel connected in a fairly short period of time. An atmosphere of encouragement, and "an acknowledgment of each woman's presence" (Mitten, 1992, p. 56) creates an environment where women form connections with each other, gain self-esteem, and trust the abilities of others in their group (Stopha, 1995).

Acknowledging and honouring another woman's presence cannot be taken for granted in daily life. Mitten (1992) reported that women perceived that they could meet certain emotional needs, such as unconditional support, attention, acceptance for who they are, and personal time, more readily in all-female OEE environments. Previously, Mitten (1985, p. 21) had suggested, that if women felt safe, they would: "often respond by reaching out to others; taking initiative to try new activities and skills; cooperating as individuals to accomplish group tasks/goals; allowing themselves to recognize and fulfill individual needs and wants; [feel] good and have fun." Being accepted for who they are, suggested Mitten, translated to women's needs of feeling trusted and respected, having their differences acknowledged, and feeling safe to express their feelings (Mitten, 1985). More recently, the question of whether *all* women feel safe in an OEE context has been asked (Mitten & Rosalind, 1993; Mitten, 1994; Powch, 1994; Tippet, 1993). However, none of these authors go on to question whether safety is the same thing for all women. The literature on sexual abuse and the wilderness as a place of healing bring attention to women's negative reactions to darkness, and fear of the unknown and uncontrolled environment (Asher, Huffaker & McNally, 1994; Mitten & Rosalind, 1993; Mitten, 1994; Powch, 1994; Tippet, 1993).

One difficulty facing outdoor programming is that it takes time to develop the trust and respect necessary for healthy relationships. Mitten (1994, p. 76) suggested that because in outdoor situations women tend to establish connections with each

other as soon as the experience begins, relationships have potential to be based on dependency, rather than on "trust and respect." To counteract this, Mitten (1986; 1994) suggested that it is necessary to allow time and space in setting the pace of the OEE programme or trip so that "healthy" and "trusting" relationships can form (1994, p. 76). The time factor is perhaps more crucial in women-only programmes, because, as Mitten (1994) suggested, men tend to learn about trust through physical activities, and women tend to learn about trust via emotional connections. The CWC model provided both opportunities, and was specifically structured for physical and emotional trust to reinforce one another (Amy Kohut, personal communication, February, 1995). Nonetheless, many CWC participants indicated their desire for more opportunity for unstructured interaction.

Promoting Self-Awareness and Self-Esteem

A variety of claims are made in the women-and-outdoor literature about the positive impact of outdoor experiences on self-esteem and self-awareness. Citing the standard benefits of working together, cooperation, risk, etc., Miranda and Yerkes (1982) speculated that outdoor experiences encourage the growth of physical, social and intellectual skills. They thought this might result in "an awareness of the unity of body and mind, and its meaning for personal potential." In turn such unity was described by them as "essential" because "the development of emotional, social

and intellectual prowess all depend ultimately upon this basic unity of self" (Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, p. 84).

As will be evident in what follows, much of the literature again proceeds by way of cross-referencing among a relatively small number of writers. Building on Miranda and Yerkes' (1982) writing, Henderson and Bialeschki (1986, p. 38) stated that "women find in the outdoors a greater experience of self-understanding." Henderson and Bialeschki referenced Miranda and Yerkes' (1982) suggestion that, "women seek their own truth in their own way through searching for personal security and unity of self. . . . more physical and inner-strength than they thought they had." Lichtenstein (1985, cited in Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986, p. 38) suggested that experiences in the outdoors can provide a woman with a stronger belief in herself. Trusting her own self is a necessary part of this:

. . . searching for one's own excellence, participating for the sheer joy, taking risks that seem less and less threatening as the woman learns to be secure in her self-confidence, and finding that her mind and brain can meet unheard challenges if only she will accept them.

In 1986, Henderson and Bialeschki suggested that women "are going in increasing numbers to the outdoors to experience self-actualization" (p. 35). In 1992, Henderson referenced Lichtenstein (1985) and Miranda and Yerkes (1982) in stating: "Feelings of well-being, self-confidence, and self-actualization often occur within

outdoor activities. Educational and physical benefits are usually obvious" (p. 50).

Nolan and Priest (1993, p. 16) referenced Henderson et al. (1989) in stating that participation in women-only programmes "provides a sense of personal challenge, increased confidence and enhanced pride. When individuals challenge themselves in ways that they have never experienced, their efforts result in an improved self-image." They reference the same source in stating that, "socially, women choose women-only programmes as a way to build skills in a supportive environment and to develop a spirit of intense bonding and co-operation without testing themselves against women."

Some of the recent women-and-OEE literature also focuses on "empowerment" through increased self-esteem. Empowerment in outdoor programmes has also been acknowledged to be a benefit for women of colour. Nina Roberts (1996, p. 234) recounts that, "Angela," a 31 year old African American, and "Evelyn," a 33 year old Chicano with Navajo ancestry, confirmed Mitten's (1992) observations about "empowerment and self-esteem," reporting that their participation in outdoor activities "built confidence and offered challenges not available anywhere else."

Beyond general claims as to the self-awareness or self-esteem enhancing effect of a women-only environment, some of the literature provides more concrete illustrations of how these benefits come about. Mitten (1992, p. 58) referred to her own programme (Woodswomen) philosophy as respecting women and having the

“goal of contributing to self-esteem development.” The three underpinnings of Woodswomen are as follows:

1. A programme philosophy that respects women and adds to self-esteem building;
2. Leaders who are skilled in implementing the program philosophy; and
3. Participants who have choices about and within the experience. (Mitten, 1992, p. 56)

Mitten (1992) quoted participant “Nancy” as saying that:

The trip’s biggest value is having a chance to try new skills in a physical arena and in an environment that lets one set their own challenges. . . . The group gets to decide most of what goes on and there’s a strong sense of camaraderie and empowerment that comes out of that. (p. 59)

Similarly, Henderson and Bialeschki (1986, p. 39) claimed that, “Women only groups allow women to exercise leadership roles and gain self-confidence by making their own decisions, taking new risks, exploring new opportunities, and allowing feelings of fear to come up and yet gain support for those feelings from other women.” And, according to Holzwarth (1992, p. 8), “When women learn a new skill for themselves, in their own style, they begin to access knowledge in a way that is both meaningful and satisfying. Inevitably, women also experience an empowering sense of autonomy.”

Mitten (1995) also explained that 'personal affirming' is a technique to build "healthy group process." The goal is "to use supportive, nurturing affirmations to help create group norms that reflect healthy relationships" (p. 85). Mitten went on to suggest that the use of personal affirming with a view to promoting "group cohesiveness and healthy connections . . . helps engender change, including an increase in participants' self-esteem" (p. 89). Locating affirmation at an individual level, Lisa West-Smith (1997) advocated the use of "affirmations" as a "basic therapeutic communication skill" in working with participants in outdoor adventure settings. West-Smith referenced Denise Mitten's (1995) definition of affirmation - "messages that are supportive and nurturing and can be used by the recipient to increase self-esteem" (p. 86).

In discussing the promotion of self-esteem through women-only experiences, the literature also points to benefits that women take away from the immediate experience. According to Henderson and Bialeschki (1986, p. 35), outdoor experiences can contribute to the overall quality of a woman's life due to "leadership development, personal growth, friendships and sharing, and the development of problem-solving skills." In 1987, Henderson and Bialeschki observed: "As women gain strength and confidence in the outdoors, they are able to experience strength and confidence in other areas of their lives (1987a, p. 25). Mitten (1992, p. 56) confirmed:

Over the past 15 years I have heard directly from women and girls about life changes and positive experiences they have attributed to their participation in outdoor trips, particularly all-female trips. They have expressed personal benefits regarding empowerment and self-esteem.

Indeed, Agnes Grant (1989) concluded that her nine day experience at the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School (COBWS) had "left me with a sense of accomplishment which will stay with me for the rest of my life" (p. 31). At 53 years old, and 10 or more years older than the next oldest participant, "I learned about my particular strengths as an older woman." In the middle of menopause, "not physically fit, in fact, I am physically lazy. I am overweight" (p. 28), Grant concluded that she "learned a lot about my body. . . . I now understand that I set my own limitations and most of the time I do not even know what my limitations are. And I learned that I set my own agenda and then look for a scapegoat" (p. 31).

Such positive interpretations notwithstanding, Mitten (1992, p. 57) cautioned that:

One specific benefit that many women report is increased self-esteem which leads to empowerment. Self-esteem is defined as a core belief by a person that she is okay, has a right to take up space, and is lovable. A person with self-esteem has an objective sense of self, self-respect, and self-integrity. . . . As a lifelong process, one's self-esteem increases through personal growth. Self-esteem develops when aspects

of life are present such as support, love and acceptance; work and accomplishment; play and fun; and time for reflection and introspection. During an outdoor experience a woman can increase her self-esteem. However, self-esteem cannot be fully gained in a week or a month. How much self-esteem is gained is dependent on the participant's level of self-esteem at the beginning of the program and the actual program design.

In 1994, in commenting on claims in the wilderness therapy literature that Lee Gillis (1992) had previously questioned, Mitten went on to query the global changes in clients' behaviours and attitudes that are attributed to the wilderness therapy experience by leaders and psychotherapists. She wrote:

There is not a body of research that specifically identifies *how* these changes are made, *what* specifically causes these changes, for *whom* these changes can be predicted, or the *duration* of these changes. Therefore, it is unknown what part of the adventure therapeutic process, if any, contributes to these global changes. (p. 58) [emphasis in original]

2.2.3 - The women-and-OEE Literature in 1996 and 1997

The preceding review has already drawn upon some of the 1996 and 1997 literature. However, a striking feature of this literature deserves particular mention. With the exceptions of

writers such as Martha Bell, Judith Davidson, Karla Henderson, Mary McClintock (1996a), Denise Mitten (1994) and Nina Roberts, even the most recent literature remains engaged primarily in an effort to confirm and reconfirm the literature surveyed above. In the next chapter, I will focus on the fact that the literature acknowledges, but does not attempt to move beyond, an essentialist and universalist view of women. In Chapters 4 and 5, I will explore its failure to engage with and draw upon contemporary feminist theory, in particular contemporary feminism's insights into the concept of the self. In the majority of women-and-OEE writing in 1996 and 1997, neither of these limitations have been addressed.

Karla Henderson (1997), in building on her previously quoted effort to identify stages in the literature concerning women's studies in the outdoors, identified the movement toward "an understanding of gender and its meanings" and of how gender affected women's and men's "involvement and behavior in the outdoors" as the "newest emerging" (p. ii) stage (Roberts, 1997). Certainly Henderson herself (1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b; Jackson & Henderson, 1995) has been active in applying a gendered analysis to women and leisure in her more recent writing. And, together with Sherry Winn and Nina Roberts (1996), Henderson examined the "gendered meanings of the outdoors" among 36 women students enrolled in courses taught by leisure studies faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Henderson, Winn & Roberts, 1996).

However, given the dearth of analysis, Henderson may be too optimistic in seeing the literature move into a new "stage" just yet.

Perhaps “move” is the operative word. In noting Henderson’s contribution to the field of leisure, and noting similar advances in the sport literature, Martha Bell (1997) rightly lamented “the lack of a study of gender” in the OEE field (p. 143). She pointed to the difficulty in finding research in experiential education that is informed by feminist theory beyond notions espoused by Carol Gilligan. Bell further identified that in the OEE field, discussions about gender issues largely emphasised “women’s different perspectives”; leading her to conclude that “the lack of a study of gender, as opposed to studies of women, in the [OEE] field is conspicuous” (p. 143). In pointing to articles by Mitten (1985) and Warren (1985) reprinted in the first collection of women’s writing in the field (Warren, 1996), Bell (1997, p. 143) asked facetiously:

Are there so few perspectives on gendered experience in the literature of experiential education that early essays ‘reclaiming’ women’s experiences are reprinted with little revision of the ideas? Has the dialogue on the nature of gender and associated issues not changed in the past decade?

A similar conclusion previously had been arrived at by Judith Davidson (1994) who referred to the analysis of gender within the OEE literature as “discrete” (p. 10). Interestingly, Martha Bell (1997) has been the only author to reference Judith Davidson’s work. However, Martha Bell’s work, specifically, her critique of the field, has yet to be commented on by other authors in writing in OEE.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST THEORY: BEYOND 'WOMAN'

In the previous chapter, I commented on the fact that a small but growing number of voices in the women-and-OEE literature raised the issue of essentialist and universalist assumptions underpinning OEE's concept of 'woman.' I suggested that the women-and-OEE literature has remained confined within itself in its failure to draw upon feminist theory outside of the field to move forward its own debate. In this chapter, I survey some selections of relevant feminist theory with a view to highlighting perspectives that the women and OEE literature might engage with in the future. I first present the way in which feminist theory has questioned the concept of woman and has sought to re-think it in light of realities of race, class, disability and sexuality. I will then, for reasons to be explained, focus on the issue of sexual identity. The data collected at CWC will illustrate that attention to differences among women is not merely of theoretical interest, but should inform the women and OEE movement with a view to enabling OEE activities to better meet the field's declared goals.

Considering OEE through a more critical lens has not come easily to me. The theory that I have recently come to criticise as culturally and historically bound has long been at the centre of my own work as an OEE practitioner, as both an instructor and a teacher of student teachers. I was a believer in the power of OEE. What I

saw happening in the field was supported in the literature. I taught the standard OEE literature. I saw students enrolled in OEE programmes and university courses 'bonding,' 'trusting,' 'risking,' 'gaining confidence,' etc. I thought that pointing out gender biases in the literature was cutting edge, progressive, enlightened. I still am a believer in the power of OEE, but after working through some of the contemporary feminist literature, I realise that my view of both the theory and practice of OEE was partial and distorted. I now understand that, as Burman (1992, p. 46) pointed out, the knowledge I thought was "universal, external and value-free," was actually "provisional, culturally and historically specific . . . arising from and contributing to social interests." Working through the contemporary feminist literature has left me thinking about a range of issues of which I had been previously unaware. I notice a shift in my thinking. I notice that I take less at face-value both the practice and theory of OEE. Perhaps Seyla Benhabib was right: I too, may be "expatriate" in more ways than I thought:

Criticism presupposes a necessary distanciation of oneself from one's everyday certitudes, maybe eventually to return to them and to reaffirm them at a higher level of analysis and justification. To this extent the vocation of the social critic is more like the vocation of the social exile and the expatriate than the vocation of the one who never left home, who never had to challenge the certitude of her own way of life. And to leave home is not to end up nowhere; it is to occupy a

space outside the walls of the city, in a host country, in a different social reality. (Benhabib, 1995, p. 28)

In this chapter, I borrow from the “varieties of feminisms” that Sabina Sawhney (1995) identified: “rather than having ‘A Feminism’ responsive to different and occasionally opposing concerns, one has varieties of feminisms, each creating its own strategies and negotiating the diverse issues that face it” (p. 204). The material presented here is not a definitive review of feminist theory. As an educator with a background in physical education, recreation, leisure studies and outdoor education, I attempt to import into OEE some of the insights of contemporary feminist theory. My hope is that these insights will begin to open new spaces in the way in which women’s experiences are currently theorised in OEE, and enable a new optic on what is happening in women’s OEE programmes. This section provides an overview of a fundamental shift in feminist theory from how women’s lives and experiences were thought about under an essentialist framework, to how they can be thought about under a non-essentialist one.

One identifiable characteristic of feminism across an entire spectrum of varieties has been the pursuit of autonomy for women. Integral to this feminist pursuit of independent personhood is the critical awareness of a sex/gender system that relegates power and autonomy to men and dependence and subordination to women. Feminists start from an

insistence on the importance of women and women's experience, but a woman-centred perspective alone does not constitute feminism. Before a woman-centred perspective becomes a feminist perspective, it has to have been politicised by the experience of women in pursuit of self-determination coming into conflict with a sex-gender system of male dominance. From a feminist perspective the sex/gender system appears to be a fundamental organising principle of society and for that reason it becomes a primary object of analysis. (Pierson, 1987, p. 203)

'Feminist' was the label deployed during the 'second wave' of feminism in the 1970's to describe women who found commonality in their belief of a shared experience of oppression (Charles, 1996). The slogan, 'Sisterhood is Powerful' was used to signify a communal experience and a political aspiration that women's solidarity could bind them in a coherent force for change (Charles, 1996). However, as has been pointed out repeatedly, many of the demands and goals of 'second wave' feminism tended to cater to the interests of a privileged few (e.g. white, middle-class, heterosexual) rather than to the interests of all women. Canadian authors Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, (1988) temper this view by highlighting the contribution of lesbians, immigrant women and women of low income to the Canadian women's movement during the 1970's. The prevalent tone of the critique of "sisterhood," however, is captured

by Audre Lorde (1984, p. 48) who suggested there to be a "pretense to a homogeneity of experience" that does not exist. That women from subordinate groups did not participate in large numbers in the early women's movement did not seem problematic to the majority of women who were writing about women's experience at the time. It was, as Alison Assister (1996) tells us, the failure to pay attention to difference in who was coming together and who was excluded from the 'sisterhood' discourse that gave rise to the realisation that sisterhood was *not* powerful for all women, but exclusionary for some.

3.1 - Contemporary Feminist Theory

Jane Roland Martin (1994) acknowledged the "terrible mistake" that "white academic feminists" made in "assuming that all the individuals in the world called 'women' were exactly like us" (p. 631). Not all feminists, however, even white academic feminists, made this "mistake." Some authors took class and poverty into account much more carefully than others, and also situated their analyses in terms of historical specificity (Adamson, Briskin & McPhail, 1988). It was through, as Nickie Charles (1996) identified, an attempt to correct the "terrible mistake" that Martin pin-pointed that resulted in the re-writing of the ways in which gender and gender divisions have theorised during the past 20 years. "Generic womanness," as Alison Dewar (1993) pointed out, "is no longer in vogue" (p. 212). Previous conjecturing by many authors about a

shared oppression uniting women, has, as Charles (1996, p. 1) told us, "given way to a recognition of difference and diversity." It became apparent that western women's liberation movements and earlier feminist writing had been based on a very specific identity, that of white, middle class, young and highly educated, often heterosexual women. In pointing to Sojourner Truth's famous "Ain't I a Woman" speech at the Akron, Ohio, Women's Rights Convention in 1851, Alison Weir (1996) identified the longevity of "the assumption that women's identity has been predicated on a false claim to universality," thereby "repressing differences among women" (p. 6). Truth's speech took place nearly 150 years ago. Yet, as Weir pointed out, the universality of women's experiences that Truth exposed then, has only very recently begun to be challenged through a focus on issues of race, class, and sexual orientation in contemporary feminism.

Linda Nicholson (1990) pointed to the irony of the "recurrent pattern" (p. 1): feminist scholars fell into the same trap of falsely universalising their theory based on limited perspectives, the very thing they were criticising. Noted Nicholson, "like many other modern Western scholars, feminists were not used to acknowledging that the premises from which they were working possessed a specific location" (p. 2). Thus, as Henrietta Moore (1994) summed up:

The politics of location make two things abundantly clear. Firstly that there is no single, homogeneous body of feminist theory; and secondly, that the divisions between different groups of women, as well as between practising feminists,

make it impossible to assert a commonality based on shared membership in a universal category 'woman.' (p. 79)

Adrienne Rich realised this was true in her own work before postmodern feminism became vogue. In a piece written in 1984 and published two years later, Rich noted, "If we have learned anything in these years of late twentieth-century feminism, it's that "always" blots out what we really need to know: When, where, and under what conditions has the statement been true?" (Rich, 1986, p. 214).

This shift in the way in which the category 'woman' is thought about is less than two decades old. Morwenna Griffiths pointed out in 1995 that "the simple-minded assumption that personal identity could just be read off from the fact of being a woman" (p. 1) was, not long ago, the norm. Griffiths went on to acknowledge that such assumptions are passé, and, that it is "now comparatively rare to meet people who think that gender, race, class, or sexuality are irrelevant to an individual's beliefs and attitudes" (p. 1). Marilyn Frye pointed out humorously that an attempt to correct the "terrible mistake" that Martin (1994) referred to, led several authors to "string suitable adjectives onto the noun 'woman'" (Frye, 1992, p. 64). Speaking for herself, "as an able-bodied college-educated christian-raised middle-class middle-aged and middle-sized white anglo lesbian living in the midwest," can, as Frye suggested, lead to "silliness and generate serious questions about adjective order in English" (p. 64).

Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson (1990) summed up the fundamental shift in feminist theory as follows:

. . . the practice of feminist politics in the 1980's has generated a new set of pressures which have worked against metanarratives. In recent years, poor and working-class women, women of color, and lesbians have finally won a wider hearing for their objections to feminist theories which fail to illuminate their lives and address their problems. They have exposed the earlier quasi-metanarratives, with their assumptions of universal female dependence and confinement to the domestic sphere, as false extrapolations from the experiences of the white, middle-class, heterosexual women who dominated the beginnings of the second wave. . . . Thus, as the class, sexual, racial and ethnic awareness of the movement has altered, so has the preferred conception of theory. It has become clear that quasi-metanarratives hamper rather than promote sisterhood, since they elide differences among women and among the forms of sexism to which different women are differentially subject. (p. 33)

Cultural feminists who are mostly associated with an essentialist approach, and who inform the women-and-OEE framework (e.g., Carol Gilligan's 1982 work), held that what was important in the articulation of feminism was the enunciation of a specifically female culture (Johnson-Roullier, 1995). Thus, central to cultural feminism is a "valorisation" of what is expressly feminine,

ultimately originating in a determination of sexual difference based on biological difference, the body (Johnson-Roullier, 1995).

Emphasising the distinctly feminine was designed, according to Cyraina Johnson-Roullier (1995, p. 188) "to counteract the centuries of marginalisation" to which women have been subjected. The notion of femininity derived from biologically determined sexual difference is denied by anti-essentialist feminists (Johnson-Roullier, 1995) who understand the body and gender roles, categories and behaviours to be separate (e.g. Butler, 1990, 1992; Fraser, 1989; Nicholson, 1990; Probyn, 1993; Scott, 1992). To these and other contemporary feminists, the category of gender is seen as socially produced and therefore cannot be tied to an essential, biologically determined, sexual difference (Johnson-Roullier, 1995).

3.1.1 - The Postmodern Lens

The 'postmodern' has been described and redescribed with so many different points of departure that the whole discussion is by now its own most exemplary definition. (Susan Bordo, 1992, p. 159)

Postmodernism claims that the pursuit of totalizing theory is mistaken, for such theory is inevitably 'essentialist' in that it makes invalid generalizations, universalizing what should be seen as local and historically specific. It also argues that there are different vantage points from which the world can

be seen, no one of which can make claim to have privileged insight into any objective truth. In this view, the subjective position from which theory is produced is just as relevant as its object. (Crowley & Himmelweit, 1992, p. 3)

'Modern' theories like liberalism or Marxism, to which 'post'modern theories are 'post,' seek to rationalise the social world (Greenberg, 1992). In so doing, they use all encompassing pairs such as public and private, male and female, unity and diversity, presence and absence with a view to describing 'reality,' or as Catherine MacKinnon (1989, p. xii) noted, modern theories claim to "be about what is." Such "fixed oppositions," pointed out Joan Scott, "conceal the extent to which things presented as oppositional are, in fact, interdependent" (1997, p. 761). The "fixed oppositions" or "binary pairs" as they are also called, of modern theories are criticised by postmodern theorists because they provide only particular and partial perspectives (Greenberg, 1992). According to postmodernists, the descriptions of 'reality' provided by modern theories are really only interpretations - discursive strategies for describing the world (Greenberg, 1992). Postmodern theory is concerned with interpretation, in addition to identifying discourses as interpretive of reality, it also recognises "the partiality and perspectivity of interpretations" (Greenberg, 1992, p. xix).

While cultural feminists claimed to describe the realities of women's situations, postmodern feminists emphasise the interpretive nature of descriptions (Greenberg, 1992). Interpretation requires a

position from which the event is understood, a perspective from which the world is interpreted. According to the postmodern perspective, women's experiences and relationships come into existence partly through the discourses about them (Greenberg, 1992). Joan Scott (1997, p. 759) pointed to the work of Michel Foucault in clarifying that "discourse is not a language or a text but a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs." According to this view, women's experiences are composed by the discourses in which we think of them (Greenberg, 1992). It follows then, that depending on the historical, political and social context in which we think of them, women's experience will be interpreted differently (Greenberg, 1992). Similar to how it views experience, postmodernism rejects conceptions of the self that are not understood as produced by discursive practices (Flax, 1991). Understanding that subjectivity - the way in which people live and understand their selves and identities - as a product of power rather than its author, postmodernism views power as being exercised in historically specific discourses and practices, as plural and constantly changing (Greenberg, 1992).

According to the postmodern view, reality is never present; it can only be (re)presented through language. Words and text, therefore, "have no fixed or intrinsic meaning . . . there is no transparent or self-evident relationship between them and either ideas or things, no basic or ultimate correspondence between language and the world" (Scott, 1997, p. 759). For postmodernists,

language is a system of signs which "speaks the speaker" (Griffiths, 1995, p. 193), instead of the other way around.

Postmodernism, then, is antithetical to essentialism of any kind - racial, sexual or human (Greenberg, 1992). Within a postmodern-feminist theory, Fraser and Nicholson (1990) called for the replacement of unitary notions of 'woman' and 'feminine gender identity' with plural and complexly constructed conceptions of social identity in which gender is treated as one relevant strand in conjunction with class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation. It proposes that the selves that were previously thought to be fixed and unitary are actually unstable, fragmented and contradictory (Benhabib, 1992; Griffiths, 1995; Probyn, 1993; Sands, 1996).

A variety of criticisms have been levelled against postmodern approaches to feminism, including their emphasis on "the ways in which gender meanings are constructed by discourse" (Greenberg, 1992, p. xxix, see also Bordo, 1992; Griffiths, 1995; Jhappan, 1996; Moore, 1994). Of concern to the political possibility for feminism is the following question: "if our identities are constituted by language and discourse, how is agency possible?" (Greenberg, 1992, p. xxix).

Of particular relevance to my inquiry is another type of criticism. Several voices have begun to warn that, just when feminism was succeeding in establishing gender as an analytical category, 'woman' was being 'deconstructed out of existence' (Bordo, 1992; Flax, 1990; Greenberg, 1992; hooks, 1990). While "eschewing essentialist notions of gender, sexuality and race," Susan Bordo

(1992) pointed to a problem that Jane Flax (1990) and bell hooks' (1990) had previously flagged. That is, a suspicion that "fragmentation . . . would undermine the authority of our experience" (Bordo, 1992, p. 163) as women, just when we might begin to "remember ourselves" (Flax) and "to make ourselves subject" (hooks). Barrett and Phillips (1992, p. 8) observed that:

Difference is not absolute, but constructed in varying ways according to what is perceived as salient in a particular context. More intractable, however, has been the issue of whether, or how, feminists can or should destabilize the binary opposition between men and women that gives the category woman its meaning. . . . To obliterate the men/women opposition is . . . a move that pulls the rug from under feminist struggle, as such.

This critique has been repudiated by Judith Butler (1992, p. 15):

To take the construction of the subject (or any other cherished notion) as a political problematic is not the same as doing away with the subject; to deconstruct the subject is not to negate or throw away the concept; on the contrary, deconstruction implies only that we suspend all commitments to that which the term "the subject," refers, and that we consider the linguistic functions it serves in the consolidation and concealment of authority. To deconstruct is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question and, perhaps most

importantly, to open up a term, like the subject, to a reusage or redeployment that previously has not been authorized.

As was implicit in my review of the standard women-in-OEE literature in the previous chapter, and in my coverage of feminist theory in this chapter, I see as crucial the insights that can be derived from 'deconstructing' the category of 'woman.' However, as will be evident from my data analysis in Chapter 4, I also believe that there are commonalities attached to being a woman. I do not see these two positions as contradictory. I agree with Jane Martin (1994, p. 646) who noted that, "of course, black and white women, middle-class and working-class women, Irish and Arab women are different. But just as no two individuals and no two circumstances are alike in every respect, no two are different in every respect." A similar point was made by Jane Flax (1990, p. 220) when she coined the phrase of "differentiated yet collective experience." This is a theme I will return to in the following presentation of data. Radha Jhappan (1996, p. 48-49) observed:

The fear of generalization that drives the 'difference' approach is understandable in view of the previous white male-crafted scholarship, and white feminism, each of which in its way claimed to speak in universal terms. The anti-universalistic and perhaps more modest claims that individuals speak from their particular identities and experiences, even as they are members of multiple interconnected social groupings, is certainly an advance on

the previous fiction of universality. On the other hand, however, if subjective experience is overplayed, if we do not have or are not allowed to use the tools to understand the world in larger terms, to analyze structures and discourses beyond personal interactions, then instead of social and political analysis, we are condemned to the narcissism of autobiography.

Jhappan (1996) suggested that the danger flagged in the above paragraph could be counteracted by “strategic essentialism.” Archana Parashar (1993, p. 330) identified that the real challenge was “to consider how to recognize the plural voices of women without losing the analytical category of woman.” According to Jhappan (1996) ‘strategic essentialism,’ is akin to Alcoff’s notion of positionality, in which identity is understood as not an immutable internal characteristic, but relative to the constantly shifting external context.

3.2 - “Differentiated Yet Collective”

3.2.1 - Women of Colour

There is a need to be expansive in our thinking about outdoor experiences of diverse people. . . . Discussion of the outdoor adventure experiences of women in particular, quite often neglects experiences of women of color. . . . Just as we (as

professionals) cannot make generalizations about all women as a single group, we also cannot make generalizations about women of color, since this group includes women from numerous racial, ethnic, and national origin backgrounds. (Roberts, 1996, p. 226)

Assuming that all women experience the outdoors in the same way is risky and would probably be inaccurate. Race, age, education, cultural background, and other characteristics motivate and constrain each woman's experience in a way that cannot be generalized to all other women. (Roberts & Henderson, 1997, p. 135)

Statistics reported in the 1991 *Statistical abstract of the United States* led Henderson (1996a) to conclude that the number of women involved in physical activities often equals or exceeds that of men. In a separate publication, Henderson referred to 1994 statistics provided by the Human Powered Outdoor Recreation State of the Industry Report (Widdekind, 1995), to illustrate the "evolving participation patterns of women in the outdoors" (Henderson, Winn & Roberts, 1996, p. 95). Although 50 million women in the United States went hiking, nearly 14 million back-packed, and 16 million women went canoeing in 1994 (Widdekind, 1995), there is little ethnic diversity among participants in OEE programmes. The field of OEE remains a white, middle-class domain. One may speculate as to why ethnic diversity is missing. Ashley (1990) suggested that

people of colour had little interest or desire to participate and lacked the necessary funds. In addition, she observed a lack of access to knowledge and understanding about programmes and their philosophy. Nina Roberts (1996) suggested that OEE is not only economically more prohibitive for women than men, but more so for women of colour. According to Zelda Lockhart, the former President of the Women's Wilderness Network Board of Directors, another factor is the perception of OEE among women of colour as "a white" pursuit: "I do not think that black women are not aware of outdoor activities; it's just that black women may think it's a white thing. They seem to be socialized to believe that participating in outdoor adventure is a white person's thing to do" (Roberts & Drogin, 1993/1996, p. 86). Even 'basic' aspects, such as lack of access to transportation have been observed as a barrier to the participation of women of colour in OEE (Roberts, 1996).

The women who comprised the secondary data set of Roberts and Henderson's (1997) study were more diverse with respect to colour, race, ethnicity than the African American women in Roberts and Drogin (1993/1996) study which looked at factors affecting their participation in the outdoors. However, the two studies yielded similar results. Listed among the reasons why women of colour interpreted the outdoors as a place of subtle discrimination, precluding their involvement, women of colour perceived themselves as lacking physical attributes, held a fear of the unknown, perceived the outdoors as an unwelcoming environment, and felt they lacked the skills (Roberts & Henderson, 1997). Roberts

(1996) told women working in the outdoors that it is "essential" to understand that not only were women of colour who participate in outdoor activities "going against the stereotype of outdoor activities as a male domain"; they also "confront the domain of race" (Roberts, 1996, p. 228).

In addition to the lack of cultural diversity among participants, OEE researchers lament a similar lack of diversity in the leadership of the field (Conquest, 1993; Roberts, 1996; Roberts & Drogin, 1993, 1996). It would seem that this very fact may be another explanation for the lack of involvement of people of colour in OEE activities. Roberts (1996) told leaders in the OEE field that they "must first be aware of their own cultural heritage and world view before they will be able to understand and appreciate those of the culturally diverse individuals they serve" (p. 237).

It is equally true that the majority of OEE participants come from relatively privileged economic backgrounds. As Yerkes and Miranda (1985) asked, where are the waitresses, factory workers and hairdressers? The CWC courses confirmed the observations regarding both ethnic and economic backgrounds of participants and leaders. All eight instructors were white, and shared the range of descriptors of the participants. As described in Chapter 1 (p. 23), the women attending the CWC programmes that I studied were not diverse with respect to race, class, ability, or ethnicity.

As I have suggested, the literature focusing upon race and class issues has been largely preoccupied with *why* women of colour or low income women are absent from OEE populations. Perhaps

because they are largely absent, little emphasis has been placed on them and their experiences as participants or instructors. Even less attention has been given to exploring how the theories of OEE, or elements of programme structure, may fail to recognise how dimensions of social difference may be relevant to 'experience' on the course. My research did not explore this problem of lack of cultural diversity in relation to race or income, but I did have the opportunity to consider sexual identity as a dimension of difference that was clearly relevant to experience in the programme, since lesbians were present among CWC participants and instructors. As previously mentioned, I was one of six participants who identified themselves as lesbian in the public forum. Three of the eight instructors were lesbians; one of whom disclosed this when in the presence of the other lesbians on course; the other two instructors revealed this to me in follow-up interviews. Thus, in drawing upon my data to illustrate the value of exploring "differentiation" while acknowledging "collectivity," to borrow from Flax (1990), I will focus on lesbians. A further reason for this choice is the fact that, despite the likely presence of gays and lesbians in all OEE populations, the literature in the field has been hesitant in its exploration of their experiences. While the absence of women of colour or of low income women from OEE populations may explain the narrowness of the literature as highlighted above, its failure to investigate "differentiation" in "collectivity" with respect to lesbians can clearly not be justified in this fashion. In sum, my aim is two-fold. First, I offer my data as they relate to lesbians at CWC as one

illustration of the insights to be derived from attention, informed by contemporary feminist theory, to difference underneath generally assumed collectivity. Second, I offer these data simply to break the silence with respect to the experiences of lesbians in OEE settings, and of heterosexual participants finding themselves in the presence of lesbians.

3.2.2 - Lesbians

In introducing the “Voices of Resistance” section of her edited book, Karen Warren (1996c) recalled how her “heart raced” 13 years earlier when she saw posted in the women’s bathroom at the Association of Experiential Education (AEE) Conference, a sign advertising a meeting of lesbians working in the OEE field. Six showed up and sat “in the dark . . . at a picnic table a very long distance from the main conference site” (p. 203). Warren recollected her interest but terror in seeing the sign, her own “internalized homophobia . . . working overtime” (p. 203), and her struggle regarding her own invisibility and silence. In 1983, fifteen years ago, Warren tells us, there were no visible lesbian role models in the outdoor field. Pointing to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Allies Special Interest Group and to lesbian activist, Karen Thompson’s, keynote speech at the 1993 AEE Conference, and “sexual orientation” being added to the AEE diversity statement, Warren optimistically points to the progress that “we” have made in the past 15 years.

Given my own sexual identity, I have, since my days as an undergraduate sports studies student in England (during which time I was not 'out' to myself), been curious about why so many lesbians were (rumoured to be) present in the physical education profession. This curiosity followed me into the fields of organised camping and OEE. But it was, until recently, a quiet curiosity. "Quiet," because the fields of organised camping and OEE have been and remain somewhat homophobic. At the outset of my fieldwork, I was not sure whether I would be 'brave enough' to headline the fact that I am a lesbian. This concern seems 'ancient history' now. What has changed in the past three years has been a result of my own process rather than any great movement within the OEE profession toward acknowledging that participant's sexual orientation is relevant to their experiences and understanding of their experiences in OEE programmes.

The American Camping Association remains unwilling to take a stand on gay and lesbian issues. Suffice is to read the "Letters to the Editor" in *Camping Magazine* immediately after any brave soul mentions implicitly or explicitly that counsellors and instructors staffing camps in the United States of America be anything other than heterosexual (e.g., see McClintock, 1990; Ohle, 1990, and Letters to the Editor in subsequent two issues). Issues regarding hiring lesbian and gay staff members have found a forum in the shape of panel presentations (comfort in numbers, for the presenters at least) at recent national conferences, but discussion of the issues in print has been rare and acrimonious. My above usage

of "somewhat" in suggesting that the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) remained homophobic was purposeful. While the AEE fares better than the ACA by including sexual orientation in its diversity statement: "The Association for Experiential Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, or professional affiliation" (AEE, 1996), research about gays' and lesbians' experiences in the outdoors remains absent. Exceptions proving the rule, Mary McClintock (1992, 1996a) and Chip Bradish (1995) have been the only voices addressing lesbians and gays in any AEE publication. Thus despite the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the AEE diversity statement, participants in OEE programmes remain constructed as heterosexual. Leaders in the OEE field can take heart, however. The Special Interest Group of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Allies in Experiential Education (LGBA) was given elevated status within the AEE organisation when it was recognised as a Professional Group by the AEE Board in May, 1998.

Such recognition is a positive step when one considers that the LGBA claim a membership of 150 (The AEE Horizon, 1998). It is *not* that lesbians are not represented among those involved in OEE (although the number of "allies" in the LGBA's count is not known). Lesbians are indeed present, but this fact is not much talked about outside of the former LGBA Special Interest Group, now Professional Group, of the AEE. In the OEE literature, lesbian issues are taken up directly by only a few writers, such as Mary McClintock (1992, 1996a), and Judith Davis (1994) who challenged the

"heteronormative repetitions of gender" (p. 20-21) in OEE. Several OEE authors have self-identified as lesbian, and other authors (e.g., Bell, 1993a, 1996, 1997; Henderson, 1995, 1996a; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995) have acknowledged that all women are not heterosexual. While the AEE should be congratulated on their giving the LGBA equal recognition with other Professional Groups (Experience-Based Training & Development; Schools & Colleges; Therapeutic Adventure; Women in Experiential Education), the vast majority of literature, in its failure to problematise sexual orientation, apparently assumes that women's sexual identities are heterosexual and can be universalised to represent all women's experiences.

Although, as Karla Henderson (1997, p. ii) pointed out, researchers are "moving toward an understanding of gender and its meanings in the outdoors", Martha Bell (1993, p. 22-23) wrote of gender being sometimes confused in OEE research as "personal, social, a given, a difference, an attribute or categorical membership." That the OEE field is "moving toward an understanding of gender and its meanings in the outdoors" is progress, particularly when we consider the absence of understanding of sexual orientation and its meanings in the outdoors. Yet, the question of whether elements of CWC's course structure, e.g. the invitation to trust other women, or the invitation to participate in activities involving physical strength, hold different meaning for lesbians who start from different social and cultural locations than straight women remains unanswered. However, the relevance of sexual identity to women's experience at

CWC was a question that occurred to me to ask only once during my fieldwork:

(Louise) Does a lesbian have a different experience than a non-lesbian on a programme like this?

(Helen) In many ways, I think that straight women are almost at a disadvantage because lesbians are prepared socially to exchange with one another. To be emotionally frank, to feel safe. And I think that is also a feminist issue, I think that women who come with some kind of feminist experience, also have that level of ability to speak. I think that for many women on our programme - one in particular, on our programme who had the whole issue about getting married and having lost her identity, having given a tremendous amount to her children and her husband, but lost herself. And was going back even further in trying to recapture her child-like. It was not even her losing herself as an adult, but losing it much earlier. And I think that many of us do. . . . I think that lesbians have in a way through their own process of coming out and how you tend to socialise more with women is that you actually regain that experience that you had with school chums when you were in junior high, and you have real friends and you are close and share everything with them. Many women lose that for a while. Some might regain some in college, but even then it is so segmented and so short time that many of them lose that opportunity and experience once they get married or once

they graduate from college. I think that lesbians perpetuate that. I think I came into the programme with that experience. I have incredible women friends.

(Louise) Yes, you and I spoke on course about how some women were realising how powerful sharing with women could be.

(Helen) Yeah, I think that is what is different for lesbians is that maybe it has something to do with the lessened impact. . . . In a three day programme where it took some women longer because of their comfort level to speak. To allow themselves to digress emotionally, to let the tears flow. A lesbian may come into that experience with a much higher level of confidence in terms of sharing who they are, a little more prepared, because it is not so unfamiliar than to be sitting on this futon with a friend and talking over a cup of tea.

As I review these words nearly three years after my conversation, I regret that it did not occur to me to follow-up in subsequent interviews the question I asked of Helen. It did not occur to me then as a question that I later would be interested in. I was unsure whether I would even write-up sexual identity in this project, much less own-up. Had I been 'brave enough' then, I would have sought some answers to supplement my supposition that lesbians are attracted as participants and leaders to the OEE field because of the lack of value placed on femininity and learned helplessness. If I

had had a stronger grasp of contemporary feminist theory prior to my fieldwork, I might have uncovered the answers to some of the questions that Magda Lewis (personal communication, November, 1996) helped me to formulate:

- Does a woman who is a committed heterosexual find her identity challenged in the presence of lesbians at CWC? If so, how?
- How do non-lesbians' perspectives of heterosexuality shift through their experience among lesbians at CWC?
- Are heterosexual women's constructions of femininity challenged at CWC given the presence of lesbians?
- Through which activities do these challenges arise - physical activities, or listening to lesbians share their experiences about their lives?
- Are there any challenges for lesbians through the presence of heterosexuals?
- Given how heterosexual, masculine concepts frame OEE, how do women participants, particularly lesbians experience a programme like CWC?

As I did not explore these questions in my fieldwork, I can only ask them here, and must otherwise limit myself to extrapolating from the issues women raised in interview about their experiences with lesbians attending the CWC programmes in 1995. I nonetheless present these 'extrapolations,' because I feel that the

(unexplored) questions listed above deserve attention in future research.

Nevertheless, I did attempt through the experience of six lesbians attending CWC to begin to shed light on issues the field has mostly ignored. However, before I proceed, I should note that even my question to Helen was simplistic. Marilyn Frye (1992, p. 62) tells us that a "rubber stamp replica" of Woman does not exist. Likewise, there is no exact lesbian copy. Thus, I am a lesbian of a certain age, race, class, gender, ethnicity and so on. Likewise the contexts in which I have lived my life with all of my identities have shaped how I interpret my experiences. Together they make me, Louise Cowin, me. Because our subjectivities as women as lesbians are partly constructed for us, socially, culturally, discursively, and imposed on our self-understandings, there is some degree of shared experience and understanding. This is precisely what Jane Flax (1990, p. 220) had termed as "differentiated yet collective." Marilyn Frye (1992) likens shared experience and the patterns it is possible to sketch in broad strokes through women's collective effort to make sense of their experiences to "charting the prevailing winds over a continent; there is no implication that every individual and item in the landscape is identically affected" (p. 66).

To pick up yet again on Flax's (1990) point, we are differentiated by our particularities and our experiences prior to our entering the CWC programme. But while differentiated at an individual level, we share collective understandings of our lives as women because of our shared culturally and socially constructed

reference points in which we form our selves and identities as white, middle class, able bodied, educated and so on women.

It was my observation that lesbians tended to understand the power of emotional intimacy that was created at CWC, whether or not they currently had intimate connections in their lives. While I agree with Helen that:

A lesbian may come into that [CWC] experience with a much higher level of confidence in terms of sharing who they are, a little more prepared [to digress emotionally, to let the tears flow], because it is not so unfamiliar [than talk with a friend over a cup of tea],

it was not, as Helen also pointed out, just a 'lesbian / non-lesbian' issue. Nor does it describe all lesbians either. I think of Connie who admitted at the outset of the course that "speaking about my feelings is not easy for me, I think that will be my biggest challenge." She did seem to struggle not to speak in platitudes, to be emotionally vulnerable. Connie expressed herself through her body with tremendous ease, and spoke up about 'factual' information, but often 'passed' on the opportunity to speak from the heart. It was not a matter of lesbians being "a little more prepared to digress emotionally," as Helen raised, or, as Heather speculated, that lesbians "know how to be a little more honest with each other," but was, as Carrie suggested, and Helen agreed, a matter of one's prior experience of exchanging at some level of emotional intimacy with women irrespective of one's sexual identity:

(Carrie) I was not so into the group bonding thing. In fact, I thought some of that holding hands stuff a little hokey and contrived. . . . but I think that my experience was different than a lot of the women who really seemed into that because I have supportive women friends, and from what I heard, a lot of the other women don't. So, I didn't feel like I had to or needed to bare my soul because I have women friends who I can do that with.

So, were lesbians less affected by the possibility of emotional connection with intimate women strangers at CWC than non-lesbians? I think that Carrie provides the answer above: "I didn't feel like I had to or needed to bare my soul because I have women friends who I can do that with." Two lesbians, Hannah and Barbara, came to CWC after a recent break-up in their respective relationships. Barbara remarked on how she "needed to feel the trust and support of other women." Hannah described herself as being "blown away" by how supportive the women at CWC were, "particularly given that my whole sense of trust has just been levelled by my partner, who I considered to be my life-long partner, leaving me."

When women leave on the ferry to Thompson Island to begin their Outward Bound experience, they symbolically set sail from their lives on the 'main land' to live in relatively close quarters with a group of women strangers on an Island for 54 hours. Like all Outward Bound programmes, the CWC experience was designed

specifically so that women ate together, worked together, slept in the same tent, supported each other physically and emotionally. The already discussed standard OEE interpretation (Nadler and Luckner, 1992), is that the combination of these factors creates a sense of disequilibrium for participants, which give rise to the possibility of feelings of accomplishment or, in adventure therapy terms, change. Working together, supporting each other, feeling supported, feeling part of the group and so on have been well documented in the standard OEE literature variously giving rise to theorising about the efficacy of group dynamics, group development, individual's self concept. Suggesting that OEE needed to move beyond recreating its existing values and assumptions, Martha Bell (1993b) subsequently argued that this same sense of dissonance offers a more important opportunity for the critical examination of location. In the remaining chapters, I go on to explore the aforementioned idea that such feelings of dissonance also provide participants with the opportunity to encounter the self in a new relation to familiar, and a new relation to socially and culturally defined, reference points. Here I suggest that the combination of living, sleeping and working in close quarters within a closed environment with other women, not only confronts women with their own constructions of self; as part of that, they are also confronted with their sexual identity and that of others.

3.2.3 - Opportunity to Consider Sexual Identity: Self and Others'

In reading the data through a feminist-inspired lens, one question I considered was whether a woman who was a committed heterosexual found her identity challenged in the presence of lesbians at CWC. I did not ask the participants specific questions with a view to soliciting information on women's thoughts about lesbianism or the presence of the lesbians at CWC. However, if women raised the issue, I often pursued the opening they offered me. Working with the data now, I notice several opportunities I was offered and never pursued. Some women did not offer any opportunity. Of the 21 women I interviewed, seven of the eight who attended one of two courses where I was the only lesbian to self-disclose made no mention of sexual identity whatsoever, or made passing comment on my being a lesbian. Like Carol, for example, who thought I might know a woman folk singer because she was a lesbian "Do you know Sheryl Weaver? You must have heard of her, she's a lesbian, I think. Anyway, she has this great song called 'emotional release.'" The exception was Joan who asked me in interview whether I would mind answering some questions she had about my being a lesbian because she didn't "know any personally."

One lesbian came to CWC because she recognised that her "self-confidence was shot" after her lover had left her only three weeks before the course. Hannah told the group about her personal situation in introducing herself at the outset of the course. She later told me in interview that:

(Hannah) I was totally self-immersed in my own pain, and yet I also worried about what the other women might be thinking about me. It was almost like I was someone else looking down on me thinking 'geez, get a grip, why don't you?' But I couldn't. That's where I was at. Particularly at the beginning of the weekend. When we were given the chance to say how we were feeling at breakfast on Saturday, I was feeling like I wanted to run away, and that is what I said. I figured it was a place to be honest, but I wasn't sure if the others wanted to hear it. . . . Overall, though, I was totally blown away by the support other women gave me. Many made some attempt to recognise how miserable I was on that first day. That meant a lot to me, but I also just needed to feel sad.

Not only did women acknowledge Hannah's recent break-up with her, they also made reference to her "pain," "sadness," "loss of loveship" in interview, referencing that "it doesn't matter who you are," "losing someone you considered your life partner is pretty awful no matter who that person is."

That there were women at CWC who were willing to talk about themselves and their lives as lesbians also created opportunities for some basic education about lesbian issues. At the same time, it also generated feelings of exclusion among some of the heterosexual women. An informal 'lesbian education session' took

place one night as dinner was being prepared. Here is what one of the 'lesbian educators' had to say about it:

(Claudia) It was fun having Lesbian 101 with the kids, that was sweet. I was there as back-up, but I think it was more of a good thing for Connie to do. I'm not sure she has had much practice speaking about herself as a lesbian to the uninitiated. I've been there, done that a lot and I didn't need to do it. The 20-24 year olds really struck me like, 'okay, so these are lesbians!' We were a good group of lesbians to meet as an introduction! We can be pretty proud of ourselves for that; we even had the necessary 'jock.' I think it was also really interesting for Liz and for Heather to be among lesbians in a group experience too, not only the younger women.

Helping to cook dinner, my attention was focused on the task and in conversation with other women who were also preparing dinner. I was unaware that "Lesbian 101" had taken place until Claudia came to join in the cooking. However, Gillian who was helping get dinner ready, later told me in interview that she "really wanted to be included in the (Lesbian 101) conversation":

(Gillian) I thought it was nice that there were so many lesbians. I think that was good for that group to be able to hear about their lives. . . . Personally, I really wanted to be included in the conversation between Connie and Roberta. I knew that Connie and Roberta were having a very intense

conversation but felt that it was maybe private as I thought that maybe she was dealing with issues around her own sexuality. I work with many lesbians. And so it is always on the table, but sometimes I get worried that if I ask a naive question that I will be judged. I didn't feel judged in this group. . . . There is a woman that I work with who feels very strongly that she hasn't been put on this earth to educate people about what lesbianism is. Because of that experience, I am a little bit more reserved. . . . But there are a lot of questions that I have. I understand from my own personal life, the attraction of being with women, although I don't think I have a sexual desire to be with women. But I can definitely see myself on an all-women's commune raising kids with other women.

Sarah, in turn, was present at the "Lesbian 101" conversation:

(Sarah) I loved it that there were four lesbians in the group. Particularly because there was conversation about lesbian issues. . . . I've never been uncomfortable with that. Curious about some things maybe, some issues. My facilitator [in a university women's studies course Sarah was a student-facilitator of, six months previously] was a lesbian and I felt like I could ask her anything. And I was curious, and I did ask her. The littlest things I should have known were normal I just never knew. It never occurred to me that all the same issues would be the same for everybody. So, it was

interesting listening to Roberta ask questions to Claudia and Connie the other night. So many of her questions were ones that I too asked.

In her mid-fifties, Joan, who was extremely active in the Unitarian Church and in various charity organisations, was a full-time home-maker, mother of one grown daughter and married for 30 years to a "brilliant scholar" who had difficulties expressing his emotions. She expressed her curiosity at the end of our interview when she used the following opportunity to "talk with me as a lesbian" (the only lesbian in her group at CWC):

(Louise) Do you have any questions of me before I fly back to Vancouver with your story on tape?

(Joan) I guess I would like to--I would have loved to have talked with you as a lesbian, because I don't know any personally.

(Louise) I think you might be surprised! Sure, now's your chance, what is it that you would have liked to talk with me about?

At the time, I thought that Joan's question was charmingly naive. I still do. However, given that she created the opportunity and asked the questions I also wonder whether there was more to this episode than my original interpretation. Perhaps, as a heterosexual woman, Joan was curious about whether "heterosexuality is all that there is." I believe the same question could also be asked of those who

participated in "Lesbian 101." That such a "Lesbian 101" session took place at CWC, I believe, is related to women living in a closed environment and activities that were specifically designed to create the sense of shared experience and emotional intimacy in which women could feel comfortable asking such questions of each other.

The presence of several lesbians on CWC courses also brought up issues for some heterosexual women of feeling that they were a "sexual minority." A predicament that I suggest might illustrate how the CWC experience might challenge or disrupt women's familiar sense of 'self,' social identity, or social location within either the dominant or the marginal gender identity. In her mid-40's, and from a small suburb on the outskirts of Boston, Heather talks about her surprise at the number of "gay women" at CWC. I wonder whether Heather's lack of exposure to lesbians combined with aspects of Marilyn Frye's (1992, p. 124) suggestion that: "There is fear of being suspected of approving of lesbians or lesbianism, fear of being identified with lesbians, fear of being suspected of being a lesbian, fear of being a lesbian" (Frye, 1992, p. 124) are relevant to Heather.

(Louise) The group this weekend, the individuals that showed up, let's turn our focus to your experience within the group.

(Heather) [I am] amazed how we did come together. It was not cliquy at all. Sometimes in a group setting, a ski weekend or something, three or four people find their way and they go off. And that pleased me that no matter where I

was, if I was walking alone, I felt comfortable going up to any one of them and having a conversation. . . . There were a couple of times that some of the gay women did seem to click together a little bit more than the straight women. Again, not a negative comment, just for where I'm at, and my lifestyle, I felt maybe I was not relating as well because of that issue. Maybe a little surprised at the number of gay women that did come. And again that maybe in my circle of friends, because I am not in that community, that a programme like this does attract more gay women than straight women, just because of the physical, because they may be a little more honest with each other. I don't know, I don't know what to attribute that to.

I felt that the lesbians in our group were more of a majority, and that at different times, did seem very evident to me. And that was okay. Did I feel a little left out, or isolated? Yeah, once in a while I did.

(Louise) When talk around lesbian issues was happening, or --

(Heather) Maybe talk and maybe pairing off a little bit. Few feelings of isolation there. It wasn't a source of discomfort, I was just aware of it. Did I gravitate more to maybe Liz or Gillian, yeah, I think so because of that reason. A little more comfortable for me. . . . Maybe the lesbians created a feeling of not really fitting or not really belonging. Maybe a feeling of inadequacy and maybe one of a little bit of jealousy, that I

would have liked to have been more included - it's hard to explain.

Heather went on to explain that she had "very very few - one or two" lesbian acquaintances, but none with whom sexual identity had ever become a topic of conversation. "It is just known, but not talked about." Heather was not shy to ask questions of me in interview about whether the number of lesbians on her course was unusual, whether there were many in the outdoor field, and why I thought that was so. However, when I asked her about her own experience at CWC, and the "maybe"s Heather raised above: Maybe "lesbians created a feeling of not really fitting or not really belonging"; "a feeling of inadequacy"; "one of a little bit of jealousy, that I would have liked to have been more included," Heather was more reticent. After an extended silence explained: "It is hard to pin-point a specific example, because there was no one particular incident. It just ran through my mind at certain times." I ran from my meeting with Heather, to Liz (who had been a member of the same CWC group), and tried to ascertain whether Liz had felt this same sense of exclusion:

(Louise) I just came from meeting with Heather, and she mentioned something that hadn't really occurred to me on the weekend, and that might have been because I was guilty of what Heather pointed out to me. Which was that she felt there were times when the group felt fragmented and she felt excluded. Did you notice or feel that too?

(Liz) I noticed that we weren't an equal, but you will never get that. We are all individuals, we are all unique, we all come from different life experiences. We are all coming there for different reasons and different points in our lives. . . . I think women there were dealing with a whole variety of issues. Their own identity, their own sexuality, how they feel about it how they are going to deal with it. That came up for me a little bit too. My only experience in being around women that identify themselves as lesbians has been little and almost distant. . . .

And I just found that for the most part, those women on the weekend that identified themselves as lesbian were comfortable to do that, and many were happy and content with that. I think some were still working on that issue. And I remember sitting in the circle during the affirmations and thinking, 'Liz, all these lesbians, and you are perfectly comfortable with them, that is interesting. That is nice'. . . . Being among lesbians this weekend was good for me because one of the things I'm wondering about is if my own sister is not a lesbian. . . .

Being among lesbians at CWC, Liz confronted her own comfort, and the possibility that her own sister might be a lesbian. Another woman who had previously confronted issues of homosexuality, though in a very different sense, was Carrie. Attending a different

course than Liz and Heather, Carrie also speculated that she was a "sexual minority, or close to it":

(Carrie) One interesting thing about this weekend was— because I've always felt this, I've always felt this was true, but it proved it this weekend, but there were so many lesbians in this group, and I liked them all very, very much, and that wasn't a problem for me. . . . But this weekend was the first time I was in a sexual minority, or close to it.

(Louise) You think you were?

(Carrie) There were thirteen of us . . . and there were at least six, maybe seven lesbians.

(Louise) Only three of us disclosed to the group. [Carrie speculates about instructors and other women]

(Carrie) On the first day Helen said something about how she had been given [the course] as a gift [from her partner] And I said, 'Oh, what do you do for a living?,' thinking it was her business partner. Hit me over the head! Then she told me, and obviously it wasn't just a two-person business, and so I just shut my mouth; I was confused but I just let it go. And then . . . she said something about 'she.' And someone else said, 'Oh, did your mother give you this?' And she said, 'No. My partner gave it to me.' And then I knew 'my partner' was not a business partner and was a she. So I figured it out. Put the pieces together. 'Hello!' Hit me on the head twice!

During interview, Carrie brought up “the lesbians on course” more than any other woman. Here might be the reason. Soon after remarking that she felt “really sorry” for Hannah, “I could feel her pain so viscerally,” Carrie told of how she had found out two years previously that her husband of 12 years was gay. In-between hearing the details of how she found out, and of the intervening two years, I asked Carrie whether this experience was relevant to anything she had done on the weekend, and:

(Louise) Did you find at any time in the weekend that you were holding back that piece of information?

(Carrie) Never when it was *m y* turn to talk. But, before it was my turn to talk, if I was talking about something that reminded me. There were several times I found myself asking ‘should I say that or not?’ and I thought, ‘well, I don’t want to insult anyone.’

(Louise) Why did you feel that you might insult anyone by sharing that information?

(Carrie) Well maybe not insult, but I thought people might say, ‘Oh, she doesn’t like gay people.’ I thought maybe that would be off-putting to some people.

It also turned out that Carrie had left “him,” specifically her residual anger about her gay ex-husband, at the top of the tree on the ‘zip-wire,’ but had never told the group. After rock climbing, Carrie had spoken of herself as “the last heathen at the Pentecostal Service” because all of the other women were effusive about their climbing

experience, and Carrie had spoken of her most significant moment at Quincy Quarries being Helen and me climbing to the top of the rock blind-folded. The next day, however, in the debrief of the 'zip-wire,' Carrie referred to herself as "no longer the only heathen." Physically, the 'zip-wire' was a significant challenge to Carrie. Until she told me during interview about leaving "him" and her remaining anger about "him" up on the platform, I had thought the reference she made on course to no longer being 'unbelieving' about the CWC experience was in reference to her sense of success in overcoming the physical challenges of climbing the ladder to the platform in the tree, 10 metres off the ground. Had Carrie not clarified this issue in her own elaboration during interview, my assumption as a researcher would have been inconsistent with Carrie's meaning. Another (different) lesbian association Carrie made was something also brought up by Emma and Sam:

(Carrie) One more thing that was interesting. Because probably the two people I liked the most were you and Helen, who I saw as strong, confident, and now I think about it, lesbian.

Emma also put together strong, confident and lesbian:

(Louise) Anything else that you want to say about your experience this weekend that I haven't asked the right question to get at?

(Emma) I made myself write in my journal that first night at home because I wanted to document the weekend. . . . I

realised that I was able to sort of push Pam and connect with her a little bit, and Penny too. It was like I could take care of them. Maybe I could be in control of asking them questions and them not expecting much of me through the questions they asked in return. But, I would have liked to get more of a sense from Helen and from you . . . I wanted to be around you, I think that is what it was, and I wanted to be around Helen. I liked your energy, your quiet confidence, a certain emotional strength. But I couldn't figure out what I could give to you. . . . I couldn't figure out how to connect. And so I looked at you and Helen - and wondered what is that makes that happen? I looked at the connection I made with Pam and Penny and wondered is it the strong and weak, that's just the way it is? I don't know, maybe I was curious about your lives as lesbians, which you didn't share much about?

I wonder whether Emma's inability to "figure out how to connect" with Helen and me was about more than our being lesbians. I certainly recognise myself in Helen's response to a question I asked her about whether she felt comfortable sharing at CWC those aspects of herself that she held 'closest to her vest':

(Helen) No. But I wasn't intentionally holding back; I didn't feel compelled to purge, but I also have a place to do that. I have some skill with my partner to do that, and I'm also in formal therapy, so I have a place to do that as well. So, I think, when others' tendency may have been to speak out,

my tendency is to be quiet and hear about it, and process it internally, and speak to myself as opposed to sharing it with other people. That's one thing that I felt I could have given to the group, was doing that a little more. Exposing myself a little bit more. . . . I was aware that I skated through the physical things, and that embarrassed me a little bit in that I know it took them tremendous courage to do the things that I seemingly skated through. But it's just a different thing. My ropes course is in my mind, in my day-to-day life, in my little demons and the big bag of rocks that we carry with us every day.

Sam was a member of this same course, and thought that the presence of lesbians on course provided her with a sense of diversity:

(Sam) The community I live in is predominantly upper income level, white, in a fluffy kind of way. That is fine, but I get bored with it. . . .

There were a lot of gay relationships which I thought were delightful coming from the San Francisco area where that was always part of my life and friends' lives. So it was nice to have lesbians there because you added a diversity that I realised I had missed. I also enjoyed being around strong, intelligent, confident women like you and Helen.

Again the same association: strong, confident, lesbian. In my mind, there were other strong, confident women on course. In fact, I would describe all three of the above women as strong and confident. It is particularly interesting, then, that these three heterosexual women, chose to specifically name two lesbians in their references to "strong and confident." Certain heterosexual women found it interesting that: they felt: "perfectly comfortable" being in the presence of lesbians; it was "nice" that there were so many of us; it was "good" for the group to hear about our lives; curious and asked questions of us about our lives as lesbians; felt (but were actually not) a "sexual minority"; somewhat isolated, and excluded. Others withheld telling of personal experience fearful of being interpreted as not liking "gay" people; found themselves liking the lesbians most; recognised that being among lesbians was good, perhaps leading to being more accepting of the possibility a sister is a lesbian; acknowledged wanting to be around strong, confident women, maybe because they were curious about our lives as lesbians.

Penny's curiosity was less coded, more transparent:

(Penny) I'm 27 and I thought I was going to grow old and lonely and no one would ever want to love me and I'd never have kids. I'm not afraid of that anymore. I'm not afraid. Any guy would be lucky to get me. To be honest, I'm not sure if that is what I want right now or ever. I was talking to Helen at breakfast on Sunday. . . . I've never been as free to

talk the questions I have as I was on the weekend. To be honest with myself. But the attraction is there. [Penny names women on course who she thought were lesbian or who declared themselves to be].

But none of that mattered. What mattered was that we were the 'June Bloomers' [the name the group chose for themselves]. That was really the most important thing. That opened up so much to me. I was so closed minded. My ex-ex boyfriend used to say 'Penny, take your blinders off.'. . . I don't even know what the hell I am. . . . That's a big question mark in my head. There's always a reason for something - I went this weekend to find courage and trust and stuff - but I truly believe that something happened at a different level.

(Louise) What level was it?

(Penny) To rise a step above the closed-mindedness of my family and my inner- circle. . . . And when I came down the plank I thought 'what the fuck will I have in common with any of these women?' I'm still a little self-seeking, but I am not like my family anymore, they are so unaccepting.

(Louise) Where does your increased acceptance come from? Did you learn something about that this weekend?

(Penny) It doesn't matter what you are - as a woman you still have feelings, and you still cry - Hannah was crying the first day. That hurt me because I hate to see people in pain.

(Louise) When you refer to 'acceptance' and 'it doesn't matter what you are,' are you referring to lesbians?

(Penny) Yeah.

(Louise) What was your initial impression when you stepped on the boat and you saw us all?

(Penny) Honest.

(Louise) Yeah. Honestly.

(Penny) This is a weekend for dyke-bitches. That was the closed minded Penny speaking. . . . I didn't think I was like any of those girls there.

(Louise) So given your initial impression that we were 'dyke-bitches,' can you explain how your mind was opened and you became more accepting?

(Penny) Because I lived with them. I cried with them. I climbed rocks with them. Because I made and ate that gross food with them. We were a team - the 'June Bloomers' team.

The preceding discussion of being a lesbian or a straight woman at CWC was offered as one illustration of how dimensions of social difference may be relevant to experiences of women attending CWC courses. Recognising this relevance would assist programmes like CWC in tempering a tendency toward universalist assumptions about their participants and about the very notion of experience. The issues raised in the discussion of lesbians' and non-lesbians' experiences on course point to a need to rethink the OEE conceptual framework and programming to better respond to relevant dimensions of social difference.

CHAPTER 4

THE SELF AS RELATIONAL

The most important of the social circumstances defining selves are found in our relationships with other people, as individuals or as social groups, rather than in other perceptions and understandings which are unaffected by relationships. . . . the most significant of these relationships are ones of love, resistance, acceptance and rejection (Morwenna Griffiths, 1995, p. 85).

A self can only be understood as constituted intersubjectively in interaction with others in a process of becoming (Seyla Benhabib, 1992, p. 14).

Social relationships are fundamentally important for the creation of self-identity (Griffiths, 1995, p. 116).

In the previous chapter, I challenged the women-and-OEE literature to engage with broader contemporary feminist theory. I argued that the women-and-OEE literature must look beyond the still prevalent universalist concept of 'woman,' and explore how social differences among women, such as sexual identity, make a difference to experience. Such a differentiated notion of experience requires taking into account issues of social location, individual

identity and sense of self. Thus a main goal of this and the following chapter is to demonstrate that women's outdoor education has a lot to gain from incorporating the insights of feminist theories about the self.

In this chapter I will first provide a brief overview on salient aspects of various theories of the self. The goal of this initial presentation is simply to provide a backdrop against which the reader can appreciate the shifts in the theorisation of the self, prompted to a significant degree by Carol Gilligan. I will then explore the broad theme flowing from Gilligan's work: the social and relational self. In Chapter 5, I will move on to utilise contemporary feminist theory of the self as it evolved in the last decade to show the full potential of applying feminist theory of the self to OEE experience.

4.1 - Theories of the Self: Within and Across Disciplines

The self has been theorised quite differently across disciplines, time and theoretical standpoint. According to Roberta Sands (1996), sociologists have used "self" to denote the person in relation to the social group. Sands gave the example of Cooley (1922), who compared the self to a "looking glass" in which others' perceptions were reflected. Mead (1934/1962) proposed that the self is comprised of an "I," which thinks about and responds to the attitudes of others. Mead viewed the self as a process, which

changed in the course of social interactions, and also theorised that the self had the capacity to see itself as an object (Sands, 1996).

In psychological terms, and according to object relations theorists, the self is also concerned with other. Object relations theory claims that “the drive of human beings is to form relationships, and it is through relationships with objects, and through separations, that the child’s identity is produced” (Prince, 1993, p. 41). Nancy Chodorow (1974) was heavily influenced by object relation theories (Nicholson, 1993), and suggested that women form a ‘relational identity’ in their relationships with others, and men form a ‘positional identity,’ defined by their position of power within social structures. In drawing attention to the early socialisation of girls and boys, Chodorow created a theory of “culturally universal difference” (Nicholson, 1993, p. 89). The essence of this universal difference is that because girls are raised at a young age by a primary care taker of the same gender, they define themselves in connection to others. Because this is not so for males, Chodorow’s theory of universal difference goes, young boys tend to see social relationships as threatening to their sense of self, and proceed to protect themselves against threats to their sense of autonomy.

The concept of identity is central to theories of the self. Erik Erikson (1950, 1959, 1968) made a lasting contribution in the theoretical development of identity (Sands, 1996). Erikson saw identity as present in each of life’s “stages,” but as particularly uncertain during adolescence, calling this stage a “normative

developmental crisis.” According to Erikson (1950, p. 228), adolescence signals a time of being:

primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the roles and skills cultivated earlier with the occupational prototypes of the day.

Erikson theorised that “ego identity” was the outcome of the process by which one accrues “confidence that one’s ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity . . . is matched by the sameness and continuity of one’s meaning to others” (Erikson, 1959, p. 89). To Erikson, identity was not a fixed personality type, but an “evolving configuration” of combined identifications, needs, roles and capacities that is never fully achieved (Sands, 1996). However, with respect to women, Erikson’s (1950, p. 228) emphasis on blending an identity from “occupational prototypes of the day” essentially equated to wife and mother. In 1968 Erikson suggested that the formation of identity during adolescence was problematic for women, because it was unlikely by this stage that she would have “met the man whose identity would be integral to her own” (Sands, 1996, p. 170). Thus, as Sands pointed out, by the early 1970’s, Erikson’s theories began to meet with much hostility from feminists who criticised the sexist bias in his and other psychological theories.

4.1.1 - The Influence of Carol Gilligan's Different Voice

Carol Gilligan (1982) acknowledged that her work was heavily influenced by the thinking of Nancy Chodorow. In her own highly important 1982 book, *In a different voice*, Gilligan noted that Lawrence Kohlberg's (1981) conclusions about moral development were inaccurate because they purported to represent 'human' development but, as per standard procedure at the time, arrived at such conclusions by studying the behaviour of boys only. An example through which Gilligan (1982) sketched out her theory of "a different voice" can be seen through the dilemma of Heinz. Heinz's dilemma had been developed by Kohlberg to measure moral development, and was a hypothetical situation in which Heinz was faced with the decision of whether or not he should break into the druggist's store to steal a drug to save his wife's life. Heinz could not afford to buy the drug, and the druggist was unwilling to lower the price. When Gilligan asked 11 year old Jake and Amy about Heinz's dilemma, she found that they responded differently. Jake recognised that life was more important than property, and concluded that Heinz should steal the drug. Gilligan (p. 26) suggested that Jake "considering the moral dilemma to be 'sort of like a math problem with humans' . . . sets it up as an equation and proceeds to work out the solution."

On the other hand, Gilligan described the deliberations of Amy as "evasive and unsure." When asked whether Heinz should steal the drug, Amy answered:

Well, I don't think so. I think there might be other ways besides stealing it, like if he could borrow the money or make a loan or something but he really shouldn't steal the drug - but his wife shouldn't die either (Gilligan, p. 28).

Amy continued to consider the dilemma between life and the druggist's property, and what effect the theft would have on Heinz's relationship with his wife:

If he stole the drug, he might save his wife then, but if he did, he might have to go to jail, and then his wife might get sicker again, and he couldn't get more of the drug and it might not be good. So, they should really just talk it out and find some other way to make the money (Gilligan, p. 28).

About Amy, Gilligan (p. 28) concluded that she saw "in the dilemma not a math problem with humans but a narrative of relationships that extends over time."

Gilligan pointed out that although Jake and Amy's responses were different, they were equally sophisticated. Jake scored higher than Amy on the traditional moral development scale. But, for Gilligan, Amy's "understanding of morality . . . arise[s] from the recognition of relationship, [and] her belief in communication as the mode of conflict resolution" (p. 30). Gilligan elaborated that Amy saw the problem as:

a network of connection, a web or relationships that is sustained by a process of communication. With this shift, the

moral problem changes from one of unfair domination, the imposition of property over life, to one of unnecessary exclusion, the failure of the druggist to respond to the wife (p. 32).

Gilligan described how Jake, in contrast to Amy, reasoned abstractly, removed the problem from its context, and used a "logic of fairness" (p. 32), in which he created a hierarchy of winners and losers. Gilligan (1982) pointed that Amy and Jake's different responses to Heinz's dilemma were compatible with theories developed by Nancy Chodorow (1974). Gilligan stressed the different experiences of girls and boys from a young age. Girls, at a very young age, according to Chodorow and Gilligan, understand that they are like their mothers. In contrast, the first "psychic task" of boys is to learn that they are not like their mothers, and cannot grow up to be like them. Gilligan (1982, p. 35) concluded that gender differences are created through the socialising effects of this contrast. For boys, a "self defined through separation," and for girls, a "self delineated through connection" (Kerber, 1993). A 'psychology of women' (Sands, 1996) has developed as an out-growth of Gilligan's theoretical and empirical observations in which self is "connected with interpersonal relationships" (p. 172).

Roberta Sands (1996) pointed out that in describing "women as relational and concerned with connections [t]hey assume that women are a singular group for whom connecting with others is an essential quality" (p. 175) (e.g. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger &

Tarule, 1986; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991). Sands is not alone in her criticism (see, for e.g., Friedman, 1997; Frug, 1992; Kerber, 1993; Moody-Adams, 1997; Nicholson, 1993). Jane Martin (1994) identified a number of questions that remain to be asked of Gilligan's (1982) 'different voice.' "Did our foremothers speak in that voice? . . . Do rural girls, Chicanas, lesbians, older women speak in it?" (Martin, 1994, p. 653).

While pointing to limitations of Gilligan's and others' contributions to feminist theory, Martin (1994) also spoke of the need to be generous, and recognise their positive contributions. Susan Bordo (1990, p. 154) had previously suggested that "a demolition derby of previous feminist thought" had been too hasty in writing-off the profitable with the problematic. Mary Jo Frug (1992) can be seen below to acknowledge Gilligan's contribution, but Frug also does not hold back in her critique of Gilligan's work, nor of what others have done with it:

Cultural feminism has promoted an important degree of self-pride and some degree of political power for women by celebrating feminine commonalities. . . . *In a different voice* (1982) has had a large role in cultural feminism's current popularity. . . . [But] I believe the vulgarization of Gilligan's book has been a catastrophe for feminists. Ripped from the context of a debate among moral developmentalists, *In a different voice* seems to have lost its edge as a disruption of previous research methods or a challenge to existing normative hierarchies. Read and cited as an exaltation of

relationships, of the relational self, of the self *in* relationship, a conservative interpretation of this book has not only validated humanistic skills and values often linked with women but it has also promoted, as if she were a new invention, a model of female subject which has been the traditional excuse for the oppression women have suffered (Frug, 1992, p. 157).

Nonetheless as Mary Jeanne Larrabee (1993, p. 5) tells us, Gilligan's work was a 'watershed' in feminist thinking "in part due to her claims about the value of women's experience. Her work thus trumpets aspects of women's experience found defective, deficient, or undervalued by the broader culture." Alison Jaggar (1990) referred to the "minor academic industry" that followed the publication of *In a different voice* in 1982. Part of this 'minor academic industry' was the development of the 'ethic of care' as a particular field of study (Larrabee, 1993). Lynda Stone (1994) referred to *In a different voice* as "one of the most quoted sources in all of feminist theory." Carol Gilligan has been featured as the cover-story in the *New York Times Magazine* and was recently listed by *Time Magazine* as one of this century's 100 most influential people.

When looked at through the lens of contemporary feminist theory, *In a different voice* poses certain problems. Indeed, I will consider some of these problems in Chapter 5. In that chapter, I will explore how subsequent feminist theory has raised a number of

challenges to the relational feminist framework espoused by Carol Gilligan (1982), particularly regarding its attachment to a unitary, coherent view of the self. In subsequent work, Gilligan herself has moved beyond this position (e.g., Brown & Gilligan, 1992). I purposefully choose to place so much attention on Carol Gilligan's 1982 work and her notion of the self as "delimited through connection" for girls and "defined through separation" for boys (Kerber, 1993) here, because, as Martha Bell (1997, p. 143) pointed out, "it is hard to find the influence of feminist theory (beyond the research of . . . Carol Gilligan [1982]) in experiential education" (see e.g., Henderson, 1996c; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986; Holzwarth, 1992; Knapp, 1985; Mack, 1996; Mitten, 1985; 1996; Porter, 1996). Mindful of the limitations of Gilligan's 1982 theory, in the remainder of this chapter I will explore how her relational lens shaped my own thinking during my field work and interviewing. What is more, concerns about Gilligan's work notwithstanding, the following data will show that the notion of the relational self finds much confirmation in women's experience at CWC.

4.2 - CWC and the Social/Relational Self

Each Connecting with Courage (CWC) course was a social experience from beginning to end. The vast majority of experiences women had as a member of the CWC programme were directly shared with other women. Not only did each group of women share the same moment in time, the programme also required them to, for

example, work together to create meals, share a sleeping space, figure-out initiative tasks, speak to their experiences (if they desired, in group debriefs), and depend on each other for their physical safety. Recall here, the standard Outdoor Experiential Education (OEE) interpretation of participants' shared experiences as leading variously to feelings of trust, support, risk-taking, group spirit, bonding, empathy, competence, confidence, increased self-esteem, etc. (e.g., Miles & Priest, 1990; Nadler & Luckner, 1992; Schoel et al., 1988; Warren, Sakofs & Hunt, 1995).

As an outdoor educator, I have had much agreement with the standard outdoor literature's described outcomes of shared experiences within OEE programmes. I have experienced such feelings myself as a participant. As a researcher, an instructor and a participant, I have heard others speak of their experiences in similar ways. However, as I aim to illustrate in this thesis, contemporary feminist theory offers a different way of thinking about the meaning of 'social' and about women's shared experiences in the outdoor context. When women's experiences at CWC are examined through the lens of contemporary feminist theory, issues of the self and other, the self and society, the self and culture come into focus. Because the self is defined socially (ideologically and culturally) and contextually through communities, institutions, systems of meaning (Weir, 1996), a programme such as CWC offers tremendous potential for women to use shared experiences to define ourselves differently and to enable us to revision our identities as women. Furthermore, because CWC is a social

experience, it presents women with opportunities to engage in the process of encountering, discovering and challenging old and new social meanings about the self in the body, sexuality, size, strength, cultural expectations, abilities and age.

While doing my fieldwork, I did a lot of thinking about women's experiences at CWC relative to the particular group of women that came together for each course. This way of thinking originates in my role as a Professor of Outdoor and Experiential Education, teaching the standard Association for Experiential Education / Project Adventure literatures. In working with groups of B.Ed. students enrolled in year long programmes, I always paid attention to, and was interested in, how each of the groups came together, their attempts to build and maintain community, the closeness with which they interacted, and how they dealt with conflict. The programme these students were enrolled in provided them with a framework within which to operate as a group, I guided them through the literature, and we talked about their experiences as members of a group relative to the literature. This literature included group development, group process and group dynamic theories imported into the field of OEE from the psychological, education, and business literatures. In class, we discussed the concepts of trust, cooperation, support, risk, problem-solving as outcomes of the group experience *à la* the standard OEE literature.

As I write this section now, in the confines of my home-office in Vancouver a couple of years later, I realise that my interest in

groups at a practical level goes back to the days of my leadership roles as captain of swimming, head of house and head of school and then as a camp counselor, head counselor, associate director of an eight week residential girls' camp. As I reflect on my own experiences leading groups, I realise that I have been curious about the process and outcomes of group interaction, group development, group dynamics, building community for many years. I have detailed in brief terms the type and range of this experience because it provided me with the points of reference with which I went into the field to collect my data, the way in which I thought about women's experiences in relation to and with other women. The way in which I thought about the outcomes of participation in OEE-type activities was congruent with that of some of the CWC instructors. For example, Beth, who, as was mentioned in the subsection 'Outward Bound' (Chapter 2, p. 52), had been a participant in the first course women were admitted to at Hurricane Island Outward Bound School (HIOBS) in Maine in 1971, and the first female instructor at HIOBS the following year, and an Outward Bound instructor on an ad-hoc basis ever since, spoke to what she saw happening to women at CWC as part of her answer to another question:

(Louise) Why leave your family and your job and go do that [instruct a CWC course] for three days?

(Beth) I get to meet some wonderful women. . . . I think Outward Bound attracts good people, but more than that, it brings out good stuff in everybody. It finds the good stuff in

everybody and brings it out, and puts it out there for everybody to see, including them. And they can't *not* see it, which is why it is so therapeutic, even though it is not billed as therapy. But why people grow from it is because it is such a healthy atmosphere to be living outdoors to do physically vigorous things and to be working in a group, and as a group where respect and trust and support and caring are the norm. And where you can take that as a given. You don't have to worry whether someone will reject you or not. If you can just be and do, and clear out all those fears and just be who you are and know more and more about what that is, and see the same kinds of things coming out of other people, and gain a new respect for other people.

As a practitioner, I have used OEE-type activities with a view to creating trust, cooperation, support, etc. with groups. After my reading of contemporary feminist theory, I would, in principle, still use OEE activities to achieve these same outcomes. But I would no longer use them 'as is.' As Karen Warren (1996a, p. 7) suggested, "women's experience in the outdoors does not necessarily fit neatly into the recipes for success common to the field of experiential education." What has also changed, is the potential I see for these same activities to shed light on participants' encounters with the self, to explain and acknowledge multidimensional aspects of the self to the self and to others. The section in Chapter 3 on lesbians' experiences at CWC (p. 116) is an example of how 'shared'

experience can highlight differences as well as elements of commonality. I also noticed as I worked through the contemporary feminist theory literature, a shift in my thinking about women's experiences as part of a group. The self in relationship with other came into focus. Thus I now see that my interview questions, prepared before I did the participant observation in the CWC courses, were heavily informed by the Gilligan-style theories of the relational self, although during the courses, I can now see that I was thinking much more in the familiar mode of an OEE practitioner. Such distinctions are much more visible to me in the transcripts, than they were as the events unfolded.

While in the field, the thoughts I taped at regular intervals throughout each of the courses document, among other things, my interpretation of how the group is gelling, how each of the women seemed to contribute to, and fit-in with the group. My tape-recordings include my own experiences of feeling more/less a part of a group compared to a previous group, as the following thoughts from course four show:

This is a good group! Women seem into being here, to sharing, being game to try new stuff, are good sports. There's already been some tears and emotional intimacy shared.

This group is a cross between one and two. There are a few women that are quick with their humour, keen to adventure. This group has bonded much more quickly than the last group.

In thoughts I recorded during my experience as a member of group three show how the group seemed less 'gung-ho' than others:

I don't know, maybe it's the damp and cold start to the day, but this group doesn't have the same spring in its step as the others. We were walking from the store room to fill up water bottles and the group was shuffling along in silence! Then, waiting outside the washrooms, I picked up a frisbee that was lying on the ground and threw it to Rebecca, who just watched it land back on the ground. I can only imagine that had I thrown a frisbee to any woman from the first two groups that an impromptu and raucous group frisbee-toss would have ensued.

It is almost like my tape recorded observations on course were descriptive accounts of the action as I noticed it: "and then" . . . "so and so did" . . . "women were sensitive to." For example, I muttered into my tape recorder after dinner on the first night of the second course:

everyone in the group really pitched in and prepared and cleaned up dinner very efficiently. There was dialogue all around; I was part of a group who told funny stories about road trips. It was neat to see Pam so lively in this exchange. She hasn't said much up 'til now, and her stories about a 'trip from hell with an aunt once-removed' were hilarious!

I recognise upon reflection, that my interpretation of a group's first few hours were largely about my feeling comfortable in the group; and, viewed through the standard OEE framework of group dynamics and group development.

My questions of women in the interview setting, however, did not show this same group-focus. I asked questions about how women perceived their inclusion in their group, what they had learned about other women, what they had learned about themselves from other women. Only upon further study of the contemporary feminist theory literature, did I begin to fully realise that the questions I had asked women in interview after the courses were so different (though only days apart) from the "practitioner" observations I made into my tape recorder during each course. To illustrate how different outcomes can be interpreted when the same activity is viewed through these two disparate theoretical frameworks, I will begin by describing an activity at CWC called 'Take Five.'

'Take Five' took place on the ferry after the definition of courage and some words of welcome had been offered to the participants by the CWC Course Director. Women were asked to spend the 10 minute ferry crossing to Thompson Island with a woman they did not know, and to find five things they had in common that were not visible (e.g. having the same colour hair did not count). By way of example, from the five times (four general enrollment courses and one staff training course) I participated in 'take five' at CWC, I found apparent commonality around the

following issues - lived full-time on an island for at least 14 years; completed a master's degree; both doctoral students; visited at least four countries in Europe; the only girl in family; the second oldest of four children; involved in a competitive sport as a girl; work for an educational institution; am a lesbian; grew up next to a kind-of ocean; involved in outdoor education; 31 years old; went to boarding school; love chocolate; have at least 4 Indigo Girls CD's; currently live more than 3,000 miles away from where we grew up. My experience in this search for "sameness" was that little attention was paid to "difference." The task was to find "sameness" in 10 minutes. A typical exchange that I experienced went something like this: "I have one sister." - "Nope. I have three brothers" - "Humm, okay, um, I grew up in California" - "Nah, I grew up on the Isle of Man, did you grow up next to the ocean though?" - "Yeah, on Venice Beach, the Pacific Ocean" - "ah, okay, we both grew up next to a kind-of ocean; because I grew up by the Irish Sea."

Soon after arriving on Thompson Island, women were offered the opportunity to share with the group the things they found in common with their partner in the 'take five' activity. The degree of commonality varied from "the only thing we found we have in common is that we have nothing of significance in common - the closest thing was that Sarah had driven north on Highway 1 in California and I had driven south on the same Highway - albeit for completely different reasons, at completely different times in our lives"; to my experience of commonality with Marli of sexual identity and work-identity.

Viewed through the OEE lens, it could be said that the main purpose of the first few hours of each course was to begin to build the parameters of emotional and physical safety, felt-trust, cooperation, team-work, a sense of fun and play. Each set of instructors had their own approach to establishing these parameters through a variety of cooperative games, and all utilised the CWC programme recommendations to include 'take five.' At OEE face-value, this 'take five' activity was fun, 'broke the ice,' gave women a task and an opportunity to find commonality and difference.

When viewed through a feminist theory of the relational self lens, 'take five' can be seen as the first of many episodes of interaction at CWC for women to acknowledge the self for a group of strangers. Sharing "personal stories," Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) stated, "[is] not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; [stories] are the means by which identities may be fashioned" (p. 1). Most women came to the CWC programme alone, in anonymity, with a 'clean slate' to do and to be. However, 12 of the 35 women knew at least one other woman and had signed-up for the course as friends. 'Take Five' was also an opportunity for women to establish commonality. As the following story will illustrate, sameness sometimes brought a moment of relief for women, like Marli, who in trying to uncover five things we had in common during the 'take five' exercise at staff training, disclosed that her partner was a woman. Marli went on to say that she was not usually so brazen about announcing her sexual orientation. "I'm glad that I guessed right!" Marli had "guessed right" in her 'bold

move' attempting to establish sameness around our sexual identity. But her 'bold move' which brought her a moment of relief, put me face-to-face with my own practice of disclosing my sexual identity in group situations. I wasn't at all uncomfortable acknowledging my shared sexual identity with Marli. However, knowing that the take-up of this activity on the Island would require us to share with the group the things we found we had in common, brought up the issue of identifying myself as a lesbian to the group from the outset of my interaction with them. This was not a piece of myself that I normally shared with groups when I first met them, and it wasn't my preference to have this disclosed at the outset. My disinclination to this disclosure was not strong enough to voice my concern, and so when Marli asked "is it okay to share this with the group," I agreed that it was. Was I truthful in agreeing with Marli and hence identifying myself as a lesbian within the first half hour to the group? I had occasion a second time to answer this question, which again gave rise to my being identified by other women as a lesbian at the outset of our interaction. However, perhaps the truth of whether I was comfortable immediately identifying myself as a lesbian to the group, is told in the fact that when I was not confronted with this decision through the 'take five' exercise, I chose to make this disclosure to the groups through the portrait activity (Chapter 5, p. 203) on the second day. I refer to this experience here because it raises the issue of identity as partly about one's location in a situation. In the 'take five' activity, I acknowledged to the group that I was a lesbian when another

lesbian attempted to establish our location as lesbians as something we had in common. Although I didn't hide that I am a lesbian, mentioning the personal pronoun of my partner in sharing aspects of myself in dialogue with other women, I otherwise chose to wait until the second day to disclose my sexual identity to the group.

This section will go on to illustrate that 'take five' was one of many opportunities women had to explore and share aspects of their selves and their selected stories with other women at CWC. It will be seen through the examples presented here that such explorations and sharing challenged some women's capacity to recognise themselves. In comparing self to others, women discovered strengths and weaknesses, similarities and differences. Women attending the CWC programme did speak to the power of the programme in creating feelings of trust and support, camaraderie, mutuality through their connections with other women. However, as I try to show throughout this chapter, when women's experiences are looked at through a theory of the relational self, the CWC programme can also be seen to provide women with multiple opportunities to encounter and understand the self in the unfamiliar social context of the CWC group.

When the self is thought of as social and relational, women's experiences at CWC can be seen to raise questions about the self, such as: "how did I come to be my self?"; "where did this self come from?"; "who do I listen to for information about my self / selves?"; "what are the societal expectations of me as a woman, and how do I measure up to them?"; "where do I fit as a lesbian (or straight)

woman?" Such questions, rendered visible when women's experiences with other women at CWC are looked at through a feminist inspired lens, offer a more complex picture of what transpired at CWC than the notions of support, trust, cooperation, group spirit that are brought into focus through the OEE-inspired lens.

In preparing my interview questions, I was greatly influenced by the view that, to date, neither the standard OEE literature, nor the women-and-OEE literature had paid enough attention to what participants learn about the self through other participants in OEE-type courses. For example, opportunities for women to encounter their selves at CWC as emotionally and/or physically strong and tenacious were plentiful. Two of CWC's programme goals were for women to experience "physical and expressive success" (Outward Bound, 1994). It could be argued, therefore, that the CWC programme was designed to provide women with opportunities to achieve those goals. Most did. However, the CWC experience was designed to be about more than adventure-based programmed activities. CWC aimed to be an experience in 'self discovery,' as stated in the programme materials (Outward Bound, 1995a). If we understand, following Gilligan, that the selves of women are embedded in relationships, then the location of the learning that needs to be explored in a course like CWC is not so much about 'skills' derived from physical and technical aspects of the programme, but about what women learned about their self/selves from their interactions with other women. Thus, I

formulated my interview questions, along the lines of the following: "what, if anything, do you feel that you learned from other women this past weekend?" and "what, if anything, do you feel that you learned about your self from other women this past weekend?" The remaining sections of the chapter explore this line of questioning.

4.2.1 - Comparing the Self With Other Women's Struggles

I begin this section with the remarks of Ann, a CWC instructor. I do this because I, too, was very struck by the other participant, Jane, about whom Ann speaks, whose quiet strength I had interpreted at the outset of the CWC course as meekness. It seems that both Ann and I were "proven wrong" about Jane who first described herself to the group as "headed toward" divorce, supporting two young children, about to be made redundant:

(Louise) All of these observations you've made about other women. . . . Allow me to ask, do you take away anything from this weekend that's applicable to you in your life?

(Ann) In my life, I try to collect strong women. I love to be--you know, I notice them. I sort of--I'm drawn to them. And I think that this course always has women in it that just--like, Jane--you might not walk by her on the street and think that she's particularly strong, but if you see her on this course it just blows you away. And I'm proven wrong a lot--you know, I have these preconceived notions. It's humbling.

(Louise) That's interesting that you speak of Jane in this way, because I had to up-date my initial impression of her as the weekend unfolded. . . . But, you know, while I too was struck by Jane's strength, I also wouldn't want to trade places with her.

Part of the CWC ethos was to enable women to "speak all" or at least speak more of themselves. And indeed, women at CWC divulged aspects of their self/selves to the varying degree that they felt comfortable. It was during the debriefs of the 'portrait' activity (drawings of nature to represent a self between the ages of 10-14 years; a current self; a desired self in the future, described in detail on p. 203) and the 'solo' activity (an opportunity to write a letter to/from the 10-14 year old self, described in detail on p. 210) that women disclosed personal experience of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, as well as tales of struggles and hardships, past, present and future. (During post-course interviews, by way of elaborating on the self, women often divulged bigger secrets, including sexual abuse, rape, various adulterous affairs, abortions, being widowed, various medical conditions, their ex-husband being gay.) In brief, some women alluded to or explicitly spoke about experiences they had encountered, or were encountering that could be described as disconcerting at a personal level and at a systemic level politically.

When such divulgences are thought about through the lens of feminist theories which problematise the self, such opportunities for

the women who shared their stories can be seen to provide them with an opportunity to question their own experience of 'self': "how did I come to be my self?"; "what are all the different parts of my self?"; "are there parts of my self I want to leave behind?"; "are there new parts of my self that I want to have for my self?"; "what parts of my self are sad, afraid?" Such disclosures about the self also provided those listening with an opportunity for self reflection. As the above snippet of conversation between Ann and I demonstrates, the opportunity for women to compare the self with other women's struggles is not only located in women's past traumatic experiences, but also in the present hardships of daily life.

All of the women who volunteered to speak with me in post-course interviews thought the level to which women shared seemingly more vulnerable aspects of the self was "appropriate," "in context," "valuable," "perfectly fine; women were respectful in telling us the sketch and not the gory details," "cathartic for us all." The programme provided plenty of opportunities for women to share. There was mixed reaction from women about whether they felt an expectation to share their feelings and their struggles, and to what degree women felt comfortable sharing. As mentioned earlier, seven of the 34 women did not volunteer to speak with me in post-course interviews, raising the question of whether these women felt the same comfort about sharing at a more emotional level. I heard from one woman who did speak with me in interview that Pam, who did not volunteer, "hated the circles and all the sharing. Every time we would finish an activity she would dread having to sit

down and talk." Contrast this sentiment, albeit reported indirectly, with:

(Ros) The thing I liked about it was I really felt very comfortable about the fact that no pressure was put on you to do any more than you felt you wanted to do, and that that was perfectly all right. There was no stigma attached. And I think that's a very important aspect of that programme, both physically and emotionally. Other people felt the same way. Because I felt that, in the group we were in, everyone was very supportive of whatever you did or offered to the group.

Of course, each woman's level of comfort or need to disclose issues of an emotional nature was entirely personal. Some women surprised themselves in the degree to which they divulged, and others were self-aware of their reticence. As one instructor speculated, some women did give each other plenty to consider about their struggles:

(Caroline) There were a lot of feelings that came up at the end of the course that were profound. Women were crying and sharing things that were their deepest things they've carried--I mean, who knows if they've ever told *anybody* that stuff?

In 1989, I heard psychologist and anthropologist Jennifer James give a keynote address at the American Camping Association's Annual Conference in Seattle. I thought she was a

very gifted speaker; her presentation full of funny stories and common-sense thoughts. One of her 'one-liners' - "Very few things are truly important" has stayed with me over the years. It was very much on my mind as I listened to, and reflected on, the stories of other women whose struggles and circumstances were far more challenging than any of my own. Other women felt similarly:

(Claudia) It was very sobering to me to listen to other women's stories. . . . I was reminded that a lot of things don't matter, most things don't. We forget that that person at the bus stop is another person going through another struggle and it--and that was really good to see and remember, and say, 'I know that,' 'I have learned that before,' but it's been a while since I've felt others' pain at such a gut-level.

. . . . I realised how each of us has our own story and have a lot of complicated things that come along and each of us has her own strengths that are not readily noticeable other than to that person. I felt that one of the most valuable things was watching people break through those things. Again I think about Gillian's piece at the end [described on p. 241], and I cringe a little because that was just a little too vulnerable for me . . . but she was able to do it, to be really in it and go - Holy Shit! I just figured out what happened. . . . It was very powerful to me, seeing the older women saying, 'no, I'm going to do this.' And doing things that were very scary for them because they weren't very physical. But also watching people come out of that and go, 'wow, we can do

something.' I think that I have done more work in that direction than a lot of the people, or some of the people, and a lot of spiritual work too. So, for me it was the inspiration of these women; in some ways I learned more about myself from their experiences than I did from my own.

The effect of feeling "others' pain at such a gut-level" was still present for Claudia six months later:

(Claudia) What's stayed with me is how very powerful it was, watching the women on course who had clearly never been in a situation like we shared. . . . Seeing some of those women really walk through fear taught me, or reminded me at least, that everybody has different fears and strengths that are apparent or not apparent, and to remember that. To seek out those two sides . . . because some things are not always apparent . . . the strengths or the fears. And watching people walk through their fears, when even they weren't aware of their fear. And also watching women who were not yet ready to address their fears.

. . . . The experience in many ways reminded me of the movie *Strangers on a Bus*, where we got to know all kinds of things about them . . . and all kinds of things like you'd never have imagined. There are other sides to people than you would have expected, and maybe had we come together in different circumstances, I would have a very different

impression of them. There were many women that I wouldn't have had that much in common with.

Likewise, Helen, whom other women referred to as "soooo together," "centred," having "her shit in a pile," perhaps because, as she told me in interview, she didn't feel the need to share issues with the group that she held closest to her vest, was similarly reflective in thinking about her own self and circumstances, relative to other women:

(Helen) . . . and in some sort of a crude way there's also that kind of amazement and wake-up call you have when you realise that--particularly if you're going through the process that I've been going through the last year and a half--and therapy has helped--how self-absorbed you become in your own difficulty. And that it's--in an unfortunate way--it's a little heartening to know that people, every type of person in every walk of life, even those who appear to have a wonderful marriage and a lovely family, and secure means of income, have things that scare the bloody life out of them. And so in a way it is heartening to realise that this is the human condition, that everyone struggles with these things. They struggle with them in different fashions.

Such struggles that make up the "human condition" were seen by Sarah to be more prevalent in other women's lives than her own in her past or present: "I've never had to deal with anything.

I've never been abused, I've never been molested. . . .I feel like I've lived this protected, privileged life." Something that struck Heather about her interactions with women was not that she had led a protected, privileged life, but that she was not alone in feeling vulnerable in struggles that make up the "human condition":

(Heather) [I came to appreciate] how very very vulnerable people are; and how precious people are. And that I am not alone [--tears--] that my struggles may be number 10, but boy, there are people who have struggles that are number 15. That we are all in this together. . . . That life is hard, but life is good. You need people, that I can't be as much of a loner. . . . I learned that you can depend on people, that people are there for you, that they are not selfish that they are good listeners, that they are compassionate and that people really do care.

Heather's recognition that she was "not alone," in her "struggles that I can't be as much of a loner. . . . that you can depend on people" could be interpreted as an identification of her self as isolated. When Heather's comments are juxtaposed with those of Jane's, the above described mother of two young children "headed toward" divorce and about to be made redundant, we see that there is no such thing as generic experience, and that each woman's understanding of her self and her experience at CWC must be thought about relative to her entry point and location. However, these very differences also provide opportunities for learning about

the self by comparing one's self with others. The standard OEE lens has tended to place participants within an experience. It has not much focused on what participants may learn about their selves in relation with other participants in OEE programmes. The lens of the relational self as used here, allows us to see these opportunities.

4.2.2 - Affirmation of the Self From Other Women

In the preceding section, the discussion centred upon the potential benefits of women comparing their selves to other women. In this section, the focus shifts to opportunities for affirmation of the self through interaction with other women on course. One of the CWC courses included a formal opportunity for women to exchange such "self-affirmations." At the campsite, around cleared dinner tables on the second night, there was opportunity to offer affirmations to other women, both of strengths others saw in them, and of contributions they had been seen to make. After listening to their affirmations, women were asked to say in brief terms what they had heard other women say about them. Talk ensued after every woman had been offered affirmations about how much easier it was to give affirmations, than receive them. Janet summed up her feelings about this: "I way preferred telling you how great I think you all are . . . hearing comments about myself made me kind of embarrassed." Several women spoke with higher volume and looked directly at the woman they were offering their affirmation to, than they did when giving their own summary of other's

affirmations of herself. Examples of women's summarising comments include: "I've never had a moment like this when the focus of positive attention has been on me. . . .That I am creative"; "That I have endurance"; "I have courage"; "I am strong"; "I can take risks and I can learn from them"; "Other people see my self-confidence"; "That I am approachable, that I love to share." While many women spoke immediately after the activity of their appreciation of the opportunity to give and receive affirmations, there were two women in particular for whom this struck a personal chord, choosing to bring-up in interview how important receiving the affirmations was for them.

The view in the contemporary feminist theory literature that each woman's experience must be understood relative to her location, finds confirmation in the backgrounds of the two above mentioned women and their perception of why being affirmed by the group was so striking to them. In the self-affirmations, women recognised / appreciated the following things about Gillian:

Always smiling disposition - contagious laughter - courage up there on the Tower on your second turn - willingness to try - crossing the swinging rope, Jane! - excitement for where I am in my life, because of you, it makes me look at it a lot differently - striving to take the facets of your life and make them whole - telling me 50 times that you had me tight - loved your story about growing up with boys - appreciate your energy level - our bond when blindfolded.

Gillian described her CWC experience as important because it made her realise "a lot of things I had been avoiding." Specifically, that the emotional feedback she got from the group was so "much more engaging than anything I've experienced since I was a camp counsellor." As a research associate at a 'brand-name' University, Gillian felt that her colleagues were not interested in her as a person, rather "they're out to look out for themselves. We are set up to try and out-do each other. There is such a hierarchy and such value placed on quantifiable outcomes rather than process. . . .I trust very few of the people I work with." In acknowledging how much she had enjoyed the social exchanges and support of the other CWC women, Gillian was confronted with the fact that her social life had been curtailed recently due to her husband's demanding job and the dissonance she felt through her own work:

(Gillian) I noticed this weekend that I was smiling. The fact that everybody told me that I smile a lot. I thought: 'have I been smiling?' I've been thinking about this a lot. . . . I realised that I am a really happy person because of the affirmations, I think I forgot that. That I am courageous, as I would define it. It was nice to have everybody else define it for me. I had reaffirmed that I am a social being and that working at this computer thing probably isn't the job for me. . . . I realised that my life work has to involve people.

I felt like I needed a tape recorder during the affirmations because I didn't want to lose what any one was saying and it was hard to listen. I was going to ask you for

them, but thought it would be too corny. I was having such an emotional response and it was almost hard to hear what everybody said.

After listening to the following affirmations offered to her, Liz also had an emotional response:

That you came here for yourself - the political activity that you were a part of - your integrity and all your political stories - you have a real glow about you - your honesty - your vitality, you're so strong - your determination to do the Tower - that you are a mother - how obviously knowledgeable you are - your sparkle, your willingness, that you are really alive - holding the rope for me today - your stories have added depth - your determination in going over Patriarchy - willingness to let go of the things that you are driving at, and aren't working.

Liz summed up her response "It is hard for me to make such a statement," [looking at her feet, eyes welling-up with tears, she sputtered-out] "That I am strong and courageous." And, in listening to Liz's statement, so did 12 other pairs of eyes well-up with tears. I learned a lot more specific information about Liz in interview than she shared with the group on course. There was a certain stoicism about her that I and other women respected. Although she never spoke explicitly on course about being in an unhappy marriage, many women surmised that was so. Nor did Liz mention to the

group that this was the “first time I’ve really felt a part of a group.” Liz did talk about being alienated by her colleagues and peers when she was a head nurse at a large Boston Hospital. The minute detail with which she was able to recall who did/said what, 20 years later, still confounds me. Below, Liz talks about why being recognised by the other women was so beneficial for her:

I think that whole affirmation process was real important for me. I think that it was Roberta who looked at me and said ‘you’re a role model.’ That blew me away. I didn’t feel that at all. Claudia came to me and said to me after we had our circle down in the meadow, ‘well, what you had to say was so powerful, Liz.’ I didn’t see why. I didn’t see why, I didn’t say anything that unusual. Claudia said, ‘didn’t you hear the silence?, didn’t you hear?’ And I said, ‘yeah’; but I don’t understand. . . . Maybe it [what I said] touched a chord in other women. . . . Sarah and I were walking back after Claudia and I talked, and Sarah said, ‘Liz, I have such respect for you. That you have taken risks, you’ve had adventures, and that you’ve made mistakes, but that you forgive yourself for those mistakes.’

In interview, Sarah mentioned noticing “the fact that Liz was so in love with her kids.” Sarah (referred to by Liz, below, as one of the “three Oregon women”), also suggested to Liz’s two children, in meeting them when the ferry docked in Boston, that they should be proud of their mother. Sarah’s praise of Liz to her children raises

the possibility that such a moment might have enabled Liz to begin to see herself not only through the affirmations of other CWC women, but also through the admiration of her children (specifically her daughter):

(Liz) One of the things that came serendipitously, the three Oregon women said to my children 'you should be so proud of your mother!' Well, Angela looked at me in a whole different light . . . my sisters could have said that to her, but these three young beautiful women said it to her, and she thought 'oooooh, my mother is cool!' And Angela said to me when we got home that she would like to do an Outward Bound course when she was old enough.

Morwenna Griffiths' (1995, p. 85) insight quoted at the outset of this chapter seems fitting here: "The most important of the social circumstances defining selves are found in our relationships with other people. . . . the most significant of these relationships are ones of love, resistance, acceptance and rejection." The preceding examples of Gillian and Liz showed how feelings of isolation in women's lives can be understood as lacking opportunities for affirming interaction with other women. Conversely the power of the affirmations exchanged at CWC can be better understood in light of an understanding of the self as relational.

4.2.3 - Encountering the Self in a New Relation to Other:

Feeling Part of a Group

Some women were more affected than others by the powerful connection that can be created when women come together as strangers and talk about and share relatively intimate details of their lives, support ensues, laughter and tears too. Again, the degree to which women were affected by, or chose to comment on, this connection must be understood relative to their previous experience; in the case of the topic under discussion, their previous experience of feeling connected with and supported by other women. As the following comments will show, some women were, to quote Penny, "blown-away" by the "wicked connection" they felt they made with other women. Other women, like Helen, in observing Penny "digging this whole connecting with women thing" were reminded of their good fortune in having valued women friends in their lives outside of the programme "I live my life with other women, and I know that that's special, but you take that for granted sometimes." Women made multiple references in group debriefs about their feeling comfortable within the group, expressing: "it's so wonderful to be part of a group"; "I'm privileged to feel a part of this group"; "I'm proud to be a woman, and proud to be accepted by such a strong group of women"; "I can't believe this group has been together for only a day, I've never felt more a part of a group in my life."

According to Sue, Ros had been a “mover and shaker” in her own realm as a younger woman. Yet Ros’ own sense of herself as feeling “invisible” in her home life, living in a small community as “one of many older women” illustrates powerfully the impact of encountering herself in a new relation to other women on course. Far from invisible, Ros was one of the central focuses of women’s experiences on her course. Sue referred to other women’s perception of Ros at CWC as an “icon,” certainly Ros’ qualities charmed many women, myself included. Ros’ sense of herself as “invisible” and other’s view of her as “charming,” “an icon,” “a role model” deeply affected Ros. At the end of the course, she thanked us for “so readily accepting [her] as an older woman,” and in interview afterwards, she spoke of herself as being “struck by the camaraderie. . . .the genuine affection. . . .the caring support I felt from each woman in the group.” Four months after the course, “the excitement of touching bases with younger women” remained with Ros: “I will always remember that feeling of being accepted by you younger women - women that were not of my generation.” When Ros’ experience of herself as an “older woman” [about to turn 70] is contextualised with her “feeling accepted” by women of a younger generation [our ages ranged from 28-33], her experience within the group can be seen in a new light. That Ros felt “really fortunate about the wonderful relationship I have with my children”; that she “think[s] of them as friends, as much as children”; and that she “see[s] and am in touch with mostly women of my generation” suggests that Ros was moved by her experience of herself in

relation to others at CWC because she saw us as "younger." Far from being "invisible" as an "older woman," she was held in great esteem by us "younger women."

The importance of Liz's experience of herself in a new relation to other was very different from Ros', as was her frame of reference and previous experience of acceptance and rejection in a group context. In fact, Liz's sense of herself as having important woman friends, of feeling part of a group was rather spotted. As she told of her experiences as a young girl:

(Liz) My Mom tells stories of me sitting on the edge of the sand-box, observing all that was going on in the box, but not joining in; refusing and not being part of the group. And that is the way I was. . . . In elementary school I made a bad friend [who] did some bad things to me that I can still remember to this day.

Liz's experience of herself as "not being part of the group" stayed with her until she went to College, and returned soon after she graduated. In describing her sense of feeling part of the group at CWC to her best friend, Sandra, Liz explained:

(Liz) I told Sandra about something I realised on the weekend; that I normally do one of two things - I either set myself apart from the group and let the group do their thing, or I step into the centre of the group and I lead the group.

(Louise) How did you see yourself relative to the group this past weekend?

(Liz) This weekend I became *part* of that group. I didn't even know I was doing it. I just did it. All those intangibles, the sense of strength, the sense of support that I could ask someone for help and accept it, that someone could give me affirmation and I could accept it. I hadn't had that since BC [large city College]. But at BC that process happened over many months and years. It was a slow building of trust.

Liz's experience of having felt a part of the group at CWC was something that was still very present for her six months later, and, as can be seen from her following comments, encountering herself in a new relation to the group provided some rather significant insight into her previous experience of herself:

(Liz) That weekend was one of the few instances where I felt I became part of the group, not in a superficial way, but I really did become part of the group.

That experience helped me in part understand why my experience at [the Hospital] was so destructive. . . . The only other time I felt truly part of a group was in nursing school at BC, when I felt a part of that group of women. At [the Hospital], the nurses sabotaged me . . . set out to destroy me. . . . and what was so destructive for me in that, was that the profession as a group, not the individual women I had been so close to at BC, and got so much confidence from, but the group destroyed me. So that has taken some time to see it in those terms.

It wasn't until I had the CWC group experience that I drew the correlation of feeling a part of the group that could be a strength. The other thing that the weekend did for me . . . We laughed a lot, Louise! Laughter is very healing. That was very good for me, to laugh with other women, because so often I have felt laughed *at* by other women . . .

Another woman who became aware of herself in a new relationship with the group was Penny. That she encountered herself in a new relation to others was significant for her, although the reasons that this was so were very different from either Ros or Liz. I recall thinking "hmmm, who's this?" when Penny extinguished her cigarette, walked down the plank onto the ferry, chilled cappuccino in hand, navel exposed. Making an immediate assessment based on outward appearance, I noticed Penny as "different." This feeling was mutual, as Penny later told me in interview, having wondered as she was getting onto the ferry "what the fuck will I have in common with these dyke-bitches?" It turned out that Penny was 'different' than the other women attending CWC programmes in 1995 beyond her appearance. She was the only woman who came from a working class background, one of three women who had not finished or were pursuing a degree. A recovering alcoholic, Penny had recently been in a coma after being (a passenger) in car accident; she had recently re-learned to walk and talk, and, according to Penny, had become "more spontaneous, less inhibited - I often blab-out stuff before my brain thinks about

it." Penny did not disclose these experiences to the group, though, according to Penny, she did tell Hannah who drove her home after the course that she "had had problems with alcohol." Other women noticed Penny as different; several included her as a comparison in their terms of reference, noting that they thought of her as "different, but a lovely, lovely woman"; "I thought that Penny provided an interesting perspective . . . she had a heart of gold . . . I loved her ability to laugh at herself." In interview with Penny after the course, I mentioned to her:

(Louise) All of the women that I've spoken with or have seen, have asked after you.

(Penny) You know how that makes me feel? So good that I am liked. That other women like and love me and care about me and respect me for who I am. They think I'm funny. I thought I'm funny, but now I know I'm funny I realised this weekend that having the proper females around you is important. To support you emotionally and give you the nurturing that you don't always get. . . . To my mother looks are important. . . . So, yeah, I felt accepted. I felt very well liked. That's not something that I have always gotten from other women. Women in society are very envious and intimidated by a strong, out-spoken, slim figured, pretty--but after this weekend, I'm like, who gives a shit?! You know what I mean? It's inside [points to her heart] that counts.

I feel like I found a new level of peace within myself through other females. I feel as though I have made 12

wonderful female friends. . . .All those circles. The unity through all the other women. Being able to connect with each woman.

(Louise) Do you feel like you connected with each woman?

(Penny) Wicked. I felt a connection with everyone.

My casually mentioning to Penny that women had asked how she was doing was interpreted by her as feeling "accepted" and "well liked" by other women at CWC, a feeling that had often eluded her in interactions with women in other group situations. Penny's experience of herself at CWC in relation to other women who "like and love me and care about me and respect me for who I am" was unlike her experience of herself with other "women in society" whom Penny perceived to be "envious and intimidated" by her sense of herself as "strong, outspoken, slim figured, pretty." That Penny walked down the plank and onto the ferry at the outset of the course thinking "what the fuck will I have in common with these dyke-bitches?," and then experienced herself in relationship with us feeling supported emotionally, given the "nurturing that you don't always get," "respected for who I am" raises the question of who the women were that Penny ordinarily took her cues from about herself. I asked Penny whether she thought there were possibilities for her to make similar connections with women in her life at home:

(Louise) These women friends that you speak of having made a 'wicked' connection with at CWC, do you see possibilities for making friends like that in your life here.

(Penny) No. I don't. . . . How often do you come across chances like we did on the weekend to really connect with people in everyday life? You don't. People that sit down and--if I sat down in this coffee shop and said to you: 'I think you are really cool, I think I'd like to have a spiritual bond with you.' You would be like, 'what!, get away from me, you crazy lady!' You would think I am crazy. It's too bad you know.

The question that came to my mind in conversation with Penny, as it does now, is about whether creating such a sense of "wicked" connection with women is also about seeking out women who are not "envious and intimidated" by a "strong, outspoken, slim-figured woman." Perhaps Penny made that connection for herself by pointing to her heart "it's inside" that counts. This feeling of having made important connections with women was still present for Penny four months later:

(Louise) Do you think that anything you learned at CWC has shown up in your life since.

(Penny) I realised that weekend the importance of having a connection with women was to me. How much I valued and treasured that. Just having everyone laugh at the dozen eggs [a reference Penny made on course to the group as a dozen

eggs; making the analogy that if she were buying a dozen eggs, the presence of 12 eggs was necessary for the carton to be desirable]. It is now September and we're still smiling about it. That makes me feel good. Just to know that each and everyone was so different. Like I said, I didn't think I would have anything in common with yers.

Again, the importance that Penny placed on "having a connection with women," her sense of connecting with "everyone" must be understood relative to her previous experience of herself in the company of other women. As Helen and I stood talking together at the end of the 'zip-wire,' Penny had just zipped down and in-between her "yee-ha, that was fantastic!," she added a few more lofty statements: "you women changed my life," "I feel like a changed woman," "you women make me feel so great" to other comments she had made about "this programme has made me feel like a different person, it's changed my life." Helen commented to me: "Penny's digging this whole connecting with women thing. Forget the advertising materials, Outward Bound should just send her out on a road-tour with her 'one-liners.' "

Heather, whose personality was diametrically opposite to Penny's, and who was referred to in interview by other women as "private," "shy," "doesn't use more words than she needs," also found herself in a new relation to the group, for her own reasons. Just prior to the course, Heather had sold a business that she had owned for 15 years. As a way of comparing her sense of herself in

connection with other women at CWC, Heather described that she had always kept separate the personal and business parts of her life, and that she noticed from the deeper-level of communicating at CWC, that her business-style of "this is what I can do for you"; "this is what I expect you to do for me" had seeped into her personal life also.

(Louise) You've always separated personal and professional?

(Heather) Yes. And that might be one of the reasons why it is hard for me to change gears because I don't let my personal life and my feelings get in the way of business. And, yes, I have close friends, some are acquaintances, but very very few personal, I mean really really personal friends that you sit and you cry with. . . . but I guess that I realised that we don't communicate as much as I communicated this weekend, that my business-side finds its way into my relationships with people. So that aspect I loved.

(Louise) Based upon that experience of communicating at a deeper level, is there anything that you will take away from that aspect of the weekend?

(Heather) Oh absolutely! I'm going to try to work at being a lot closer with certain people, realising that I don't always have to be on the go, I don't always have to be reading the latest novel, I don't have to be going to a movie. Take some more time to just sit, to just talk with somebody. Not to have to have someone come for dinner and then go do an activity. Spend some more time talking and communicating with that

person. That we don't have to ride our bikes, we don't have to do. And that was a thing that impressed me the most was that it is all right to just go for a walk with someone, or just sit with someone. That you don't always have to be doing. I think that I have been so goal oriented, and that has come from business, that I have to make this, x amount of money, I have to do this, I have to do that. I have to make the phone calls. I realised that you don't have to do that.

I need to make more of an effort to connect. . . . And I think having people say how good - [tears] - I was at listening, how they admired my tenacity, I needed that! It has been a long time. . . . Knowing that just someone was appreciative of what I did. And it didn't have anything to do with money, with business. There was no other motive other than to someone being there to support me. And that made me feel good. . . . I felt a genuine caring. I guess I've felt it from friends, but not in the way that I felt it this weekend.

Emma, another woman who had recently sold her own business, and was pondering her career options at the time she attended the CWC programme, also found herself in a new relation to the group. Shortly before the course, Emma and her business partner had had a party for the people who had worked for them. Looking around the room at "a bunch of names and job-titles," Emma realised how little she knew about them, and how little they knew about her. The recognition that "I need more of a balance--

that I need to push the people side and the development of people” was fresh in Emma’s mind at the time she attended the CWC programme. At CWC, Emma did make gains in this regard:

(Emma) I felt that it's comfortable to talk to women. The whole way women can be, that's a whole positive side, that makes me want to connect with them. Reach out more than I have before. And that was sort of on an intense basis this weekend. . . . Here was an opportunity to reach out to a whole group. It just magnified the possibilities. . . . On the weekend, I recognised that I didn't have female friends.

. . . . I recognised that I could connect in a very short period of time. . . . Sam at one point turned to me and said ‘are you happily married?’ Which made me think, ‘woah, as a matter of fact.’ . . . That's what I need. And I need to hear other people's stories. And not read about them in a book, and not see them in a movie. But where you can really probe and say: ‘why did you do that?’, ‘and then what happened?’ And so I think it let me see that you can do that and that it was safe. . . . I think that the weekend helped me see that it was safe and good to connect with women. So that was very positive.

As the following quotes illustrate, women learned not only from their own sense of discovery from their participation in a group, but also from the impact of this experience on the women around them. This notion is reflected in the following comments of

two lesbians who make reference to the power they noticed some other women found in connecting with other women:

(Helen) I saw women whose experiences were very different than mine, and I learned a great deal. You and I were speaking earlier about how we both live our lives with other women, and I know that that's special, but you take that for granted sometimes. And I saw so visibly [the] power . . . [the] recognition of the loss that many of these women who'd gotten married and had children who really, in a sense, had not mourned it, but were very aware of what was missing in their lives. And not having those friendships, not having a girlfriend or a group of women, and the sort of critical mass they create emotionally. That, I think, was spoken very loudly to, in having 11 complete strangers who were together for such a short period of time, even within the first day who could josh with one another, would feel comfortable in dressing to some degree with one another, to cry and to talk about their fears, and intimate things that were not things that you would not normally feel comfortable in speaking about with complete strangers. So there was a power of the group. . . .

(Claudia) watching women's commonalities come out and watching women support each other that didn't know each other at all was very powerful. . . . Unfortunately in our world, that doesn't happen all the time. We don't have

community in that way. And many women don't even know the power that women create when they come together. . . . I forgot that not every women has had that experience. And so, I feel very privileged.

Finally, implicit in the discussions throughout this chapter has been the notion that 'self' and 'experience' need to be seen through a social and cultural framework. Neither 'self' nor 'experience' are isolated, individual (bodily/physical) matters; they are part of a social process and dialogue. It is precisely because this is so that a programme like CWC, or any other OEE programme which is group-based and explores shared experience, has the potential to contribute to this dialogue. The focus of all the analysis presented so far reflects this common-sense usage of the word 'social' meaning roughly, things that are shared, or experienced together. This assumption pervades the OEE literature.

But the feminist literature on the self and identity introduces a more challenging concept of the 'social' which I will attempt to explore in at least a preliminary way in Chapter 5. This complex notion draws inspiration from a more postmodern perspective, and asks us to look upon concepts like 'identity,' 'self,' and 'experience' not simply as 'shared' but as being shaped, even created, intersubjectively.

Looking through that lens, 'experience' in a group like CWC becomes less an occasion for 'discovering' a self than part of a process of 'creating' or 'fashioning' a self, beginning with one's own

self-understanding. All this involves taking an even larger step away from the standard OEE perspective with which I began this research. In the next two chapters, I will try to make visible some of the implications of taking this step for women's outdoor education, in theory and practice.

CHAPTER 5

BEYOND THE UNITARY SELF

. . . a self is made and makes itself in the changing circumstances in which she lives and in a direction strongly affected by her own understanding of herself. (Morwenna Griffiths, 1995, p. 82).

In Chapter 4, I reviewed some key ideas from Carol Gilligan's (1982) work on the relational self and the criticisms that have been made of that framework. I argued that the criticism raised important points, but did not negate the pertinence of Gilligan's central insights. I then explored elements of my own research data which illustrated how the idea of the 'relational' self can be seen to resonate with women's experience, and how the use of this framing in my interviews did begin to help me open a useful window on the importance of the CWC experience on women's self-understanding. In this chapter I will go on to show that other, more recent feminist theories of the self, informed by a more postmodernist stance, allow us to see a far richer and more complex picture, and shed new light on key concerns of the women and OEE literature and its core concepts.

Although definitions of self differ across disciplines, and within disciplines, Roberta Sands (1996) concluded that "they converge in their depiction of an internalized relationship between

an inner, reflective agent and external experiences" (p. 169). The self as Nancy Chodorow (1974) conceptualised it was thought to be relatively cohesive, integrated, gendered and historically continuous (Sands, 1996). Postmodern theories conceptualise the self quite differently, also historical, but "multiple, contradictory and in process" (Newton, 1988, p. 99). Accordingly, the existence of a coherent, singular self that is the outcome of early life experience is rejected.

5.1 - A Postmodern Notion of the Self

Recent feminist theorists argue that the self is more complex than is suggested by Gilligan's notion of 'relational.' For Alison Weir (1996, p. 185), the concept of self-identity is "the capacity to experience oneself as an active and relatively coherent participant in the social world." Weir borrowed from Simone de Beauvoir to express her view that the "ability of a person to relate to him or herself and to be able to relate to others in a meaningful way, to act and react self-consciously" (Simone de Beauvoir, 1972, p. 17) was essential to self-identity. For Weir, the capacity for "meaningful" interaction with self and others involved both reflexivity and intersubjectivity. Weir saw reflexivity to be necessary because the meanings of one's relationships come down to oneself. In everyday terms, Weir's belief about reflexivity is recognisable through individuals being faced with questions of "who I am" and "who I want to be" (p. 185). In response to this dilemma, Weir suggested

that "I am the one who must invest my existence with meaning for me." At the same time, Weir argued that intersubjectivity was equally important because "meaning can be generated" only through each individual's "participation in social meanings, which are intersubjectively constituted" (p. 185). Accordingly, "the very concept of a 'self,' of an 'I,' of a 'me,' is something which is constructed through intersubjective interactions, and such interactions always take place in contexts of shared meanings" (p. 185). Similarly, said Weir, one's "identity as a specific individual is constructed through one's participation in communities, institutions, and systems of meaning, which organize . . . and through which [one] interprets [one's] interactions with, the world, the self, and others" (p. 185).

The issues of self and identity have come under scrutiny within feminist thought in recent years. According to Marion Smiley (1993), the influence of postmodern feminism (e.g. Butler, 1990; Fraser, 1989; Nicholson, 1990; Scott, 1992) has revealed that, until its interventions, feminism had tended to operate within the humanist assumption of the existence of a "unified authentic subject" (Smiley, 1993), and an assumption that identities in general and gender identities in particular are essential and given. Postmodernist feminists propose that identities, including gender identities, are discursively constructed, and that they lack any essential nature; rather identities are unstable, fluid, often contradictory and always in "process" (Smiley, 1993).

The understanding of self and identity offered by postmodern feminism is that neither is fixed, stable, or bounded (Bordo, 1990; Butler, 1990; Dugger, 1995; Weir, 1996). Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson (1990) encouraged feminists to adopt a "postmodern-feminist theory" of identity, whereby general claims about "male" and "female" reality are "eschewed" and replaced by "complexly constructed conceptions . . . treating gender as *one* relevant strand among others, attending also to class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation" (p. 35). Such a proposal for a more adequate approach to identity, according Bordo (1990), begins in recognising that "gender forms only one axis of a complex, heterogeneous construction, constantly interpenetrating, in historically specific ways, with multiple axes of identity" (p. 139).

The contemporary view of identity, according to Morwenna Griffiths (1995, p. 82) is that a self is "made and makes itself in the changing circumstances in which she lives and in a direction strongly affected by her own understanding of herself." Within this contemporary view of the construction of a self lie several assumptions, identified by Griffiths to include: agency; control; the subjective experience of a fragmented, changing self or set of selves; and the significance of bodies and material conditions. These assumptions led Griffiths to believe that "an account of the construction of a self needs to show how social circumstances, material circumstances (including embodiment), change and growth all come together to make a self" (p. 82). Weir (1996) agreed with Griffiths, stating her conviction that individuals must be understood

as embedded, embodied, localised, constituted, fragmented and subject to systems of power oppression, and exploitation.

Furthermore, Weir believed that we need to clearly understand ourselves as actors capable of learning, capable of changing, capable of bettering the world and of improving ourselves.

Allison Weir (1996, p. 190) saw the “problem of the *identity of the self* [as] bound up with the problem of *identity of meaning*, and with the problem of *identification with, or relationship to, others*” [emphasis in original]. She suggested that “attempts by feminist theorists to formulate a positive conception of self-identity often flounder because one or the other of these elements have been left out” (p. 189). Weir supported her argument by pointing to relational theories such as those espoused by Nancy Chodorow which focused on the “relationship between self-identity and identification with others,” but failed to consider “the identity of meaning.” According to Weir, it is because Chodorow’s argument lacks any “mediation through identity of meaning in language” that such relational theories “see the identity of the self and identity with others as being locked in opposition, or merged into one” (p. 189). Poststructuralist theories of identity are also criticised by Weir because they tend to focus on the structurally similar position between the “identity of the self and the identity of meaning in language,” but fail to consider “any conception of mediation through social relations with others” (p. 189). These theories fall short, suggested Weir, because “they see the identity of the self and the identity of meaning in language as being locked together in a . . .

structure of totalizing repressive identity” (p. 189). Weir saw each of these as being incomplete because they are “unable to abstract, from concrete relationships or from the system of language, to a concept of the individual as a participant in the intersubjective constitution of meaning, and hence in the social contestation of meanings” (p. 189). Morwenna Griffiths (1995) shared Weir’s point of view regarding the limitation of language, acknowledging at the outset of her text a central assumption that, “language creates us but is also created by us” (p. 13). Griffiths denied “linguistic determinism” (p. 13); advocating instead that, “language is developed in a community of participants. Understanding is constrained by that community and by the language it has developed” (Griffiths, p. 14).

For Griffiths (1995), gender is significant in every society; it is only the way in which it is significant that varies. The ‘bottom line’ for Griffiths in the development of self is that gender, disability, race, sexual orientation all matter - the self is formed by an interaction of the material with the social. For Griffiths, the material circumstances of an individual’s body is a significant aspect of the self interacting with the social. Griffiths explained that we grow up in particular bodies and our selves and subjectivities develop accordingly. While I do not agree with Griffiths (p. 85) that “each human being is *born* with a unique set of psychological characteristics,” I do believe that “each human being” *develops*:
 a unique set of psychological characteristics, such as the tendency to introversion or extroversion or with a special

capacity for kindness, anger or patience. Anatomical factors include sexual differences (genital, but may also be psychological) and racial characteristics such as eye colour, hair colour, eye shape and colour of skin. They also include material abilities, disabilities, and individual attributes such as having perfect pitch, 20/20 vision, diabetes, particularly long legs (Griffiths, 1995, p. 85).

Seyla Benhabib (1992) saw change as important in the development of the self. Benhabib illustrated the difference of her belief from that of male philosophers, naming Hobbes as an example, who discussed men as if they were "mushrooms," springing from the ground entirely matured. Opposing this view, Benhabib stated her belief that "a self can only be understood as constituted intersubjectively, in interaction with others in a process of becoming" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 14). Griffiths, too, theorised the self as a work in progress:

It is essential to acknowledge that there exists no unity of the self, no unchanging core of a being. Such a belief is a fancy, and will mislead the self into seeking to establish it. Being true to oneself does not mean seeking after such a core. It means undertaking the difficult business of assessment and transformation within a changing context of self. Authenticity requires re-assessing the changing self, not preserving sameness (Griffiths, 1995, p. 185).

Morwenna Griffiths (1995, p. 188) likened the construction of the self to the construction of patchwork:

making a self is relatively easy, though it always takes time and attention. However, like patchwork, making a good one is very hard indeed. Understanding which pieces of old cloth will fit into the whole is a difficult and painstaking matter. Like patchwork, the construction of an authentic, autonomous self depends on the context of each fragment, and where it fits within the overall design. Like patchwork, it is hard to say how many makers there are and where all the pieces came from.

Griffiths did not, of course, refer to the experiences of women at Connecting with Courage. However, her image of the 'patchwork' hints at the potential of feminist theories of the self for a new understanding of why OEE programmes like CWC provide powerful experiences for women. To illustrate this potential of contemporary theories of the self, this chapter will now explore two of the theories' themes: the self constructed through time and the self as fragmented. To fully appreciate the contemporary conception of the self as constructed through time, it is necessary to first problematise the very concept of time. In particular, it is important to understand the difference between this inherently fluid conception of time, and 'time' as employed in simple reflection back to the self in the past. To this end, I will proceed first to present data collected at CWC through the lens of women's reflections upon their selves at

different, fixed points in time, drawing again on the assumptions of Carol Gilligan's (1982) and Annie Rogers' (1993) approaches. Then I will present CWC data through the optic of a different theory that assumes the self to be in continuous flux, evolving and changing through time. Finally, from this latter conception of the self in process, flows an acknowledgment of the self as multiple and contradictory. Thus the second theme of contemporary feminist theory of the self explored in this chapter is that the self is not merely in process, but even at a given point in time, there is no unitary self.

5.2 - Encountering / Recovering the Past Self

The girls' CWC programme upon which the adult women's programme was modelled was devised by feminists and seasoned experiential educators (and, in 1992, employees of Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Centre), Joann Stemmerman and Helen Fouhey. In the adult women's course, the programmatic focus on 'pre-adolescence' was evident in the 'portrait' exercise and also in the mini-'solo.' In the portrait activity, which took place after rock climbing on the middle day of the course, women were asked to find a quiet spot alone in a designated area of the Island. We were given a selection of crayons and coloured pencils, and were invited to draw on blank sheets of white paper three pictures "to signify you" (Outward Bound, 1994). The first picture was to be a self-portrait of something in our surroundings to represent ourselves at 10-14

years old; the second picture a self-portrait representative of the present; and the third, a self-portrait of "how you'd like to see yourself in the future" (Outward Bound, 1994). Women were told at the outset that they would gather immediately after the time alone, when there would be an opportunity to show their drawings to, and interpret them for, the group. About an hour was given for the drawing part of this activity, and depending on the depth to which women shared and the number of women in the group, between 45 and 90 minutes were taken to share.

The CWC training materials (Outward Bound, 1994) stressed that instructors should pay attention to their choice of words when framing the 'portrait' and 'solo' activities which involved women in reflecting on their childhood's. The training materials suggested using something like the following explanation as a way of framing the focus of the solo:

This activity should be framed as open ended[ly] as possible. Many women had very unhappy, abusive childhoods. In many cases a loss of voice or going underground became a necessary coping mechanism. We are not meant or trained to deal with someone rediscovering abuse history because we made them do this activity. But by framing it openly, we give each student the choice of how deep to go. It should sound simply like this: 'If you choose, bring along the picture of yourself you brought from home. Write a story about the girl in the picture. Fact or fiction is fine.' [Further

instructions ensue about how to be vague about giving instructions, so as not to lead the women].

Some women did elect to share painful stories of their experiences of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, their parents going through bitter divorces when they were 10 to 14. For some women on course, hearing about other women's experiences presented a reference point. Sarah, for example, found herself feeling "lucky that no bad stuff happened to me," a point elaborated on in the 'Comparing the self with other women's struggles' subsection (Chapter 4, p. 196). Of the 34 women I attended CWC courses with, three women chose to "pass" on the opportunity to share what they had written or drawn in debriefs. Some women spoke in platitudes. It seemed as if many women were measured in what they made visible for the group on course. Several women defined their selves in broader terms during our interview than they had during the CWC weekend. I purposely use the word "seemed," as women's comfort with or their need to render visible information about themselves for other women varied greatly and was entirely individual. Several women prefaced the telling of their experience as they had reconstructed it through the picture they had drawn with "this was a difficult time for me" and proceeded to share information to varying degrees. One of the instructors, Caroline, raised in interview a question (previously referred to on p. 169) I had frequently thought about as I listened on course and in interview to women's stories:

. . . . Women were crying and sharing things that were their deepest things they've carried--I mean, who knows if they've ever told *anybody* that stuff. Like the stuff that Pam was saying about not feeling comfortable talking. I didn't feel like she could have tolerated a whole lot of feedback . . . but the fact that she was able to acknowledge that was a huge thing for her.

Some women's discomfort with talking about themselves and their experiences in the group was visible through body language: a leg shaking up and down, gripped hands, shifting their weight as they sat on the ground. Discomfort was also noticeable in strained voices, choking up with tears.

Featured below, is Gail, a 40 year old woman from rural New England. Up until the portrait exercise (about 30 hours into the CWC course), Gail had constructed herself for the group as a private person, a woman who was careful with her words or emotions. However, both during the portrait activity, and the solo debrief the following day, Gail showed to the group a level of emotional vulnerability that she had not displayed to us previously. Following, in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 are Gail's representations of herself and the descriptions of the drawings of herself between the ages of 10 and 14, herself in the present, and what she wished for herself in the future:

(Gail - 10 to 14 years old) I grew up in a small town . . . in a family stigmatised by alcohol. My father was a raging alcoholic - a raging maniac. I always had hope that life was somewhat different. I ran away to New York City and Boston. Any place where I felt I could be anonymous. Not because of who *I* was, but who my father was.

I felt pretty twisted like the thing represented in this drawing. Although I felt twisted, I also had direction, there is a definite flow in this twisted picture. I was growing in a lot of different directions - looking for a way out of my father. Desperate to find out who I was - there is a hand in this twisted picture, that is my hand reaching out. One part looks like a shoe, reaching outward. This drawing that I started out thinking was pretty twisted, now, I think, is moving.



Figure 2. Gail's portrait of herself at 10-14 years old.

(Gail - present) This tree grew from that twisted piece . . . put down some roots, which began by getting some formal education [Gail finished her BA degree in the spring prior to attending CWC in the fall]. I'm impulsive a lot of the time. I don't have fear to challenge myself. I'm afraid of people. I can feel your pain, Meg, [another woman on course] more than I can feel my own. The problems I have are partly genetic. A lot of good growth has come to me as a result of my education. I drew a tree that was not completely grown, not fully developed. A branch that is still developing - this limb is broken, the tree no longer has leaves on that part. I've got roots, growth, a twist, I've still got foliage. I'm at a point where things are not as important--that are dead and dying, and that is okay. I really like who I am right now . . . the twist gives me a lot of comparison and understanding, becomes my strength.



Figure 3. Gail's portrait of herself in the present.

(Gail - future) . . . I have trouble speaking up, trouble in expressing my anger. Only my husband knows my true self. I have faith that I am becoming a solid person. I would like to become as solid as a mountain. Like the elements - ocean, sky, shells; there's movement in the flow of water. A consciousness there. Like the connection between being solid and being conscious. I feel like I am "getting grounded"; "freedom"; "creativity"; "creative and courageous." I feel "*creageous.*"



Figure 4. Gail's portrait of herself in the future.

The instructors of Gail's course suggested we sculpt ourselves into a pose that represented the self we would like to be in the future. Below is Gail's "mountain of strength" pose.

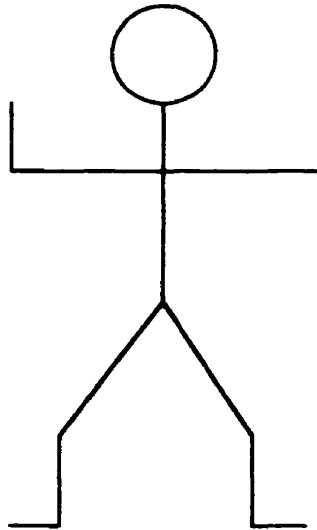


Figure 5. - Gail's "mountain of strength" pose

The solo was the last component of the course before the final farewell-celebratory circle. The solo at CWC was allocated approximately two hours, with an additional 30-90 minutes to debrief and show pictures depending on how much of their experiences women shared with each other. Women had been asked to bring with them to the course a photograph of themselves between the ages of 10-14. During the solo we were asked to spread out along the eastern shoreline of Thompson Island, and were invited to reflect on the photograph of ourselves by writing a

letter to the girl in the picture, or to write a letter to ourself from the girl in the picture. Featured here, again, is Gail:

(Gail) I wrote something here, but it's not what I want to say. I went to a 12 step programme two years ago. I was not addicted to drugs or alcohol, but with food. I used food as a control to achieve excellence. Most of the time, I feel as if I've been running away. Peter, my brother, is a golden guy, Mr. [New England]. Every woman he wants, he gets, he has a Corvette, lots of \$\$--I wanted his success.

This weekend has meant a lot to me. Most of my life I have tried to measure my success by his success. I lost my own identity in that, and I am angry at myself for that. I wish I could say I was angry at him, and blame him. I think my family loved me as much as they could. As much as they could with self-respect issues such as they were. I am determined that even though my family has many self-destructive behaviours, not to continue to do that in my life.

I used to use food to stuff my feelings at 14. Now I know what it is like to be a strong woman. I don't know what it is like to be a powerful woman because I don't have any role models. I've always felt like the 'under-dog.' This weekend I feel like I'm not. I've achieved some pretty big goals. This weekend I know what strong women look like. I feel like I am becoming one.

Gail's story, sketched above, is interesting in and of itself. I hope that my memory of her determination, tenacity and the story of her journey to becoming a strong woman will remain with me long after the completion of this project. I'm sure that, like Joan suggested, Gail's "mountain of strength" pose, will. CWC instructors spoke in interview about their belief that the power of the CWC programme was, in part about "women coming to grips with some pretty heavy stuff in their past" (Beth); "some women make some fairly significant connections about pieces of their past" (Judy). I agree with these perceptions. I was moved to tears, brought to goose bumps about women's stories, past, present and their hopes for the future.

The CWC programme understands the potential of, and in its staff training manual (Outward Bound, 1994) justifies adopting the solo and portrait activities in light of the key findings of the AAUW Report (1991), the research of Brown & Gilligan (1992; 1993), and Annie Rogers (1993). The AAUW report found, among other things, that as girls reach adolescence, they experience a significantly greater drop in self-esteem than boys experience (AAUW, 1991). Brown and Gilligan (1992, 1993) found that in order to avoid appearing smart to boys, girls forget what they knew, prefacing their answers "I don't know," something Brown & Gilligan (1992) refer to as "loss of voice," that girls go "underground"; at the cusp of adolescence, girls become captive to what Brown & Gilligan call the "tyranny" of the "perfect girl," the girl who is always "kind" and "nice."

Annie Rogers (1993) articulated a concept of self, "inseparable from" the 13th century definition of courage "To speak one's mind by telling all one's heart" (p. 266). Borrowing poet, Pamela Hadas', description of the self as "any true I in a story" (1987, p. 190), Rogers (1993) suggested that the "true I" "is the self who describes her experience courageously, rendering a story in detailed transparency, voicing a full range of feelings" (Rogers, p. 273). Both the self-portrait activity in drawing the 10-14 year old self and the letter writing between the girl in the photograph and the adult woman during the solo are practical applications of Annie Rogers' (1993) recognition that women need to reclaim their courage by uncovering memories of themselves "in late childhood in relationships with older women and with girls" (p. 290). Rogers' recognition is supported by the women who spoke with Emily Hancock (1989) about their experiences as adults, and in the process "stumbled upon" the girl they thought they had left behind: "Women in my study came fully into their own and became truly themselves only when they recaptured the girl they'd been in the first place - before she got all cluttered up" (p. 3).

Reclaiming such memories of the self in late childhood is vital if we consider Annie Rogers' (1993) assertion that the loss of the capacity to "speak one's mind by telling all one's heart" is one that many girls encounter at the cusp of adolescence. Such a loss, Rogers goes on to state, is one that "leaves in its wake unspeakable longing and rage, as well as a struggle for courage in relationships" (p. 275). The extension of this struggle says Rogers, is that speaking as a

"true I" becomes "transgressive and dangerous" and gets buried in the "feminine underground," kept under wraps in an "androcentric culture" (p. 275).

The simple fact that an OEE programme for girls and women utilises feminist-based research findings is significant. In 1998 this remains significant. However, when the portrait and solo activities are looked at through the lens of contemporary feminist theory, a more multi-dimensional picture comes into view about how we might extend our understanding of these activities' potential. What is important to note here, is the way in which the above cited research theorises the notion of time as both relevant and relative to the self. For Brown and Gilligan (1992, 1993) and the AAUW Report (1991), adolescence and pre-adolescence seem to be a fixed moment in time; and the implication is that the confusions accompanying adolescence are encountered by girls in general. For Annie Rogers (1993), the self is recovered from "late childhood." Rogers also posits that there is indeed a "true I," a notion that will be put into question below, in the section on the 'self as fragmented.' First, however, in contrast to the just presented idea of a self as 'recoverable' from a specific time in life, I wish to outline the contemporary conception of the self as continually constructed through time.

5.2.1 - Self as Constructed Through Time

When we consider that the self is constructed through time (Benhabib, 1992; Griffiths, 1995; Grimshaw, 1993), it is not possible for a self to exist that is not a result of what has happened in the past (Griffiths, 1995). Morwenna Griffiths also suggested that our ability to understand the context in which we live is limited because we ourselves are fragmented. Because of this, says Griffiths, our actions, perceptions and attitudes often become habitual, and are rooted in forgotten situations. While these roots might be forgotten, we might still hold onto and actively live out these perceptions, actions and attitudes through our different sides. Getting back in touch with these rooted habits can, according to Griffiths, be a necessary part of transformation, but may also cause us to abandon some parts of ourselves we had not paid attention to (Griffiths, 1995). Both the portrait activity and the focus of the solo at CWC are opportunities to pay attention to past selves. I suggest that they are novel ways of “finding or creating me” by implementing Griffiths’ (1995): “Being alert to who you are requires discovering yourself in a number of ways as well as through simple introspection. It is an important part of finding or creating ‘me’” (p. 185).

There were multiple opportunities at CWC for women to encounter aspects of their self constructed through time. Through the narrative in this section questions of “who am I?”; “how did I come to be my self?”; “where did this self come from?”; “what

influence did gender, class, sexuality, race, etc. have?"; "what are all the different parts of my self?"; "who do I listen to for information about my self/selves?"; "what new experience do I want for my self, and how?"; "are there parts of my self that I want to get back?" will come to light. As will also be seen, when past experiences or selves are thought about in the present, the fresh look at the experience or the self sometimes allows us to see different things.

Many women remembered fondly their younger selves and, to quote Nicola, how "spunky and lively and full of action she was." In recalling such memories, it was not uncommon that, in the next breath, women, like Nicola here, would lament her loss: "I wish I had her same energy and spunkiness now." Some women specifically chose to speak about their younger self in interview. Ros referred to herself as trying to figure out a lot of things about herself in her new lease on life. Ros' experiences of reflecting (more than half a century later) on her 10-14 year old self were particularly resonant, as she told me in interview:

(Ros) I belonged for a time when I was a kid growing up to an organisation called 'The Children's Aid Society'. . . . And it cost you 25 cents to join and a nickel a month for dues. And they had things like tap dancing and crocheting, sewing and painting and crafts and cooking. . . . Any time you could sign up for a trip, and all you needed was a bag lunch and your carfare, I was there! Even though it was only a coca cola bottling plant! You know? So *that's* part of it. I'm sort of flaunting that; I think I talked about it a little bit on the

weekend, that I was trying to get back in touch with *that* person, who was ready to take her ticket and her bag lunch and go anywhere! Well, my mother said at the time that I was three, I would pack a valise and go off at the drop of a hat with somebody who wanted to take me some place. Adventuring in the world, you know? My world was small, but adventuring in the world. So maybe there was some of that left, and it was part of getting back in touch with that. That person.

(Louise) Do you find that you're able to do that; did that happen for you some on the weekend?

(Ros) I'm getting there. I've never been one to have pictures of myself around, which probably says something, and it's something I'm doing now. I have on my desk a picture I found because I was organising photographs that I had piled in the cellar. I found a picture of myself when I was about 20 years old . . . and I looked at it, and I thought, 'Gee, how does she fit?' So I bought a frame . . . and I look at the picture every once in a while. And that's when I found that the time on the beach, when we were supposed to write this little thing to our 'child,' I found that very moving.

(Louise) Did you write a letter from you now to the girl in the picture, or--?

(Ros) I did this dialogue between Ros then and Ros now . . . I was asking the Ros then, 'What happened to you?' And the Ros then saying, 'Well--teary as I did on the beach--I got lost

along the way.' I felt like I liked her a lot better than what had happened to her over the years.

Perhaps Ros was living out her aspiration, stated above, to get back in touch with the kid "who [60 years previously] was ready to take her ticket and bag lunch and go anywhere." When I saw her six months after the CWC experience, Ros had spent a month in Manhattan, retracing her parents' arrival at Ellis Island as immigrants from Italy into the United States, and also "bombing" around her old childhood neighbourhood in New York City. I last heard from Ros after she had spent two months in Europe, ending her European trip hiking in Scotland with her grandson. Ros' musings and actions could be interpreted as her constructing meanings, connections and identities for her self; they, like her acknowledgment of her decision to frame a picture of her 20 year old self, "probably say something."

At half Ros' age, and experiencing a "flat spot" in her 12 year old lesbian relationship, Helen's desire to reconnect with aspects of her younger self is not dissimilar to Ros'. In showing to the group a photograph of herself brimming with confidence, Helen spoke during the solo debrief of the regret she had in forgetting her 13 year old dreams. She expressed her desire to take back the stewardship of what she had processed during the weekend, instead of buying into others' images. In interview, Helen elaborated on these acknowledgments:

(Helen) I have suffered from incredible periods of over achievement in my life to periods where I have not had to put much out, and that disappoints me. I spoke about that on the weekend when we were asked to revisit who we were at 10, 11, 12, 13 or 14.

(Louise) Yeah, on the weekend you spoke about the kid who had 'the world by the tail'--

(Helen) Yeah. In a way, the letter that I wrote to myself at that age I wrote in vain of writing to myself at 13. . . . I felt apologetic because I felt that I let that young girl down in a way by acquiescing at various times in my life to other peoples' beliefs and concerns and definitions of myself and my world. There are different times when I have not questioned my path as much as I would like to. Sort of being carried along and not being as pro-active in making that happen. It has disappointed me.

[. . .]

(Louise) Does what you've just said [about maturing, shaping and a sense of change] relate back to that kid who you described as having 'the world by the tail?'

(Helen) Yeah. . . . I think in our youngness and in our naïveté, we have the ability to have expectations and hopes. I don't think that I've really given myself much room to have to do that that much as an adult, to have greater hopes and greater expectations. I think some of that's been squelched, because I think many of the things that we believe are

success and achievement as adults are about the salary we take home and the car we drive. I'm aware of wanting to reclaim that sense of expectation and hope, and not only reclaim the sense, but live it out in action.

Another woman who had a previous sense of herself as "having the world by the tail" was Liz. While not desiring to connect with her 10-14 year old self because "there wasn't a whole lot there," Liz was very certain of the self she was "desperately seeking" to re-claim. Describing herself as "afraid of my own shadow" between the ages 10-14; told by the career counsellor at school that she should "only apply to nursing programmes at small colleges, and that I would be wasting my money to apply to big Boston schools because I was not smart enough." As I heard Liz recount with such minute detail, events and people from her years as the self she was "desperately seeking" to re-claim, I was both astounded and saddened. Astounded by the amount of information, and left wondering whether Liz could have allowed herself to feel more sanguine about her years as a leader at a large Boston school she was told she shouldn't waste her money applying to, and her years as head of paediatric nursing in a large New England Hospital, if she didn't carry such a burden of sadness in the present. The mother of two children who "mean more to me than anything in the world," but in a "hopeless, loveless marriage," one that "if I had any financial certainty I'd be long gone from. And given my strong Catholic beliefs, Louise, that's a strong sentiment":

(Liz) I was interested in what happened to that 28 year old woman. Underneath seeming like I was 'queen of the castle,' I was fragmented. Things were in boxes. . . . So there is something about the 28 year old woman, that while she thought that she had the 'world by the tail,' there were all these boxes, parts of my life were in separate containers and there was some spill over, but they were separate
[. . .]

After spending time this weekend writing to the 12 year old girl, doing the drawing exercises and listening to the other women talk about themselves as girls. . . . I really felt that I took that 12 year old girl and this 28 year old woman, and I have hugged them and I said, 'it's not only okay, it's going to be wonderful!' That it's coming together, that that 28 year old woman was not whole, as wonderful as she was. And I was searching back for her. She existed, but she is not there any more. What's there is so much better. It is *so* much better.

Liz, above, can be seen to attribute the bringing together of her 12 year old and 28 year old self through two of CWC's programmed activities (solo and portrait). Liz's reflections on the outcome of these activities finds confirmation in Morwenna Griffiths' following suggestion: "Being alert to who you are requires discovering yourself in a number of ways as well as through simple

introspection. It is an important part of finding or creating 'me'" (1995, p. 185).

In the previous section, 'encountering / recovering the past self,' I illustrated the theory reflected in CWC's programmatic focus that elements of a cohesive self can be recovered through reflection on a particular point in one's life. In this section, 'self as constructed through time,' I have argued that the full potential of such reflection is rendered visible only when the self is seen to be as evolving and as constructed through time. Benhabib's (1992, p. 14) theory of the self "in a process of becoming," evolving through time, will be further illustrated through data collected at CWC in the section on 'rethinking experience' (Chapter 6, p. 233). In the remainder of this chapter, however, I will illustrate that the self is not merely evolving through time, but even at any given point in time, is multiple and contradictory (Newton, 1988). Indeed, the notions of the self as evolving through time and the self as fragmented are inextricably linked. Acknowledging that the self is 'in process,' means acknowledging that at no point in time there is one unitary true self.

5.2.2 - Self as Fragmented

Building on the argument I developed in the previous section, I work in this section with Judith Newton's (1988) notion of the self as "multiple, contradictory, and in process" (p. 99), and illustrate

how this theory of the self as fragmented opens up a new way of thinking about participants' experiences in OEE programmes.

A conception of the self as fragmented is, of course, problematic for the standard OEE literature. This literature has relied on Rogers, Fitts and Piers-Harris' theories and scales to discuss and measure self-concept. These theorists, said Epstein (1981), emphasise that one of the most basic needs of the individual is to maintain unity and coherence of the self. Self-concept is, therefore, rated as being highest when unity and coherence is achieved. Rogers and Fitts' notion of the self as fixed and unitary (and unproblematic) can be seen in the following suggestion by two authors in the standard OEE field:

a conscious and overt goal of the adventure is to expand the self, to learn and grow and progress toward the realisation of the human potential (Miles and Priest, 1990, p. 1)

Similar to the failure to problematise who the subject is in the following definition by the Association of Experiential Education, (AEE), Miles and Priest assume that the subject is an "autonomous being, in rational control of their choices and following developmental patterns of growth" (Bell, 1993b, p. 21). I have previously reported the 1995 AEE definition of experiential education as "a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences." In the footnote to this definition, "learner," is seen to be a category or role: "There is no single term that encompasses all the roles of the

professionals within experiential education. Therefore, the term "learner" is meant to include student, client, trainee, participant" (AEE, 1995, p. 1). The question of who the self is, is entirely absent from this definition, the self is unproblematic. The student, client, trainee, participant's age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, etc. are unquestioned. Therefore, student, client, trainee, participant are left unexplored as a universal category, as if all people defined by such are the same.

It follows then, that my discussion of the self as "multiple, contradictory, and in process" (Newton, 1988, p. 99) brings into focus a new optic through which to view women's experiences in an outdoor programme. It renders visible what is invisible in the standard OEE framework. Because the self is fragmented, argues Morwenna Griffiths (1995) "'the self' is actually more like 'the selves'. . . . If fragmented selves want to be true to themselves . . . they do not mean they want to be true to some particular one clearly understood and unified self" (p. 175). Griffiths suggests that the 'I' in ordinary English is hospitable to notions of fragmentation. She goes on to illustrate the notion of the 'I' being fragmented, pointing out that it is commonplace in "ordinary language" to talk of "sides" or "streaks" in a person; someone who has an unexpectedly sentimental side to her character, or, "is kindly, but she has a real streak of malice," or "I didn't know I would do that, but I did" (p. 181). The self for which Griffiths argues, then, is compatible with the self found in the statements of ordinary language: "characterised

by incoherence in its beliefs and actions, not easily understood by itself only partly avowed" (p. 181).

In the following exchange, I comment to Claudia that I had noticed her talk about herself (both during the CWC course, and during the interview) in several different ways. While I have taken note of the different ways in which I had heard her speak of herself, implicit in my questioning of Claudia during my fieldwork, "if you were to describe yourself to yourself, who is it that you see," is that I was expecting Claudia to provide me with a unitary definition of herself. Claudia side steps my question in order to describe the "two sides" she identifies in herself. In the analysis of my fieldwork, and with respect to the "different ways" I had heard Claudia talk about herself, Morwenna Griffiths (1995) helped me to understand that Claudia's experiences of her 'self' as a lesbian, an athletic child, a teacher, a musician, a "survivor," are all examples of the self as fragmented. Claudia does not have one unitary self, but, because the self is fragmented, Griffiths tells us that "the self" is actually more like 'the selves':

(Louise) I've heard you speak of yourself in many different ways - as a kid who could serve a volleyball over the net from the base-line at six, as a 'survivor,' as a teacher, as a musician, as a lesbian. If you were to describe yourself to yourself, who is it you see?

(Claudia) I think that my image of myself often gets in my way. I think that image carries with it from long ago, being the kid on the outside, being the scape-goat, the kid that got

in trouble. . . . On the one hand, I think that I am a very giving and alive person. I am very perceptive of people. I am fun loving. I try to draw people out. I am very interested in many things. Yet, I am also a person on the other hand that I see myself often as being awkward, stiff, inhibited. I think about the fact that you are going to be listening to this tape later and my main thought is about my voice on tape. I think that I am often self-conscious in the way I talk. . . . I see myself as sometimes loud, and not boorish exactly, but I can take up a big space, I can be a big presence in a good and bad way. As I have gotten older, I am looking to change that a little bit, or at least look at it a little more seriously and call myself on it when I find myself right in it. So, I guess there are those two sides, kind of.

(Louise) Did you find yourself noticing the "two sides" this weekend?

(Claudia) I feel like yes, in a way. I felt that even during it when we would be at dinner, or when we were just hanging out--I felt that I talked too much. Sometimes I felt that my need to tell stories--I wondered what my reason for that was. Was that a smoke-screen? Because I have done some interesting things--there are some interesting stories that I could tell. And on one hand, they were stories that were relevant and good for people to hear. On the other hand, I don't know whether it was to impress people.

(Louise) What do you think now on reflection?

(Claudia) I fear the latter.

Not only is the self fragmented, it is also made up of a number of "different, sometimes incompatible selves, all of which, taken together, make up the self as a whole" (Griffiths, 1995, p. 181). At the time of my fieldwork, my understanding of the self as relational had been informed by the work of Carol Gilligan (1982) and Mary Belenky et al. (1986) whose work inspired the line of inquiry I was using in the following interview questions about describing "yourself to yourself." In the questions that follow in this section, I notice my use of 'real' self, and hope that my naive usage might have been sophisticated enough to mean fragmented, not unitary, contradictory. But I am not certain. As Adrienne Rich (1986, p. 223) mused: "it can be difficult to be generous to earlier selves." My exploration of feminist insights has certainly changed the way in which I look at this project, and has also given me much to think about at a personal level.

As will be seen below, Barbara had an understanding of her self as multiple, fragmented, changing in explaining her desire to be "who I am and every one I am." At the outset of the CWC course, Barbara spoke of wanting to "reclaim my 10-14 year old. I'm sad. I worry about being sad. I want to bring her back in." Barbara's understanding of her self/selves had been informed, in part, by "more years of therapy than I want to remember." Barbara's sense of herself as "fun," "likeable," "that people wanted to be with me" were feelings that she wanted more of:

(Louise) In this 'search for authenticity' that you refer to, how much of the 'real' Barbara did we see this weekend?

(Barbara) You saw a lot of parts of me that I haven't shared as freely with that many people. It felt good to do that. It feels like 'Hey! I want more.' I want to do it now. That I can wear my [professional] hat one day and a baseball cap the next day. That growing up there were places where parts hurt so bad they had to be set aside for time to come. And the time has come. I want to be re-integrated. I want to be who I am and every one I am. I think you saw a lot of joyful parts, and for me, enduring bliss is not easy. You saw who I was, and who I am capable of being. But you didn't see me when I get flustered and anxious.

In the snippet of conversation above, it can be seen that I followed Barbara's reference to her "search for authenticity" by asking her how much of the "real" her was present on the weekend. Again, my 'in the field' researcher self, was looking for Barbara's unitary "real" self. Barbara's desire "to be who I am and every one I am" is a 'far cry' from a notion of the self as unitary. Barbara's "search for authenticity," to live out her fragmented selves is a dynamic process. Like the self, Griffiths tells us, authenticity is under constant construction and deconstruction: "authenticity has to be achieved and re-achieved. Each action changes the context and requires understanding if authenticity is to be retained" (p. 179).

Barbara's search for "authenticity" differs from Sue's, who refers below to the self as performance. In describing how little she thought about the programme prior to experiencing it, Sue spoke of being able to wear not a professional hat or a baseball cap, but a little fancy hat, but only for a week:

(Sue) I am game! . . . and it was only three days, and I know from experience I can do anything for . . . one week. You know? Whether it's to get dressed up in high heels and little fancy hats and go to Ladies' Teas in New Orleans. And I can be just as great at it as anybody. It's like a performance.

In the following conversation, Helen can be seen to be questioning the performance aspects of her own self, "trying . . . not to be defined by other people"; "desperately want[ing] to be genuine." In her everyday language, Helen renders visible this conflict:

(Louise) Several of the women that I've spoken with from our course have unsolicitedly mentioned that they saw you as a strong, confident woman; they sensed in you a certain inner-strength. What do you think of their perceptions?

(Helen) First off, I'm flattered. . . . There are certainly things that I don't feel confident about, that I don't readily share; they didn't see all the other things that scare me--the part that's not confident, the part that's not always 'up'. . . .

Something I am trying to attain is not to be defined by other people, and I think I'm extremely susceptible to that,

whether that's through compliments or the way in which people see me, and also in turn the way in which I really view myself. It's not that I'm not flattered when people find a certain attractiveness to me, but I think that inside there's something that still questions whether all that is genuine. And I desperately want to be genuine, but above all else, I want to be motivated internally and not have external influences determine me to too much of an extent.

When the self is understood as fragmented, Helen, Barbara and Sue are seen to be speaking about various selves, which act and appear in different circumstances of their lives. Helen can be seen to be thinking about her multiple, contradictory selves in questioning a potential discrepancy between the selves that others compliment her about, and other aspects of her self that are not so confident. Morwenna Griffiths (1995) might consider Helen's self-reflection as courageous in that it requires "courage to instigate self reflection which calls oneself into question. Openness to ourselves is not always a comfortable process, any more than is the process of openness to others" (p. 187).

Ros can be seen as no longer willing to be defined by the same oppressive material structures as she was when "living in the confines of a marriage," "having been raised within a certain generational way of thinking, where your needs are always subjugated to the needs and desires of the larger group." Referring to her weekend experience as representing a "combination of

turning points" she had made in her life, Ros alluded to "finding a self that is acceptable to itself" (Griffiths, 1995) in speaking of her unwillingness to repress parts of her self for the sake of others:

(Ros) I've reached a point in my life now, if someone's going to get in the way of me being who I am, or of not accepting who I am, if who I am bothers somebody; I'm not going to let it bother *me*. I don't have time to waste on that kind of stuff. I don't even try to do the 'nice little thing' that I grew up with--the 'good girl thing.' You know: 'She's not bad! She means well.' I say, 'screw it!' 'Means well' isn't good enough! No way! Either we can meet spontaneously, accepting each other, and go on from there and have some fun together--otherwise, don't bother.

In explaining to me why she had hung her purple CWC certificate in her kitchen, Ros explained how the CWC course had been a self-validating experience for her. My curiosity about why Ros had hung her certificate was prefaced by asking her how she had got her certificate home in such pristine condition:

(Ros) It was a little wrinkled--I ironed it!

(Louise)Why though, out of all the things you've done in your life, does *that* certificate hang in the kitchen, ironed and framed?

(Ros) That's an interesting question. . . . I never framed my diploma which I had gotten arduously with three kids and a big house to run. I don't know. This represents a kind of--I

think it really represents not so much a turning-point, because I think I've been doing that for the past couple of years, but maybe it's a combination of the turning-points? Like, I've said something to myself that the direction in which I was moving is, for me, the right one. This sort of showed me that what I was aiming for was to get back to that child in me, develop me--you know--that eagerness to try new things. . . . It was kind of like Robert Graves' "Good-bye to all that."

The preceding quotes illustrate the potential of a programme like CWC, in personal and in theoretical terms in bringing the sensitivities of contemporary feminist theories of the self to the CWC experience. In this chapter we have seen CWC participants' selves as constructed through time, fragmented and multiple. The data offered repeated confirmation of Morwenna Griffiths' claim that ". . . a self is made and makes itself in the changing circumstances in which she lives and in a direction strongly affected by her own understanding of herself" (1995, p. 82).

CHAPTER 6

OEE: CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES REVISITED

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 my focus was on exploring several strands of feminist theory as resources for understanding women's experience in the outdoors. In this final chapter, I want to return to key concepts in the standard OEE literature and to standard OEE programming practice to make concrete suggestions based upon insights derived from that exploration. First, I will re-visit the very concept of experience. Then, I will re-visit the concepts of metaphor, transference of learning and change. Finally, I will suggest that the use of contemporary feminist theory should not be limited to such 're-visiting.' I will show how I think a feminist theorisation of the self, and a feminist re-thinking of OEE core concepts, call for, by extension, an introduction of political and social context into OEE programming practice.

6.1 - Rethinking Experience

Implicit in the literature review and data presentation in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 has been a challenge to the concept of experience on which the standard OEE framework is premised. In this section, I want to make the implicit more explicit by drawing together contemporary feminist insights into the concept of experience and elements of my data which serve to illustrate these

insights. As will be apparent, much of the theorising in regard to “experience” runs parallel, indeed is inextricably linked to the previously discussed criticisms of essentialist and universalist concepts such as ‘woman’ or the ‘self.’ Thus, experience is seen as coming into being in part through interpretation, and because lived experiences are always contextual, specific and conditional, interpretations are not fixed and can change. Morwenna Griffiths (1995, p. 14) described why this is so:

I start from *this* situation and *this* situated self. I can recount my experience as it feels to me now, with my present level of understanding. It is quite possible that as I continue to think and theorise and observe, that I will understand more and my situated-self understanding will change accordingly [emphasis in original].

There is no generic experience. Two or more people who share the same moment in time will be unlikely to interpret their experience identically. Elspeth Probyn (1993) flagged the limitations of the previous feminist use of experience as unproblematic, referring to the way in which it was thought about as a “transparent rallying call” to all women regardless of our very long histories of difference. Martha Bell (1993b) highlighted a similar problematic in the OEE literature “discussions within this journal [of experiential education] commonly take for granted . . . that experience has some fixed, inherent meaning” (p. 20).

Bell took issue with Michael Gass', at that time recent, statement that "one of the best functions of experience is that it validates all of the processes that theories support" (Gass, 1992b, p. 7). Bell pointed out that Gass' assessment made real experience abstract because he reduced actual experience to a notion of experience, devoid of context. Within such a reduction argued Bell, "experience becomes *it*" (p. 20), an object, expected to do a similar thing to participants every time. When experience is theorised as absolute, it bears little resemblance to the experiences taking place in individual settings, providing instead a uni-dimensional and partial explanation of what is happening (Bell, 1993b). This same criticism applies to what I have seen within the practicum part of teacher education in two B.Ed. programmes in Canada where "experience" (student teaching practicums) is not linked to theoretical activity like course work, readings, classroom discussions. Like Magda Lewis (personal communication, November, 1996), I believe there to be an overwhelming ideology in many teacher education programmes that experience in and of itself is the best teacher.

One of the central functions of experience, pointed out Bell (1993b), is that it is diverse and cannot be fixed or determined. Bell alerted us to the fact that something requires a critical examination when the accepted definitions do not match the lived experiences of others. By highlighting the unnamed premises of OEE, it is possible to understand what is taken for granted. Alison Dewar (1993) made a similar observation about the sports literature: "If we examine

whose work we are reading, whose experiences we use to inform our thinking, and whose voices and experiences are missing, we may develop an understanding of the limits and possibilities that exist in our work" (p. 212).

Apart from the issue of generalisation of experience, the location of experience within experiential theory also requires critical examination. As hooks (1994) recognised, narratives of experience are usually told retrospectively. Warren and Rheingold (1993, 1996) observed that the value of experience is located in the present in experiential theory. Experiential educators actually create experiences for participants as the centre of learning. Using Dale Spender's (1981) argument of personal experience as 'knowledge made,' Warren and Rheingold (1993, 1996) caution that if only created experiences - based on task or activity - are used in OEE programmes, participants' learning will be limited to the fabrication of experience in the present. However, as my data has shown, it is possible for OEE activities to become a method of using new experiences to challenge our understanding of the old. As previously illustrated, and as I will elaborate below, it is through group process, and reflection on past personal experience resulting from participating in novel activities within a supportive and safe environment that OEE programmes provide a different version of what consciousness-raising (CR) groups were doing. As the data has suggested, and I will demonstrate through specific examples below, OEE programmes can provide women with a new context in which to take a fresh look at, and come away seeing differently, their past

experience. "Descriptions of experience are always revisable" as Morwenna Griffiths told us (1995, p. 14). Through the new experience of writing her autobiography, Maya Angelou (1984) saw how her understanding of a particularly traumatic experience had changed. Griffiths pointed to the change in understanding that Angelou achieved, and thus the nature of the experience as she told of it in her autobiography. Angelou told of being raped as a child, and how she reacted to that experience by becoming mute for seven years. As an adult with more maturity, Angelou reacted to that childhood experience through words, telling of her experience of keeping silent (Griffiths, 1995). Griffiths reminded readers that Angelou was not reporting a story told by someone else; as an adult, Angelou told of her own experience, as the silenced child was unable to do.

Feminist educators encourage students to examine their own life experiences and to treat these experiences as valid forms and sources of knowledge (Dewar, 1991; hooks, 1994; Lewis, 1990; Lewis & Simon, 1986; Warren & Rheingold, 1993, 1996). This attention to personal experience is a cornerstone of feminist pedagogy (Manicom, 1992). In discussing the similarities between feminist pedagogy and experiential education, Warren and Rheingold (1993, p. 29, 1996) identified the need to import this 'cornerstone' into experiential education: "To validate the experience of women and girls, it is crucial to include real issues in their lives" (Warren & Rheingold, 1993, p. 29). The preceding data illustrated that this was done well at CWC, for example, through the

programmatic focus of the portrait and solo activities on the 10-14 year old self, as discussed above, and elaborated below.

In working through contemporary feminist theory, I came to understand that feminist pedagogy is more than a process or a handy set of instructional techniques. It is, as Briskin (1990) pointed out, a standpoint. Standpoint theory puts the experiences and perspectives of oppressed groups and individuals at the centre of the analysis. It assumes that the understandings we develop derive from our location and situation in the world (Lather, 1991). Contemporary feminist thinkers see knowledge as valid when it takes into account the knower's specific position in any given context, a position which is defined by gender, race, class, sexuality and other socially significant dimensions (Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 1994). One such dimension, captured in my data, is age.

bell hooks (1994) described how thankful she was in discovering the phrase 'the authority of experience' in feminist writing. It legitimated what she believed was valuable in what she brought to, but was often absent in, feminist classrooms. hooks (p. 90) went on to discuss a transition in her understanding of the phrase, and of being:

. . . troubled by the term . . . acutely aware of the way it is used to silence and exclude. Yet I want to have a phrase that affirms the specialness of those ways of knowing rooted in experience. I know that experience can be a way to know and inform how we know what we know. . . . Though opposed to an essentialist practice

that constructs identity in a monolithic, exclusionary way, I do not want to relinquish the power of experience as a standpoint on which to base analysis or formulate theory.

hooks (1994) identified the "complexity of experience" (p. 91) as a "privileged location" from which one can know. According to hooks, we need to know from "multiple locations, to address diverse standpoints, to gather knowledge fully and inclusively" (p. 91). Elspeth Probyn (1993, p. 82) noted that the "particularities of where we speak are as important to the signification as to the content of what we are saying." Probyn (1993) pointed to the juncture at which current thinking about experience finds itself:

We don't know what to do with our selves because current cultural and feminist theories either reify the experiential for its own sake, or reject its potential out of hand. . . . we find ourselves at a conjecture where theoretically there is little to rest our enunciations upon (p. 82).

Probyn identified a deeper issue arising in thinking about what experience can be made to mean and how it may be put to work. After all, "it is rather difficult to speak one's self in a theoretical context that tends to exclude the positivity of experience" (Probyn, 1993, p. 82).

Joan Scott (1992) stated her belief in the importance of recognising women's experience, but noted that when experience is

recognised independent from context or theory, it was insufficient as a theoretical or epistemological base. "What could be truer, after all, than a subject's own account of what he or she has lived through?" (Scott, 1992, p. 24). Working with Scott's observations, Judith Davidson (1994, p. 13) pointed out that experience "naturalises and decontextualizes the identity of the speaker without questioning what historical and discursive conditions create that experience and that subjectivity." In this way, Elspeth Probyn (1993) pointed out, experience becomes evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world. Thus experience, too, can be understood ideologically. Probyn reinforced the idea that experience is an ideological production:

Experience describes the everyday, or the 'way of life'. it is also the key to analysing the relations that construct that reality. . . . If we are to begin to take the problematic of the self seriously, we need to look for, or remember an epistemological basis that could support theoretical uses of the experiential (Probyn, 1993, p. 18).

Experience does not speak for itself. It needs to be given meaning using theory and conceptual frameworks (Magda Lewis, personal communication, November, 1996). CWC could have gone further in this respect, an aspect that I will discuss in the final section of this chapter. However, missed opportunities

notwithstanding, some aspects of CWC lend themselves to fleshing out the preceding discussion by linking the feminist theorisation of experience to data collected on course. In particular, the aforementioned programme focus on the 10-14 year old girl serves to illustrate the powerful potential of a feminist approach to experience in OEE activities.

After dinner on one of the CWC courses, we spent time looking at pictures of each other between the ages 10-14. The instructors shuffled up the photographs we had brought of ourselves to the course, and passed them around the circle. At the time of the activity, I thought it was all good fun; there was a lot of giggling, questions and statements such as "oh my god, who's that?" or "that's definitely Roberta!," "oh yeah, so it is!" This activity, however, was highly significant for one woman, prompting her to think about her younger self because the group were unable to recognise her as a 14 year old, photographed 16 years previously. In the debrief following the solo Gillian shared the connection (reconstructed here from notes I took on course) she had made of an event that happened a decade and a half ago:

(Gillian) I found it difficult to look at the picture of me at 14 - it seems as if we are separate beings, then and now [Gillian gets emotional] - I started to write to see how she and I became *w e*. When did this change happen? - I hung out with boys, no differences, even when my breasts got bigger. A new boy moved into our neighbourhood and he saw me as a girl, not one of the group. The boys went camping one night,

and I was not invited. I identified what I went through then by doing this exercise. I remember standing on my toilet seat at home and peering into the backyard where my friends were camping. The next morning I asked them what they had been doing, and one of the boys showed his penis to me. Is that when I lost my voice? Maybe it explains some of my own insecurity around my skills. Last night I thought back to the affirmations, and remembered that you liked my smile. I remembered that the girl in the picture is smiling. I've got to remember that too.

Gilligan and Brown (1992, 1993) and Annie Rogers (1993) would have something to say about the question Jennifer raised: "is that when I lost my voice?" in recalling these experiences and sharing them with the group at CWC 16 years later. When we look at Gillian's experience and her recollection of that experience several years later through a contemporary feminist-inspired view with the help of Elspeth Probyn (1993), we are able to see that the boys were doing their boy thing when we understand that experience is an ideological production, worked up by the cultural and social frameworks within which we live. According to the contemporary feminist view of experience, the key is not about what we do with experience, but how we think about experience. According to Probyn (1993) and Scott (1992), experience is not just something that we construct, or something that comes with a past, but a fabrication with all kinds of assumptions attached.

The connection that Gillian made with her past experience illustrates that OEE may be a method of using new experiences (the created activities at CWC) to challenge our understanding of the old. As Gillian's experience at CWC attests, when we look at experience in a new context, it is possible to come away seeing it differently. It is the creation of a dynamic of one's past experience and one's present use of that experience in a new context:

(Louise) Anything else that seems significant about your weekend?

(Gillian) I really wouldn't have learned when I stopped playing with the boys if we had not done that free-write [on the solo]. I don't know why I got so upset [when I told the group about this in the debrief] because I was upset when I was on the beach, and I thought 'okay, no problem. I'll be able to talk about it.' It was such a realisation for me and I thought it might have been trite for everybody else. It was the picture, thinking back to that picture. I thought it was very interesting that nobody could pick me out. I was like wow - that is probably why I started going down this path of connecting with this kid in the picture. Nobody else could see me in that picture. I felt like it was a mirror. . . . So when people didn't recognise me in the picture, I found that very interesting - that there is no connection between what that little girl was like and me. So when did I not become that little girl?

(Louise) When do you think?

(Gillian) I'm not sure . . . but I found myself thinking 'where is she, she was great! I miss her!'

It was Gillian's experience of herself as a 30 year old woman in a social relationship with other women, and of us not recognising her at CWC as the same "kid in the picture," as she said above, that precipitated this questioning: "who was I?"; "where did I go?"; "I want her back"; the realisation that brought about this questioning was referred to by Gillian as being "the most significant thing that has happened to me in a very long while." The connection that Gillian made as to why she "stopped playing with the boys" had an impact on other women, such as Claudia who mentioned witnessing Gillian's realisation as "smacking her between the eyes [it was as if Gillian went] Jesus, I just figured out what happened! It was pretty awesome to watch her put two and two together and make that realisation. If that wasn't a textbook example, then I'm not sure what is." During the interview, I surmised Claudia meant "textbook" relative to Annie Rogers' (1993) notion of recovering the self from 'late childhood' (see Chapter 5, p. 213). However, the question was never asked, and was also absent from discussion in the solo debrief at CWC. Here is a tidy example of "missed opportunity" by the CWC programme to provide women with a cultural mirror to raise issues emerging from such observations in their social context. For example, Gillian's experience might have been a jumping-off point for a discussion of the impact of gender roles and gender identity on women in adolescence and beyond. My failure to question Claudia's

reference to “textbook example” is another example of “missed opportunity.” I didn’t know how to provide the cultural mirror to which I refer now, then. This will be further discussed in this chapter’s final section.

Gillian’s experience of us not recognising her from the picture of herself at age 14 “is probably why I started going down this path of connecting with this kid in the picture” which led to her realisation of when and why she “stopped playing with the boys.” In challenging the way in which the OEE field conceptualises its central tenet, experience, as having a “fixed, inherent meaning”; “abstracts real experiences into a concept of experience,” Martha Bell (1993b, p. 20) offered her above cited view that when experience is conceptualised without a context it becomes “it” and “treated like an object, expected to do the same thing to us every time.” When experience is thought about this way, it is possible to see, as Bell pointed out, that experiences can create dissonance and provide participants “with the location for critical examination” (p. 22).

Martha Bell’s (1993b) challenge to the standard OEE conceptualisation of experience can be seen through the realisation that Claudia referred to as “smacking [Gillian] between the eyes.” When other women in her present social context failed to recognise her as a teenager, Gillian questioned her own her sense of self “I felt like it was a mirror. . . .that there is no connection between what that little girl was like and me.” Although the CWC’s focus on 10-14 year old self was built into the programme, the outcome for Gillian

of the picture sharing that I personally thought was "good fun" was not fixed nor determined by the CWC programme.

Not all women's re-acquaintances with a former self "smacked them between the eyes." For some women, memories of their late-childhood were brought back through climbing trees, rock climbing, swinging on ropes, being physically active; things they had not done for a long time. In terms of the self, such memories could be seen as women encountering themselves in a different relation to their sense of self as adult women as "object[s] of social construction" (Rogers, 1993, p. 266). When Kristin and Emma were unsure where to move to next when rock climbing, or found themselves feeling afraid to make the next move, they found themselves thinking back to when they used to climb boulders as girls. Why girls stop climbing boulders at the cusp of adolescence is the subject of much recent discussion and theorising (e.g. Brown & Gilligan, 1992, 1993; Orenstein, 1994; Pipher, 1994; Rogers, 1993). Climbing the tree at CWC took Sue back four decades, as she revisited a feat she still (tongue in cheek?) considered one of her "triumphs in life!"

(Sue) There have been spots in my life when I have shown more guts than ability. . . . I'm not physically adept, and I've never trained my muscles or known what I was capable of physically. . . . Just climbing the tree [for the zip-wire] brought back memories of climbing trees in the neighbourhood, and always getting chased out of the trees. And I was never as good as the boys, and I was the only girl

in the neighbourhood--I was a little fat girl who wore skirts all the time. And yet I loved being up in those trees, and hiding from Mrs. Bell, you know. Now I think about it, I'm not sure if it was the trees or the excitement of out-smarting Mrs. Bell. One day we were up in Mrs. Bell's tree, and hearing her front door--she always chased us out--hearing her front door open and her come out on her porch, and the screen door close, we froze. And she came, and she brought her trash can out, and she put it *right* under the tree. And went back in. . . . She didn't even know we were there! She didn't know we were there! And I have always thought of that as one of my triumphs in life, I have to admit! So it was really neat for me to remember while I was climbing that tree yesterday, the cotoneaster tree in Mrs. Bell's yard. Gee, that 40 years ago! Tee-hee-hee!

For other women, like Carol, climbing the tree brought up specific memories of a scared self, a fear she hadn't faced 20 years ago during open-heart surgery:

(Carol) The zip-wire was, unequivocally, the highlight emotionally. I had never had an experience like that before. The heart surgery was one of those experiences in my life where I didn't recognise or acknowledge anything. I was, 'oh yeah, doesn't everybody have this surgery when they are 19 years old?' . . . those last three staples up on that tree. I remember being rolled in [to the operating room] and

remember breathing [demonstrates] those kind of 'here I go breaths,' and it was the fear. It was the fear that triggered it because I thought the tree was going out a little, and I was thinking, 'shit, I could fall!' That is, 'I'm really afraid.' And Beth [instructor] said, 'you've got three more to go,' and I'm thinking 'shit!' And the level of fear I had about falling at the top of the tree--that was at that exact same level, I think, of what I was going through 20 years ago.

(Louise) The tears now--make me wonder whether you're still processing what all of this means to you?

(Carol) I am. I definitely am. I think it was another one of my walls, or a piece that made me numb is gone. . . . I think I never--I didn't know how afraid I was of not coming out of the surgery. I never talked to anyone about it. . . . I didn't face the fear at the time. And what this weekend, plus some of the work that I have been trying to do, is, you know, to bring me back to moments where I had these traumas that--sort of re-live it again, to experience it and move on. I guess I can't move on until I move back.

Carol's realisation: 'I guess I can't move on until I move back' when viewed through the standard-OEE lens could be seen as an example of Gass' (1993) "metaphoric transference" (explained in Chapter 2, and explored through the data in sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 of this chapter). I suggest in the 'metaphor' section below (p. 254) that the main point of the zip-wire activity is stepping off the

platform. Certainly the metaphor offered at CWC was constructed around just that. However, if we only think about the zip-wire in such absolute terms, the purpose of which is to zip down the wire, Carol's experience does not fit. She did indeed zip down the wire, but we need to pay attention to where she found her particular resonance in the activity: "those last three staples up on that tree. I remember being rolled in and remember breathing those kind of 'here I go breaths.'"

By contrast, when we view Carol's same statement: "I guess I can't move on until I move back" through a feminist-inspired lens of the self being constructed through time, Carol can be seen as claiming an understanding of the self as fearful in a way she similarly felt 20 years previously, but never acknowledged. Through this lens, then, the focus of Carol's fear in the present as she climbed up the staples, thinking "shit!, I could fall" can be understood in the fear she "didn't face at the time" of her surgery, for, as Morwenna Griffiths (1995) tells us: "there is no such 'here and now' for a self that is not a result of what has happened in the past - and what is expected in the future" (p. 176).

Through Morwenna Griffiths theory, we see Carol constructing her self through time, and also encountering in the present a piece of herself which is still with her from her past, of which she was unaware:

. . . . a piece that made me numb is gone. . . . I didn't know how afraid I was of not coming out of the surgery. . . . I didn't face the fear at the time

We learn through Carol's description of herself at age 14, a little more about why she might have felt that her experience on the zip-wire was "unequivocally the highlight emotionally," and why she might have been unaware of her feelings related to her fear of "not coming out of the surgery" until this episode at CWC. Below is Carol's verbal description of, and the portrait of, herself at age 14:

I have little recall of the events that make me who I am. As a kid I worried a lot about what everybody else thought. Making sure everything was all right. I started to become very closed. It was very easy to perpetuate being closed because it feels normal - by closed I mean not recognising human feelings. I made out like everything was 'peachy.' This picture is of a salt marsh with no connection to the sea. No tidal flushing for rejuvenation.

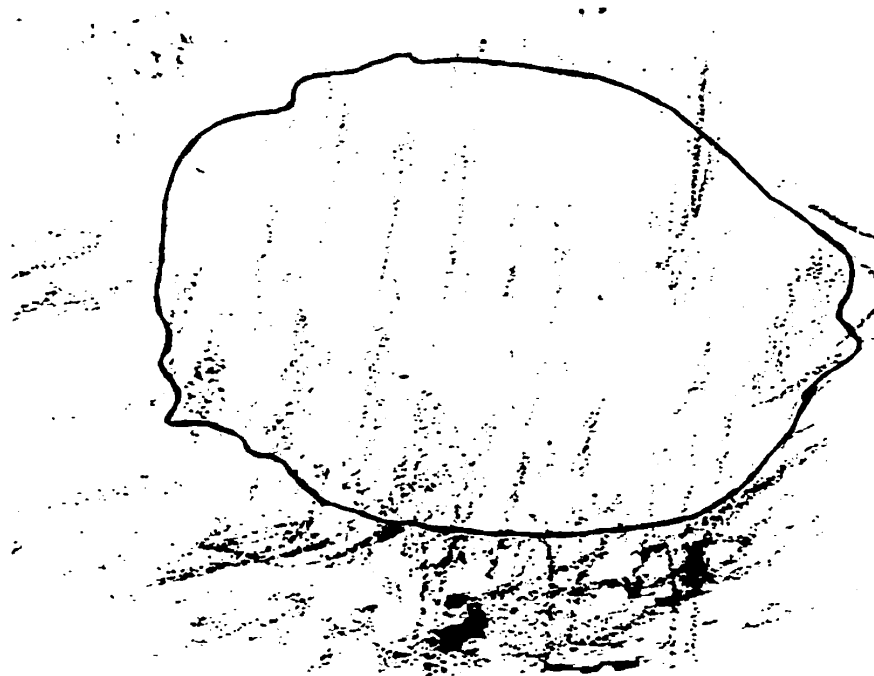


Figure 6. - Carol's portrait of herself at 14 years old

And in showing the photograph of herself at age 14 during the debrief of the solo (the activity immediately after the zip-wire), Carol told us:

I am one of identical twins. I don't think a picture exists of just of me. We shared a lot because that's the way it was. Maybe being a twin was more difficult to focus on me. I had trouble with feeling closeness - couldn't talk to parents about my fears - I was told that I took things too seriously - I was afraid of school, failing math, having no friends. After a while I felt numb.

One year later than the picture I showed you, I was walking down a well-lit street and I was assaulted. When I was with the police I was afraid, like it was my fault. Afraid to tell my parents. Always trying to fix things, to make them right, to take care of everyone else.

Carol recalled 25 years later the memory of her 14 year old self as: "worried," "closed," "not recognising human feelings," "an identical twin," "difficult to focus on me," "couldn't talk," "afraid," "took things too seriously," "felt numb," "I was assaulted (at 15 years old)." Carol's realisation at 39 years old of: "I guess I can't move on until I move back" is relevant to Morwenna Griffiths (1995, p. 184) thoughts about our changing selves:

. . . we have a limited ability to understand the context in which we live. . . . Many of our actions, attitudes and perceptions have become habitual, or have their roots in

forgotten situations but which yet express important sides of ourselves.

Climbing the tree at CWC, and recalling memories of her 10-14 year old self/selves through the 'portrait' and mini-'solo' activities created a sense of dissonance for Carol who described the "emotional response" she had when she finished the zip-wire as "totally overwhelming - you saw me, I was a jelly-fish." As Carol alluded above, the CWC experience complemented other self "work" she had been doing. Her experiences at CWC provided some insight with which to make her subjective experience of herself intelligible (Griffiths, 1995).

This section has shown that there is no generic experience. Nor does experience speak for itself. Women did come to significant self understanding at CWC. However, they did so through often entirely independent experiences, finding significance in different aspects of the CWC programme activities. The experiences of the women as presented above illustrate that OEE programmes cannot plan for meaning because experience does not simply occur on course and cannot be programmed. Rather, women bring their socially, discursively, culturally constructed selves to the programme, turning it into their own experience and deriving their own outcomes. Of course, OEE programming is essential in creating and shaping the opportunities in which women can experience their selves.

6.2 - Metaphor, Transference of Learning and Change

(Louise) You speak of this all-women's experience as being 'powerful' for women. What is it about it being all-women?

(Judy) Well, when you think about it, we didn't see a man all weekend! I think that is a very powerful metaphor for women. . . . I think that women get to break-through the 'chains and shackles' that kept them in a very limited, confined identity, and when you see that you are capable of anything, then there is no holding back. The power to create change in your life. If you can jump off this and belay on that and hang over here, climb a tree - somethings in life look very manageable. So, by having this visceral, bodily experience, the power in it is able to be transferred to breakthrough the things that seem hard elsewhere. . . . Like if Gillian can walk and stand out there on the tippy log [on the alpine tower], look down, be scared shitless, she is going to be able to decide many more things. There will be somewhere when she will remember that moment, and say, 'I can do that. I can focus and do that.' *That* is a powerful thing.

This section focuses on three concepts related to the just explained notion of experience, and central to the OEE framework. Metaphor, as previously discussed in more detail (Chapter 2, p. 65), plays a dual role. It is used to frame or structure activities. It is also an important device by which learnings from the structured

activity are transferred back into participants' lives. This transference of learning (Chapter 2, p. 63) is a related concept, and is explored in this section. In turn, according to the adventure therapy literature, transference of learning is a key element in bringing about (functional) change in participants. As I will illustrate below, my research found all three concepts and the claims underlying them to be highly relevant to the CWC course and to the women's experiences during and after the course. That said, the interviews I conducted with CWC women also revealed gaps in the conceptualisation and use of metaphor, transference of learning and change respectively.

6.2.1 - Metaphor

Within the adventure therapy literature, there is agreement that metaphors are an effective method for transferring participant learning into functional change in situations outside the setting where the learning originated (Bacon, 1987; Gass, 1993; Gass, 1995). This face-value view of metaphor, together with a sketch of its use and history within the Outward Bound organisation was given in Chapter 2 (p 48). In reviewing the usage of metaphor by women authors in the *Wilderness therapy for women* text, Helen Lenskyj (1995) noted their tendency "to share [a] largely uncritical enthusiasm for metaphors" (p. 14). Lenskyj pointed to the simplification and universalisation in the way metaphor was thought about: "The metaphor approach, simply put, holds that how

you climb rocks, symbolizes how you live your life, face challenges and master new and stressful experiences" (p. 14).

Heidi Mack (1996) noted that when women worked with their own experiences rather than an imposed interpretation directed by the programme or facilitator, the interpretation belonged with the woman, not the programme, resulting in a more "profound, individualised interpretation" (p. 26). Intuitively, it makes sense that it would be counterproductive to provide the interpretation participants are supposed to make during the activity for them at the outset. Nonetheless, as Mack noted, within the OEE literature, there is a bias toward the use of "imposed" metaphor, metaphor that is created by the instructor/therapist. Mack is right in pointing out that imposed metaphors will result in failure for some participants. In using the notion of "derived" metaphor, Mack (1995) was the first to offer a feminist analysis of why women should be given the chance to create their own meanings. Nadler and Luckner (1992) had previously pointed to the need for metaphors to be created and directed by the participants. Mack (1996), in turn, noted that:

Meaningful metaphors begin with value placed on the expertise and capacity of women. . . . Telling women exactly what each component of the activity metaphorically represents creates a learning space crowded with expectations of how this activity should be interpreted. For women living in a world of externally imposed expectations,

this activity may be inappropriate, replicating expectations that exist in their experience in a patriarchal society (p. 27).

While not acknowledging the explicitly feminist nature of Mack's concern, Michael Gass (1997) recently conceded that "Mack is correct in her assumptions when such a[n] [imposed] framework makes little sense to a particular client's reality; that is, when it has little connection to a particular client's issues" (p. 66). I take this starting place as a given.

Gass' (1993) concept of metaphoric transference was previously introduced in Chapter 2. According to Gass, "metaphoric transference occurs when parallel processes in one learning situation become analogous to learning in another different, yet similar situation" (p. 245). A standard OEE ropes-course activity, the 'zip-wire,' can be thought of in terms of its potential metaphoric transference. The zip-wire, already referred to in previous sections, is an angled wire suspended between two trees. At CWC the wire is approximately 75m long and about 15 metres off the ground. Secured in a harness by a safety rope system, women climb up a ladder leaning against a tree and then up staples in the tree, onto a platform about 17 metres off the ground. Clipped into a new safety system and attached to a pulley, women step off the platform and travel down the wire. After describing (with varying degrees of detail) the safety and logistical aspects of the activity, instructors offered women the opportunity to think about the zip-wire as the following metaphor: "If you choose, you can leave something behind

on the platform. Step away from what you want to in your life, and step towards what you want" (Outward Bound, 1994).

As detailed here, the zip-wire activity allows examination of the use of metaphor. In my view, the activity, as framed at CWC, relied on a device located between "imposed" and "derived" metaphor. The zip-wire was framed in a non-prescriptive way, that is the choice of words left women room for personal interpretation: "if you choose"; "can"; "something"; "you want"; "your life". Women were invited to think about this activity in the way it was offered. Their learning was not prescribed, but left to them to interpret personal meaning. These same words are an example of Heidi Mack's (1996) distinction of "derived" metaphor. However, I would say that the CWC zip-wire framing amounted more to an imposing of metaphor without imposing it. Although the words used by the instructors gave women a choice in principle, in actuality an image of what the activity might signify was set up for them. Nevertheless, my interviews with the CWC women show that the combination of zip-wire and ("imposed"/"derived") metaphor was powerful. I will offer some quotes illustrating this in the next subsection dealing with the use of metaphor to effect transference of learning and / or change. However, at least two women's responses revealed they had "derived" their own meaning from the zip-wire activity, despite the way it had been framed. As Carol's experience attested (p. 247), the metaphor rested not in the "leaving behind" and "stepping toward" images, but in altogether different aspect of the activity.

As I stated in the 'rethinking experience' section at the beginning of this chapter, the main point of the 'zip-wire' activity, as set-up at CWC, was stepping off the platform. Certainly, the metaphor offered to women at CWC was constructed around this: "If you choose, you can leave something behind on the platform. Step away from what you want to in your life, and step towards what you want" (Outward Bound, 1994). Also in that section on rethinking experience, I pointed out that Carol's "unequivocal emotional highlight" at CWC occurred in the zip-wire activity, but that the location of resonance (the fear she felt, and had never acknowledged, of being wheeled into the operating room for open-heart surgery 20 years previously) was not stepping off the platform but climbing the last three staples on the tree. Other women, like Liz, identified their own metaphors in encountering the self in the present in a way that gave them insight into the self rooted in history. We can see the kind of connection Liz makes reflected in Griffiths' (1995, p. 184) suggestion that: "many of our actions, attitudes and perceptions have become habitual, or have their roots in forgotten situations. . . . Overriding these habitual actions and attitudes is a necessary part of transformation . . ." (p. 184):

(Liz) Doing the [alpine] tower reminded me of what I went through in my job [at large New England Hospital where Liz had been the head paediatric nurse]. . . . When it failed [change that she was instrumental in trying to implement], I refused to say, 'well it failed because I was set up.' Anything

that should have been done to make that job succeed, it was done the opposite. . . . people . . . did things to thwart it. Specifically plan to thwart it. I didn't see that. I saw it as me, Liz, having sole responsibility - not being smart enough, not being strong enough, not having enough energy. It was my fault, and if I just tried harder, I was going to make it work. The same thing with the marriage - I was going to try harder, I was going to make it work.

So doing the tower, I had to accept that that route [I had chosen] wasn't going to work for me. I had to let that go and find another way to go up. . . . Because of the way the tower was set up, perhaps it made it more symbolic for me . . . that I started on one path, one obvious path. I had to undo everything and go to another path. [The alpine tower is a tripod, with, three 'buttresses,' each with an independent safety rope set-up. By choosing to go 'another path,' Liz had to physically clip out of one safety rope system, and re-clip into an entirely separate set-up on another of the tripod's 'buttresses.']

I knew when I sat down and I said to myself, 'I'm going up that fucking thing,' that it was my reluctance, my old pattern of saying, 'I'm going to do it, no matter what. If I can't do it, it is because I am inadequate to doing it, and I am going to prove that I am not inadequate. And I can do it.' I had the time, and the thought process to say, 'wait a minute!, step back, what you are doing is that it's not that you can't go

up, it was that that was not working. Now can you still reach a goal up there, and go a different way.' I think Amy [CWC Programme Manager] saying to me, and what was going through my head, 'Liz, if you go around and take the easier way up, that will at least get you up [off the ground] so that you can go further up and do something else. You need to get passed that point.' And I knew that logically, but it was sort of saying, 'all right, I'm willing to do that'. . . . I really weighed trying to do it one more time that way. But a voice in the back of my head said: 'wait a minute, this is not [large Boston] Hospital, this is not your marriage. This is just a chair that you are trying to get to, and what other way can you go and do it.' And not extend every ounce of energy and frustration trying to be determined to do it in that way.

Five months later, the connection Liz made between her experience of struggling to get off the ground on the alpine tower, and the larger issue of her (past) reluctance, even inability, to defer blame remained with her:

(Liz) The [alpine] tower is really symbolic for me, it really helped me understand. I learned a great deal that day, about how difficult it is for me to give something up. I have been much better since the experience on the tower at letting go. For example, the job I recently applied for . . . I got the feeling that when my references hadn't got called that I wasn't going to get it. I forced myself into the interview for

the last job I had. . . . With this application, I found myself almost consciously stepping back, and saying, 'okay, what route worked before' - how did I get up to that point before, and how can I get past it? - or how can I do another route? What worked before was that somebody took my résumé to the person doing the hiring, so now my route is to try and find someone with the connection to get my résumé to the person doing the hiring. . . . I have this innate instinct to sort stuff out, but the thinking through the steps as a route, that I learned from the tower. . . . And it is so powerful.

Liz and Carol's responses, as reproduced above, lead me to ask how much more varied the women's experience and use of metaphor related to the zip-wire and alpine tower would have been without the metaphors provided by the instructors prior to the activity. Heidi Mack (1996) advocated such an opportunity for "derived" metaphor, and Michael Gass (1997) outright rejected it. The data just presented suggest it is possible, indeed desirable, to invite women prior to an activity to find their own meaning in it, or even to leave any discussion of meaning and metaphor to the debrief.

6.2.2 - Rethinking Transference of Learning and Change

In this section I will explore, and offer criticism on, several aspects of the standard OEE literature's usage of the concepts of transference of learning and change. In the standard OEE literature,

there is an assumption that the transference of learning from OEE experiences into participant's lives will produce some measure of lasting change. In much of the literature, there is also an inclination to take a 'freeze-frame' of the OEE activity, and to view its impact through a 'before and after' lens. This means that the standard literature does not fully explore what it is that changes, nor what the process of change looks like. Specifically, I will suggest below that change is not clearly 'before and after,' but must be understood as a process bringing together participants' experience before, during and after OEE activities. Central to the change experienced by women was their gaining an understanding of their selves in this contextual sense. Therefore there is a close connection here to my previous discussion of the self constructed through time in Chapter 5.

The zip-wire activity again lends itself to illustrating these points. Here is Helen's response to a question I asked about whether she thought about her experience on the zip-wire as a metaphor:

(Helen) I thought of it in much more general terms as a place of leaving something behind, but I also thought of it as going towards something as I moved down the cord. Which, for me, is letting go of some of the trappings that I allow myself to get stifled by, which primarily is a concern about being uncomfortable about going too far outside of my own old self, my own predictable self, and feeling uncomfortable with the new person I might find, which might be drastically different

from the one I've grown fond of, or I at least have an attachment to.

(Louise) What are some of those trappings that are stifling you?

(Helen) Ahhhh! Some of it's inertia. Fear of change because it's unpredictable, and losing the control over that.

(Louise) Who was the self you thought of zipping toward?

(Helen) Well, some of the things I'd want to go towards would be a willingness to take more risks, giving myself room to be different, whatever that is. I mean, I keep thinking there's a different way that I'm supposed to be, but I'm still not sure why that is. So much of myself I feel comfortable with, and I like.

(Louise) So, you don't want to trade it all in . . . ?

(Helen) Right. Well, I don't want an overhauling--just a 'sprucing-up'--a detail, or something of that nature.

Given Griffiths (1995) recognition that the self is constructed through time, even if Helen had wanted to, it would not have been possible for her to 'zip' away from her past self entirely: "there is no such 'here and now' for a self that is not a result of what has happened in the past - and what is expected in the future" (p. 176). Helen's thoughts above imply that she understands herself to be "multiple, contradictory and in process" (Newton, 1988). According to Griffiths (1995, p. 187):

Change also arises from our own, individual, fragmentations of self. . . . It takes courage to instigate self-reflection which calls oneself into question. Openness to ourselves is not always a comfortable process, any more than is the process of openness to others. . . . the self changes over time, partly through having the attitudes required for engagement with and openness to persons, partly as a result of having the courage and patience to listen to our own fragmented selves. This is self direction up to a point, but it is not enough by itself. It is also necessary to understand the power of operating in the context in which we live.

When Griffiths' conditions for self-change are juxtaposed with the conditions for change as described in the standard OEE concept below, we notice that "understanding the power of operating in the context in which we live" (p. 187) is absent:

Experiential learning is also predicated on the belief that change occurs when people are placed outside of positions of comfort (e.g. homeostasis, acquiescence) and into a state of dissonance. In these states, participants are challenged by the adaptations necessary to reach equilibrium. Reaching these self-directed states necessitates change with its resultant growth and learning (Gass, 1993, p. 4).

Nadler (1993) and Gass (1997) agree that the facilitator of the adventure experience (adventure therapist) plays an important role in experiential learning:

Facilitation is the process of augmenting the qualities of clients' experiences based on an accurate assessment of clients' needs. The typical intended outcomes of facilitation are to: 1) enhance the quality of the learning experience; 2) assist clients in finding directions and sources for functional change; and 3) create changes that are lasting and transferable (Gass, 1997, p. 67).

The standard adventure therapy notion of change as something that is "lasting and transferable" (Gass, 1997), "resulting in growth and learning" (Gass, 1993), has a much less fluid quality than the contemporary feminist view of the self as always under construction and deconstruction - "in a process of becoming" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 14). But what would this more amorphous notion of change look like if the self is seen as always fluid? What would count as 'change'? How would we recognise it? Would *any* change count as 'lasting'? And what would it mean to 'transfer' changes in the self or learning from one setting to the next?

Looking back on the follow-up interviews I did with women four to six months after the course, I can see that I was thinking about change along lines quite similar to those pursued in the OEE literature. I was interested in the efficacy of the adventure therapy-OEE field's notion of 'change' and 'transference of learning,'

and my goal in the follow-up interviews was to determine whether women's experiences in the CWC programme had any resonance in their lives four to six months later. It is clear to me now, as I review the questions I asked CWC women, that I was looking for confirmation of their experiences at CWC changing them in some way. In part, I wanted to satisfy my own long standing curiosities, even skepticism, about whether any change could be seen as being of a lasting or enduring nature, and what aspects of the outdoor experience could be seen as responsible for those outcomes.

What I now notice in analysing transcripts of my data, which I don't think I noticed so readily while doing the fieldwork, is that the women I interviewed were often searching for words to convey an experience of change that was somewhat different than the one I seemed to be looking for. So sometimes our conversations produced a rather shifting point of view about these issues. For example, Helen, below responded to my question with some equivocation over how much the course was 'responsible' for changes in her life; but she also emphasised that she "unlatched the gate with that programme," and that it had helped her life "move along":

(Louise) You spoke the last time we met about many of the experiences in your life being like stamps in your passport - experiences you've had, but experiences that haven't had much meaning beyond their being some kind of a marker of recognition. Would the three days you spent at CWC be like one of those stamps in your passport?

(Helen) In and of itself as an experience, yeah. Um, having visited one of the Boston Harbour Islands. Yeah it would be one of those 'I've passed through those gates, I've done that. I've been on an Outward Bound programme.' Though I'm not foolish enough to assume that my experience would have been the same had I invested in a week or month long programme. I can still see where I might still benefit from having a repeat experience with Outward Bound in a different setting.

All I can say in comment to that is that I unlatched the gate with that programme - I've walked through another field, and it has allowed me to move on to something else. It has given me a place to say not only that I started from, but a place that I have left behind as well. I've gotten through something. I don't know that Outward Bound is responsible for that.

(Louise) Help me understand the field of which you speak. Has your life moved along in the four months since we met, and if so, how?

(Helen) Yes, it has. But at a pace that I think is a natural pace. . . . I think I knew what my demons were going into this programme, and I think I made the assumption that Outward Bound would provide me with challenges that would create a break-through that would be uncanny in terms of my expectation. That I would have something that took me

by the throat and shook me to a point where I would speak a different language.

It didn't happen, and I don't think it is a fair expectation either. The reward of that realisation is that life comes at its own pace, and you can push it along. But you create that. A set of circumstances or another person doesn't do that. But that is an actualisation that I have had to pay for in therapy that I have had to tread through just out of experience and life's little dilemmas that are thrown to us every day.

Looking back on this conversation, I now notice that Helen was perhaps trying to explain to me how her own understanding of personal change was shifting. She says "I thought Outward Bound would . . . shake me by the throat" But then she says "It didn't really happen that way, and I don't think that is a fair expectation either." Instead, Helen offers a view of change as happening at "a natural pace" and as a process that is not created for you, but that "you create" and "push along." She goes on to describe having had a "very enjoyable weekend," giving herself permission "to be different afterwards," but not seeing this happen:

(Helen) I came to the programme . . . with a pre-determination or a pre-destiny of desired outcome, that 'Okay, this is what I'm doing. This is taking three days. It's written on paper. I'm doing it, and so I'm going to use it as a

platform for saying I'm giving myself license to take this experience and allow myself to be different afterwards.'

(Louise) Just giving yourself that permission was significant for you?

(Helen) I believe so, yeah. I'm much more confident about saying that than being able to say that there was something in the programme on the Friday, Saturday or Sunday where I felt a turn or a breakthrough. I'm very clear on that, though; I'm very clear that I definitely gave myself license to be different after having been through the programme, not really knowing whether the programme would truly have an effect on me.

Then, in the next question, I picked up on Helen's notion of "be[ing] different afterwards" and asked simply "are you any different?," which seemed to trigger a more 'cut and dried' next comment from Helen:

(Louise) Are you any different?

(Helen) No, I'm not. I had a very enjoyable weekend. I enjoyed meeting all of the women. Perhaps it was more interesting to see the effect of the programme on some of them - many women--Penny, Evelyn, Kristin, Emma--now I think about it, all of them seemed to be more wowed by it than me.

So, there we have an interesting snippet of conversation which I now think vacillates between different notions of change - what it means, how it happens, or what it looks/feels like. My questions seem to assume a more 'before-after' notion of change, while Helen seems to switch back and forth a bit. In another interview, it was Barbara's explanation to my question about change that made me re-evaluate the concept of change. I began to see change as less absolute and more as a process. Barbara described this process as "stepping two more feet toward the centre":

(Louise) Has Barbara changed in any way as a result of the CWC experience?

(Barbara) Ah--changed in the sense stepping two more feet toward the centre. Coming closer to being in the circle. I have been out of the circle for a long time. I feel closer to being in the circle, but not quite there yet. If I were in the circle, I would do more connecting with people from the group, or would be more connected with people beyond my partner. That is the goal here for me. To develop an intimacy that doesn't equate to partner, but to this web - not just safety, but to getting around. Being able to meet more people. To feel more alive. To trust myself that other people will like me and respect me. That keeps coming up, trust myself . . . like at Outward Bound where I felt the trust of others and was able to trust myself and let my defenses down. . . . But the centre is still a ways away. I'm slowly getting there. . . . I wish I had something more to tell you,

more movement, something more demonstrative -- that I enrolled in a Ph.D. programme.

(Louise) I wouldn't recommend *that!* . . . besides, I hear for you that 'two feet toward the centre' of the circle is as significant as enrolling in any Ph.D. programme. I think that your sense of change is relative to where you entered the programme, and the reasons that you came to Outward Bound when you did. I think that change is relative and looks very different for every woman. Maybe negotiating the rest of way toward the centre of the circle to which you refer is your Ph.D. programme?

A similar fluidity, even ambivalence, in talking about the experience of change appears in the transcripts of my conversations with Penny. Penny had described to me a process of exhilaration following the course, after which life "kind of went back to normal." I was interested in this description because of my own skepticism about 'longevity' of change. So I asked her about this experience, and she too shifted back and forth a bit in ways of interpreting her experience:

(Louise) I have a clear recollection of speaking with you on the 'phone a few days after the CWC course - you were so happy with your self and life. You had enrolled in Spanish lessons, had agreed to become secretary to a beginning AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) group; life was pretty busy for you and good. We met not long after the course, and you were

still 'out there' - feeling if I can quote you, 'exhilarated.'

What happened to that?

(Penny) Um. I don't know. I don't know where my exhilaration went, or when exactly it went, but there was a definite up for me during the course and after the course, and then life kind of went back to normal. . . . I just haven't experienced anything of that magnitude before or after. I just haven't experienced that. And, I'm still very proud that I accomplished what I accomplished, because that was hard, very hard. But everything in life is hard. It was just like another test in life.

So, on one hand, Penny can be seen to be saying that her exhilaration over the CWC experience was short-lived and then life went back to normal "it was just like another test in life." On the other hand, the details she gave me in the rest of the interview about the circumstances of her life following the CWC course paint a very different picture. Penny is the woman (quoted in Chapter 4) who came down the zip-wire stating that "this course has changed my life." After hearing Penny make this statement, Helen had mentioned to me that CWC should forget their advertising materials, and instead send Penny out on a recruitment tour with her one-liners! Four months later Penny was still "very proud that I accomplished what I accomplished"; and ostensibly, her life and the way she viewed life had changed considerably since CWC. A month after the CWC programme, Penny left her aunt and uncle's house

where she previously had been living. It was not an amicable departure as Penny was, as she said, "kicked out. Well my uncle threatened me that he'd kick me out . . . I didn't give him the chance because I left." Three months had passed since all this transpired, and when I saw her, she seemed rather serene. While the sense of exhilaration Penny felt during and immediately after the CWC experience had diminished, Penny credited her experiences at CWC and the other women on the course with some important shifts in her life:

(Penny) I think a big leap was saying to hell with Malden, Melrose, Medford [suburbs of Boston]--that area that my family lives. What the heck is wrong with being an individual? I've wanted to live up here for a year and a half. I made this decision for me. Women like you and Helen and Carrie helped me see that I don't have to follow the crowd, being an individual is okay, that I don't have to be doing what other people expect me to do. This is my life to live. Meeting the women at CWC I realised that I can't always be running. I don't have to be running. I was always running all my life. Running to please my family and running away from their troubles. I have finally stopped running. . . . I feel like I have done a tremendous amount of growing this summer, more than I ever did in my life.

(Louise) Do you think that any of that growing that you refer to has anything to do with going to Outward Bound?

(Penny) Oh yes! I think a lot of it. That was the beginning. That was the jump-start to change. Because if I hadn't gone on that weekend, I may not have had the courage to get the hell out of my uncle's house. It was what I needed, because if I never went on that weekend, I'd still be with my aunt and uncle; I'd be unhappy. It was a mad-house there. It was crazy--they were crazy. *That* I think is the main difference. The courage to move out and start a new life in a new city away from anyone in my family. And see for myself that I can be on my own, I can survive on my own. . . . Do you know how good that feels?

Penny's crediting her CWC experience as the "jump-start to change" is more certain than many others, whose sense of exactly what their experiences at CWC meant to them four to six months later was far more nebulous:

(Sue) There is a lot of vagueness. But that is very normal for me! . . . Did it change my life? Yeah, in some way it did. But would I be able to explain more to you about why? No. It gave me an underpinning that I don't think I had before. I mean it didn't turn my skin blue, I didn't run off to Asia, it didn't change my life on an outward level, it changed it much more on an interior.

Sue's comments above, did not support what I was looking for in the field - a cause and effect equation as to whether CWC 'changed'

Sue's life. Rather than confirming this notion, Sue told me that she could not show me change in the form that I seemed to be looking for. Instead, Sue told me it was not like that: CWC did not turn her "skin blue," the change was vague and unexplainable. For another woman, Janet, this vagueness was present as she thought about her experiences at CWC only days later. Janet acknowledged that she was not particularly self-reflective, and, particularly during the early stages of the CWC course, chose to pass in debriefs or spoke in platitudes. It was not that she was disengaged, but, perhaps, as one of the women said:

(Claudia) Like Janet - she wasn't used to sharing or really thinking about how she felt--I mean, I wondered whether she even acknowledges her feelings to herself. Let alone a group of strangers.

I was surprised that Janet volunteered to speak with me about her experiences at CWC. Other women from previous courses who had been similarly reticent in sharing their experiences in group debriefs had not volunteered. Noteworthy about Janet was the fact that other women on her course had commented on the "change" the course seemed to have produced in her.

(Louise) Several women have commented on your 'opening up more' as the weekend went on. Chris and Judy [instructors] even said in the closing circle that you had 'changed.' Did you notice what other women were seeing?

(Janet) Um. Well--I think I am thinking differently about myself because I think I see myself in a different light now.

I now see that Janet provided me with her own 'ordinary english' (Griffiths, 1995) description of the process of change. Janet rendered visible in plain language Seyla Benhabib's (1992, p. 14) notion of the self "in a process of becoming," (1995) and Morwenna Griffiths notion of change as a process in referring to: "Um. Well-I think I am thinking differently about myself . . . in a different light now." I have left unedited Janet's search for words to describe this process of change to illuminate her own search for self understanding through what she has just experienced at CWC. Her thoughts continue:

That kinda, um--I just feel, well okay--You know how sometimes you get into those moods where you think that no matter what you do, you are not going to make a difference? And then I get all frustrated and fed up because I don't think that one person can make a difference. After this weekend, I just don't feel that I won't make a difference again. And that is the difference for me, the new light for me. I've always had doubts about this before, and now I really believe it.

(Louise) Can you help me understand what it was about the weekend that helped you see that different light, or that you can make a difference.

(Janet) I think that by being able to trust everybody and I want to trust everybody else around me. Somehow that ties

in to thinking that I can make a difference. I think that people just--well, okay, this is a part that you are not going to understand. I feel that because I feel more like a whole person, that I can give that much more to other people, and to thinking that - I just have this thing that I think I can change the world, which is probably pretty naive, but I am going to stick with it. So I think that because I am that much more of myself that I can do that now.

(Louise) So, being able to trust the other women helps you think that you can make a difference because you feel more like a whole person. Did this sense of being able to trust others give you any insight into Janet?

(Janet) [long pause] I dunno. I guess I thought more about who I am as a person, and what I can do. I don't usually think about that kind of stuff, so that was cool. I just realised some stuff that I didn't know. I didn't think I could get to the top of that tower, but I did. And I thought 'Yeah! I'm the coolest!' I think I can take more risks now, which is a good thing.

As each CWC course unfolded, women frequently spoke in debriefs about their sense of increased self-confidence, stronger sense of self-competence, a stronger belief in themselves, a general sense of 'can do.' Such feelings are not unique to women's programmes, and not unique to CWC. As I discussed in Chapter 2, this general sense of empowerment is cited frequently as a benefit

of participating in outdoor groups (e.g., Holtzwarth, 1992; Mitten, 1992, 1994; Roberts, 1996). The passages quoted above from my interviews with Janet and other women illustrate that the feeling of empowerment that women attributed to the programme as it unfolded was carried over into post-course interviews. It is clear that the above mentioned women-and-OEE authors are right: CWC had a strong 'empowerment' impact on the women. However, my interviews also revealed that this impact was very much related to women arriving at new understandings of their selves, past, present and in process:

(Carrie) I think everything clicked for me when I was climbing that tree for the zip thing, and that was harder than I had expected. And then that's when I really sort of put it all together, that at Outward Bound, yes, they put the little metal stakes in the tree for you, but they put them just a *little* bit out of your reach. They put, like, two of mine were out of reach, and the third one was really easy. Then the next one's hard and the next one's easy. You know? Just to really toy with you. And really light didn't dawn until I stopped myself from saying to Caroline [instructor who was observing and encouraging Carrie from the platform that Carrie was trying to climb to] 'Help me, bitch!' And then I thought, 'No. This is what it is. It's all about doing it by myself, knowing I can do it on my own.' . . . And what I came away with was you *can* do it on your own; just have enough faith in yourself, and you *will* do it. You *can* pull it off.

Four months after our CWC course, I met Carrie again. In the intervening months, she had been to Japan to film a documentary. This in and of itself was a significant event, but perhaps of greater significance to Carrie's sense of "can do" she re-discovered at CWC, was that when the trip was threatened due to a shortage of funding: "The former Carrie would have shrugged her shoulders and said "oh well, it wasn't meant to be." Instead, the "new" Carrie rallied and was successful in convincing the company's Board of Directors to equal any financial donations she managed to secure:

(Carrie) And that's what this whole summer has been about - is saying, 'I am strong enough to do it on my own.' . . . I mean I had a heady summer. Frankly I don't expect to have summers like that every year. So now I want to keep up the momentum - not at quite the same pace or the same magnitude. I can't go half-way around the world every other month. But I want to keep up this attitude of trying new things, of exploring new things, not waiting for things to come to me. But to go try for lots of different things, and those that happen, happen. But branching out and trying new things, and not be defeated by not even trying.

(Louise) Does this heady summer you've had have anything to do with the CWC weekend?

(Carrie) Yeah. I think that leaving my anger at Roger [ex-husband] on that tree really helped me think more about life in the present and not the past. . . . I think that whole zip

thing was important. . . . Climbing up to that platform was a huge deal for me. But bigger than that was catching myself from being mouthy to Caroline, realising that I didn't need her help: that I could get up to that platform on my own.

A sense of "I can do this" because I did "x" at CWC was a connection frequently made by women several months after their experiences. In addition, a number of women specifically referred to CWC as a touchstone in times of self-doubt. That is, referring back to specific moments of success during CWC enabled them to overcome self-doubt in challenges they encountered subsequently. As the following quotes will illustrate, this too is inextricably linked to women discovering and understanding new things about their selves. Emma attributed the realisation that she was able to take care of herself to her experience at CWC:

(Emma) If I hadn't gone to CWC, I don't think that I would have climbed Mt. Monadnock or Mt. Washington by myself. At Outward Bound I realised that my body was strong, I could take care of myself--that helped me in going off and doing this by myself. And it really gets me angry now when my husband says 'watch out for bears'; 'don't sleep under the stars, in case an animal comes.' And I think 'look at the way you drive, *puh-leaze.*' If something is going to happen, it is going to happen there. So there is a push to try things whereas before I think there was a fear. . . . On the physical

side, at least, there isn't that fear of living and trying things. Instead there is a push.

For Carol, among other things, her CWC insights came to be symbolised by the 'beads of courage' as a token of 'can do.' Beads of courage were small plastic coloured beads that women were given the chance to take after each activity as a way of recognising something they felt proud of doing. Alternatively, beads could be offered to another woman as a way of acknowledging her efforts, or as a way of acknowledging something she said or did. We threaded the beads onto a piece of nylon cord and wore them on our wrists during the course. In meeting with women immediately after the programme and several months later, I saw beads of courage dangling from rear-view mirrors in cars, worn with (expensive) jewellery, attached to backpack zips. For several women, the beads became a material symbol of recognition for their efforts, achievements and insights at CWC. Several months later, some women were still able to remember what each of the beads signified. For Carol, the beads served a larger purpose than a reminder. They had taken on a special significance, a material touch-stone that "embody the spirit, the fact that I can do anything":

(Carol) There are times when I know I have a really tough meeting to chair with a number of different view points, and I know I have to get them to reach consensus . . . that is when I pull out the 'beads of courage'. . . . When I am getting ready in the morning, and what I say is, 'you can do it.'

The beads embody the spirit, the fact that I can do anything: 'You've climbed up those rocks, you've jumped from the trees' then these difficulties aren't so insurmountable, you are capable of doing it. So, I don't take them every day, they have definitely played a role in my professional dealings. Particularly when I anticipate difficulty. My beads have become a symbol of courage . . . and they are so small, they fit anywhere. In that way, even with school too, I have found myself saying, you can do this, you can write this paper, you can get it done. CWC has been a marker of my saying 'I can do this, I've jumped out of a tree, I've climbed rocks, I can do this!'. If you set your goals, you can reach that . . . I notice a definite 'go-for-it,' you can do it attitude.

A question that occurred to me to ask Carol four months after her CWC experience was an issue that had eluded me during other interviews. It is a question that was again present for me during the reading of the data, and now, in writing this section:

(Louise) In talking about your 'can do,' 'go for it' attitude, you refer to jumping out of trees, climbing rocks. Is it always the physical aspects of the course that you think back to in a moment of self-doubt?

(Carol) I think it depends on my frame of mind at that particular moment. Probably the full spectrum, but the emotional release of re-living being rolled into an operating

room, to sharing some of my deepest emotions with my niece as well as the other women - all of those things were a big deal for me. But the physical aspect of grieving on the tree. I can *so* remember that, it is so close. The staples at least at some point triggered progress and getting there and you can do it, even though you are scared to death. As the tree started going out and got more difficult and scary for me . . . that is what triggered the fear, that touched my life 20 years ago.

I notice, however, in writing this section, that I am thinking rather differently about the separation between the physical (and emotional) aspects of Carol's experience in the CWC programme that I enquired into above. Looking back now at my question to Carol, I think that I was attempting to establish an independent variable; as an outdoor educator I was looking to validate that Carol's experience in the CWC programme was the cause of something else. Carol tells me, however, that emotional and physical aspects of her experience are not cleanly separable. For example, Carol talks about "the physical aspect of grieving on the tree," but it is now less absolute to me that Carol was referring only to the tree as physical; I now see her "grieving" to be physical also. Likewise Carol's reference to "the staples" [on the tree] and being "scared to death." Her fear and the staples can both be seen as physical, as her memory of the tree is not separate from her fear as a physical experience. Prompted by my recognition of the question I asked Carol above as to whether

she thought back to physical aspects of her CWC experience during moments of self-doubt, I looked, at the outset of my data analysis, at the location of women's 'aha' moments. I recognise now that I was looking to pin-point the critical moments of women's self-understanding, and whether they were located in CWC's physical, expressive or creative activities.

To this end, I initially thought that Sherry, when referring to her experience at CWC as a "touchstone," was talking about relating back to a physical episode at CWC as a metaphor to draw upon at a time when she subsequently felt scared. However, I now see that Sherry's reference to jumping off the platform on the zip-wire as "a wicked big step" was not the only physical moment; feeling "really scared" was also.

(Louise) In between all of the flux of changing jobs, moving states, moving from the country to the city, have you thought about our Outward Bound weekend in May?

(Sherry) Yes I have - a lot. You know, I don't want to lose the memories, because I felt so good when I was there. . . . And, I think it goes back to realising that I'm stronger than I think I am. And when I get really scared, I think back and say, 'well Sherry, it is okay. You did jump [off the zip-wire platform], it is not going to be that bad!' That jump for me was a big step, it really was. It was a wicked big step for me. And I feel so confident now. I'm still scared . . . but I feel much more confident now and so I feel so much more secure.

(Louise) These feelings of confidence and secure--do they have anything to do with CWC?

(Sherry) Oh yeah they do because it is kind of like '*The little train that could.*' And this is what I see in myself - this fear of fear. Roosevelt said 'there's nothing to fear but fear itself.' . . . In a way, that is a very profound statement. . . . And I feel like that jump for me off the platform was like the 'little train that could.' Once it got over, it was okay. And it is like I was scared to go up, I was really trying, and I was barely making it, and I felt like giving up and going back down again. But, like the 'little train,' once I got to the other side, I realised that it is not that bad - there really is nothing to be scared about.

. . . . In my new job, there is this cloud of negativity that hangs over the people that I'm in charge of, the mediocre things of the daily routine of the job. . . . And so it goes back again to the fear of what am I getting myself into. Thinking why am I here? What am I doing here? Why did I leave all my friends behind for this? And I've found myself thinking 'this can't be any worse than sitting on top of that platform and being scared to jump.' This is *nothing* compared to that!. . . . In retrospect, when I balance my fear now, I compare it to jumping off the platform.

For Sherry, her experience and memory of jumping off the zip-wire's platform is intertwined with her experience and memory

of fear. I now understand as a result of what both Carol and Sherry told me of their experiences as reproduced above, that the separation I was trying to locate between "physical aspects of the course" and CWC's other activities cannot be fashioned this way as it does not work as a way to express their experiences.

Sherry's story underscores the inseparability of physical and emotional elements of the course and their impact. But it also offers powerful illustration of the process of self-discovery and understanding occurring both during CWC and as a result of her reflecting back on her CWC experience later. Sherry had verbally and emotionally expressed her fear of heights during the first two days of the CWC course. So, when she elected to take her turn on the zip-wire, CWC's final activity involving height, we all gathered at the bottom of the tree to offer our encouragement. Sherry struggled with the climb, verbalising her visualisation of her running route "I see the lilac bush," "I'm at the big old oak tree" to distract herself from the fear she was feeling. When Sherry finally made it onto the platform in the tree, she had an extreme emotional response. Still gathered at the bottom of the tree, we saw Sherry hugging the tree, her body physically heaving, and heard loud sobbing. I thought Sherry's out-burst was a physical and emotional reaction to fear of heights. Sherry never corrected my assumption on course, choosing not to bring it up during the (weak) debrief. It was not until she explained the following during interview that I understood the intensely personal connection she had encountered:

(Sherry) My husband was diagnosed with a brain tumour and died six weeks later. . . . I was widowed at 24 years old [eight years previously]. . . . And a couple of years after he died, one of our best friends asked me 'Have you really just let it all out and really screamed?' And I said, 'No, I really don't feel that way.' I cry a lot; I don't have any problem crying--it's the emotional--getting emotional's not one of my problems! So I always cry a lot and I really enjoy it. But he said, 'You don't want to scream? Just scream?' And I really didn't, but when I got to the top of that tree [on the platform of the zip-wire], I was, like 'Arghhhhhhhh!' I really felt like letting it out! And all I could think of when I got up there . . . was Tom. That's what I was going through up there. . . . all that crying was just my sorrow.

(Louise) Oi. I had *no* idea. . . . I thought that your emotional outburst might have been related to your fear. I obviously didn't know why you were crying, but I tell you, I was crying! And everyone around you was crying. . . . I think that women were crying for their own reasons for crying. It was really quite a moment!

While Sherry was crying and hugging the tree, several women removed themselves from the group, and spent some time alone. Another three women formed a circle and started singing:

(Sherry) When they started singing 'Amazing Grace,' I was just, like, 'Woah--How did they know?' Like, it was just

so--That was incredible, because that was Tom's favourite hymn. . . . That was my favourite hymn. We sang it at the-- so here they are singing--we sang it at Tom's funeral. . . .But, yeah, that's what was going off for me. I hit that platform; I was hugging that tree. I felt like I was hugging Tom.

It was not until five months later, when describing how she had in the intervening months reflected back on the fear she felt on the platform at CWC, that Sherry made what she later described as a "very profound connection":

[(Sherry) In retrospect, when I balance my fear now, I compare it to jumping off the platform.]

(Louise) And you always think about the platform as your point of reference?

(Sherry) Yes, the platform is my point of reference. More so than the rock climbing or any other event. And where . . . my point of reference was my husband's death - because that was the only real challenge that I had. So this to me is a new reference point - to use that is more positive for me in my life, you know, than having to use my husband's death as a point of reference for getting through something.

And I'm making this realisation as we speak!! But thinking about it, it is so much better! Much better. And maybe that is why I feel so much better! More mentally healthy about things because now, if you think about it - god, what a drag that other point of reference was! You know I

mean in a way that could have been pulling me down! Pulling me down, and not realising it. And now I have something more positive to build upon. I'm coming to this realisation now as we speak - sitting outside Newton City Hall on September 17, 1995.

Maybe the honesty was to confront my real sadness. I knew I was really sad, and I was honest that I missed my husband. I was really hurt. And maybe I faced that truth up in that tree because I was so scared, and all that was left was the truth. And maybe that is where the courage came from because once I faced that truth, it allowed me to move on. Fear really puts you in light of yourself. And maybe unless you conquer that honesty and truth you're stifled, stuck, plugged. You're jammed up. . . . Maybe that's where the out-pouring of that came from . . . the unbottling opened up space. . . . So, when is our next appointment! This was helpful!. . . . for research and for friendship. . . . Now I'm beginning to make sense of it all.

Sherry refers to the "unbottling" of her tears as "open[ing] up space" for change. The OEE literature would find confirmation for its notion of 'disequilibrium' in Sherry's comments. As previously discussed, the OEE model (Chapter 2, p. 55) states that feelings of disequilibrium bring about 'feelings of accomplishment.' I would argue the disequilibrium that Sherry felt as a result of her fear led not only to feelings of release and accomplishment, but more

significantly to self-knowledge and self-understanding. However, not only did Sherry have an intensely personal experience that led her to self-knowledge and self-understanding, our subsequent conversation about this experience helped her to make a "subjective experience intelligible" (Griffiths, 1995, p. 75).

The preceding pages were among the most interesting for me to write. I was fascinated by finding my 'field self' looking to establish whether women were changed by their experience at CWC, even changed in a lasting way. What women repeatedly told me was that change was not a matter of 'before and after,' but rather was a process, much like Barbara's 'two steps toward the centre,' or Helen's 'unlatching the gate.' The women's responses, and my subsequent immersion in the theories of the self as constructed through time allowed me to see that change is a multi-faceted and continuous process. It is partly about how we see ourselves and encounter ourselves and partly about changing contexts of our lives. Similarly, who we 'are' at any moment in time is partly a matter of who we 'know' ourselves to 'be' and the opportunities we have to encounter ourselves. Thus, in writing these pages, I conclude that OEE programming can bring about change and can result in transference of learning. However, my understanding of how these outcomes occur and what they are has evolved. I no longer see change as a quantifiable variable, 'objectively' discernible from the outside. Rather, I understand it as an ongoing process of changing self knowledge.

6.3 - Beyond the Personal: Political and Social Context

So far this chapter has drawn upon contemporary feminist theory as giving new insights into OEE's core concepts, and opening space for transformations of these concepts. In the remainder of this chapter, I suggest that contemporary feminist theory not just be brought to bear in setting up OEE experiences, but in giving them feminist content, in bringing the social and political insights of feminist theory into OEE settings. This effort, of course, builds upon (in my view is a logical extension of) an understanding of the self as also socially constructed (Chapter 5).

In summing up the learning transfer research of Lave (1988) and Rogoff (1984), Arthur Wilson (1993) concluded that:

. . . to understand the place of context in thinking and learning, we have to recognize that cognition is a social activity that incorporates the mind, the body, the activity, and the ingredients of the setting in a complex interactive and recursive manner (p. 72).

I have argued in the introduction to Chapter 1 and in this chapter, and have tried to illustrate throughout the discussion of data, that experience is not just the 'here and now.' It is not simply a unidimensional event that can be programmed and guided. Rather it unfolds in a social context, created by the fact that all participants bring their particularities and their socially, culturally and discursively constructed selves to the common experience. A

hand-full of OEE authors (e.g., Bell, 1993a, 1993b; Brookes, 1993; Davidson, 1994; Vokey, 1987; Warren & Rheingold, 1993, 1996) have been critical of the field for its focus on psychological perspectives, described by Ewert (1987, p. 25) to be "the most widely used viewpoint" in research on outdoor adventure. In the psychology paradigm, the focus is on the individual rather than the social. Andrew Brookes (1993) levelled his criticism at a key OEE text (Schoel, et al., 1988), and, by extension, at Project Adventure, a prominent organisation in the OEE field. According to Brookes (1993), Schoel, et al's. (1988) methods were "nearly independent of both place and social context" (p. 19), thereby neglecting to take into account "any notion that social problems may have social, rather than individual, origins and solutions" (p. 21). Brookes suggested that it was time for Project Adventure and the principles of adventure-based counselling they advocated to be re-viewed through the lens of "more adequate" theories of social change, educational context and critical evaluation.

A similar critique was raised by Helen Lenskyj (1995) who noted that the majority of the wilderness therapy literature drew on the values of humanist therapy, which emphasises "empathy, personal growth, relationships and emotional release but fails to situate these issues in the wider political context" (p. 7). Lenskyj quoted feminist therapist Miriam Greenspan to contrast the humanist values purported in the wilderness therapy text with those of feminist therapy. Greenspan (1983, p. 144) saw feminist therapy as "geared to the interests of women as a group, not merely

as individuals,” promoting “personal change that both acknowledges and confronts the social world. . . . self and social reality are seen together.” Lenskyj identified that by comparison, explicit connections between the individual woman and social context were mostly absent in the wilderness therapy text. Lenskyj largely based her conclusions regarding the wilderness therapy literature on one text, *Wilderness therapy for women* (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994), and articles published in *The Journal of Experiential Education*. Yet the same criticism is applicable to the OEE field in general, and has also been made by the abovementioned authors.

In the earlier section on metaphor, (instructor) Judy’s reflections on Gillian’s experience were substantiated by women who, when experiencing self-doubt in months after CWC, recalled their success in a physically challenging encounter on course. I reported on Judy’s comments in my discussion of metaphor, earlier in this chapter, but they are also relevant in this section. To attribute these connections exclusively to the workings of metaphor would compound a central limitation of OEE research: its general failure to consider the social context in which programmes operate. If programmes such as CWC are to actualise their potential of providing experiences that are informed by feminist principles and think about the way in which women’s experiences at CWC challenge the social/cultural construction of gender and what it means to be a woman, we must pay closer attention in our programming to the fact that gender identity is the object of social

and cultural construction, and problematise how our understandings of our gendered selves are shaped by such a construction.

The CWC programme specifically created experiences for women to, as Judy stated: "jump off this and belay on that and hang over here, climb a tree." This section will go on to demonstrate that the CWC programme often missed the opportunity for such experiences to be explicitly situated relative to socially constructed norms of gender. Judy implied that such experiences offered a transformative encounter if the activities - jumping, hanging, belaying, climbing - are understood as transgressing the norms of femininity. Working from this premise, it is possible to see the potential that is currently untapped at CWC, indeed presumably the vast majority of OEE programmes, in explicitly challenging and extending participants' understandings of the societal and cultural prescriptions of what it means to be a woman. Judy initiated this line of conversation during our interview, but failed to explicitly bring to dialogue these issues on course. If my analysis of Judy's comments had been restricted to the standard OEE / adventure therapy conceptual frameworks (understood in terms of metaphor, change and transference which Judy actually named) this broader, social view could have been rendered invisible.

Also in the metaphor section above, I argued the limitations of the OEE notion of metaphoric transference through Liz's experience on the alpine tower. To use Heidi Mack's (1996) analysis. Liz's metaphor was "derived" from her own experience as she came to her own insights into her obstinate self of her own

accord. As Liz struggled one more time to get off the ground, she realised that the alpine tower was neither her marriage nor the hospital for which she had worked. This self-realisation coincided with programme manager, Amy Kohut's, encouragement that she attempt to get off the ground via another base of the tripod. Liz was successful in achieving the goal she had set herself at the outset of the day of climbing: to reach the 'karma' seat (a spot in the middle of the tower), and make an entry in the journal kept there. However, Liz's true moment of self-realisation was not how high she climbed, but learning "a great deal that day about how difficult it is for me to give something up." The question, I now ask myself about Liz's self-realisation, is what insight a programme with an explicitly feminist outlook might have been able to offer Liz about her propensity for self-blame? - ["I refused to say, well I failed because I was set up" . . . "I saw it as me, Liz, having sole responsibility - not being smart enough, not being strong enough, not having enough energy. It was my fault, and if I just tried harder, I was going to make it work. The same thing with the marriage - I was going to try harder, I was going to make it work."]

Morwenna Griffiths (1995) suggested that women's pursuit of finding "a real self, or a self acceptable to itself" (p. 76) is, in part, complicated by sex discrimination, and also oppressive material structures which interact with what Griffiths called "habits of mind." The 'habits of mind' to which Griffiths referred are present (though different) in men and women and, for women, are such that they keep the oppressive material structures in place. Griffiths gave as

examples of women's 'habits of mind' a "lack of self-confidence, a de-valuing of her own needs and desires, or even a lack of knowledge about her own needs and desires" (p. 76). Griffiths believed that eradicating such 'habits of mind' could be conceptualised as 'finding oneself.' While I do not believe that a three-day CWC course can eradicate such socially and materially constructed "habits of mind." I do believe that through the shared experience of programmes like CWC, there are potential opportunities for women to encounter themselves in a new relation to Griffiths' "habits of mind." I have mentioned previously, and I go on to argue here, that a programme like CWC can be seen as a different version of what women's Consciousness Raising (CR) groups did in the 1960's and 1970's. Specifically, such programmes can provide women with an opportunity to take a fresh look at previous experience in a new context. In so doing, a new dynamic is created between women's past experience and their present. This new dynamic has the potential to challenge women's understanding of themselves and their lives as women, and according to Marilyn Frye, can result in women seeing themselves as "authoritative perceivers":

When women's experience is made intelligible in the communications of consciousness-raising we can recognize that it is in the structures of men's stories of the world that women don't make sense - that our own experience, collectively and jointly appreciated, can generate a picture of ourselves and the world within which we are intelligible.

The consciousness-raising process reveals us to ourselves as authoritative perceivers which are neither men nor the fantastical, impossible feminine beings which populate the men's world-story. (1992, p. 60)

From their earliest days, Western women's liberation movements valued women's experiences, and consciousness-raising provided women with a context and platform within which they could share their "apparently isolated and idiosyncratic experiences" (Charles, 1996, p. 6). The women's movement placed women's experience at the centre of the political and theoretical agenda, which, for many women led to the realisation that their experiences were common to numerous women (Roseneil, 1996). Furthermore, women came to understand that the society and social relations within which they lived were at the root of what they had previously perceived to be their personal inadequacies and failings (Frye, 1992). The construction of the slogan 'the personal is political' stemmed from women's recognition of their shared (though not necessarily identical) experiences (Charles, 1996). Barbara Polk summed up women's participation in consciousness raising groups this way:

As members of the group share experiences and attitudes, they become aware that the problems they thought were theirs alone are less a function of their own personal hangups than of the social structure and culture in which they live. Through sharing experiences, women find that personal

problems related to being a woman cannot be solved without an understanding of the society and, often, without attempting to implement changes within it as well. (Polk, 1972, p. 324)

In CR groups then, women's experiences were foregrounded and served as a springboard for examining and understanding the dynamics of women's "universal" oppression (Adamson, Briskin & McPhail, 1988). However, just as 'sisterhood' was rightly identified as potentially exclusionary, not powerful (Chapter 3, p. 100), the CR movement was also criticised for its universal treatment of women, in the way in which it theorised that all women were subjected to oppression in equal measures by virtue of their sex (Charles, 1996). bell hooks (1984) and numerous other authors have pointed out that women's diversity in terms of race, class, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation belie such claims. As Griffiths (1995, p. 17) pointed out, "Some of us speak from more central places than others. It is not only some white males who are privileged. I, like most others, sometimes speak from a place of relative privilege and sometimes from a place of relative disadvantage." Marilyn Frye (1992, p. 60) added, "women's lives are full and overflowing with the evidence of the imbalanced distribution of woes and wealth as between the women and the men of each class, race and circumstance." Frye went on to argue through the analogy of charting the prevailing winds that while all women do not encounter oppression or privilege or any other experience in the

same way, there is, as Jane Flax (1990, p. 220) pointed out, a "differentiated yet collective experience":

But as the naming occurs, each woman's speech creating context for the other's, the data of our experience reveal patterns both within the experience of one woman and among the experiences of several women. The experiences of each woman and of the women collectively generate a new web of meaning. Our process has been one of discovering, recognising, and creating patterns - patterns within which experience made a new kind of sense, or in many instances, for the first time made any sense at all.

Patterns sketched in broad strokes make sense of our experiences, but not a single unified or uniform sense. They make our different experiences intelligible in different ways. Naming patterns is like charting the prevailing winds over a continent; there is no implication that every individual and item in the landscape is identically affected. . . .What we discover when we break into connection with other women cannot possibly be uniform women's experience and perception, or we would discover nothing. It is precisely the articulation and differentiation of the experiences formulated in consciousness-raising that gives rise to meaning. (Frye, 1992, p. 65-66)

I have previously mentioned that the CWC programme was "designed by women for women" and advertised itself as a "3-day

self-discovery adventure for women” (Outward Bound, 1995). It included in its programme standard OEE-type activities (some of them introduced with a feminist-inspired vision as will be seen below), such as the already described creative and expressive activities (based on the research of Brown & Gilligan 1992, 1993; Hancock, 1989; Rogers, 1993) designed to encourage women to reflect on the time in their life when they were 10-14 years old. As was discussed in the ‘self as constructed through time’ section (Chapter 5, p. 215), when these same created opportunities are viewed through the lens of contemporary feminist theory they can also be seen as offering women an opportunity to see the self in the present as a product of a self in the past.

But the portrait and solo exercises also raised issues of reflection about the effect of social and cultural prescriptions on their experiences as girls. For example, Rebecca, who had not revealed herself as particularly reflective about her subjectivity, in showing us a picture of herself at age 14 during the debrief of the solo, made reference to her “high hair” as a method of trying to “fit in”:

(Rebecca) It mattered to me that I fit in, that’s why I had this high hair. Do you know what it takes to get your hair that high every day?

After telling the group about how her need to fit in manifested itself in her life at age 14, Rebecca went on to speak of a new sense of responsibility she felt toward her two pre-adolescent half-sisters:

(Rebecca) Being part of this course and meeting all of you women, I now know that I have to pay more attention to my two younger sisters and tell them that I am there for them and all this stuff doesn't matter.

Although attending different CWC courses, and growing up in very different environments, ten years apart, the similarity between Rebecca's thoughts (above), and Connie's (below) is striking. Unlike Rebecca, Connie is a lesbian, and grew up in a rural town in the South where she entered and won the local beauty contest. In describing her "big hair" in the photograph of herself at 13, Connie reflected:

(Connie) I hate to think how many hours of my life I spent in creating and maintaining this big hair, applying make-up, trying to look like what I was told looked good. . . . All I wanted to do was fit in to society's standard, that was the only way as a teenager I got any recognition. . . . get all the boys attention by looking like the pictures in the magazines. . . . Now look at me!

Indeed, it was hard to believe that the woman we saw before us was the girl in the picture, 20 years later. In thinking back to her experiences in the rural South, and listening to other women's stories and thoughts, Connie stated:

This course has kicked me in the butt to pay more attention to my niece who is 1300 miles away. . . . her parents are

divorced and she is very hard on herself. I need to take a more active role and be a positive influence in her life. I'm afraid that she is growing up like I did thinking big hair is important.

In the 'rethinking experience' section at the beginning of this chapter, I discussed the self-realisation that Gillian arrived at in being "amazed" that no one was able to identify her in the picture of herself at 14 (p. 243). I also mentioned that this opportunity created by the CWC programme enabled Gillian to remember and re-think her exclusion from her friends' camping experience, and her understanding of herself as different from the boys she considered to be her best friends, raising a new question for Gillian: "Is that when I lost my voice?" These examples illustrate that women do come to their own realisations about their histories, past experiences and previous selves through the CWC programme. However, as I go on to argue in this final section, with thoughtful facilitation, there exist many more opportunities to draw parallels between personal experience to the larger social and political context. In thinking about these opportunities, I am again struck by the similarities to CR's efforts to highlight the personal as political and to make the implicit explicit. Before focusing on the 'potential,' here are examples of how CWC did attempt to provide a feminist-inspired twist to two standard OEE activities.

The CWC programme's physical activities were standard Outward Bound stock, yet, there was an attempt made within some

activities to re-frame the challenge with a feminist angle. This is demonstrated through the following example of rock-climbing. Provided below is the briefing that the then CWC Programme Manager, Amy Kohut, gave to women at the outset of their rock climbing experience. Given that this is Amy's own framing (which she presented in her own inimitable style), it is presented here in her own words sent to me in post-course correspondence:

First I make fun of the flash and macho of skin tight lycra rock climbers, tense muscles bulging not because they are tense about the death defying acts they are about to undertake, but from flexing to show off to each other. I make sure I wear a figure 8 and carabiner [climbing equipment made of aluminum] and jingle them around to make that important sounding noise. . . . Then I demonstrate the safety system, the mechanics of climbing and say that we are here as a group of women to be supportive, and to take the mystery out of rock climbing but to keep the magic. . . . I talk about a past CWC participant's quote to me of how she equated rock climbing to 'a dance with the rock.'

Then I go to the book *Leading out* [deSilva, 1992]. The story of a woman named Collette, who is a blind woman who comes to climbing late in life. I use this to make the point that how high a blind person climbs has no bearing on her perceived success--it makes, for me, each moment of rock climbing equally important. Five feet off the ground is the same as 75 feet. Following in this concept, sideways is as

good as up. Collette says somewhere in her story to 'make a friend of the mountain'--how relationship based and anti-conquest that is! From this friend concept, I offer that handholds and footholds can be the rock putting out a hand for the climber as she goes.

Finally, I tell of the time that I was at the climbing site with a CWC group, and there was a group of fire-fighters (all men) doing rescue practice close to us. I tell of how I had this experience of looking in on two contrasting worlds, because from where I was anchored in at the top of the rock, I could hear their macho man world as they yelled to each other, 'come on fag,' 'ya big fat wimp' and the supportive world of CWC women shouting encouragement like 'lovely move!'; 'great job!'; 'nice!'; 'well done!' (Amy Kohut, personal correspondence, November, 1995).

I laughed with the other women each time I observed Amy's demonstration, and understood and appreciated the re-framing of rock climbing as more relevant to women. Beyond the humour, we can also see that Amy's interpretation of Collette Richards' "to make a friend of the mountain" being "relationship-based and anti-conquest" was Carol Gilligan-esque and related to the women-and-OEE literature previously discussed.

A different example, with greater (but missed) potential for CR possibilities, of the CWC programme making adjustments to standard OEE activities was provided and delivered by Judy. During

the one CWC course that used 'low-ropes course group initiatives' à la Project Adventure's Karl Rohnke (1984), Judy gave Rohnke's group initiative staple, 'Nitro Crossing,' a more feminist focus. The object: "To transport a group and a container 7/8 full of "nitro" (water) across an open area using a swing rope" (Rohnke, 1984, p. 139) remained unchanged, but the scenario that Judy framed this activity around was quite different. Making adjustments in framing OEE activities to make the scenario feel more relevant to the participants is common in women's OEE programming, and Judy, like Amy above, carefully chose her words for her all-women audience.

Judy re-named Karl Rohnke's 'Nitro Crossing,' "Overcoming Patriarchy." The open area that we had to swing across was said to contain oppression, discrimination, inequality; the place from where we had to swing was named "Interrupted Voice," and the place where we were supposed to land was named, "Collective Voice." In the bucket, instead of "nitro," was said to be "women power": the power of the collective, qualities that we had named in a previous activity, "Circle of Strength" as those we were proud of owning and thought we could contribute to the weekend. While Judy's examples could be said to have an essentialist 'ring' to them, they also have political meaning, and, I would argue, are more meaningful to women than transporting a bucket of 'nitro' across an open space, which I had previously heard contained water with crocodiles, sharks or other people-eating animals. Similarly, Karen Warren (1996) remarked that she had had recent occasion to reassess 'The

Spider's Web,' another of Karl Rohnke's (1984) standard OEE activities, and concluded:

I was poignantly reminded . . . that the popular techniques of experiential education must be constantly subjected to critical examination. I witnessed once more how women's experience in the outdoors does not necessarily fit neatly into the recipes for success common to the field of experiential education (p. 7).

Unfortunately, in the case of Judy's activity, the debrief evaporated. It was lost among other initiatives and was spoken about by women from a personal perspective, from their own experience. Missing entirely was the very point of the framing. Instead, given the lack of a guided debrief, issues like trust, support and cooperation were raised by the women. Thus, in this case, CWC was indeed limited to a "3-day self-discovery," shutting out the opportunity to explore the social and political context of the self.

This is all the more regrettable as, without being articulated in a coherent (much less theoretical) way, many issues related to the social construction of women actually did come up on the initiative of the participants. Women did want to talk about what could be loosely understood as the social construction of woman - "women as objects of social construction" (Rogers, 1993, p. 266), and did create their own dialogue around that in the programme. Some examples of this are presented below.

My experience as a member of four CWC courses was that, in addition to the factors identified in Nadler and Luckner's (1992) experiential education model (Figure 1., p. 54), the combination of diversity of age, sexual identity and experience among women were an excellent recipe for rich dialogue about women's issues in the group format. These factors were present on the two courses where substantial exchanges in terms of issues and the sharing of personal facts and stories occurred between women. Another feature, one that Denise Mitten (1994, 1995) called for, is that time be made in the programme to connect. Several women expressed regret that more time was not set aside at CWC for informal exchanges. On one course, the instructors recognised the benefit of an unstructured post-dinner conversation, and did not carry out their planned evening activity. One of the instructors brought this conversation up during our post-course interview:

(Ann) Could you believe the conversation after dinner on the first night?! I'd be interested in knowing whether that happens on any of the other courses you go on . . . it sure hasn't happened on the other [three] CWC courses I've instructed before this one.

(Louise) Yeah! It was kind of serendipitous. And it seemed to me that all of the women had a chance to have their say, it wasn't monopolised by one or two women. I'm also glad that you were able to just let go of your planned activity--you recognised that something good was going on and let us be. We must have been sitting around for at least two hours.

It is important here to note that the exchange which Ann and I refer to above was initiated entirely by the participants. Ann and her co-instructor, Hillary, were contributors to the discussion, but did not initiate it, nor facilitate it. The oldest participant, Ros, raised this issue in interview, and also gave her thoughts on why the discussion had a life of its own:

(Ros) And also what came across among the young women too, which was very satisfying for me, was to see them still struggling, you know, to find their identity, but that they all seemed to be very proud to be women. And didn't feel they had to make excuses about themselves, which my generation did a lot of, you know--in part, being put in that kind of secondary position in the world. The world mental set. And these women are still fighting about that. I mean, it's still there, but they at least are feisty about it and they keep trying to prove to themselves over and over that they don't have to get into that mind-set. That's kind of nice to see, that it continues.

. . . . And you know . . . Ann and Hillary were participants in that conversation, they didn't shape it. . . . The conversation just kind of had a life of its own.

One other group had their own impromptu, participant-generated, woman-centred, issue-raising dialogue in the same lull in the scheduled activities as the above group. Like Ros in her group,

Barbara also commented on the lack of facilitation by the instructors in the after-dinner story-telling:

(Ros) I know they [Outward Bound] wanted the group to be self-determined, but I was hoping for a little shove. A facilitator could have made that conversation much richer and inclusive . . . by drawing comparisons and differences and including the experiences of the younger women.

It can be seen from these examples that women created their own dialogue about their experiences as women and benefited from such conversations. Women were interested in sharing their experiences of their lives as women, and hearing about other women's experiences. Arguably, and as Helen was reported as observing in the section on lesbians, women don't need to go on an Outward Bound course to do that. But there is something tangible about the shared-experience of a programme such as CWC in its mixture of experience-based physical, creative, expressive activities, and the fact that the group is 'all there is' for 54 hours that provides a rich opportunity for such dialogue. This is why I believe that a programme such as CWC is uniquely positioned to provide a context for something akin to CR.

The majority of the issues that were raised in the group-setting at CWC were women-centred; because of the absence of a political framework/context, they were not always feminist. There was usually an essentialist ring to the dialogue, perhaps in large part because the women were relatively homogeneous. However,

that these issues have a forum to be "heard into speech" (Nelle Morton, cited by Frye, 1992, p. 64) at all in an outdoor setting for women is a start! Women attending CWC were not necessarily aware of the "terrible mistake" that Jane Martin (1994) identified "white academic feminists" had made in the past, and had since acknowledged, "in assuming that all the individuals in the world called 'women' were exactly like us" (p. 631).

Because the self is defined socially (ideologically and culturally) and contextually through communities, institutions, systems of meaning (Weir, 1996), a programme such as CWC offers tremendous potential for women to use shared experiences to come to self-understanding or a consciousness of one's identity in a social context. At a larger level, it provides the opportunity for women to revision their identities as women. Furthermore, because CWC itself is a social experience, it presents women with opportunities to engage in the process of encountering, discovering and challenging old and new shared meanings about the self in body, sexuality, size, strength, cultural expectations, abilities and age.

Almost two decades ago, Joy Hardin (1979) made a recommendation that future research consider the impact of outdoor courses on the development of women's feminist consciousness. Martha Bell (1993a) looked at this question with three other seasoned Outward Bound instructors in her attempt to discern what impact their feminist consciousness had on their leadership. With a view to participants, however, the recommendation Hardin made nearly 20 years ago remains just

that. With one 'kind-of' exception. A descriptive account by Deb Jordan (1988) of a camp leadership programme, the Iowa Girls' Leadership Camp, launched by the Iowa Women's Political Caucus in 1976 to "stimulate" 13-16 year old young women "to think positively and powerfully regarding their futures, and to view themselves as agents of change in our society" (p. 30).

Of course, as the following example illustrates, being part of a feminist experience can be confusing for some women. In comparing herself to other women on her course (of whom five [out of eight] declared themselves to be "feminist"), Jane raised in interview that she felt "inadequate" due to what she perceived as a lack of feminist sensibility, and alludes below to her curiosity about what a feminist is as shifting:

(Jane) I thought that all the women on the course were very intelligent and had a really different way of looking at things. I liked that . . . but I also felt inadequate about what I knew, compared to them.

I never took a women's study class in college. I don't know, I just never did. But it was kind of neat, listening to other people having a conversation, and the different books that they've read. And it's like, I haven't read any of those books; I read, like, the best sellers, but I haven't read, like 'Exploring Yourself' or 'Exploring your Womanhood.' I don't think that I've been in touch with that. It's kind of strange, considering that I'm a mother. . . . I think I wrote down some of the different books that some of the people said. . . . Like, I

never did consider myself a feminist. I don't know if I am. I don't even know what the definition of it is.

(Louise) What do you think?

(Jane) Someone that, you know, is really, like, gung ho-- 'We're as good as men, and we can do whatever men can do, if not better,' or whatever. And I'm kind of, like, 'Gee: that whole feminist revolution has really screwed me over.' Because now not only do I have to go out and get a job, but I have to still come home and take care of the kids and clean the house and do the cooking. So in some ways I'm screwed. So, you know? Whereas before I would only have had to take care of the kids, and now I've got to be this superwoman! And I think that's nowadays why women are developing high blood pressure. And all the other problems that go along with that additional stress of being in the working world. After this weekend, I'm more curious. . . . I'd like to read more about it, you know?

Jane's notion of what a feminist was supposed to be like was contradicted at CWC. A feminist to Jane was "gung ho," "We're as good as men, and we can do whatever men can do, if not better." Jane seemed to want to not like feminists. In her mind, before the "feminist revolution," she would not have had to be "superwoman." Yet, Jane spoke of the other women at CWC as "very intelligent," and of specific individuals as: "a wonderfully sweet lady"; "really neat"; "a role model for me;" "really nice" and alluded to respecting the

self-knowledge work they had been doing. At the end of the CWC course, we find Jane to be "more curious," wanting to "read more about" feminism, questioning what not so long ago seemed unquestionable: that she too might in the future want to consider herself a feminist, similar to the women she had liked at CWC. Given that Jane was a member of the group in which I reported Ros above observing the lack of facilitators' shaping of dialogue, the question is raised for me as to whether some programme changes might have allowed women like Jane to leave CWC with a clearer sense of what defined a 'feminist,' and what the "whole feminist revolution" actually achieved for women, and what it still seeks to change, so that women like Jane will not have to do 'double duty.'

In the metaphor section of this chapter, I suggested that it was counter-intuitive for instructors to tell participants how they should interpret an activity before experiencing it. By extension, I do not believe that instructors should impose their understanding of experience, or their own agenda, or particular view of the world on participants either. However, I do believe CWC instructors could have been more pro-active in their debriefing by elaborating on the leads that women themselves provided when speaking about their experiences at a personal level. In other words, they could have taken advantage of opportunities for CR. Mary (who came to the CWC programme as a participant, but with experience as a leader in other OEE programmes) suggested something that is not the full answer, but she is definitely on the 'right track':

(Mary) I think the debriefs were kind of standard, 'Give a high and a low.' 'Share one word.' . . . Maybe there could have been more in-depth debrief work. I think there were opportunities for making connections between people, and there was very little time or effort put into drawing people out and making connections between people. Using the debrief to show similarities in experiences and difference too. . . . You know, the whole connecting with women thing as well as connecting with courage.

As discussed in Chapter 2, debriefing the experience is a central tenet of experiential education process (see, e.g., Gass, 1993; Joplin, 1981; Kolb, 1984; Nadler & Luckner, 1992). Yet, in my estimation, it is often poorly done. At CWC, I found myself frequently commenting in my tapings on the shallowness of debriefs, describing them variously as "rushed," "inadequate," "trite," "absent." One of the CWC instructors later admitted feeling "disappointed" in her handling of a debrief that had led me to record the following thoughts immediately after it had taken place:

(Louise) . . . what just transpired in the last debrief . . . troubled me. At the beginning of the take-up of the solo, Caroline had described the parameters of the debrief as 'an opportunity to tell what you want of your solo experience, and what you feel you need to enter your lives in two hours when the ferry departs, homeward bound.' I like the notion of homeward bound! Anyway, we were told that we had

three minutes each to do this, and that Caroline told us she'd be strict about timing because the boat leaves at 3:00, and we have to be on it. The debrief turned into 'tell us your heart,' 'cry,' 'okay, shut up,' 'okay, next.' There wasn't time for the level of exchange that went on in this debrief. I felt these two instructors in particular [a trained therapist and a seasoned Outward Bound instructor] should have known better, and either made more time available, or should not have invited women to be so vulnerable through the questions they asked.

Caroline, herself, as she told me in interview a few days later, saw it this way:

(Caroline) There were a lot of things that came up at the end of the course that were profound. . . . To really not to have that honoured with the time it deserved was a disappointment to me. . . . I feel that, as women, we get rushed a lot in our lives, and that a lot of times we don't really get a chance to honour the things that are there, that are personal. . . . I don't mean dwelling on the stuff that's painful, but honouring that it's there, and then also honouring how it is that you're learning from that. And I think that's what is short-changed in life. So whenever I have an opportunity that's about growth, that's what I want to see happen.

In every other respect, Caroline had been very efficient and eloquent in summing up debriefs, and brought a feminist sensibility in highlighting the women-centred issues that had been raised or alluded to by the women, and an equally thoughtful approach to the way in which she asked questions to focus women's attention. The above 'glitch' notwithstanding, Caroline modelled for me a feminist instructor. Her "common-sense" thoughts, "life lessons," "wisdom," comments and questions were also noticed, appreciated and commented on by women in interview, and informal exchanges (gossip) on course, with much greater frequency than any other instructor. That Caroline viewed the "symptoms" of the women with whom she worked as a therapist as "partially sociological," and the CWC programme as "providing a context for women to be able to grow in ways that our culture doesn't nurture," has resonance in feminist theory that argues that the problems psychology has traditionally viewed as being in our heads, are actually constructed in a dialogue with society and culture. Indeed, Caroline viewed CWC as a way of providing women with such understanding:

(Louise) What is it about CWC that brings you away from your therapist's chair and out to Thompson Island for three days every so often?

(Caroline) . . . it really seemed like a forum where women could come together . . . to deal with some of the traumas of growing up female, and reclaiming some of the strengths that get lost along the way. And in my daily life I work with people around how to regain their strengths all the time, and

I am often working with people after they've really had some serious symptoms that are, in my way of viewing, partially sociological. So it's really about providing a context for people to be able to grow in ways that our culture doesn't nurture them. And then also providing a context that allows them to have some ways of transferring that back to their lives.

Clearly safety must be the first and foremost concern of OEE programmes. However in presenting Caroline's example here, I also hope to highlight the importance of instructors having skills other than technical skills. The above statement by Caroline neatly summarises the potential of programmes like CWC when instruction is provided that offers a relational, social and even theoretical context in which women can understand their experience. It should also be noted that the possibility of women gaining some theoretical insight about their lives as women is not available only to the participants, but also to the instructors. Through her experiences as an instructor at CWC, Chris refers to greater understanding of her self and her life and the choices she has made, past, present and future:

(Chris) Prior to Outward Bound I was always lacking that work-context, a real sense that I could do something and be master of it and be respected for that.

. . . . I have realised the value of getting to know the language and the structure of something and being able to

operate in those parameters using it in one's speech and understanding. For a lot of my life I kept throwing away structure and throwing away things. Thinking everything somehow needed to be spontaneous and absolutely real. And honesty meant sincerity and was totally made up from within, without any drawing on the language or academic learning. I think that connecting with Outward Bound in general, and CWC in particular, has been part of my willingness to take on some structure. Knowing that that is not the answer of the whole world, but it is a place when I can find myself and become creative.

Through working the CWC programme I have a greater understanding of the themes: women, voice, empowerment. Where women are in the world. And that is connected with the reading I have been doing. Not having an academic understanding of it, experiencing the weekend helps fill in a lot of that, and helps me think about it.

I previously mentioned that I thought the observations Mary made about the debriefs at CWC were on 'the right track' and part of the kind of answers I am looking for in feminist outdoor education. As Mary observed, "there was very little time or effort put into drawing people out and making connections between people." Not only is it possible for a skilled facilitator to highlight sameness and difference and "making connections between people," a facilitator with a feminist sensibility can provide an emotional, social and

cultural mirror in which to reflect women's insights and situate them in the larger social context. If OEE programmes like CWC are to be feminist rather than women-centred, facilitators need to be sensitive to the openings women participants provide, so as to assist them in understanding their personal experience relative to that of other women. Much like Marilyn Frye's (1992) previously noted description of patterns:

. . . each woman's speech creating context for the other's, the data of our experience reveal patterns both within the experience of one woman and among the experiences of several women. The experiences of each woman and of the women collectively generate a new web of meaning. (p. 65)

The challenge is to make the implicit explicit. A feminist sensibility could situate the issues that CWC women raised about their lives as women within the larger social framework, thereby providing an opportunity for women to understand their personal experiences as political. By this, I do not mean that the power of women's personal self-understanding and knowledge be compromised. Rather, I believe that if women's experiences at CWC were understood to be delineated by Marilyn Frye's (1992) "patterns," that further self-understanding would be possible; resulting as Frye (p. 65) suggested, in a "new web of meaning." This is so because our subjectivities as women are partly constructed for us socially and culturally, and embedded in our self-understandings. Therefore at CWC, there was, at an implicit level anyway, some

shared understanding about our lives as women, and a potential for more. I am advocating that OEE programmes strive to make the implicit more explicit so that it is possible for participants not only to gain greater self-understanding and self-knowledge, but also to discern their experiences to be "differentiated yet collective" (Flax, 1990, p. 220).

All of this begs the question of how instructors can be trained to take up these issues and to open up the spaces in which they can be effectively discussed. As is illustrated in the preceding discussion, the background with which instructors (including myself) enter OEE programmes is often in physical education, outdoor education, recreation, leisure studies, bachelor of education, none of which are known for their feminist emphasis. In fact I would venture to say that feminist views in some of these fields remain marginalised, even equated with and ostracised as, 'lesbian.' Clearly, a first imperative is to encourage women with diverse backgrounds (like Caroline and Chris described above) into the field. A second imperative is to provide instructors, irrespective of their backgrounds, with a feminist framework during staff training. Obviously, this would have to be done thoughtfully and carefully, or major resistance could be the result. Such a framework and the attendant acquisition of a feminist sensibility has benefits for instructors, as Chris described above. It enables them to provide the already mentioned cultural and social mirror with which to reflect the issues women raise, and to situate them in a larger social and political context.

This brings me back to my earlier comment that the CR movement was about women learning to do something different with their life experience than they had done previously. Perhaps this is what OEE programmes are facing in exploring how to take the interest in experience and the commitment to group activity and to re-think them with a view to bringing a feminist sensibility to what can be accomplished. As I have stated at several points above, the CWC programme missed many an opportunity to explicitly open up spaces for discussion when its instructors did not draw out the larger issues and frame them in a social context. To repeat, CWC advertised itself as a "3-day *self*-discovery adventure for women" (Outward Bound, 1995). However, as Griffiths (1995, p. 1) stated:

The self I am, the identity I have, is affected by the politics of gender, race, class, sexuality, disability and world justice. In other words, the feelings I have, the reasons I recognise, the wants I act upon - they are deeply political.

In previous chapters, my project shed light on a more nuanced version of the self. In the first part of this chapter I went on to demonstrate that when women's experiences are looked at through this lens, more complex and complete understandings are possible. Thus the key concepts of OEE need to be re-considered. In this last section, my central goal was to suggest that such new understandings have important implications not just not for the central theories and concepts of OEE, but also for the programming and staffing of OEE activities.

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APPENDIX

FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Not only do numerous debates exist in the social sciences about the relative merits of qualitative versus quantitative research methods, Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (1994) reported in their *Handbook of qualitative research* that “tensions, contradictions, and hesitations” abound within the field of qualitative research also: the ‘field’ of qualitative research is far from a unified set of principles. . . . [it] is defined primarily by a series of essential tensions, contradictions, and hesitations. These tensions work back and forth among competing definitions and conceptions of the field. (p. ix)

Rather than provide an overview of the “definitions and conceptions” within the qualitative research field, or the debate between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms, I will appropriate a contention that Kenneth Howe (1985) offered to the qualitative / quantitative debate. For Howe, the important question was to ascertain the appropriateness of the research method relative to the theoretical issues under consideration:

the merit of a given piece of research depends on how it responds to the fallibility of the question at issue, the fallibilities of relevant background beliefs, the nature of the question, and the broad practical and ethical constraints

under which the investigation must be conducted. (Howe, 1985, p. 17)

Shulamit Reinharz (1992) concurred with C. Wright Mills (1959) who encouraged his readers to think of method as "information about . . . actual ways of working," and not "the codification of procedures" (p. 195). In describing the process of how I went about collecting the data in Chapter I (section II), I attempted to reveal what went on in the "backstage regions" to which Gary Fine (1993, p. 267) referred. While it was not my objective to account for every single aspect of the research process, I was conscious of being "transparent" about "what I did" and "how I did it" (Klein, 1986, p. 14). Taking into consideration Fine's (1993) belief that it is "crucial . . . to be cognizant of the choices that we make and to share these choices with readers" (p. 268), I am mindful that the choices I made in doing 'what I did and how I did it,' affected the entire research process, including this final product. In the remainder of this section, I outline some of the choices that guided this project and their accompanying effect.

"Very simply" stated Patti Lather (1991), "to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the center of one's inquiry" (p. 71). As Helen Callaway (1981, p. 460) put it, feminist research helps us "to see the world from women's place in it." Feminist researchers' interest in qualitative methods originated in our recognition that "positivist methods skewed knowledge in an androcentric or male-oriented way" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 46). In

providing a summary of research conducted by those who identified themselves as feminist, Shulamit Reinharz succinctly noted that, by "eschewing standardization in format," researchers who operated in a feminist framework allowed "the research question, not the method, to drive the project forward" (p. 22). Reinharz's criterion for what counted as feminist research was the self-identification of the researcher: if she "identif[ied] herself as a feminist doing research" (p. 7).

Ethnography is "multimethod research" (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Denzin, 1994; Reay, 1996; Reinharz, 1992; Margery Wolf, 1992) and includes both participant observation and interviewing. Ethnographic inquiries "rely on the researcher's immersion in social settings, and aim for intersubjective understanding between researchers and the person(s) [researched]" (Reinharz, p. 46). Ethnography, then, is what Reinharz referred to as a "non-positive" research method, one that feminists have utilised to off-set the positivist paradigm (Reinharz, 1992). Researchers working from a feminist ethnographic perspective have, according to Reinharz, sought to: "document the lives and activities of women; understand the experience of women from their own point of view; and, conceptualize women's behavior as an expression of social contexts" (p. 51).

The importance and process of establishing rapport is considered to be important in feminist ethnography (Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981, 1985; Reinharz, 1992; Wolf, 1992). Shulamit Reinharz noted that "by achieving rapport, the feminist researcher reassures

herself that she is treating the interviewee in a non-exploitative manner. Rapport thus validates the scholar as a feminist, as a researcher, and as a human being" (1992, p. 265). That the relationship between the researcher and her 'subject' might, in actuality, be one of an imbalance in power with the resultant potential for exploitation, has been said to "shatter the original tenets of early feminist work" (Diane Wolf, 1996, p. 19). The concepts of power and exploitation were raised by Judith Stacey in her 1988 article "can there be a feminist ethnography?" (Stacey, 1991), in which she called into question Helen Finch's (1984) and Ann Oakley's (1981) (essentialist) assertion of the natural and harmonious relationship between the female researcher and her female subjects. As Sherna Gluck and Daphne Patai (1991) noted:

In rejecting traditional practices rooted in assumptions of the researcher's separateness, neutrality, and distance from the subjects of research, feminist discourse has emphasized instead, commonality, empathy, and sisterhood. These assumptions often collide with the realities of actual research situations, as many of the practices and perspectives proposed by feminists generate, in their turn, new problems, ironically undermining the very principles they were designed to embody. (p. 109)

I note here the similarity of this debate on methods to the debate that began within the feminist literature in the mid-1980's regarding the critique of its theory and approaches as essentialist.

These problems of power and exploitation that Gluck and Patai (1991) identified above, have been discussed in the feminist methods literature with a view to race (e.g., Phoenix, 1994), sexuality (e.g., Holland & Ramazanoglu, 1994) and class (e.g., Reay, 1996). I have tried to take responsibility for my own location in such relations of power and privilege throughout the research process by attending to concerns discussed in the remainder of this Appendix.

I stated in the "what I did" and "how I did it" (Klein, 1986) account of my fieldwork (Chapter 1, section 2), that my capacity to establish rapport and trust with women was enhanced by our shared Outward Bound experience, framed by the definition of courage "to speak one's mind by telling all one's heart" (Rogers, 1993, p. 265). I also stated in the above mentioned section, that I considered my interaction with women at CWC, and being privy to the stories they shared with me, to be an "unmitigated privilege." I believe a certain responsibility is attached to this privilege. Mary Maynard (1994) pointed to Janet Finch's (1984) experience of interviewing clergy wives and mothers involved in play groups, and noted "if the researcher is educated and articulate it is very easy to encourage women to talk about aspects of their lives concerning which, on reflection, they might have preferred to remain silent" (Maynard, 1994, p. 16). From my experience, I can relate to Janet Finch (1984, p. 80) who "emerged from interviews with the feeling that my interviewees need to know how to protect themselves from people like me."

Margaret Hagood (1939) described how she proceeded in a "friendly, conversational, 'just visiting tone'," and only indirectly approached questions regarding women's "attitude." While I consider that I approached conversations with women in a similarly friendly tone, I did not shy from questions regarding attitude or affect. However, and this was my guiding principle, if my questions evoked an emotional response, I acknowledged the woman's tears with the observation of whether they might be indicative of an unresolved or still-tender feeling. If the woman did not elaborate on this opening, I did not pursue the line of inquiry as I considered it to be imprudent. I simply felt that it was irresponsible to encourage women to open-up emotional issues in our brief interview, knowing that I would step out of their lives, and retreat to the other side of the continent with their story on tape.

But women did volunteer information that surprised me. Michelle Fine (1983) asked the question of what researchers should do with material "we happen to collect?" Although Fine raised this issue with a view to material women had disclosed to her in her capacity as a rape counsellor, I believe her question is relevant to this discussion. If I felt that women had disclosed some personal information, either by way of elaborating on their emotional response, or if my intuition prompted me to sense that what they were telling me seemed *risqué* to them, I asked these women at the end of the interview whether there was anything they had shared with me that they would prefer I not use. Two women who revealed details of adulterous affairs, and one woman who shared

her experience of being raped, and another woman who had an abortion, requested that I not use this information. I simply do not believe that, as Judith Stacey (1991) suggested, that "the lives, loves and tragedies that fieldwork informants share with a researcher are ultimately data - grist for the ethnographic mill, a mill that has a truly grinding power" (p. 113). Rather, I believe there to be a responsibility inherent in the research relationship, and that the "ethnographic mill" should be guided by that responsibility.

However, in spite of this sense of responsibility, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1952, p. 453) informs us that: "The only safe way to avoid violating principles of professional ethics is to refrain from doing social research altogether." We must, then, be sagacious, and always cognisant that, both we as researchers, and "our conclusions should always be open to criticism" (Holland & Ramazanoglu, 1994, p. 146). We must be aware of the choices we make, our own subjectivities, and the interpretation of other people's experience that both of these influence.

The way in which the researcher's social identity and values affect the data are of principal importance to feminist researchers (Borland, 1991; Gluck & Patai, 1991; Reay, 1996; Reinhartz, 1992; Rogers, 1993; Stacey, 1991; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Wolf, 1992). This is so, because, as Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1993) point out, "who a researcher is, in terms of their sex, race, class and sexuality, affects what they 'find' in research" (p. 228). While, as Stanley and Wise go on to acknowledge, reflexivity is not an exclusively feminist concern, Margery Wolf (1992) noted that feminists' interest in the

notion of reflexivity preceded its arrival on the research landscape as a "trendy term":

in our dealings with one another - questioning the use of power and powerlessness to manipulate interactions in meetings, examining closely the politics of seemingly apolitical situations, evaluating the responsibilities we bore toward one another, and so on. (p. 132)

In the research literature there are many interpretations of reflexivity, including two on which I will draw here. First, that of critical reflection and examination of the research process with a view to uncovering any assumptions about gender, race, class and other "oppressive relations." And second, that of reflexivity as an "intellectual autobiography" (Maynard, 1994, p. 16). Annie Rogers (1993) identified the benefits and inescapable features of Maynard's (1994) "intellectual autobiography":

To reveal myself in my work means to bring the self, the psyche, soul, mind, spirit - that peculiarly structured inner world that makes each of us who we are - directly into my work. . . . I form relationships, expecting both to influence others and to be influenced. . . . If I participate in authentic relationships, how could this be otherwise? (Rogers, 1993 p. 267)

Rogers acknowledged that for her, as for Susan Krieger (1991), the self "is a researcher's finest and most valuable

'touchstone' for making relationships and creating interpretations throughout the research process" (p. 267). Reflexivity is a critical aspect in qualitative research, because, as Norman Denzin (1994) pointed out "in the social sciences there is only interpretation. Nothing speaks for itself. Confronted with a mountain of impressions, documents, and field notes, the qualitative researcher faces the difficult and challenging task of making sense of what has been learned" (p. 500).

Ethnography is, "in the last instance," as Judith Stacey (1991) point out, the "researcher's interpretations, registered in a researcher's voice" (p. 114). Because of this, some feminist researchers (e.g. Borland, 1991; Gregg, 1991; Klein, 1983; Kelly, 1988) return their interpretation 'of what has been learned' to the original voice, their subjects. "In the spirit of reflexivity" (p. 65), Katherine Borland (1991) shared an experience that led her to urge fellow researchers to "not simply gather data on others to fit into our own paradigms once we are safely ensconced in our university libraries ready to do interpretation" (p. 65). Borland had come by this advice through her experience of misinterpreting her own grandmother's story, resulting in her being told "you've read into the story what you wished to - what pleases *you*" (p. 70). Briefly, Borland's grandmother, Bea, had agreed to talk on tape with her 'folklorist' grand-daughter (Borland) about an event (going with her father to the harness races, and betting on a horse and rider) that had happened 42 years previously. If the reader were able to disregard the ideological framework that Borland provided prior to

recounting the harness race story, it would be easy to get caught-up in a face-value rendition of Bea's delightful and lively story as told by Borland. However, to do so would miss the point: what Borland described as "who controls the text?" (p. 70). Borland had (mis) interpreted her grandmother - who she saw as a "remarkably strong, independent woman" - to be a feminist, "even though she had never called herself a feminist, it was an easy step for me to cast her in that role. . . . we are forever constructing our own identities through social interactions, we similarly construct our notion of others" (p. 72). Denzin (1994) recognised this dilemma when he stated that "the Other who is presented in the text is always a version of the researcher's self" (p. 503). And, as Susan Krieger (1991) noted, "when we discuss others, we are always talking about ourselves. Our images of 'them' are always images of 'us' " (p. 5).

As the writer of this thesis, I was, as Norman Denzin (1994) identified, a *bricoleur*, crafting meaning and interpretation out of women's experiences. Interpretation is, as Denzin (1994, p. 502) points out, "an art; it is not formulaic or mechanical." The fashioning of this thesis, then, is a reflection of my location and experiences. Who I am "in terms of [my] sex, race, class and sexuality," as previously mentioned by Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1993) "affects what [I found]" (p. 228). Informed by the data, the contemporary feminist theory literature, the OEE literature, my own experience, and my self as the research tool, I sculpted this product. While constantly vigilant of the context of women's words, I take

responsibility for crafting them into their current format.

Maureen Cain (1986) encouraged us to "take our own theory seriously" and to "use the theory to make sense of . . . the experience" (p. 265). As Mary Maynard (1994) identified "this is an interpretive and synthesizing process which connects experience to understanding" (p. 24). My own personal experience of this research process has convinced me that my ability to see more, or less, or differently was related to the theoretical lens I viewed women's experiences through. Perhaps it goes without saying then, that someone with different knowledge(s) than I have, or someone from a different location, would likely see different things in the data, and, therefore, come to a different interpretation. This is so, because, as Elizabeth Wheatley (1994) informs us:

Ethnographic relations, practices and representations, as well as the metaphors we use to make sense of them, are contextually contingent - their character is shaped by who we look at, from where we look, and why we are looking in the first place. (p. 422)

With this irremediable problem in mind, I have tried to make visible throughout the thesis, evidence of my own analytic process, including changes in my perspective as I went along.