OUTWARD BOUND AND EDUCATION FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PROLOGUE

II. OUTWARD BOUND: AN EXPERIENTIAL VIEWPOINT

III. THE OUTWARD BOUND IDEOLOGY
   A. The ideology is compelling because of its content.
   B. The ideology is pervasive.
   C. The ideology facilitates education at Outward Bound schools.
   D. The ideology obstructs education.

IV. OUTWARD BOUND'S EDUCATIONAL METHOD
   A. A comprehensive, compelling culture develops at the Outward Bound school generating commitment to the Outward Bound program.
   B. The educational method is experienced based. Self-confrontation is a major technique.
   C. The educational method is action-oriented.
   D. The Outward Bound program is explicitly uniform, yet a wide range of individual response is acceptable.
   E. Psychological preparation for and follow-up after an experience are not emphasized.

V. OUTWARD BOUND'S EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES
   A. Encouraging personal growth.
   B. Developing the ability to deal with danger, in particular the fear which is evoked (developing of courage).
   C. Developing the capacity for persistence (developing will-power).
   D. Developing a style of functioning which includes pacing oneself, living efficiently, and economically, and relying on one's natural resources.
   E. Developing interpersonal competence and sensitivity to improve task performance.
   F. Developing a desire to serve others.
   G. Developing a Religious attitude.

VI. EVALUATION AT OUTWARD BOUND
   A. Success is based in part on student's actions, how much of the Outward Bound program he completes.
   B. Success is based primarily on the student's reaction to the course, particularly his attitude.
   C. Criteria of success are ambiguous
   D. Staff decides who passes the course.

VII. THE JUVENILE DELINQUENT AND OUTWARD BOUND
   A. Certain qualities of the Outward Bound experience particularly encourage urban "juvenile delinquents" to change.
   B. Certain qualities of Outward Bound make it particularly difficult for these delinquents to change.
   C. Outward Bound groups composed entirely of delinquents.

VIII. SUMMARY AND COMPARISON OF OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOLS
   1. Chart (summary characterization of the Outward Bound Schools observed).

Appendix A. COLORADO OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL, course C-16
I. PROLOGUE

Outward Bound is a 26-day residential school conducted in an isolated, wilderness setting. The typical course is for males* ranging in age from 16-23, and coming from a variety of racial, religious, educational and socio-economic backgrounds. The curriculum contains a variety of primarily physical tasks, geared to the resources and demands of the school's setting (see Appendix A for a sample curriculum). The tasks are meant to become increasingly difficult for students, both physically and psychologically. The school tries to challenge its students to go beyond what they considered their (psychological and physical) limits. The attempt is made to use such "stretching" experiences to increase students' knowledge and appreciation of themselves and others.

The Massachusetts Division of Youth Service had collected preliminary evidence that an Outward Bound school experience reduced recidivism in adolescent delinquent boys committed to a correctional authority. To obtain more complete and conclusive evidence, a new research project was launched to study the effect of Outward Bound on juvenile delinquents. This new research effort included a team of participant-observers.**

Why the need for participant-observers? Though there was already preliminary evidence that an Outward Bound experience reduced recidivism

* Minnesota runs courses for females.
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there was little impartial information about what constituted an "Outward Bound experience". If delinquents were being affected, we could not go far toward suggesting "why". The "treatment" condition of the study had to be described.

Our professional training for the role of participant-observer is in the social sciences, particularly social and clinical psychology. This professional background was thought to increase the likelihood of impartial information about Outward Bound. Our professional training did, for example, seem to help guard against substituting the Outward Bound ideology for what actually happened at the schools. This task was especially difficult because the ideology exerts a powerful influence on the conduct of an Outward Bound course. Our professional training, however, is effected by its own ideology. We tried not to use certain components of our social science ideology, e.g., emphasis on psychological variables and group processes, to misinterpret the Outward Bound experience.

Our goal as participant-observers was to understand Outward Bound as a culture, as a system of education for personal growth. To do this, we tried to isolate Outward Bound's key educational principles and techniques. We also tried to examine how the school functioned, and how students were motivated and affected by the Outward Bound experience. This participant-observer report, then, presents our understanding of Outward Bound as a system of education for personal growth. It also attempts to capture some of the atmosphere of an Outward Bound school. The report may thereby provide a better context for understanding the more quantitative sections of the M.Y.S. study of Outward Bound's effect on delinquents.
How were we to do our job at Outward Bound? Before our arrival at the Outward Bound schools, we felt that the usual difficulties of the participant-observer role would be compounded there. There would be the need for a delicate balance between participation and observation, participating enough so as to make valid and not merely "objective" observations. Added to that, it seemed that observation would have to deal with a 24-hour phenomenon, and most of the observing would have to be done "on the run". Outward Bound seemed a total culture and so much of it seemed to involve strenuous action. Both these assumptions were confirmed. The participant-observers' schedule tried to facilitate their extended involvement in the typical Outward Bound program. Within certain logistical constraints, the schedule also tried to cover each school, and special groups (e.g., the homogeneous delinquent patrol) and have at least one observer who had been to all three schools.* To record our observations we employed a portable tape recorder (for interviews, observations) and a daily journal.

On our arrival at the Outward Bound schools, our role as participant-observers came suddenly clearer. Unless one participated extensively and actively, one could not really understand Outward Bound at all. And so participate we did. We were introduced as educators trying to learn more about Outward Bound. Since the Outward Bound schools are by now used to visitors and observers, our entree was not difficult. Generally we participated along with one of the regular groups of students as they went

* First course Colorado (C-16): Katz, full course.
Second course Minnesota (M-7): D'Andrea, full course.
Second course Hurricane Island (H-1): Kolb, two weeks; Katz, three days.
Third course Minnesota (M-8): Katz, full course.
through the course. At times we functioned as assistants to the instructors, most often as students.

There were at least three reasons for extensive participation. First, so much of Outward Bound operates from the inside, from within the culture. In order to appreciate the impact of this culture, one has to be immersed in it to a considerable degree. And the experiential impact of Outward Bound was something we perhaps could not have prepared for.

Moreover, unless one participated extensively and actively, one could not acquire enough skills to observe in critical situations. We were not willing to observe students on a climb or an expedition unless we felt reasonably confident about our own wilderness abilities.

And finally, there was an unwritten law that respect and comaraderie was based upon a person's willingness to at least try those Outward Bound activities which befitted his age and condition. Since we were apparently young and physically fit and coordinated, few activities were seen as inappropriate for us to try. Once we began to participate, it was not easy to abstain from parts of the program because we were "PH.Ds" or "there for only one course" or "not really part of the program". Much of the success we had in observing Outward Bound seems dependent on the respect and comaraderie generated by the degree of our participation.

This immersion on the Outward Bound culture had important implications. The need to categorize — seemingly universal, but particularly rampant among social scientists — had to be abated. The Outward Bound experience too often demanded so much that there was little energy or interest left for categorizing. If you were really scared on
that rock-climbing exercise, your categorizing had to wait until the exercise was over. The observer role was most often performed at night, in the tent, where one could reflect on the day's experiences. The daily journal became quite important because your feelings and observations would change from day to day, often dramatically. And after completing an Outward Bound course, as one's perspective gradually developed, these journals became an invaluable source of data.

We also found extremely useful those many categories which laymen use to describe human experience, but which social scientists avoid. Words like "courage", "hard work", "life-death situation", "boredom", seemed made to order for describing Outward Bound.

One final note about our role as participant-observers. As social scientists, we were initially excited about studying something which we rarely encountered professionally, i.e. a situation which apparently produced dramatic personal growth. After attending the schools, we ourselves felt quite affected. We still felt excited about Outward Bound and its potential for encouraging personal growth.
II. OUTWARD BOUND: AN EXPERIENTIAL VIEWPOINT

Now that we were starting to spend more time in the field, it felt like we were shifting into high gear. Only the staff knew exactly where we were going that morning, which sort of left you wanting to know more about the routine that was planned and the exercise that you'd be participating in. We rode for a while in the truck, going over bumpy mountain roads, tossed about on the hard seats, sharing in an early morning adventure joy-ride.

We reached our destination and looked up. It did look big. "It" was a rock face, something which later we would respect much more than we did that morning. Hiking up the gully we arrived at the base of the rock face. It looked even more awesome and magnificent than from the road below. There were some other patrols there, close to forty students and five or six instructors milling around.

Soon the demonstration began. With apparent ease, confident ease it seemed, several of the instructors demonstrated rock-climbing. We looked up the rock face as they gracefully worked their way up, looking for the proper hand holds and foot holds. After a few more climbs by the instructors, the task was ready, the challenge set forth. And then began the slow process of each student confronting the task each in his own manner.

Who should go first? There was much jockeying around for that "privilege", and as usual, the guy who "always wants to go first" went
first. Watching one of your peers negotiate the same climb that only the instructor had done previously made the task seem within your own reach, made it seem possible, perhaps easy. Soon, however, there were students who began to encounter difficulty. Their climbs were not effortless, not graceful. They were more struggling up the rock, fighting against the rock rather than working with it, searching frantically for holds rather than carefully finding them. Then the task again appeared difficult. You started to make judgments about how you would do based on how others were doing. But once your peers started climbing, the task was one you had to confront and try.

Over so slowly each student had his chance to walk up to the base, check his knot, and begin his climb. But the progress was slow. Mass production techniques had made little headway in the operation of this activity. Three routes were going, but there were nearly forty boys, and they did not climb fast. And each climb was spot-lighted. Observed by various peers to get pointers for their own climbs or to make judgments about the climber. Observed by the instructors, for their job was safety, to keep people out of trouble. So there was lots of waiting, lots of idle chatter, some concern for the fact that you would be climbing soon.

After several students had completed their climbs, they took over the other part of the task for the day, that of belaying. Those who were belaying had the responsibility for insuring that the climbers did not have a serious fall. The rope attached to the climber’s belt was held by the belayer at the top of the rock face. The belayer had to continually "feel" the climber at the end of the rope, giving him just enough slack so that he could climb freely, not so much slack that if he
slipped he would fall too far. This ultimate responsibility, this balancing of another's life was easy to talk about, harder to really feel. When the climb was not going smoothly, when the climber perhaps slipped, then innocence would vanish. The belayer felt the climber's life in his hands.

Lunch came, a break in activity. A time to exchange some of the fear, some of the exhilaration that went into the rock climbing activity. But a time for most of the boys just to eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, talk about the weather, kid each other, and generally act as they did on all other lunches in the field. A time to relax, except for those whose climbs were yet to come, who felt some tension, at the very least a sense of expectancy. The lunch was short. It had to be. There were many who still had to climb. Back up the gully, along the loose rock, back to the base of the rock face.

My turn. It was not that I was holding back; it's just that I wasn't one of the most eager ones. I went to the base, with confidence. The ones who had climbed the route that I was going to take looked like they were having a relatively smooth run. Roped-in. Check my knot out with the instructor, a couple of times. And then I began to climb.

The first several moves were easy, and I developed over-confidence. I climbed without really thinking ahead and looking for my next moves, and soon I was in a terrifying position. I could see no where to go. Up, down, left, right, there seemed no route open to me. I got really frightened, scared, and forgot that I was roped in. It became an ultimate situation for me, my life was at stake. I tried to move to the left. I reached high,
too high, and that was it. My grip couldn't hold any longer, and I slipped. The feeling inside was a sinking, a real sinking. I knew that was the end. Split-seconds later I was on the ground. I hadn't fallen more than eight or nine feet, possibly ten. Inside, however, I had passed through death, and there I was on the ground again. I was shaky, but my next thought was to start up again. There just didn't seem to be any other reasonable alternative.

I began to climb again, this time with a little less confidence than was appropriate, and the climb was not easy. There were several spots where I was there for what seemed a long time, looking for the right path, seeing none, then taking a chance, coming up with a hand-hold which seemed to work, scrambling more than climbing. Above me another student was having real problems, and he froze. He froze for quite a time, and beneath him I had to stay flat against the rock waiting for him to move, in any direction. He tried several ways but couldn't get going again. Eventually the instructor came out and assisted the boy above me off the rock face.

Arriving at the top of the rock face after my climb was not exhilarating, not exciting; it was just good to be there. Once at the top I joined a special league, a league which was created just on that day, a league whose admission was climbing from the bottom of that rock face to the top. It was not a hard league to join. Everybody but one or two of the forty boys made the league, but still, it was a league, and being a member of it brought you that much closer to the people around you. Closer, not because you knew them any better, but because you and they had gone through an unusual experience together.
Today was a long one. By the time all the students had a chance to climb the rock face, it was late in the afternoon. As we walked down from the face, again down the gully, tired this time, I realized that the situation had provided me with an ultimate moment. Undoubtedly I had been prepared for such a thing, but the situation encouraged and stimulated such a moment. Down on the road again, walking back to camp I felt much more humble, still a little shakey. I really felt that my Outward Bound experience would not be easy. There would be moments like that one on the rock face, where I had died in my own mind. It was in hope of just such moments that I had come to Outward Bound.

The hike back to camp was very "professional". We knew where we were going, we decided what pace to set. We all felt much more involved in our mountain environment. And we had done something which professional climbers do, they with much less effort and much more skillfully. But we had done it, we could talk about it, and it made us feel more "professional".

At night, the fall was still with me. I relived it several times, the sinking feeling was real. I thought -- it seemed almost a vow -- that in the future I would not "give up" when the consequences were so dire. I felt more aware of that moment when "it's all over" and wanted to maintain that awareness. There were no lights on in the other tents. Most boys were probably already asleep. Had many reflected much on the day? They were instinctively storing up energy for the next day, which seemed a good idea.
III. THE OUTWARD BOUND IDEOLOGY

The Outward Bound ideology is both powerful and pervasive. The ideology presents Outward Bound as a dramatic, important, potentially life-changing experience. It portrays Outward Bound as a way of actualizing one's potential, particularly in the area of character development. The ideology markedly affects what happens at Outward Bound. It both facilitates and obstructs the schools' educational effectiveness.

A. The ideology is compelling because of its content.

Outward Bound is portrayed as an effective tradition-tested way of self-discovery. There are numerous references to the Outward Bound movement, and the people who through the years have taken the Outward Bound path. There is an assumption that the Outward Bound program is intrinsically educational. Moreover, there is an assumption that Outward Bound can be successful with all types of boys, that each boy will benefit in his own way.

Through primarily physical activities which are increasingly stressful and demanding, a student is forced to confront himself. Plato's statement is quoted: "Let us build physical fitness for the sake of the soul", Outward Bound "trains through the mountains and not for them". The student discovers aspects of his essential nature and thereby begins to develop character. Important ingredients of character are: self-reliance, the desire to serve others, courage, self-discipline, realistic self-image, resourcefullness, will-power, and appreciation of nature and man's place in it.
Moreover, there is the claim that character is essential to human functioning but particularly lacking and hard to develop in modern youth. Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, is quoted in the Outward Bound brochure:

"The purpose of Outward Bound is to protect youth against a diseased civilization. Three decays surround the modern youth: The decay of care and skill; the decay of enterprise and adventure; and the decay of compassion".

Most adults involved in Outward Bound find this claim expresses their viewpoint. As the Outward Bound course progresses, more and more students come to feel that the claim is accurate. The ideology promises a way to develop what is essential, but lacking and difficult to attain.

B. The ideology is pervasive.

A variety of public relations materials are employed in communicating the ideology. The more formal ones range from the Outward Bound brochures to the Outward Bound movies and scores of magazine articles written about Outward Bound. Most of these more formal public relations materials emphasize a dramatic existential quality to the Outward Bound experience. The reader or viewer is constantly impressed with the ultimate quality of the Outward Bound experience, and is instilled with confidence that the Outward Bound approach works. The lead quotation from the Outward Bound brochure is a student's analysis of Outward Bound:

Only under the pressure of stress does a person get the chance to know himself. Outward Bound is not easy; it is not meant to be. It is something very good.

It is hard for a prospective Outward Bound student not to feel that some-
thing significant will happen at Outward Bound after he reads such a
statement. The Colorado Outward Bound movie entitled "Tall as the
Mountains" dramatizes the Outward Bound experience. On viewing that film
one does feel that Outward Bound "is not easy", but one also feels a
strong motivation to complete the Outward Bound course because it is
something special, almost heroic.

The more formal public relations materials are continually
supplemented by the talk and action of the Outward Bound staff. One often
sees in a staff member the personification of the Outward Bound ideology.
And for these staff members who accompany their actions with talk, the
message of the ideology is made even more explicit. This is not to say
that staff members give out a "party line". There is a core value system
which seems shared by most of the staff, a core which stresses the
Outward Bound experience as a path of self-discovery and service to others.
But there are as many modifications on how this core is presented, and
ways in which this core is elaborated, as there are staff members.

C. The ideology facilitates education at Outward Bound Schools.

The ideology can enhance the experience at Outward Bound and
facilitate its educational effectiveness. It can serve as a powerful
motivating factor. Staff members feel that they are involved in a special
job, an extraordinary educational experience. This feeling seems to
derive not only from the realization that students' lives depend on their
instruction, but also on their feeling a part of the Outward Bound
movement. They have a special sense of pride and desire to do a good job.
The Outward Bound ideology also generates in students a feeling that they
are involved in an important educational experience. They appreciate and are encouraged by the fact that many before them have tackled the same problems that they will face.

The ideology has a self-fulfilling property. According to the ideology, Outward Bound is an effective way of discovering one's self. Students, and especially staff, share in this belief. Having the belief can help, in fact, to make the Outward Bound experience meaningful and effective. Most students come to Outward Bound to change or be changed. This would include the high school student who feels he will become (physically) tougher and the college junior who feels he will develop leadership ability; the boy sent by his parents to "become a man" and the boy sent by the correctional institution to be "reformed".

D. The ideology obstructs education.

But the ideology, by its very power and pervasiveness, can also obstruct the educational effectiveness of Outward Bound. Expectations based on the ideology are often unfulfilled. The Outward Bound ideology does not emphasize gradual change. The ideology considers change in a broad and dramatic manner, as in, for example, "learning to deal with fear". It does not focus upon the smaller, less dramatic but often more essential aspects of change. Students therefore find it more difficult to be satisfied with and build upon minor experiences of change and growth.

Students' experiences at Outward Bound usually do not seem so dramatic or clearly worthwhile as the ideology can lead them to expect. It takes a certain kind of courage to accept one's own experience as being a valid Outward Bound experience when the drama is not apparent or their experience
is not clearly "something very good". It becomes difficult for the student to describe his own experience in his own words. When, for example, students talk about their "solo" one is acutely aware that many of their descriptions have already appeared in the various public relations media. On further exploration with these same students they emphasize different but very important aspects of their solo, such as their boredom, or their disappointment in not making more constructive use of their time. Students describing their own experience in the language of the public relations media is unfortunate. It becomes even more serious, however, when ideology is substituted for experience when the Outward Bound ideology actually prevents students from having an Outward Bound experience. For it is clear that only when the student has his own experience, does he have an Outward Bound experience.

The ideology can become so overwhelming that it can lead some students to take a passive approach toward Outward Bound. Since the Outward Bound experience is portrayed as so powerful, they feel that it will happen to them. Though this passive attitude is continually discouraged, it can limit the students' degree of involvement in the program. Staff members can also be overwhelmed. This leads to a general feeling that the Outward Bound program "automatically" works. Their efforts at "making it work", so critical to success at Outward Bound, are lessened.

The ideology assumes that Outward Bound can be successful with all types of boys. This position supports the concept of the extremely varied student body which is found at the schools. But with some types of boys, Outward Bound can be an educationally unrewarding experience.
For some, Outward Bound appears to have a diminished impact. Some of the more mature college students are less motivated than the usual student in the course who tends to be very much at the high school stage. The mature student has more perspective and is not as thoroughly immersed in the Outward Bound culture. Peer pressures, inter-group competition become less powerful forces for him. He can more easily absent from undergoing an experience in the Outward Bound way. Students who are experienced woodsmen, sailors or climbers do not generally get as much from these activities at Outward Bound as do other students. Much of the challenge and excitement due to the novelty of the task is absent.

There are other types of students who may be adversely affected. A boy who has intense psychological problems does not seem appropriate for Outward Bound even though he may come to the school because he wants to change. If a boy has intense fears, or an intense need for reassurance, it presents particular problems. Having him confront fear can lead to increased fear unless the confrontation is handled with extreme sensitivity and competence.

The Outward Bound approach sees a value in treating all students in essentially the same way. The assumption is in part that if you treat a "problem" student like the other students, i.e., as if he were "normal", then he is likely to start being "normal". There is some psychological evidence to suggest this can be an effective approach if handled with great inter-personal sensitivity and understanding. However, this same approach can lead to ignoring a student's intense problems, and perhaps increasing their severity. At Outward Bound, since few of the staff had
experience working with intense psychological problems, such problems were often ignored. At times they were ignored by officially assigning "problem" students to a special group from which staff only expected the worst.

Moreover, staff generally does not have enough time to work too extensively on particular problems students may have. There was a feeling among some staff members that such specialized attention was beyond their responsibility. They were bothered by the increased difficulty of running a course including "problem" students.

Outward Bound at present seems particularly suited to educate "normals". Perhaps a procedure of selection could be developed which would assure a more effective matching of prospective student and Outward Bound. This procedure might include discouraging certain types of boys from attending an Outward Bound school. In addition to the present requirement that the prospective student be in good physical condition, there also might be a requirement that the student not be at the time involved with intense psychological problems. This procedure might also encourage a prospective student whenever possible to attend the Outward Bound school which seemed the best educational environment for him. As we shall see, there are important differences between schools.

But more elaborate selection procedures conflict with the Outward Bound ideology and at present seem impractical. If the "problem" student is to be treated as if he were "normal", there need be no screening for psychological disturbance. Moreover, the "first-come first-serve" basis of present Outward Bound selection is eminently practical and convenient.
There does, however, seem to be an increasing number of "problem" students who attend Outward Bound schools. This would include students attracted by the public-relations image of "from marshmallow to man in 26 days" as well as the students supported by government grants who are often "juvenile delinquents" or "kids in trouble". It seems that some modifications are necessary in selection procedures and/or staffing and programming.
IV. OUTWARD BOUND'S EDUCATIONAL METHOD

Outward Bound relies primarily on an experience-based, action-oriented method of education. Learning occurs in a "total culture" which generates commitment and excitement. Many of the students' experiences and actions have an intense, ultimate quality. This increases the already vast educational potential of the method. A key technique in the Outward Bound method of education is self-confrontation. Self-confrontation encourages the individual to surpass what he thought were his limits. Staff is the critical factor in Outward Bound's method of education. The staff members must guide a student's experiences and actions if education is to be maximized. Outward Bound schools do not emphasize preparing a student psychologically for an experience; nor do they emphasize dealing with his psychological reactions to the experience, an approach which may reduce the educational impact of the student's experience.

A. A comprehensive, compelling culture develops at the Outward Bound School generating commitment to the Outward Bound program.

The very physical isolation of the schools acts to increase involvement and to emphasize Outward Bound values and standards. Visitors to the school are looked upon as outsiders. There develops a strong feeling among the students of being in a retreat, being in a "special place" in order to do "special work". If one does accept the purposes of attending the Outward Bound school, then one's entire life can revolve around the school and its program. Most of the students have such a relationship to the school. It is infrequent that they can support interests or needs
antithetical to Outward Bound, and therefore not usually taken care of by Outward Bound. Since the student's life revolves around the Outward Bound school, the values of the Outward Bound culture (e.g., "finishing the course") become intensified.

Students become immersed in the Outward Bound culture. Things which never would have been attempted become standard practice. As students go down the zip-wire, sliding over the gorge, they often feel that "kids back home should only see me now". Old values and standards for behavior are replaced by the Outward Bound values. Very often one consciously realizes he is doing "Outward Bound-type things" only after he has already done them for some time. This immersion is both sudden and gradual. Outward Bound starts off with "a bang". Usually the very first day you are doing something which you would never have attempted before, e.g., running headlong down slippery rocks through the bog. Also, as the course progresses, your values become Outward Bound values: "Of course I'll run and do the dip, what else do you do when you get up in the morning".

Indeed it is hard to be anything but completely involved in the program. As we described in the Prologue, we really had to participate in order to be participant-observers. Students who were only marginally involved in the program could not stay very long at the schools.

The Outward Bound ideology is a key influence in shaping the culture. It becomes difficult not to meet challenges or finish the course. There is a prevalent value that only the "strong", the "men" are able to finish the course. In an event like the marathon, individuals who do not finish or do not cross the line running are looked down upon. Persistence is a
virtue, and giving-up is hard to tolerate. Students feel that what they have to do at Outward Bound is what should be done. It becomes very difficult for a boy to "walk away" from a challenge. Students are often kept in the challenging situation for a period of time to encourage their meeting it. There are few "acceptable" reasons for not doing parts of the program, or for leaving the course. Serious physical injury like a broken leg, is one such acceptable reason. Injuries which allow for "malingering", like sprains, are rarely acceptable. Psychological problems, like fear of the mountains, are not easily understood, sometimes ridiculed.

Challenges, particularly when they are felt as dangerous, when one's life is "at stake" take on an irresistible quality. The excitement of the challenge, the sense of adventure, is contagious. Exciting events intensively involve the students in Outward Bound. More dangerous tasks generate more excitement. As on the climb up the rock face, much of the excitement stems from a conflict about whether one should make a certain move or should not. Many students feel they have come to Outward Bound specifically to meet challenges. Challenges are often seen as the highlights of the Outward Bound experience.

The opportunity to really test one's limits is very important. Challenges, particularly those felt as dangerous, are often approached as opportunities for defining oneself. For many students, the question "Who am I?" is very pressing. As suggested by many writers, adolescents' sense of identity is in formation. For many, the challenges of Outward Bound provide an opportunity to gain some clarity about "who they are". They look upon Outward Bound as an "initiation rite", a not particularly pleasant but "real" way of finding out who they are, what their limits are.
Many students approach Outward Bound as if it were the initiation rite which will effect their transition from boyhood to manhood.

The development of competence and confidence in meeting the Outward Bound tasks becomes important. Competence (mastery) generates a sense of personal worth and a feeling of accomplishment. Students develop pride in their competence, an almost professional feeling about their sailing, climbing or canoeing abilities. There is also a strong desire to be able to deal with danger confidently. It becomes important to be able to face one's fear about a dangerous situation, and still complete the task. Students are not comfortable with the feeling that "I'd never do that again, it was too scary."

There is a strong desire among students to be seen as "men" not "boys". They do not want to be considered soft or cowardly. Hard work becomes intrinsically rewarding and a source of pride when one wants to avoid appearing soft. After a hard day of hiking or paddling, students feel a meaningful sense of accomplishment. Many of the tales told by students deal with the weight of the pack they carried, or the number of hours they rowed. Students who take short cuts, or have a lazy attitude, rarely occupy positions of influence or respect. Outward Bound is "hard work", not "fun". Rarely does a student enjoy Outward Bound. Rather, it is something he should go through. To be considered "chicken" and not to be able to disprove this claim is a supreme insult at Outward Bound.

Peer, staff, and family expectations exert great pressure toward conforming to the Outward Bound culture. As on the climb up the rock face, when everyone is doing it, the individual student finds it hard not to join
in. This is particularly so when he realized that the comaraderie which develops is based on a sharing of common experiences. Anyone who did not climb the rock face that day was "left out" in a very important sense. The watch patrol or brigade as a unit also exerts strong pressure on completing tasks and the course. Inter-group competition is based on individuals’ performances on tasks, particularly on their completing tasks.

Staff members are persons who have completed tasks similar to or more demanding than the Outward Bound program. Their almost unquestioned expectation is that their students will also complete the Outward Bound course. In fact, part of their reputation as instructors depends on how all their group completes a task or finishes the course.

Parents add a final pressure toward completing the course. It seems that there is an increase in the number of boys who are "sent to Outward Bound in order to become a man". There is also the more usual expectation that when one goes to a school, one finishes the course and gets his diploma, or in this case, certificate.

B. The educational method is experience based. Self-confrontation is a major technique.

Critical self discoveries are brought about by placing the student in situations where he must confront himself and his abilities. The situations demand actions which challenge his self-definition and encourage him to explore and surpass what he thought were his limits. They are designed so that the student has to confront his own limitations, the fear, etc., rather than avoid it or smooth it over. The self-confronting situations range from the mundane to the dramatic; where a life might be
at stake or a basic need such as hunger might be involved. The confrontation could take place in a student's private world or in a very public arena.

The climb up the rock face was one example of a limit-stretching experience. This was especially true, as we saw, when your moves follow a period when you find yourself "stuck", wondering what to do next. A student was facing a very difficult jump (psychologically) on the ropes course. He was there a long time, and a number of his peers gathered to watch. He constantly and continually described how he was going to make this critical jump, how he wasn't afraid, how he just needed a little time. He made the issue of his courage very explicit. After some time, he had to give up and climb down. He also had to deal with a modified image of his courage. There was also the boy for whom the mountains presented a situation which evoked self-discovery. He confided his private fear: "You're not going to get me up there — I'm scared of those mountains, I might get lost or I might fall down; I didn't realize I'd be so scared."

Then there was the heavy packs, or canoes to portage. It was something each student had to deal with, yet it stretched each student in different ways. Many of the situations which presented the most substantial challenge to students were situations they all had to go through, situations which were "part of the course".

The technique of self-confrontation seems critical to personal growth or self-realization. "Identity crises" (as described by Erik Erikson) and "peak experiences" (as described by Abraham Maslow) are associated with self-confronting experiences. Both of these phenomena are often
growth-producing. In the identity crisis the individual raises issues of "Who am I?", "Where do I want to go from here?". In the peak experiences, the individual can "get outside of himself", get perspective on what he is doing. He can feel or see more intensely than is usual and discover new aspects of his emotions and thoughts. Outward Bound adds an intensity and ultimate quality to self-confrontation because the confrontation often demands that the student act, not merely talk, and because the student's physical life can be at stake.

But self-confrontation at Outward Bound does not automatically engender personal growth. Self-confrontation is often an intense and volatile experience which requires sensitive attention. Staff guidance as manifested in preparation for and follow-up after experiences become critical. For example, if experiences are to be self-confronting, the "limits" of a student must be sensitively assessed. It is not easy to know how much someone can stretch himself or what is the right time for him to try. These judgments rested with both students and staff. There were no tasks which automatically made these decisions. More often than not the decisions that were made at Outward Bound seemed wise.

There is an emphasis on making information - or content-learning experiential. The feeling is that a student should grow into knowledge about the wilderness, learn through his own trial and error. Indeed there is a certain unwritten rule that a wilderness expert does not pass on to others all of his knowledge, all of the lessons he's learned from his own experience. Lectures, when given, are usually followed by exercises which employ the principles of the lecture.