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OUTWARD BOUND AS EDUCATION FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

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Harvard University**

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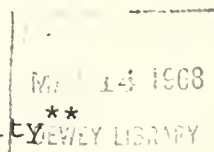


OUTWARD BOUND AS EDUCATION FOR PERSONAL GROWTH*

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**Now at Department of Psychology, Brandeis University.

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Education of the whole man has been an enduring concern, and still seems a relevant response to contemporary crises such as the crises in race relations, urban areas and emerging nations. Such an educational process involves an integration of emotional, physical and moral or spiritual learning with intellectual learning. Allport (1954) and Alschuler (1968) have discussed some educational methods which attempt to impart more than intellectual knowledge, including sensitivity training and creativity training. In this paper we will describe Outward Bound, a program which is unusual in that it works directly on the individual's emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual functioning. This comprehensive approach to education makes Outward Bound an excellent case study in the area of education for personal growth.

Outward Bound is a school offering a twenty-six day residential course in an isolated, wilderness setting. Typically, the course is for males aged sixteen to twenty-three from a variety of racial, religious, educational, and socio-economic backgrounds.¹ An attempt is made to limit the proportion of full-paying students to about half of any course. The curriculum contains a variety of primarily physical activities such as wilderness travel and camping, mountain climbing, canoeing and seamanship. Activities

¹Courses for females aged sixteen to twenty-three and for male and female adults are conducted, e.g., at Minnesota Outward Bound.

are meant to become increasingly difficult for students, both physically and psychologically.¹ The school tries to challenge its students to go beyond what they considered their psychological and physical limits in order to increase students' knowledge and appreciation of themselves and others.

Outward Bound was founded originally as a survival training school for British merchant seamen during World War II. Shipowners found that young seamen were the first to give up and die when in exposed lifeboats; whereas the older men, officers and petty officers, though less fit physically, were more likely to live and to save others.

The shipowners turned to Dr. Kurt Hahn, headmaster of the Gordonstoun School in Scotland, who had already incorporated concepts of service, rescue training, physical challenge, and adventure into his educational practices. Hahn worked out a program that was highly successful in preparing young men to cope with defeatism and to prevail amidst hardships. Hahn believed that success in meeting a severe challenge often depends more upon attitude than physical prowess. The literature on individuals' reaction to disaster and crisis supports this assumption

¹Generally, the first ten days are spent in developing wilderness skills and going on a two to three day wilderness expedition. This is in preparation for a long expedition, approximately ten to fifteen days, towards the end of which is the "solo-experience." Students spend approximately four days and three nights alone in the wilderness with minimal resources for food, warmth and shelter. At the end of the course students have increased responsibility in planning and conducting expedition.

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(e.g., Burns, Chambers and Hendler, 1963).

The success of Outward Bound during the war suggested such schools could serve a useful function during peacetime. There are at present six Outward Bound schools in England, four in Europe, four in Africa, five in the United States, and one each in Malaysia, Australia, and New Zealand.

Outward Bound is now involved in another phase -- developing its applications to a variety of educational settings. Outward Bound has been an input in Job Corps and Peace Corps training, high school and college programs, and the treatment of juvenile delinquents (Outward Bound, Into the Mainstream). This process of applying Outward Bound to other settings has had mixed success. One of the key problems is the failure to clarify the Outward Bound educational methods or principles. This paper attempts to meet this problem.

The primary source of data for this paper is the research reports of three participant-observers.¹ Before this, information about Outward Bound had been limited to public relations material or descriptive articles. We were professionally trained as participant-observers in the social sciences, particularly social and clinical psychology, which was thought to increase the likelihood of our gathering impartial information about Outward Bound. Our professional training, however, is affected by its own

¹Thomas D'Andres attended the full course at Minnesota Outward Bound; Richard Katz, the full course at Colorado, and Minnesota and three days at Maine; David Kolb, two weeks at Maine.

THE ANCESTORS

John ...
 Mary ...
 Elizabeth ...
 William ...

James ...
 Sarah ...
 Thomas ...
 Anne ...

Robert ...
 Margaret ...
 Henry ...
 Elizabeth ...

George ...
 Mary ...
 John ...
 Sarah ...

Richard ...
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ideology. We tried to avoid using certain components of our social science ideology 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. Personal growth deals with growth in the individual's understanding of self and environment. To do this, we tried to isolate Outward Bound's key educational principles and methods. We also tried to examine how the school functioned and how students were motivated and affected by the Outward Bound experience.

On our arrival at the Outward Bound schools, our role as participant-observers came suddenly clear. Without extensive participation, we could not really understand Outward Bound. 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 accustomed to visitors and observers, our entree was not difficult. Generally, we participated along with one of the regular groups of students as they went through the course.

There were at least three reasons for extensive participation. First, so much of Outward Bound operates from the inside, from within the culture. To appreciate the culture's impact, one has to be immersed in it. And the experiential impact of Outward Bound was something we perhaps could not have prepared for. Moreover, only by extensive participation could we acquire enough skills to observe in critical situations. We were not willing to observe students on a climb or expedition unless we felt reasonably confident about our own wilderness abilities.



And finally, there was an unwritten law that respect and camaraderie were based on 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, few activities were seen as inappropriate for us. Once we began to participate, it was not easy to abstain from parts of the program because we were "Ph.Ds" or "not really part of the program." Much of the success we had in observing Outward Bound depended on the respect and camaraderie generated by our participation.

This immersion in 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 the rock-climbing exercise, your categorizing had to wait until the exercise was over. The observer part of our role was most often performed at night, in the tent, where one could reflect on the day's experiences. The daily journal kept by participant-observers became quite important because feelings and observations would change from day to day, often dramatically. 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," and "boredom," seemed important for describing Outward Bound.

OUTWARD BOUND: AN EXPERIENTIAL VIEWPOINT

Now that we were spending more time in the field, we felt like we were shifting into high gear. Only the staff knew exactly where we were going in the morning, which sort of left you wanting to know more about what was planned. We rode for a while in the truck, going over bumpy mountain roads, 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 east 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 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.

Ever so slowly each student had his chance to walk up the base, check his knot, and begin his climb. But the progress was slow. 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.

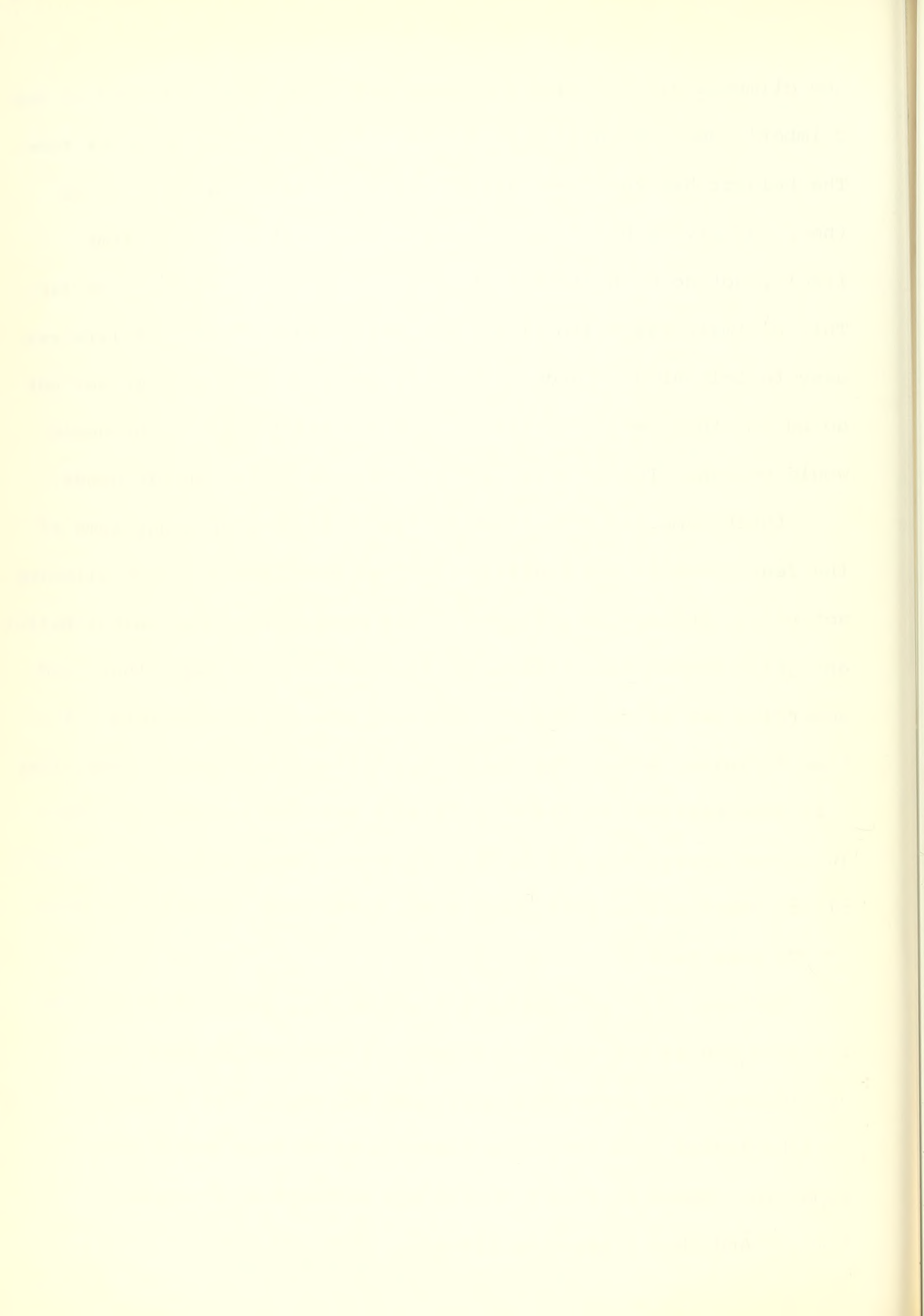
After several students had completed their climbs, they took over the other part of the task for the day, that of belaying. Those who were belaying had the responsibility for insuring that



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 to 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; they 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 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 it, 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 shaky. 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.

THE OUTWARD BOUND IDEOLOGY

The Outward Bound ideology is both powerful and pervasive. It 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.

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. The assumption is that the program is intrinsically educational, and, moreover, that Outward Bound can be successful with all types of boys, each boy benefitting in his own way.

Through primarily physical activities which are increasingly stressful and demanding, a student is supposedly forced to confront



himself. Plato's statement is quoted: "Let us build physical fitness for the sake of the soul." Another favorite quote is: "Outward Bound trains through the mountains and not for them." The student supposedly 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, resourcefulness, will-power, and appreciation of nature and man's place in it.

Moreover, Outward Bound claims to develop what is essential to human functioning but particularly lacking and difficult to attain in modern youth. Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, says:

"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."
(Outward Bound Schools, brochure)

Many who work with Outward Bound see it as a response to William James' call for a moral equivalent to war.

A variety of public relations materials are employed in communicating the ideology. Most of these materials emphasize a dramatic (almost heroic) and existential quality to the Outward Bound experience. The lead quotation from the Outward Bound course catalogue 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. (Outward Bound Schools brochure)

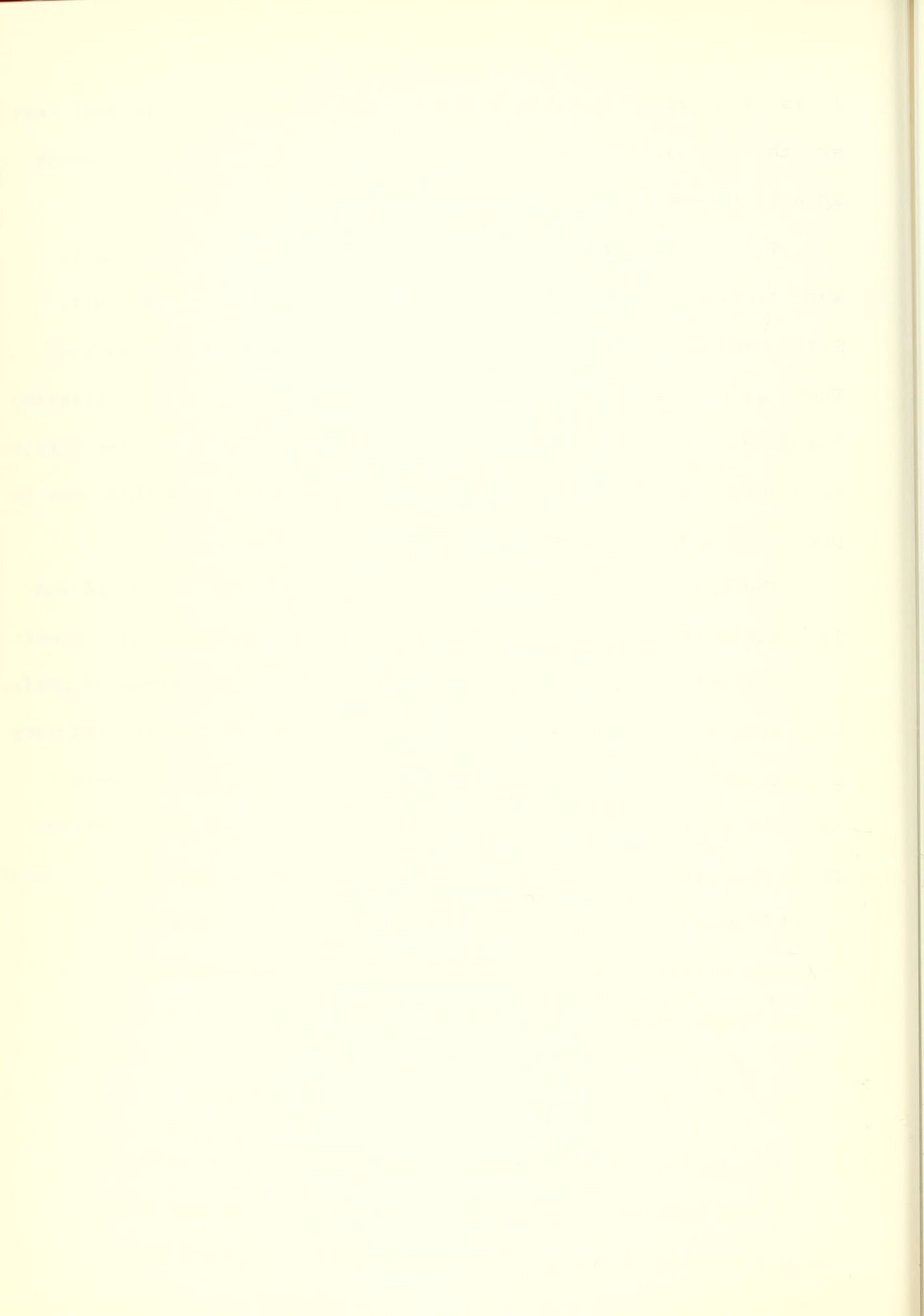


It is hard for a prospective Outward Bound student not to feel that something significant will happen at Outward Bound after he reads such a statement.

The more formal public relations materials are continually supplemented by the talk and action of the Outward Bound staff. Staff members often seem to personify the Outward Bound ideology. There is a core value system shared by most of the staff, stressing 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 elaborated as there are staff members.

The ideology can enhance the experience at Outward Bound and facilitate its educational effectiveness. It can serve as a powerful motivating factor. Staff members have a special sense of pride. They 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 from their feeling that they are a part of the Outward Bound movement. The Outward Bound ideology also generates in students a feeling that they are involved in an important educational experience.

Ideologies often can have a self-fulfilling property. According to its ideology, Outward Bound is an effective way of discovering one's self. Students, and especially staff, hold 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."

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 focus on gradual, undramatic change, the kind of change whose cumulative effect is so often the key to personal growth. Instead, the ideology considers change in a broad and dramatic manner, for example, "learning to deal with fear" after experiencing a particular crisis. Students therefore find it more difficult to be satisfied with and build upon minor experiences of change.

Students' experiences at Outward Bound usually do not seem so dramatic as the ideology leads them to expect. It takes a certain kind of courage to accept one's own experience as valid when the drama is not apparent or the experience is not clearly "something very good." The student finds it difficult to describe his experience in his own words. He often uses the language of the public relations material, which is unfortunate. It is even more serious,



however, when ideology is substituted for experience.

The ideology can even lead some students to take a passive approach toward Outward Bound. Since the Outward Bound experience is portrayed as so powerful, students can feel that it will happen to them. This passive attitude is continually discouraged, but even staff members can be overwhelmed. They can feel that the Outward Bound program "automatically" works. Thus, 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 assumption results in extremely varied student bodies at the schools. But with some types of boys, Outward Bound can be an educationally unrewarding experience.

For some students, Outward Bound has a diminished impact. The more mature college students tend to be less motivated than the usual student who is still very much at the high school stage. The mature student has perspective and does not become as thoroughly immersed in the Outward Bound culture. Also, 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 are absent.

Other types of students may be adversely affected. Outward Bound is not at present capable of educating more than a few boys with psychological problems in any one course. If, for example, a boy has intense fears, it presents particular problems. Having him confront fear can lead to increased fear unless the confrontation is



handled with extreme sensitivity and competence. Few of the staff had experience or time enough to work with psychological problems. Moreover, some staff members felt that specialized attention was beyond their responsibility.

The Outward Bound approach values treating all students in essentially the same way. In part they assume that if you treat a "problem" student like the other students, as if he were "normal," he will begin acting "normal." There is some evidence to suggest this can be an effective approach if handled with great interpersonal 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 the necessary sensitivity and understanding, such problems were often ignored. At present Outward Bound seems particularly suited to educate "normals."

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, which increases the educational potential of the method. A key technique in the method is self-confrontation. Self-confrontation encourages the individual to surpass what he thought were his limits. Staff are 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. But 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. This approach may reduce the educational impact of the student's experience.

Total Culture:

As Goffman (1961) has described, "total institutions" exert a comprehensive and compelling influence on their members' values and standards. Outward Bound can be considered such a total institution. The schools are physically isolated, indeed remote; the mass media are not available to students; and for the entire twenty-six days students are involved in Outward Bound work. Visitors to the school are looked upon as outsiders. Students feel that they are in a retreat, in a "special place" to do "special work." If one accepts Outward Bound, then one's entire life can revolve around the school and its program. Most of the students have such a relationship to the school.

Students become immersed in the Outward Bound culture. Things they never would have attempted become standard practice. Students slide over the gorge, feeling "kids back home should see me now." Old values and standards for behavior are replaced by the Outward Bound values. The immersion is both sudden and gradual. Almost immediately after you emerge from the bus which takes you to the school, you are doing something 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 beginning, 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. There is a prevalent value that only the "strong," the "men" are able to finish the course. Persistence is a virtue. 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.

Challenges, particularly when they are felt as dangerous, when one's life is at stake, seem irresistible. The excitement of the challenge, the sense of adventure, is contagious. Exciting events intensively involve the students in Outward Bound. Many students feel they have come to Outward Bound specifically to meet these challenges to their lives. More remember such challenges as the highlights of their Outward Bound experience.

The opportunity to really test one's limits is very important. The adolescent's search for clarity about his identity is particularly keen (see e.g., Erikson, 1959). Challenges, particularly those felt as dangerous, are often approached as opportunities for defining oneself. Many students 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 approach Outward Bound as if it were the initiation rite which will effect their transition from boyhood to manhood. In contemporary America, such a clear transition is absent, though the adolescent need for it may still exist. Some of the compelling quality of Outward Bound certainly derives from its role in making this particular transition. But Outward Bound is also compelling because it seems to be a contemporary representative of a group of institutions (e.g. initiation rites, secret societies) which historically have effected major transformations in individuals (see e.g., Van Gennep, 1960 or Campbell, 1956).

The development of competence and confidence in meeting the Outward Bound tasks becomes important. As White (1959) has discussed, competence (mastery) generates a sense of personal worth and a feeling of accomplishment. Competence is a particularly relevant issue for the adolescent. 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 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 and the sense of accomplishment. The students talk about 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" 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. Each boy is associated with a group of twelve throughout the course. This smaller unit also exerts strong pressure toward completing tasks and the course. Inter-group competition is based on individuals' performances on tasks, particularly on completing tasks.

Staff members have completed tasks similar to or more demanding than the Outward Bound program. They expect 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. Many boys are "sent to Outward Bound to become a man." Also, the parents expect that when one goes to a school, one finishes the course and gets his diploma, or in this case, certificate.



Critical self discoveries are brought about by placing the student in experiences where he must confront himself and his limitations, rather than avoiding or "smoothing over" what he sees. The situations demand actions which challenge his self-definition and encourage him to explore and surpass what he thought were his limits. The self-confronting situations range from the mundane to the dramatic where a life might be at stake. 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. Another example was when a student faced a jump on the "ropes course"¹ which psychologically was very difficult, i.e., it seemed that he was very high up. 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 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."

¹The ropes course consists of a series of physical tasks demanding balance, agility and some strength; they are often performed at considerable heights.



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. The research on T-groups, which employ self-confrontation as a primary technique, supports this assumption (Schein, Bennis, 1965). Outward Bound adds an intensity and ultimate quality to self-confrontation (not usually found in T-groups) because the confrontation often demands that the student act, not merely talk, and because the student's physical life can be at stake.

The Outward Bound experience, and certainly those aspects which are especially self-confronting could be described by Maslow's (1962) concept of a "peak experience." They have an ego-transcending quality of significance for the student. As both Maslow and James (1929) have suggested, such peak experiences can lead to (dramatic) personal growth. But such experiences do not invariably lead to personal growth. For example, the individual's expectations about experience and the setting within which the experience occurs, effect the nature and degree of his subsequent growth (see e.g., Ungar, 1963).

Self-confrontation at Outward Bound does not automatically engender personal growth. Self-confrontation is often an intense and volatile experience which requires sensitive attention. 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. 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, learning 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 or actions which employ the principles of the lecture. Sometimes the action was not too difficult as when, for example, you tried out one of the drown-proofing swimming strokes. Sometimes the action represented a major challenge, as when, for example, you checked the way you had just been shown to rope yourself in, because in the next moment you were going down the side of the cliff for the "big rappell."¹ Those days when lectures predominated, were felt to be "slow days."

This emphasis on experiential learning had certain limits, of course. When there was insufficient time or when there was a

¹The rappell is a method for descending a rock face in which the person at times "walks down" perpendicular to the rock face.



life and death issue, the staff became quite didactic. If one met a section of coast which was particularly difficult to navigate, the staff took command. Instructions were given clearly and forcefully when a life was at stake. Then, one could not "afford" experiential learning. This did not seem to detract too seriously from the power of the Outward Bound experience.

Action is constantly required. In an important sense, things don't happen at Outward Bound until people "do" something. Performance is the true measure of the man. Bravado, bragging, and boasting are quickly exposed by peers and staff. Of course, not acting is equally important. Much of the Outward Bound experience occurs during those times the student faces a particular task, for example, the next move up the rock face, and stops, hesitates, or becomes immobilized for a very long time.

Action-Oriented:

Actions are valued more and more publicly than thoughts and feelings. Physical prowess and conditioning become a source of pride and interest among the students. Feelings like fear or loneliness are touched upon mainly in private or in small groups, if at all; and then they are discussed in a joking manner, minimizing their importance. The student whose contribution is mainly intellectual, for example, the one who has ideas about solving an initiative test,¹ is often more tolerated than admired.

¹Initiative tests demand that students collaborate with each other and put together physical resources to solve an apparently unsolvable problem within a time limit.



Finally, two things about physical conditioning contribute to this higher valuation of actions and the physical realm: students rather quickly "get into shape;" and "being in shape" is a concrete measurable arena of accomplishment.

We have already mentioned that being in the field put the program "in high gear." There is a general feeling among both students and staff that canoeing (or climbing or hiking or sailing) is "what we are here for" -- not spending time at the school's home base. A logical extension of this emphasis, courses which are held entirely in the field (mobile courses), get closer to the core of Outward Bound. Being in the field also provides a more total exposure to the Outward Bound culture. Students have fewer of their own strategies for coping with the wilderness as compared to the school compound. They are therefore more receptive to the Outward Bound approach when in the field.

Course Requirements:

There is a strong pressure at Outward Bound for everyone to receive the standard treatment, for everyone to take the same course. This is a particularly significant pressure considering the variety of boys attending an Outward Bound school. There are actually, however, many different courses at any one Outward Bound school session. In terms of his actions, and more importantly in terms of his reactions and attitudes, each boy has essentially his own course.

The requirements for a particular Outward Bound task or for an entire Outward Bound course are often modified for an individual student. The decision about how and when to make such modification

is not an easy one. But the, judgments about helping a student explore his limits are not easy. Staff had the authority to make such modifications. They consider the physical and when possible psychological capacities of a student. For example, they can give a lighter pack to a boy who is somewhat weaker than others; or assign a normal expedition route to a boy who can push himself in spite of a bruised ankle; or give a difficult solo site to one of the more resourceful boys. Staff members try to avoid insulting a student by saying in effect that he cannot complete the standard course. Often, however, staff and student do not mutually recognize the need for particular modification.

Sometimes the decision to modify the requirements of the task or the Outward Bound course depends on the student's judgment and/or actions. In the climb up the rock face we described, certain students purposely took more difficult climbing routes. Students vary in the degree to which they push themselves on final expedition. Finally, student bravado is often taken literally. Students who boast about their ability to do certain things are usually challenged to put their words into action.

The fact that each student takes essentially his own course increases the educational potential of Outward Bound. Certain problems, however, prevent this potential from being realized to



any large extent. Outward Bound is not really prepared for such individualized instruction and treatment. Often, for example there is insufficient psychological preparation to facilitate a student's individual educational experience in one of the "standard" tasks. Moreover, there are no easy guide lines for the decision about when a modification in the course is necessary, when appropriate, or when a "cop-out." This creates some confusion in both students and staff. And since the general expectation among students is that everyone should do the same course, you often hear complaints about modifications: "someguys aren't really doing their job," "some guys are getting off easy."

Psychological Preparation and Follow-up:

As social scientists, we must be especially careful at this point. We will try not to misinterpret Outward Bound so as to confirm our professional bias toward emphasizing psychological functioning. It does seem, however, that adequate psychological preparation for and follow-up after an experience is lacking.

First let us make clear what we mean by psychological preparation for and follow-up after an experience. We do not mean intellectualizing about an experience. We do not necessarily mean talking about or conceptualizing an experience, though one might. As demonstrated by "basic encounter" groups talking about things can be an intense experience (see e.g., Rogers, 1967). "Psychological" also includes emotional and non-verbal preparation and follow-up. By "psychological" preparation we mean being psychologically ready to learn from an experience, not being told what to experience. By "psychological" follow-up we mean being psychologically able to



sustain the educational impact of the experience, not being told what you experienced.

At Outward Bound, preparation for and follow-up after an experience is handled effectively on the physical dimension. For example, students are adequately clothed, and receive adequate medical attention. They gradually build up their physical climbing skills before going to the mountains. Debriefing sessions were most often skill-oriented.

Some attention is paid to psychological factors at Outward Bound. Work on the ropes course also prepares students psychologically for their climbing, e.g., it develops confidence. But there are two particularly important areas in which psychological preparation and follow-up seem inadequate, thereby decreasing the educational effectiveness of experiences. First, the intense, volatile emotions (e.g., fear) generated by some experiences seem inadequately handled. Second, the variety and range of particular experiences seem inadequately explored. Though some staff worked effectively in these areas, there are few formal structures supporting them in this effort.

Many of the experiences at Outward Bound involve intensely felt and volatile emotions such as fear. When a student confronts himself, such emotions usually arise. Psychological preparation and follow-up become particularly acute at those times. Fear, for example, is often engendered without an appreciation of the effects it might have on an individual. Follow-up is often too minimal to direct the fear into productive directions. In such cases the



the student becomes less able to deal with or understand the fear. An emotion experienced in such a way is too often gladly forgotten or avoided. The potential learning that could have occurred, which was great, is severely limited.

The solo exemplifies an experience whose range of possibilities seems inadequately explored (Katz, 1968). Preparation and follow-up for the solo was primarily on the physical dimension. Many students spent their solo "caught" in one or two routines (e.g., getting wood for the fire, thinking about food). They were unprepared to learn more by examining alternative behaviors. Others found themselves unable to do even the simplest things. They became disappointed in themselves. There was little post-solo examination of such "limited" behavior, though examination could have turned that behavior into an educational experience. Instead of merely being disappointed in himself, a student could learn how this behavior explained something about himself.

There are students who "come prepared" to enhance the educational impact of experiences. They naturally consider the meaning of their behavior or the implications of an action. The vast majority of students, however, need guidance in order to turn Outward Bound experiences into educational experiences. These students might benefit from more psychological preparation and follow-up both at critical points in the course program (e.g., before and after the solo) and at critical points in their own course (e.g., when they must exercise leadership for the first time).

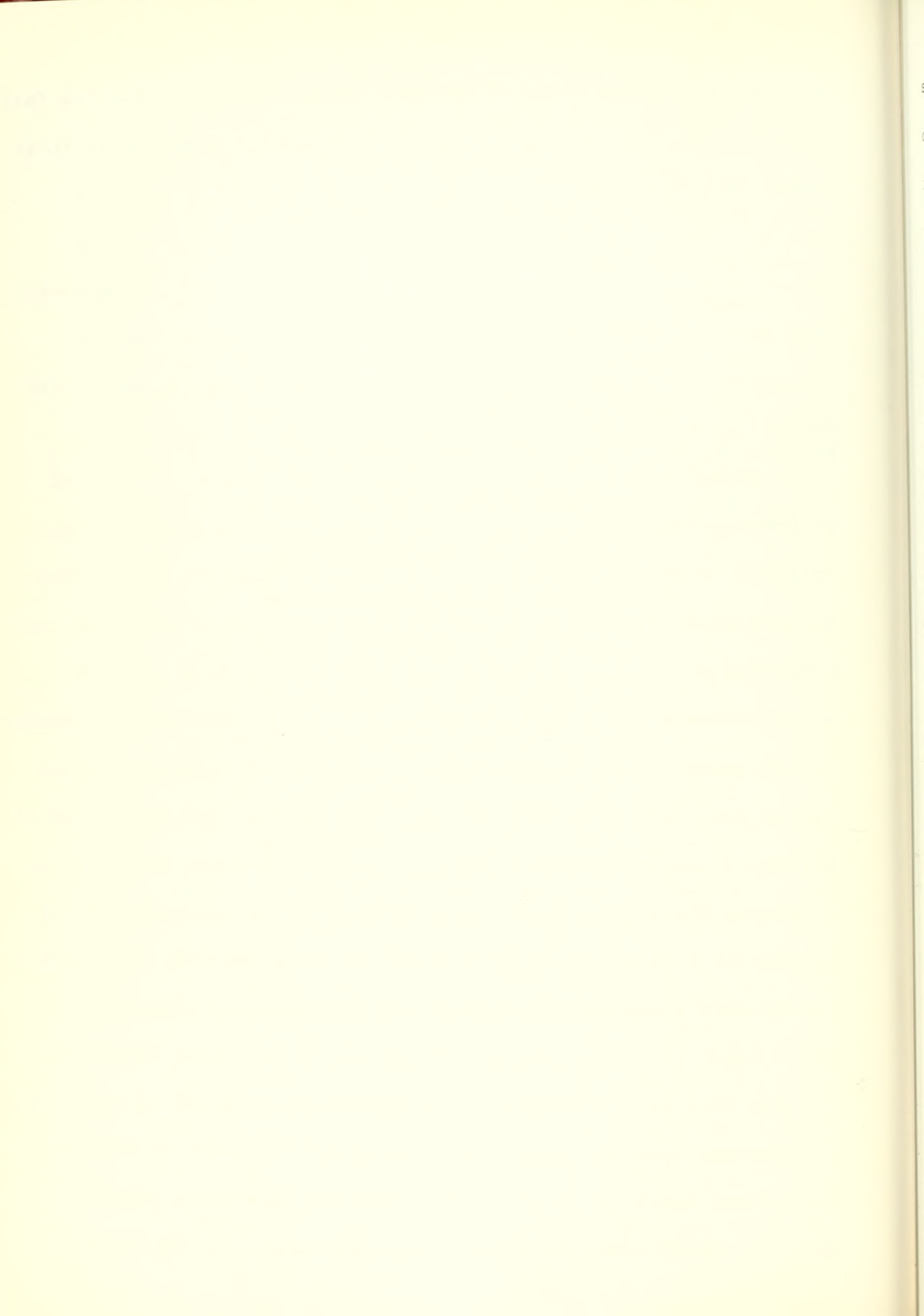


Perhaps discussions might be helpful, e.g., describing how the fear felt, and sharing this description with others who also give their reactions to fear. Being able to clarify or conceptualize an experience, even in a very rudimentary form, is often helpful in understanding the experience. The danger, of course, is over-psychologizing. Then the concept becomes substituted for the experience; introspection leads to immobility. But Outward Bound seems far from this danger.

Staff:

Without the proper guidance from staff, the Outward Bound program would work only fortuitously. The physical locale, the tasks to be performed, the schedule -- all seem ancillary to the Outward Bound experience. They are "equipment" which must be used. Depending on the quality of the staff, they are used in a way which produces more or less of an educational experience. A student can be pushed to constructively explore his limits or pushed too far or too fast. The difference often lies with the instructor in charge of the activity. Staff members are often not aware of the extent of their influence on Outward Bound. We have already mentioned the feelings many staff had that the mountains, the forests, the Outward Bound program itself are automatically educative.

Staff is in constant and immediate contact with the students. The key unit in the Outward Bound experience consists of two staff members and twelve students (the "patrol," "brigade" or "watch"). The patrol spends most of its time working separately from other patrols, which leads to a great decentralization. The low staff-



student ratio and the decentralization gives the instructor a great deal of influence. This influence is further enhanced by the immediacy of the contact between staff and students. A closeness develops on the various field expeditions.

Not only is the contact between staff and students constant and immediate, but the staff has great authority in the program. Staff in effect runs the program. Outward Bound is not a "participatory democracy." Students are only rarely consulted in planning the route and length of expeditions. The twenty-six day schedule is largely preplanned, and number of open periods at a minimum.¹ Staff knows what to do and how to do it -- they have the skills. Being in control of the program and having the skills to carry it out heighten the degree of staff influence on the Outward Bound experience.

Outward Bound requires an exceptionally talented staff; generally it is able to recruit qualified people. An instructor's job is extremely difficult. It is hard to judge when to let the student learn by trial and error and when to offer guidance and in what amounts. Staff must be more sensitive to the individual qualities of a student than his peers usually are. The value of meeting challenges must be carried out more sensitively and flexibly

¹A recent Outward Bound innovation -- "the mobile course" -- has a more flexible schedule. Mobile courses occur entirely in the field. Because they must respond to exigencies of the field situation their scheduling is more open.



by staff than it is by most students. Added to these (more subtle) difficulties is the enormous responsibility Outward Bound instructors have -- their students' lives often depend on the quality of their instruction. One final element is the expectation that students will change in important ways. This puts additional pressure on the staff.

There seem to be at least three important aspects to a good staff member: technical proficiency, skill as an educator, and dedication to the Outward Bound idea.

Most of the Outward Bound staff are exceptionally qualified in the technical realm. Outward Bound's "classroom" is the sea, the mountains, the lakes and streams. Before one can teach effectively there, one must have enough technical competence to instinctively make the "right move." An instructor who had to worry about his own performance too much would be at a disadvantage. He couldn't devote enough attention to his students. Moreover, his relative lack of skill or confidence would be noticed by the students, diminishing their respect for him. Also, technical competence is essential to effectively encourage students to test their limits. Instructors have to know about the actual physical and technical difficulty of the various tasks in which limits are tested.

Certain staff members seemed "too competent" or "too professional" for Outward Bound. At times they seemed to demand too much perfection in the way an act was performed. And other



staff members did not seem sufficiently aware of how difficult the beginning stages of a climb or portage were for a student.

Throughout, however, their high degree of technical competence was essential for safety. Their standards of safety, often based on an experient with a tragic accident, were an essential aspect of the Outward Bound experience. And they spoke out when they felt these standards were being compromised either in the area of equipment or supervision.

Fewer on the Outward Bound staff are effective educators. It takes great skill as an educator to know when a person is stretching his limits. The effective educators usually were not among the most technically proficient. Having some instructors who were not physical "supermen" helped students communicate with staff and learn from them. An instructor who became winded in the morning run seemed more accessible to the student who had a similar experience. The primary teaching mode is example.

Staff members are generally quite dedicated to their job. It is hard to imagine how they could accept the considerable demands on their energy, patience and understanding without this dedication.

As important as it is to have good instructors, it is even more important to avoid "bad" ones. Unqualified instructors are rare, but in the one instance that we observed the effect was near disastrous. This instructor at times severely compromised safety standards, at other times perverted education into militaristic regimentation and seemed a "cheerleader" for a cause he neither understood nor participated in.



Staff selection, therefore, is critical. Staff training programs are employed at Outward Bound schools both to understand staff better, selecting out the unqualified, and to orient staff toward the Outward Bound approach. Another good staff selection and training procedure is the extensive in-service program at Outward Bound schools for staff-trainees, many of whom have recently completed an Outward Bound course. These staff-trainees assist instructors and there is ample opportunity to judge their potential as regular staff.

OUTWARD BOUND'S EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Outward Bound functions more in terms of experiences, actions, and activities than explicit educational goals. Its theory of education and personal growth is implicit and unarticulated. There are, however, educational goals which guide the selection and development of these experiences and activities. The basic goal is to encourage personal growth. Other goals, which are in a sense vehicles for encouraging personal growth, focus on developing courage, will power, a style of functioning which stresses pacing oneself, living efficiently and relying on one's natural resources; interpersonal competence to improve task performance; a desire and ability to serve others; and a religious attitude.

In discussing these goals, we will comment on two aspects: the discrepancy between the goal which actually operates at the schools and the educational goals stated in the Outward Bound ideology; and the degree of success in attaining the former goals.

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Encouraging personal growth is perhaps the basic and overriding educational goal at Outward Bound. One very important aspect of this goal is that personal growth be sustained and generalized after Outward Bound. The Outward Bound idea is to educate through mountain-climbing, canoeing, or navigating on the open sea. For example, overcoming a physical obstacle is a teaching analogy for overcoming a psychological obstacle. There are serious obstacles to making this idea operational. The problem is that educational implications of the physical activities are not always automatically perceived or experienced.

Generally, students do not intuitively or immediately see the relationship between, for example, climbing a mountain and the issues which concern them back home. An obvious case is the city-dweller who remarks that there are no mountains or lakes on his block. This concrete approach is not prevalent and takes time to overcome. The staff at times unwittingly reinforce this dilemma in students. There is a strong feeling that all a student has to do is climb one of the taller peaks and an important educational experience will occur for him.

Moreover, students often want to become competent in the activity at hand, to the point where the activity can easily become an end in itself. For example, as students develop skill and competence in navigation, they often become captivated by an image of themselves as professional sailors.

Other features of the Outward Bound experience make it seem unrelated to the situations most students face after the course.

For example, the schools are located in retreat-like wilderness settings quite unlike the urban, industrialized environments most boys are in contact with. This difference between the Outward Bound environment and the home environment can serve as a stimulus to change while at Outward Bound. In a new environment individuals often try out new behaviors. This difference also, however, makes integrating the Outward Bound experience into daily functioning after the course more difficult.

Post-course conditions are not conducive to supporting personal growth changes in students. Students have few procedures available for integrating the important and special Outward Bound experience into their daily functioning. Some Outward Bound students can talk with others who have been to Outward Bound. Other students try to bring small parts of Outward Bound into their daily functioning on their own. For example, they may run every morning. But this is not easy to keep up. A few of the Outward Bound students continue actively in the Outward Bound organization as staff-trainees and then as staff.

Without such integration into a student's daily functioning, the Outward Bound experience can elicit feelings not conducive to long-term change. Students can easily become nostalgic, looking back on the Outward Bound course as a major life experience which is a "past" event, something which could never be duplicated. They may even wonder how they were able to do what they did at Outward Bound. This can happen when, after getting distance from the Outward



Bound experience, one feels more completely the fears which accompanied particular challenges. Changes in self-image felt during the course may begin to seem alien to a person. The tendency to exaggerate the dramatic and dangerous aspects of the course to the exclusion of the frequent experiences of gradual change increases the difficulty of sustained personal growth.

Courage:

There are many kinds of danger at Outward Bound, and many fears are evoked. Outward Bound tries to develop students' courage, their ability to deal with danger. Physical dangers, at times involving a student's life, are emphasized both in the public relations media and during the course. But there are other dangers which seem potentially to have a great impact on students. There is, for example, the danger of not succeeding, and the accompanying fear of failure. On the long hikes, one can never be sure all the time one will make it. Confrontation with what is subjectively felt as dangerous is a crucial part of a student's Outward Bound experience. Were it not for this, Outward Bound would become just another summer camp.

In examining the element of danger and its accompanying fear we will focus on physical danger. Of all the dangers present at Outward Bound, physical danger seems the best understood, the most carefully worked on, and the most emphasized, particularly by students.

An educationally-effective amount of danger, involving a balance of "objective" danger and what is "subjectively" felt as



dangerous, is not easily attained at Outward Bound. Tasks which are objectively dangerous are not always synonymous with tasks which are subjectively felt as dangerous. Climbing up loose rock is in fact (objectively) quite dangerous, but students do not instinctively feel it as particularly dangerous. The rappell, on the other hand, is usually felt as being quite dangerous, though it is, in fact, fairly safe.

Most often tasks which are subjectively felt as dangerous depend on the students' inexperience with the task requirements. The first time one climbs a rock face, or "shoots the rapids" or is on the sea at night in an open boat is entirely different from the second or any succeeding time. The unknown is critical to generating a feeling of danger. Often, as a student gains experience with such tasks they feel less dangerous and can become objectively less dangerous. But students can also make the tasks objectively more dangerous through over-confidence.

Some tasks seem designed to provide the students with a "new thrill," a new danger experience. Some of the more professional staff objected to this, particularly when the task did not seem to prepare students for functioning in their wilderness environment.

Yet if objective physical dangers were eliminated, the Outward Bound experience might be much less intense than it now is. It seems likely that many of the instructors would no longer operate as effectively. Since they know there are objective dangers, they retain a very intense and active participation.



The approach of the more professional staff members to physical danger is that they believe in exploring limits, but with continued knowledgeable and careful assessment of the dangers involved and the probabilities of surviving those dangers. Their approach is safe and reasonable, while they continue to extend themselves and confront danger. The importance of technical competence and judgment again becomes clear.

Tasks which involve physical danger are clearly defined. Rules for meeting these tasks are specified and adherence is demanded. The dangers inherent in the task are explained and methods for dealing with them are outlined. It is made very clear that "one wrong step" really can mean the difference between life and death.

Students are instructed against doing "reckless" things. They are told to appraise the situation, and determine the probability of success, the degree of danger. Once a particular action is deemed appropriate, the student is told to complete the action successfully. He literally cannot afford to think about how frightening that moment is until he has performed the action. Too much introspection could lead to dangerous self-consciousness, even physical immobilization. That is probably what happened to the boy who froze on the rock face. It is not easy for students to focus on the next hand hold and ignore the fact that they have never been more frightened in their life.

The fact that certain procedures and rules are necessary to meeting dangerous tasks has important implications. A student cannot participate in certain parts of the course if he has not mastered

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the rules. Having a boy on a climb who has not mastered the safety rules is quite different from having a student in a class who does not understand the math problem. A boy on the mountain who is not aware of the safety precautions can endanger his own life and the lives of others. Because of the cumulative nature of the learning at Outward Bound and because techniques are taught rapidly it becomes essential that a student participate continually and from the start of the course. Special instruction to develop a skill is not always available since the staff is already over-worked.

Moments of danger are embedded in the "daily" requirements of persistence. The times when a student has to confront danger often come unexpectedly. A climber might approach a crevasse, and a moment of danger is unexpectedly at hand. Or a dangerous task could be expected; one could work toward mastering it. For example, students were aware of the "big rappell" even before they began the course. But throughout, there was need for persistence. Tasks which require persistence take up more actual time in the Outward Bound course than tasks requiring other capacities. Tasks involving danger, however, are often emphasized more and considered more significant by students.

Will Power:

Outward Bound tries to develop the capacity for persistence or will power. The persistence needed is both physical and psychological. The need for physical persistence is quite clear. The long hikes, the long rows, the long portages, all require substantial persistence. Well after fatigue has set in, when physical pain has

The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the war. It is followed by a detailed account of the military operations in the West, and then a chapter on the situation in the East. The report concludes with a summary of the results of the war and a forecast for the future.

The second part of the report is devoted to a detailed study of the military operations in the West. It begins with a description of the German offensive in May 1940, and then follows the progress of the Allied forces as they fought their way back to the sea. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

The third part of the report deals with the situation in the East. It begins with a description of the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, and then follows the progress of the German forces as they fought their way into the Soviet Union. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

The fourth part of the report is devoted to a detailed study of the military operations in the East. It begins with a description of the German offensive in June 1941, and then follows the progress of the German forces as they fought their way into the Soviet Union. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

The fifth part of the report deals with the situation in the Pacific. It begins with a description of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and then follows the progress of the Japanese forces as they fought their way into the Philippines, the Netherlands East Indies, and the South Pacific. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

The sixth part of the report is devoted to a detailed study of the military operations in the Pacific. It begins with a description of the Japanese offensive in the Philippines in December 1941, and then follows the progress of the Japanese forces as they fought their way into the Netherlands East Indies and the South Pacific. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

The seventh part of the report deals with the situation in the Atlantic. It begins with a description of the German U-boat offensive in May 1940, and then follows the progress of the Allied forces as they fought their way back to the sea. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

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The ninth part of the report deals with the situation in the Mediterranean. It begins with a description of the German offensive in May 1941, and then follows the progress of the German forces as they fought their way into the Soviet Union. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

The tenth part of the report is devoted to a detailed study of the military operations in the Mediterranean. It begins with a description of the German offensive in May 1941, and then follows the progress of the German forces as they fought their way into the Soviet Union. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

The eleventh part of the report deals with the situation in the Balkans. It begins with a description of the German offensive in April 1941, and then follows the progress of the German forces as they fought their way into the Soviet Union. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

The twelfth part of the report is devoted to a detailed study of the military operations in the Balkans. It begins with a description of the German offensive in April 1941, and then follows the progress of the German forces as they fought their way into the Soviet Union. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

The thirteenth part of the report deals with the situation in the North Africa. It begins with a description of the German offensive in June 1942, and then follows the progress of the German forces as they fought their way into the Soviet Union. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

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The fifteenth part of the report deals with the situation in the Italy. It begins with a description of the German offensive in September 1943, and then follows the progress of the German forces as they fought their way into the Soviet Union. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

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The seventeenth part of the report deals with the situation in the France. It begins with a description of the German offensive in May 1940, and then follows the progress of the German forces as they fought their way into the Soviet Union. The author describes the various battles and the tactics used by both sides, and also discusses the role of the air force and the navy.

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already come and gone, students must continue. In the conditioning exercises, for example, though a student is completely exhausted, he is asked to "do one more" pull-up, etc. The need for persistence often leads to a fatigue which lowers psychological resistance.

Psychological persistence is equally important. We talked of the waiting at the rock face, the long waits before it was your turn to climb and face danger. Students also must stay with a task even though the rewards are few or scattered far apart. The long expedition often involved sleepless nights. The three-day solo experience is primarily a test of persistence. It becomes a single dramatic event in post hoc descriptions, rather than so many minutes, hours or days facing boredom and loneliness.

The need for persistence imparts a sense of continuity to the Outward Bound experience. Were they not set within the context of persistence, the moments of danger would more likely become merely discrete "spectaculars." Set within the context of persistence, these moments are more likely to have an effect on personal growth.

Style of Functioning:

The individual must develop a particular style of functioning. A steady, regular pace is needed to master many of the tasks and to meet the demands made upon one's energy. As we saw on the climb up the rock face, steady, regular movements are required. "Scrambling" makes the task extremely difficult and dangerous. The hikes, expeditions, canoe trips -- all demand energy expenditure spread over long periods of time. Especially in the early part of the course, students do not have a regular rhythm to their canoe paddling and will



put forth spurts of hard paddling amid generally lackadaisical paddling. It is only in time that students realize how important it is to have a regular rhythm. Not all students learn this, and for those who do not, a long day of canoeing, hiking, or rowing is extraordinarily difficult. The urge to "work hard and get there faster" has to be subdued, and regular breaks are essential.

There is an important difference between pacing which is externally imposed and pacing which evolves from within, based on the student's own characteristics. The former is very mechanical, the latter is more of a rhythm. Most students do not develop this ideal rhythmic pacing.

Within this steady, regular pace, the individual must also be flexible, ready for unusual demands on his energy and able to adapt to a changing environment. On white water, one must be able to make "just the right stroke" at a specific time. One has to be able to react quickly, and one's instincts must be right more often than wrong. Students must learn to regulate their body temperature by making adjustments in their clothing; one must also keep dry in changing weather conditions. If one's pacing is merely mechanical, this flexibility is more difficult to attain.

The individual must learn to live simply, efficiently, and economically. On expedition, the students can take only the essentials, because the weight of the packs must be kept down. Gear must be organized and packed efficiently. Space, too, is at a premium. The solo experience for many students epitomizes this

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need to live simply, efficiently, and economically. The idea of the body as a "machine" becomes important. For example, one takes on expedition small amounts of high energy food and feeds the body as you would stoke a furnace. Food is fuel, to provide energy. Simplicity, efficiency, and economy are much more characteristic of behavior in the field than at the school's home base. Still there are very few frills at school, for example, no TVs or radios, and students live in tents.

The individual must continually exert his own effort without employing shortcuts. There is a conscious emphasis on the use of the most basic (often archaic) modes for student training. You hike at Outward Bound whenever possible. Rides are available only if walking would take too much time. Whaleboats equipped with oars, at times using sails, are used instead of power boats.

Technological aids are used primarily by staff, particularly to insure safety. Various communication devices and power boats are available for rescue operations. Staff members also sometimes "treat" themselves to the "luxury" of modern conveniences, such as the latest in alpine stoves.

The tasks which require efficiency, economy, and use of one's own resources are considered "lessons" in getting close to one's "natural conditions." These lessons, however, seem short-lived. Perhaps the best example of this is the solo experience. The student alone must deal with his basic needs for food, warmth, shelter and companionship at a very primitive level. He must also meet his



more subtle needs associated with time itself. Four days and three nights alone in the woods is a long time, and boredom is one of the major elements in the solo. During the solo he comes to understand his basic needs more intimately for he often has difficulty in meeting them, let alone fulfilling them. Unfortunately, much of this understanding seems tied to the particular task of completing the solo. After solo, students very quickly forget many of the things they learned.

There seems to be insufficient amounts of fun, play, release, and exploration. These seem necessary counterpoints to the pacing, efficiency, and economy. There is a tremendous pressure to take a longer route, to push on further before making camp. This pressure means that recreation must be sacrificed, for example, an evening dip in the lake, or exploring an island. When recreation is sacrificed too often, things seem to get stale. Fatigue builds to an unproductive level.

Interpersonal Relations: Outward Bound seeks to develop interpersonal competence and sensitivity, primarily toward improving task performance. Extensive or intensive interpersonal relationships are not encouraged, nor are they frequent. This presents a problem, for often such relationships seem necessary to the Outward Bound experience. We talked, for example, of how the educational impact of a fear experience might be increased if the student could share this experience with others. But sharing feelings of fear in a constructive way usually requires a good deal of understanding and trust among people. A relationship of such depth is not frequent at Outward Bound.



The fact that interpersonal relations are oriented toward task performance also influences the concept of Outward Bound as a "melting pot." Although there is great opportunity for Outward Bound to be a melting pot experience, what in fact happens is that a heterogeneous group of students learns to function as a team but the individuals do not come to understand each other in any depth. The initiative tests are a good illustration of how students develop teamwork. The teamwork develops on the basis of an appraisal of the particular strengths and weaknesses of the individual members. For example, someone who is quite strong fulfills one part of the task, someone who is light and can jump high fills another. But the variety which makes up any one person is not explored. The part of him which is functionally important, that is, which will lead to the solution of a task, is emphasized. Students easily acquire labels, and these labels are misleading. They can make empty and facile the Outward Bound idea that "each boy has a contribution to make." Too often a student's contribution becomes a not too subtle smokescreen for a failure to accept him as a person. Also, the teamwork which develops does not seem particularly durable.

Impressive learning could occur if interpersonal exploration were encouraged. Since the group composition is heterogeneous and there are a number of intense, shared experiences, groups could communicate about important things. This kind of interchange does happen spontaneously, on occasion, and the results seem fruitful.

The helping relationship provides a further example of the



task-oriented nature of interpersonal relations. "To help" and "to be helped" are important aspects of Outward Bound. Students depend on each other in an ultimate but circumscribed way. As we described in the climb up the rock face, the climber depends in an ultimate way on the belayer. But the belayer is more a role than a person. Any student could belay for any other. The exigencies of the task seem to bring out the helping response, which in other less demanding situations is conspicuously absent.

Competition with standards of excellence and concern with effective performance are rather fully explored. Intergroup competition is an explicit issue at Outward Bound. There are days set aside for group competition and daily scores are often kept. Competition with oneself is also stressed. Students are encouraged to improve upon their past performances. On the rock face, the need to immediately climb a second time and this time not fall, was in complete harmony with the Outward Bound idea. Tasks like the conditioning exercises encourage the individual to gradually improve his skills and better his prior performance. Inter-individual competition, though not encouraged, is allowed. The marathon race, for example, is often an opportunity for individuals to compete against each other, in spite of the fact that group scores are kept. Much of the impetus for competition comes from the staff. The staff are continually trying to do a task more efficiently, or present themselves with a harder task to complete. The staff members also compete with each other, often using their groups in this competition.



There is little support for expressing what are traditionally considered more feminine concerns, such as, tenderness, caring about others, sensitivity to others' needs. Over-protective concern for others is often ridiculed. There is a tendency to polarize these expressions of tenderness and sympathy into a concept of femininity (and weakness) as contrasted with masculinity. Feelings and appreciation of beauty also tend to be pushed into a concept of femininity.

The de-emphasis on exploring interpersonal issues seems to result from both characteristics of the Outward Bound program and staff preferences. It is thought that exploration of interpersonal issues can make task performance ineffective, at least in the early stages. Again, because of constraints of time, as well as the fact that real dangers exist with many tasks, tasks must be performed effectively quite soon. Finally, few structures encourage exploration of interpersonal issues. There are, for example, few times devoted to group discussions.

Most of the Outward Bound staff do not see their jobs as encouraging interpersonal exploration. They feel that task performance is the essential aspect of Outward Bound. Interpersonal understanding, if it occurs, is seen as an outgrowth of task performance.

Service: Outward Bound works in three areas to develop the desire to serve: it develops confidence in being able to help others; students are taught certain service skills, e.t., fire-fighting, first-aid; and it encourages a service attitude or orientation. The schools serve as official search and rescue centers for their areas, and many members of the staff have participated in a number of rescues.



"Real" perhaps dramatic service opportunities seem important to developing in students the desire to serve. There are a number of simulated rescue operations. But rarely does a faked injury convince many of the students. When the rescue is real, it is completely different. Involvement is higher because the stakes are higher. Students go beyond themselves on the real rescues, whereas on the simulated ones, they do not. The rarity of real rescues is fortunate, but it does somewhat detract from the intensity of the service opportunity for the students involved.

Real and dramatic service opportunities (for example, a rescue) engage students more than do real but mundane opportunities. This encourages a limited, immature concept of service. Too often it seems that, in the minds of the students, service becomes equivalent with rescue operations. Keeping the woods clean on a canoe trip to prevent fire hazard does not engage students' interest or energy. But such more mundane service opportunities are frequent. They also seem central to serving others, relating to a more general desire to serve, a general concern and feeling of responsibility for the welfare of others. This general desire to serve does not necessarily spring from a student's involvement in a rescue operation.

Religious Attitude: Daily morning readings, followed by a period of silence, are the formal religious vehicle. The readings deal with themes such as man's insignificance in relation to nature, the beauty of nature, the importance of persistence. Often, however, students do not listen attentively. In the field, religious moments are less frequent but usually more powerful. When a student is

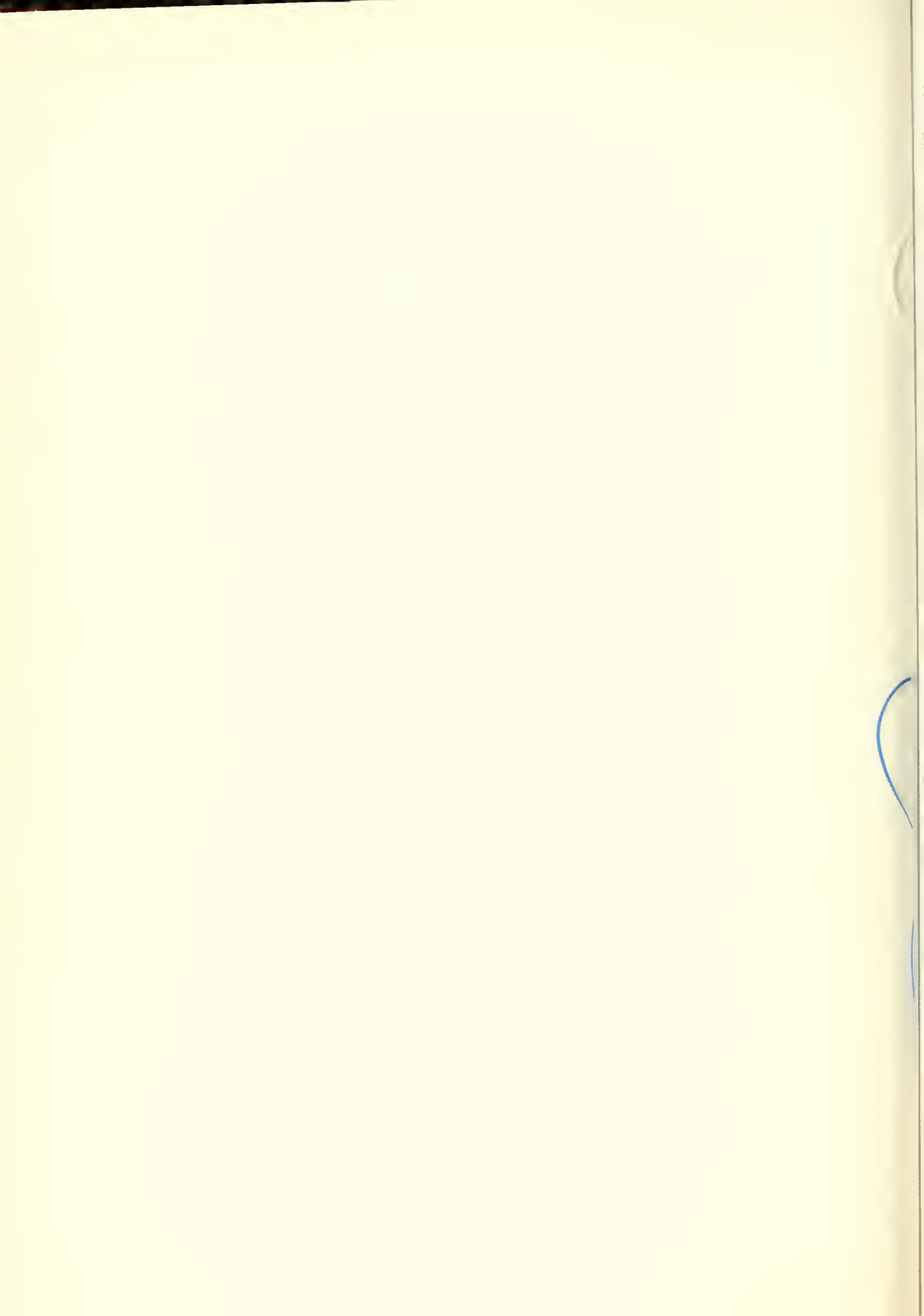


called upon to give grace for the meal which follows a long hard day of canoeing, the grace can be quite inspiring. The impact of a magnificent view on a climb can be quite powerful.

Much of the religious attitude at Outward Bound focuses on men's relationship with nature. At the start of the course, students usually struggle with or fight against nature. As the course progresses, they learn more how to cooperate with nature and, on occasion, to appreciate it. The first climb of a mountain is usually a conquering of the peak. As students learn more to pace themselves, they move more towards a cooperation with nature. They begin to understand the significance of the solo preparation for the island off Maine: "When the tide is low, your dinner table is set."

Staff generally cooperates with and appreciates nature, and values a "return to nature." They have a somewhat neutral attitude toward nature. They feel that they have a job to do and that nature has her own ways. They try to maximize the congruence between their needs and nature's ways. Staff highly value the more natural, uncomplicated, primitive way in which they can live in the field.

Rules of conduct are pervasive, and are ethical as well as functional. The rules against smoking and drinking make sense in terms of physical conditioning. But they are also presented to the students as having a moral implication. The "rules of the wilderness" likewise have both the functional and moralistic quality. One keeps the campsite clean of litter so as to prevent fires, but also out of courtesy to the next user and adherence to a "woodsmen's code." The pledge students make at the beginning of the course to abide by Outward Bound



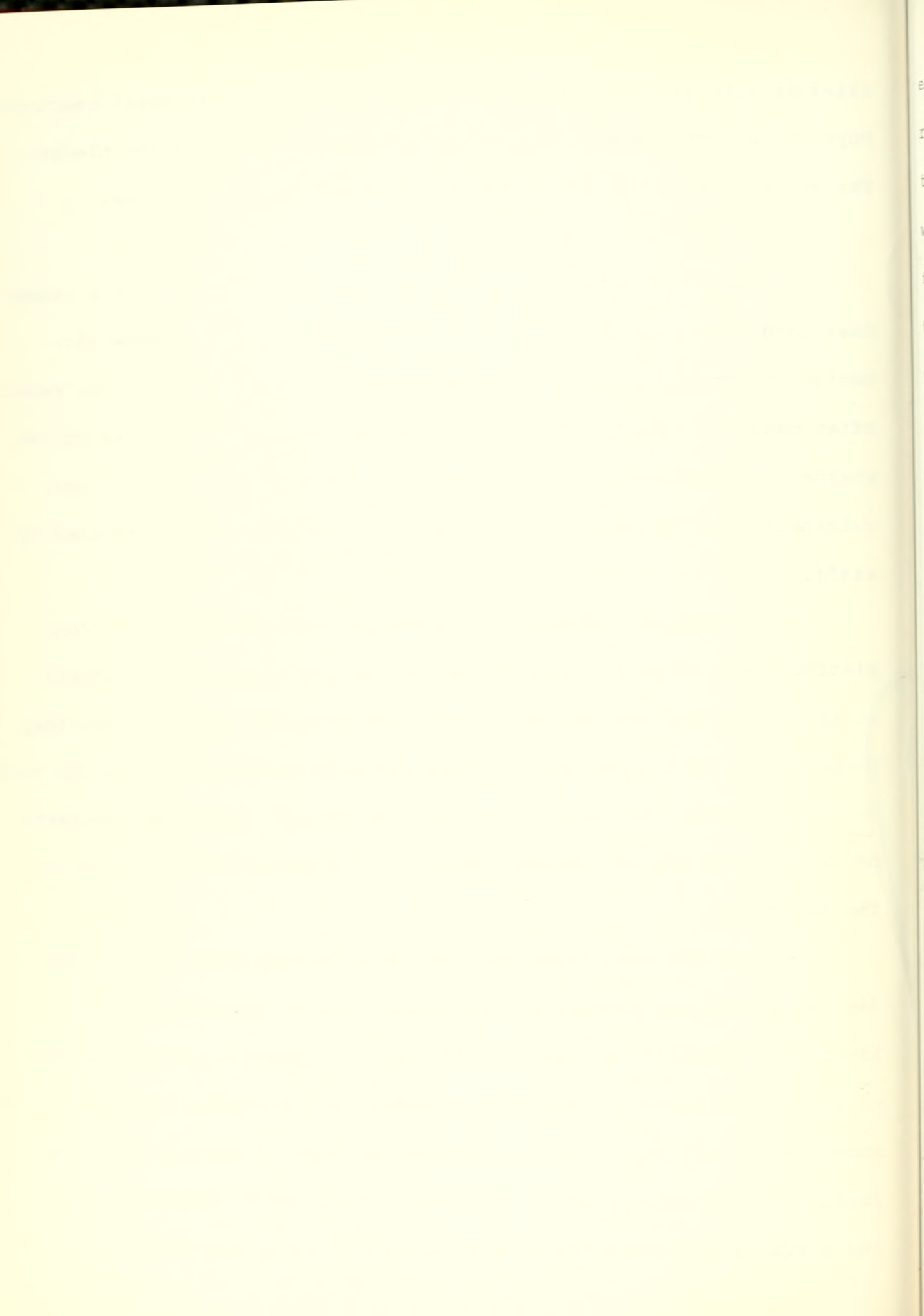
rules is both given and taken seriously and with strong moral overtones. Boys often turn themselves in when they violate parts of the pledge. The violations are conceived of primarily as moral violations.

EVALUATION AT OUTWARD BOUND

"Success" at Outward Bound is determined less by what the student does than by his attitude. The criteria of success are, moreover, ambiguous and individualistic. This gives added validity to the remark often made to students: "Only you know how you've done in this course, whether you stretched your limits." The formal evaluation process, culminating in the award of a certificate, is, however, controlled by staff.

Most students complete all of the Outward Bound program. Completing tasks is particularly important in the mind of the students. It is an easy way for them to measure how they are doing and how they compare with fellow students. There are many modifications in the tasks to be performed. But some of the most demanding and dangerous parts of the program are considered essential to complete (e.g., the solo, the marathon).

Perhaps the most important quality a student must show is the desire to confront himself and go beyond what he thought were his limits. Frequently, a student will confront himself, yet not be able to explore or stretch his limits extensively. A student may overcome his bravado but still not acquire new ways of dealing with his fear. Certain other student attitudes are valued at Outward Bound and serve as important criteria of success. It is important, for



example, to do things because one wants to, or because one is willing, rather than because one is forced. It is important that students continually try. Though one does not have to be joyful or cheerful while going through an Outward Bound course, one should not be a thorough-going complainer. It is also important to work toward more than a minimum performance. The student is expected, for example, to be constructive during his solo rather than just lie all the time in his sleeping bag (if he has one). The ideal is to have the student desire excellence in his performance.

Though it may be easy to judge if a student has physically completed a particular task, it is not easy to decide what the specific task for that student should be. Students reactions and attitudes, the more important criteria of success, are even more difficult to judge. Moreover, instructors have differing ideas about the appropriate attitude or approach to the Outward Bound course.

The problem of "malingering" highlights the dilemma of determining success at Outward Bound. Who is to say whether the sprained ankle or aching back is enough to put one out of commission? What will lead one boy to give up may be taken by another as a challenge. In the final analysis, each student knows how he did, whether he pushed himself or eased through. This seems valid, for the Outward Bound experience is in essence an internal one. Yet when it comes to deciding who passes the course, the responsibility shifts to the staff.

The criteria of success are ambiguous. Staff occupies a powerful position at the schools. A student will naturally look to the staff for some indication as to whether he is doing well. And staff

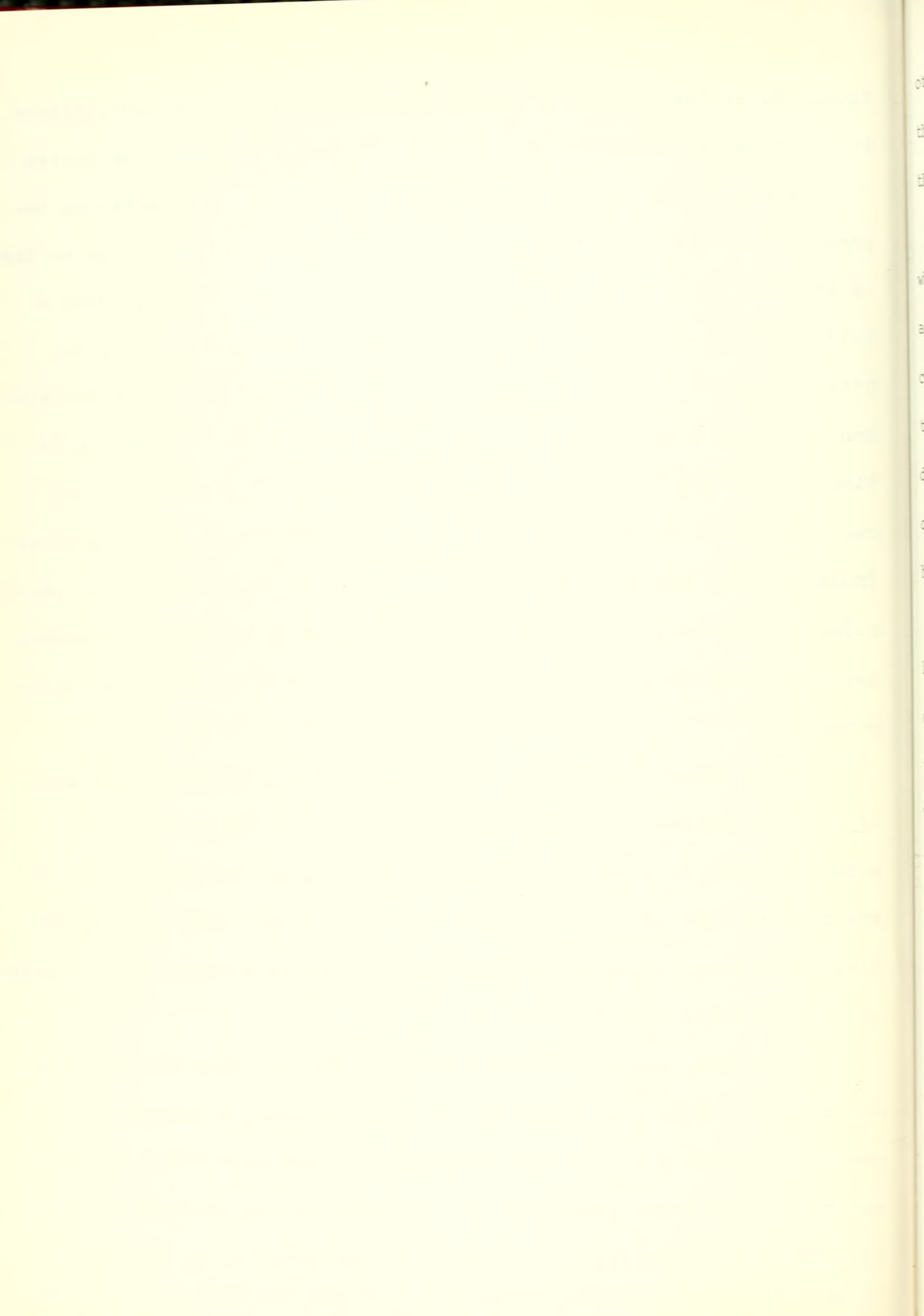


freely gives feedback to a student about his performance and attitude. Staff, however, decides whether a student formally passes the course.

Giving staff this decision-making power seriously undercuts the idea that the student himself must be the ultimate judge of how he did in the course. Instructors, of course, try to find out a student's self-evaluation. There are interviews set aside for this purpose. Often, however, the instructor spends most of the time giving the student his (the instructor's) frank evaluation of him, leaving little time for the student's own evaluation of himself. Self-evaluation can be a valid assessment technique as well as an educational process (Kolb, Winter, Berlew, 1968; Katz, ditto). Considering also the particular importance of self-evaluation at Outward Bound, it would appear useful to include students in a more meaningful way in the evaluation process.

Being awarded the Outward Bound certificate is the formal sign of passing the course. The certificates are awarded in a serious ceremony which is viewed by staff and students as the culmination of the course. Certificates are accepted with pride. Even the boy who played the role of the court jester becomes quite serious when he walks up to accept his certificate.

There are, however, no easy formulae for deciding who gets the certificate. With many students the decision about a certificate becomes a question of balancing his strength and weaknesses, or balancing Outward Bound standards with a student's own personal growth. If a student has fulfilled all the task requirements, it is hard not to give him a certificate, unless his attitude has been poor. On the



other hand, if a student has an excellent attitude, he can be awarded the certificate despite the fact that he has not finished all parts of the course.¹

There is a general belief that certificates are awarded to those who deserve them. The assumption is made that certificates are an accurate external sign of students' internal judgment of their own success at Outward Bound. In some of these cases, certificates are awarded to encourage the student to act so as to deserve it. Rarely can a student maintain belief in his own judgment about the certificate when it conflicts with the staffs' judgment. Decisions about certificates thus have a compelling and final quality.

In addition to certificates, a report is written on each student by his instructor. This report attempts a more extensive and intensive description and evaluation of the student's behavior and attitude during the course. The report is sent to the student's parents or sponsors. With these reports, evaluation becomes more of a learning experience because instructors usually discuss with a student the content of his report during an interview at the end of the course.

¹Certificates are sometimes awarded contingent on what the student does for a period of time after the course formally ends. Violation of Outward Bound rules, such as smoking and drinking, disqualifies a student from receiving a certificate. If this student, however, has done well enough in the rest of the course, he is given what amounts to another chance. For example, if he smoked during the course, but does not smoke for a specified period of time after the course, he may be awarded the certificate.



SUMMARY

We have tried to present the data about Outward Bound as social scientists. Careful, objective descriptions and evaluations have been our aim. Such an approach does not allow for enthusiasm. In our summary statement about Outward Bound, we wish to express enthusiasm. We feel enthusiastic about Outward Bound's potential and capacity to educate for personal growth. We feel, however, that this enthusiasm should be coupled with several recommendations. Foremost is that Outward Bound continue to engage in critical self-examination, expressing the results of this examination in modifications of its approach and program. The mobile courses and courses for adults are exciting modifications.

As the demand for new types of Outward Bound programs continues there must be some guidelines for developing these programs. What educational principles of Outward Bound must be retained in any modification of the standard program? In what sense must Outward Bound move from the wilderness retreat to the urban environment? What does it mean to have self-confrontation in the classroom? What kinds of persons may not find Outward Bound a particularly educating experience? A second important area involves what a student does after his Outward Bound course. Procedures are needed for maintaining and developing some of the changes begun during the course. Finally, there is the problem of maintaining staff quality. With the increasing popularity of Outward Bound and Outward Bound type programs, the need for accurate staff selection and thorough staff training becomes acute. How can staff be recruited in large numbers when the requirements for the job are so demanding? Outward Bound's effectiveness and future development depend on how it deals with such issues.



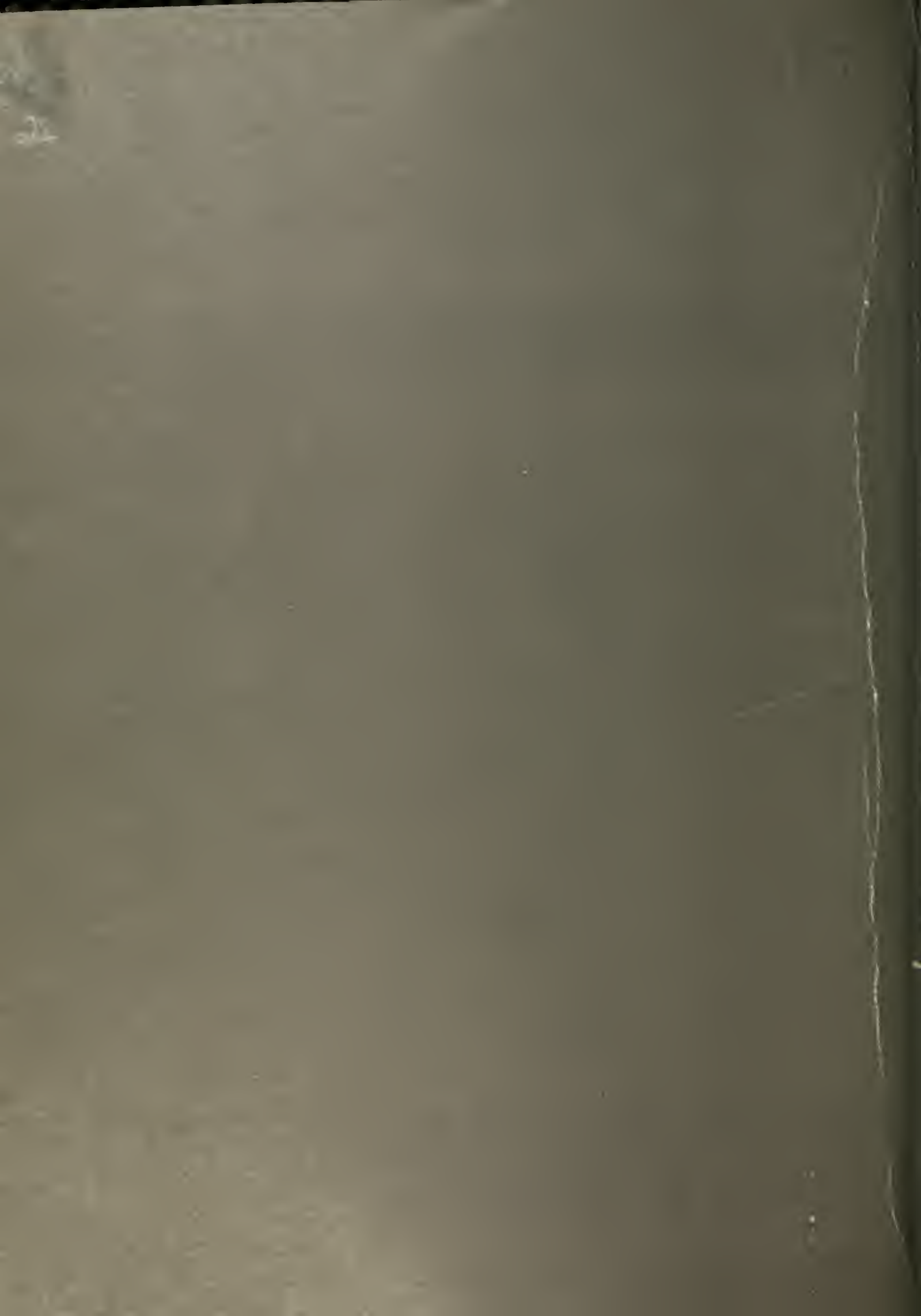
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