

Hi Adrian
- feel free to
use as you
wish - Remember,
quite out of
date - but maybe
still useful
Robert

ON CROSSING, AND NOT CROSSING,
THE WILDERNESS BOUNDARY

written
around
1997

(Informal comments for the 5th World Wilderness Congress on "Research and 'The Wilderness Effect'", and other thoughts on "Growth and Therapy in Wilderness Settings" -- drawn from 22 years of developing, conducting, and re-searching a wilderness program in a university setting.) *

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Beware, white man, of
playing with magic of the
primitive. It may be strong
medicine. It may kill you.
Ye, sons and daughters,
foster children of the cities,
if ye would go to the wil-
derness in search of your
Mother, be careful & cir-
cumpect, lest she lure you
into her secret places,
whence ye may not come
back. From

Jaime de Angulo

The Lariat 1974

Turtle Island Foundation

PREFACE

At times I find myself longing for the world of Thoreau or Muir, or for that of my own youth, when wilderness was not so much a cultural idea, but a place where the full range of natural processes could find their balance, a place where visitors from civilizations incompatible with those processes only infrequently penetrated.

As I'm sure most of you know, now, in the few short years that the idea of wilderness has become a pervasive cultural symbol, an icon, we're flooded with concerns and crises, moral questions and management decisions, the resolution of which will affect the possibility of wilderness, or the health of our species, or even the possibility of a future at all.

We have tens of millions of humans without enough food for basic health, looking on "wilderness" for the basic needs of sheer survival. We have the undiminished voracious appetites of the millions in industrial countries who look on wilderness as raw material for the accumulation of capital, or of manufactured goods that distract and entertain.

And we have these many subcultures, of which some of us here are perhaps members: those who would attempt to

retreat from a civilization whose ugliness and brutality seem to be overcoming its beauty and wisdom; those who value wilderness because its secrets have not yet been penetrated; those who have found enough healing in the wilderness experience to continue coping in the increasingly violent urban jungles; those who seek medicines for cure or profit; those who wish to protect the remnants of the once rich biodiversity of the planet as one would protect a museum; those who visualize the imminent destruction of this particular wave of civilization and seek only their own survival; those who still look for answers and models for the role of human consciousness within the full biology of the planet. And those who are oblivious.

In other words, as Rod Nash, Max Oelschlaeger, Dolores LaChapelle and many others have so clearly articulated, wilderness is not just a place, or a remnant of what once was, or a commodity, or the missing Elder or Mother -- it is an idea, a complex of ideas, profoundly intertwined with the historical and current meaning of our civilization, and with our hopes and fears for a future, and as such is a place of tension and acrimony, along with the poignant beauty that stands in such sharp contrast, often juxtaposed immediately adjacent to, the ravages of our civilization.

It is within this context that I consider the current rush to use wilderness for various psychological needs of our civilization, and from which I look back over my own work of more than 20 years of taking university students and others into extended stays into wilderness, and then back again into our urbanized world.

There appears to me to be considerable confusion surrounding the use of wilderness for "therapy, learning, and inspiration" and especially around the attempts to research, and pin down, the much vaunted "wilderness effect".

I hope these informal comments in the brief time allotted me will be useful in diminishing the confusion somewhat, or at least will focus some of the issues so that our discussions, especially among those of us who share this work of leading people in and out of wilderness, will be worthy of the incredible beauty and power of the wilderness itself.

I apologize for the sketchiness of what follows, and for the sometimes dogmatic presentation of ideas and propositions put forth as fact without the development of experiential or bibliographic support, but in this time frame that is not possible. Such support and acknowledgement is carried in a longer paper from which this is extracted, prepared for the follow-up to this Congress; and that paper is in turn part of a book underway on "The Ex-

perience of Wilderness". I certainly hope to correspond or visit with those who might wish to discuss these ideas further.

Also, these ideas are based on a rapidly emerging body of work, somewhat parallel and complimentary to "Ecophilosophy" and "Deep Ecology", called "ecological-psychology", by which a number of us in the United States and Canada are seeking a logic, an underlying model, with which to express what poets and nature writers have long been expressing about wilderness and the wilderness experience, and which expresses my own particular interest, the relationship between culture and wilderness.

We seek this "underlying logic" or "model" of the human-nature relationship out of necessity, and not out of a firm conviction that in these days of post-modern de-construction such underlying structures can be articulated, or will not ludicrously distort the full systemic complexity of our relationship with nature, or the reasons for our alienation

. . . but not in 15 minutes . . .

INTRODUCTION: THE WILDERNESS EFFECT

"What a shock it is to our psychic system to suddenly drop out of the immense over-stimulation that our culture has become. Trees and streets, telephone poles and cars racing by our eyes, joggling our peripheral vision; flights across continents and oceans, millions of sparking dots forming into tv-images; concerts, pounding drums on stereos, parties and words, signs, symbols, awash in images of stylized feminine bodies, moment by moment, crashing into our circuitry . . . and then, suddenly, few or no words, sounds only of rivers and wind in trees, heartbeats and breath noticed, the crackling of a fire, night sounds of the forest, bird calls . . . and the ears and eyes and nose and skin open in wonder, wider and wider, colors and smells and shapes becoming more vivid as if shells and scales are being removed. The mind drinks in view after view of forces and systems in balance, dying and re-birthing all around, a river in full health, flows following, meandering along paths of least resistance; the most disruptive perception a path through the forest that also meanders here and there like a peaceful, gentle light into the canyons of our hearts . . . "

from "The Experience of Wilderness"

With the exception of a few large, contiguous wilderness preserves in the lower 48 states, and the wilderness lands in Alaska, most wilderness areas are relatively small islands of supposed pristineness amidst rapidly urbanizing or exploited (if not devastated) "resource lands."

Where such "islands" do exist, they are being severely impacted (a bureaucratic euphemism for damaged) by various

human recreational uses. On summer weekends wilderness areas in California, east of Seattle, west of Denver, and elsewhere may have as many as 50,000 users or more.

It is not this informal use of which we speak -- that is a matter of urgent concern for the managers of wilderness, a matter of quotas and the "imposition on freedom" that such quotas imply. A related, but different topic.

It is the rapidly increasing institutional and formal use of wilderness preserves "for the restorative values of wilderness for personal growth, therapy, and inspiration" * of which I speak. (The miracle, perhaps, is that in the United States we still have the undeveloped land, and the wealth and leisure, to even be able to consider such uses. The irony of it, rather than miracle, is that our wealth freeing us to consider "the therapeutic use of wilderness" is very likely rooted in the effective exploitation of what once was wilderness in North America and throughout the world, a consideration not to be forgotten, but not to be treated here.)

I take John Hendee and Randy Pitstick at their word that this therapeutic use is an expanding type of usage, for I know they've surveyed literally thousands of groups now using wilderness for a variety of social purposes.

* Hendee, Pitstick

(I reluctantly and somewhat nervously find myself on that list, and, according to a recent New York Times article, have even been designated a pioneer in this field!)

At any rate, as hundreds and hundreds of research studies are claiming -- now it can be said! -- the wilderness has a very profound affect on people!

"The Wilderness Effect" as it is being called is increasingly accepted as a given. This is certainly justified by colloquial accounts: most who spend any time at all in the wilderness, and who don't attempt to duplicate the comforts of their home culture, experience, or at least think they experience, something profound.

This of course, though probably exacerbated by the stresses of modern civilization, is not new -- the "effect of the natural" has been recorded by the Israelite psalmists, the ancient Chinese sages, the poets of the Middle Ages, on through Thoreau and Muir into our own time, even through the waxings and wanings of public attitudes towards wilderness as depicted in Nash and Oelschlaeger.

The "Wilderness Effect" is often associated with healing, with craziness, or great spiritual crises; or as adventure -- all clearly implying a contrast with "common reality" as found in one's "home" culture.*

* cf., Peter Duerr, Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary Between Wilderness and Civilization. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

It often includes such psychological ideas as "increased sensory awareness", "shifts in perception", the "oceanic experience" (a la Freud), "peak experiences" (a la Maslow), "archetypal experiences (a la Jung), "soul experiences" (a la Hillman), and "transcendent" experiences (a la the transpersonal psychologists).

The "Wilderness Effect" often implies expansion, or reconnection -- the expansion of "self", the reconnection with past adaptations (going back into our pre-paleolithic existence), with natural cycles, with complete and fully natural systems -- systems that include death, fear, violence, as well as beauty and elegance in wondrous balance.

Another frequent base, or source is through the release of repression. Wilderness users in this camp tend to see the source of the impact of the wilderness experience not so much as coming from the external wilderness, but from "the internal wilderness" which emerges when repression, inherent in the culture, is diminished or removed.

And so on. Certainly there is no agreement on how to define the wilderness effect, or what it does or doesn't include. It is very rare that a wilderness program will include more than one or a few of the above viewpoints.

A different psychological theory, or avoidance of any psychology, or any theory whatsoever for that matter, will shape differing strategies, or focus an approach on a certain population of clients, with very different goals, and of course different results.

RESEARCHING THE WILDERNESS EFFECT

Such variety poses immense difficulties for the researcher. How can results be compared, let alone common conditions codified as a basis for widespread research among the wide variety of professional wilderness users?

And there are more considerations. How does one approach a phenomenon that appears highly pleasurable and profoundly transformational, aesthetic and energizing, and yet lasts only minimally upon return to one's day-to-day life in the culture? Or, assuming wilderness to be not culture, and assuming we can leave at least some of the culture behind, and, in effect, to some degree, deprogram, so that we are able to more fully and more accurately experience natural processes over which culture is a veneer -- assuming all this, how can the culture-bound techniques of our research do anything more than diminish or distort such experiences? (graduate students deserve special compassion in this area!)

One also wonders what social or personal forces are pushing this research, for it seems that some kind of a line has been crossed in recent years, where proof of the benefits and full explication of The Wilderness Effect has become essential.

Perhaps this need is sparked by the sheer numbers of people using the wilderness in this manner (itself perhaps a symptom of a culture desperate for healing, or at least desperate for some release from the rising stresses of urbanized life).

Perhaps the demand for proof is sparked by the budget cuts in agencies needing more efficient therapies; or by the tendency of the immense academic psychological establishment to need to penetrate every corner of life, no matter how personal or sacred; or by the passionate curiosity of such leaders of wilderness management as John Hendee, who know a trend when they see one and would like to see it grounded in fact, if not wisdom.

Whatever the need for research, this great desire of academics, bureaucrats and managers on budgets, to pin down "the effect" should be tempered with Martin Buber's statement:

"An I-Thou knowledge that can be held fast, preserved, factually transmitted does not really exist."

My Own Research

I have been conducting wilderness trips in a university setting for 22 years. I have been conducting research on the trips for most of that time, partly to keep academic deans at bay, partly as a basis for my own quality control, and partly in search of repeated patterns that would suggest a language, and logic underlying what obviously is a remarkable experience and perhaps a useful window into the dynamics of cultures in general, and the nature-destroying aspects of Western culture in particular.

It must be repeated, I have been studying my own particular approach to "wilderness for personal growth", and make no claims that my results are generalizable to other approaches.

I must also state that I do not believe it can be proved by scientifically objective measures and with statistical confidence that the wilderness experience is therapeutic as a general rule. Nor am I fully confident that, within the dynamics of the culture within which I live, it is in fact therapeutic, whether proven or not. I watch carefully the many (mostly futile) attempts to prove beneficial outcomes of various psychotherapeutic approaches and realize "wilderness therapy" deals with many more variables (the whole, shifting panorama of the infinite systems of nature, for starters).

*cf., James Hillman's We've Had 100 Years of Psychotherapy and the World's Getting Worse, Hillman & Michael Ventura 1992, Harper San Francisco

What I am attempting to do is to honor and explore an experience of exquisite beauty, of obvious impact on individuals, and of such profundity and complexity that the term "ineffable" or "spiritual" for the experience seems appropriate. Whatever it is, and whatever its benefits, the wilderness experience is worthy of respect and caution.

In my particular case, research has always been rooted "within the process, confirmed by experience" -- in other words, along the fine line of a supposedly therapeutic program and a research program, with the often high-tension stance familiar to anthropologists of "action- or participatory research" linking the two poles. (Objectivity is an interesting and useful mode of knowing, but should not be mistaken for the reality of experience, especially when dealing with the very reality-constructing mental processes comprising our culture.)

I have wanted what is usually wanted in social sciences contexts: how to ask of our data "questions of substance" amidst a huge research record (in the social sciences in general, and wilderness research as well) of such vast triviality.

I have attempted to avoid the relief of grabbing hold

of a symbol here, or a finding out-of-context there, and creating a theory out of it..

But yes, I have arduously searched for stuff to measure and correlate; formulated hypotheses and tested for them; described and described, attempting to remain open "to whatever comes up", fishing with questionnaires, interviews and observations, anecdotal records, critical incident reports and the like. And in fact, I am always surprised from every set of results.

I have linked consistent responses -- "patterns" I call them -- that emerge in a large percentage of the questionnaires -- with age, gender, time of year, composition of the group, and to link this with more subtle and esoteric factors such as where the experience is taking place (for example, certain valleys or ridges or pools in streams, or peaks may, over time, seem to arouse similar potent behaviour).

(This "quest for the independent variable" could, as most experiential and social-sciences researchers well know, fill an entire treatise in itself. Suffice to say that though we often would examine consequences of a very specific event, action or intervention while holding other variables as fixed as possible, just as often we would "put it all together" and read out of the "texts" participants would provide (in the form of stories, poems,

anecdotes, etc.) the broader "story of the relationships" between "structures shaped by the wilderness", or directly with the wilderness itself. This has always made sense to us, because it reflects our goals, to facilitate the reestablishment of a full, nondistorted relationship with nature, or "natural processes".

In sum, the questions I have been asking for years precisely reflect the specific goals of my program:

1. Does the wilderness experience offer "new" or unique opportunities for awareness, and other forms of relationship?
2. What is the core dynamic, the "core wilderness experience" and process that "causes" the wilderness effect in my particular set of circumstances?
3. How does this compare with other wilderness approaches?
4. What are the implications, theoretically and practically, of so many inferring spiritual qualities to the wilderness experience?
5. What does the experience reveal, if anything, about "unconscious" and "transpersonal" processes?
6. Are people really benefitted, on the whole, by the experience? If so, in what ways? and for how long?
7. What are the dynamics of the "culture-nature" interface, and how does this manifest?
8. Can in fact "cultural programs" be "deconditioned", and in what ways can the wilderness experience facilitate this?
9. What does group process have to do with the enhancement ^{or} ~~of~~ diminishment of the wilderness experience? solitude?
10. How can "relationships with natural processes" be established without need-based "egoic dominance" (see below), projection, or other egoic (and cultural) protective maneuvers? How can relationships be fully accurate?

It may be useful to compare these goals with a small sample of other approaches:

1. Typical social agency

To enhance functioning with regard to a specific social task within the culture (i.e., getting a job, becoming more successful in work situations or relationships, adjusting to societal stress, working more successfully on a corporate team, overcoming an addiction, etc.)

2. Hendee

"To allow core patterns, feelings, beliefs, values and social interactions to emerge and to use this heightened state of personal and social awareness to bring one to a growing edge where one's behaviour can be understood, evaluated and affirmed or redirected."

3. Anon . . .

To experience nature, have a good time, recharge one's batteries, get a perspective on things, get away from the kids . . .

4. A River-guide company

". . . to have an adventure that will fully awaken you, in complete comfort and safety, with gourmet meals waiting for you at the end of the day . . . "

5. Outward Bound

"While Outward Bound provides enormous personal benefits, it is not therapy. We are not a rehabilitation program or an appropriate forum to address psychological issues. Outward Bound is about affirmation of personal strengths, not repair . . . "

6. Center For Light, Love, and Laughter (Marge Kaiser)

"This will be a three day intensive backpacking trip in the high Sierras. Focus will be on silent contemplation of nature and our relationship to it. We will leave ALL aspects of the culture behind (except for food and shelter.) Through meditation, ritual, alone time, and sharing we will explore the Sacred in nature and in ourselves."

7. Earthways (Steve Harper)

"Nature can provide opportunities to stretch one's limits and explore one's inner wilderness. By living in a natural environment it is possible to expand one's sense of self and depth of being . . . "

Some Assumptions Underlying My Approach

The goal of my particular wilderness approach, to define transformation as the re-establishment of a healthy human-nature relationship, and to facilitate enough de-conditioning of cultural "programs" in order for connections with natural processes as found in wilderness to be made, assumes that such relationships do not exist, or are distorted, or are somehow inadequate (for example, the relationships do exist, but are not believed to exist -- see below).

It is further assumed that certain human "reality-constructing processes" contained and perpetuated through cultural reinforcement processes maintain (and tend to expand) our current problematic human-nature relationship. (Thus, it can be said that our wilderness trips are as much about healing our relationship with culture -- perhaps healing all relationships -- as they are about healing the relationship with nature.)

I assume that we are in fact immersed in natural processes, but somehow think we're not (because of our "dualistic" mode of processing the information emanating from experience), and thus, unable to accurately process information from natural processes, become physically skewed ("out of balance") with regard to natural processes. Over time, many generations, with a kind of "Lamarckian" evolutionary cultural build up, such distortions coalesce

into ~~such~~ broader programs we give such names as "dominance", "anthropomorphism", "patriarchial thinking", exploitation (of natural processes), and the like. The intricate inter-reinforcing web of myths, stories, habits, traditions, ideologies, belief systems, and "modes of knowing" gives us our very destructive stance with regard to "nature". Yes, we can attempt to access the destructive system at any level, any one or more of an almost infinite number of "doorways", but I am assuming that the more "macro" places in the system (as, for example, "greed") ^{are} ~~as~~ symptoms, and the more fundamental psychological information - "reality-producing" process ^{is} ~~is~~ the root cause. (And this is what makes the wilderness experience so interesting, because it seems to (potentially at least) serve to disrupt fundamental programs of information processing.)

I assume that there is no adequate psychology or philosophy to yet give language (in a logical and rigorous fashion) to these processes (though various eco-philosophy and eco-psychology movements are attempting to do so), but that poets and writers for a long time have more or less accurately diagnosed this wounding process (Wm Blake, perhaps Wordsworth and Whitman, Roethke, Snyder, Jane Hirschfield, Michael McClure, Diane DePrima, etc.)

Some Language

Here is an example of redefining enough psycholgoical "reality processing" language to be able to articulate the wilderness experience with some depth and consistency.

Assume "the Wilderness Effect" to be "below" or "beyond" culture (however much it might be intertwined with each individual's own unique personal cultural imprint). In other words, whatever culture is, and however "deep" it is intertwined with natural processes, it is still, relatively, a veneer, evolutionarily recent.

Assume Mind to be a full summary of all natural processes and the information emanating from the interaction of such processes. Assume Mind therefore to be an immanent property of the universe, an immanent "intelligence" manifesting in natural processes. Assume Mind to be prior to consciousness, and encompassing of all past, present, and future consciousness.

Assume consciousness, therefore, to be a property of Mind, a special capacity of humans (and perhaps other more complex mammals) that allows a special self-reflexive experience of Mind.

Assume that consciousness, in recent evolution, has "fallen" away from Mind, in part, serving on the one hand the development of egoic capacities and the rise of perspective and individualism, the ability through objective

observation to manipulate natural processes to some degree, and through the ammassing of power through such manipulation to be able to further control and dominate natural processes to the point that they are endangered; and on the other hand the separated consciousness increasing^{ly} informed by its own culture-generated information, and decreasingly informed by the information of Mind . . .

Assume "ego" to^{be} that collection of cognitive abilities that, among many need-fulfilling capacities, also is a word for the processes that split consciousness from Mind. Ego thus "dominates" consciousness, regulates it, orients it to need fulfillment, and protects and maintains its own functions.

Assume that the "residue" of the egoic processes form a pattern, a continuity, that tends to become fixed, consistent, and is the basis for such concepts as "the self", "identity" and "persona", etc..

Assume that one of the capacities of the ego, namely the distinction-making capacity, is hyperactive in Western culture, instigating a momentum of distinction-making that has evolved further into disjunction -- complete splits between aspects of reality, or "dualism".

Assume that consciousness, when remaining as a function but dropping most of the egoic processes, and especially the hyper distinction-making capacity, develops "awareness"

that serves to open consciousness to Mind, countering, reversing, or dissolving the separative function. To the degree that consciousness is disjunctive with Mind is the degree that the human is, at the core, unsatisfied and motivated by need-seeking behaviour.

Activities which "decondition" the cultural programs which support hyper-separating egoic activity allow the naturally-function^{ing} awareness process to heal isolated consciousness and open it to the natural processes, inside and out, to which it, along with many other human functions, have access.

Egoic patterns long reinforced can be diminished only with great difficulty (with the exception of psycho-active chemicals), such patterns tending to return when awareness processes drift back below a certain threshold and egoic need-fulfilling patterns "take over".

In no way does the linking of consciousness to Mind via awareness remove normal (natural) egoic function^{ing}. Distinction-making is healthy, crucial for our survival. Hyper-active distinction making, to the point of disjunction, has separated us from the collective natural processes *to the point* that we are in fact killing that which sustains us, etc.

Various practices seem to directly and, potentially deeply, shake the cultural programs that maintain the distorted hyperactive egoic processes: namely, contemplative

practices (various meditation, breathing, and yoga techniques -- designed to "flood consciousness with awareness, and thus flood consciousness with Mind"); psychedelics -- natural ones which for many centuries have been used ritually to link up consciousness with "larger realities", and artificial ones which, more or less inadvertently, have been discovered to be extremely potent in dissolving cultural programs which maintain separation-producing information processing); and, the wilderness experience, which also seems -- when structured to be -- extremely potent in diminishing cultural programming and arousing the kind of awareness that brings Mind and consciousness back together. Of course there are many other practices, rituals, and human activities that allow, or help create "healed relationships", but that's another paper.

What for me has been important from all this is to come to realize that the transition between isolated consciousness and consciousness merging with natural processes, or "mind", is virtually identical in principle to the transition between "culture" and "wilderness -- _____ that in fact what I was exploring and attempting to research was boundary phenomena where culture and wilderness meet. The irony of it was that the more this became clear, the less the wilderness became essential for healing culture.

Another way of saying it is that it is not the wilderness per se, in isolation, that is the source of healing of the information processing that is behind the breakdown in the human-nature relationship. It would appear that way from the dualistic perspective. Rather, the source of healing is in the relationship between the same process -- information processing (e.g., "reality construction") -- carried under different circumstances: one the one hand, within the culture, on the other hand, within the wilderness. When the person is able to move between modes of information processing whether in wilderness or culture -- in either location -- then healing can be said to have begun. The reasons for this are complex and cannot be fully explored here, but they have to do with the full inclusion of all human capacities in our healing, the dynamics ^{of} cultural as compared with natural information processing, the relationship of consciousness to external natural processes, and so on.

Finally, to end this foray into language, if it is boundary phenomena we are exploring between wilderness and culture, then we must understand "both sides".

As stated earlier I take culture to be an overlay of nature, even in situations where nature and culture seem intertwined (see below). Culture is the sum total of

human symbolic operations, the total including an evolving build-up from the past. Though cultures over our evolutionary past have been hugely variable, at present there appears to be a very rapid global merging into a more or less homogenous culture, though with many sub-cultural variations. This "global village" culture bears a strange (and to some of us horrifying) resemblance to the dominant Euro-American culture, with its basic Assumptions which are, in essence, rooted in dualistic modes of constructing reality out of experience.

Dualism is defined as a definitive split in reality -- that is, one believes various realities function on different principles, different processes, ultimately belonging in different realities -- mind split from body; subject from object, humans from "other", and so on. As John Dewey pointed out 65 years ago, once one dualistic mode is established, many others -- "like a plague" -- usually follow.

In fact, we can theorize that there is only one reality, embracing all that is, even while one's cultural programming reinforces the mental operations that lead one to believe otherwise.

Wilderness, also as stated above, is, simply, where culture is not, except in the form of trails, the in-

cessant sound and sight of military and commercial jets, polluted air blowing up canyons from urban areas, acid rain, and of course the culture carried into the wilderness in the continued cultural processing of those entering the wilderness. (Not long ago I saw a man on a knoll deep in the wilderness with his portable computer on his lap, "networking", he said as I approached, "with people all over the globe". The abstractions compatible with the computer's circuitry a match, to him, of the incredible and unabstractable network in which he was immersed.)

Brief Summary of a Typical Trip

OK, back on the trail here, with a very brief summary of a typical trip, so my approach can be examined comparatively.

Typically a trip lasts two weeks, rarely less, sometimes three, once in a while four weeks.

Participants are drawn from the entire university community, including fellow professors, graduate students from other departments, local psychotherapists and psychiatrists, and various wilderness leaders (sometimes former students) from around the country (at various times we have had exchange programs with such organizations as Outward Bound). Because of this variety of participants,

and because Sonoma State University is somewhat unique in the California University system (typified as "experimental") and also attracts many reentry students, the average age of participants over the years has ranged around 29-30.

There is a 3-8-week preparation period prior to entering the wilderness, comprised of readings, discussions, the transition from a class of strangers to a tight-knit cooperative community, the beginning of "culturally deconditioning" practices such as meditation and yoga (practices that will be continued in the wilderness, and likely will continue following the wilderness journey as well -- the primary means by which "culture shock" is avoided during the return). There is serious singing practice as a means of relaxing together and unifying as a group, but also as a means of cutting down the chatter and sharing deeply without didactic explanations.

All participants must "get aerobic" during the preparation period, with a test with fully weighted packs (usually around 50 pounds) required up a nearby mountain about 10 days prior to the trip. Those who cannot keep up with the aging leader must drop^{out} and, if there are openings, wait for another trip (the class is usually booked several years in advance). Average size

of the groups are usually around 12 or 14, never more than 16, including leader and assistants.

Food is carefully selected to be fully nutritious, but "just enough". Only items essential for health and safety are allowed.

Everything is ritualized by the time the trip begins -- the driving to the trailhead, the dividing of the food, the weighing of packs and distribution of "community" equipment, attention to health and safety practices. We do not step on the trail until we are fully satisfied that the group is grounded in health practices and has come together as a working unit (we have been known to spend as many as three days working to achieve this in particularly difficult groups, but that is rare). At any rate, in 22 years I've never had an accident of any consequence.

Entering the wilderness -- across the boundary -- is ritualized; crossing the first river, the way we walk (distance from each person, walking in silence, fast or slow, who leads, etc.), the way meals are cooked (everyone takes a turn), learning to put up tarps with alacrity (we rarely take tents), rigorous instruction in no impact camping. The ambiguity about destinations,

distance to be hiked each ^{day}, any plan for the day at all, etc. soon conveys the idea that we are already there where we set out to be, doing what we came to do. Within a few days participants speak of being "home", and of experiencing a very deep familiarity with what we're doing.

The pace, direction, many of the activities are decided by the group as a whole -- everything short of life-threatening situations are decided by consensus. A group may be very athletic, very energetic, full of many ideas and plans, or very quiet, contemplative (or lazy). Leaders make suggestions (which of course are often given extra credence, because "they're supposed to know what we're here to do"), sometimes quite often sometimes rarely. Thus, the group becomes empowered as a group quite quickly, which greatly reduces stress and in fact makes a much safer, and more pleasant-to-work-with group.

There is of course a mistique surrounding the class, and much talk from previous trips, so many of the same practices are repeated: almost always an "alone time" lasting three or four days; all night chanting rituals; climbs to peaks at sunrise or sunset, or in silence in the moonlight; separate camps for several days between men and women (with often highly ritualized ways of coming

back together); sometimes very carefully conducted sweat lodges. Of course sometimes a trip is occupied with heavy weather, or illness, or "something to work out in the group". But as with Outward Bound, the trips are not advertised as "therapy" or "healing" but rather, as an opportunity "to explore one's relationship with nature, as found in the pristine setting of wilderness". Yes, many will use the trip for various private goals -- an impending decision to be seen in perspective, a chance to explore (or sometimes avoid!) a personal problem, and so on.

Participants often become ebulliant to find that fears prior to the trip have proved unfounded. Occasionally someone will express boredom, or will try and goad the group into conflict or various feats of derring do, but for the most part being in the wilderness, alone and together, unfolds as an incredible drama of great beauty, and the simple acts of moving together, leaving no trace, cooking and sleeping, and tuning in to the necessary skills while also tuning into fire and water and various celestial events, is fully occupying.

There is no way to adequately convey in a few words "what the trips are really like" -- and every trip is remarkably different -- but here is some prose written after a trip that might convey a slight flavor of our particular ^{approach} ~~trip~~, and what we might mean by "transformation".

"Moments of integration -- of being completely one with surroundings -- haven't happened in my life that much, and when it has happened it has been as frequently out of wilderness as in. Making love has been the most common way in the past, but that's still more a communion, a co-mingling of forms seen as separate.

Here is one time of complete integration with wilderness.

There were 12 of us on a warm June day along the upper reaches of the Middle Fork of the Eel River in California (one of the few completely healthy, undammed rivers left in the state). As it happened we were six men and six women, two of whom were sisters, one 22, the other 14; their father was one of the men.

We were near the end of our two-week trip and we had gone as deep into the center of the wilderness as we could, and as deep into our hearts and minds. We had adopted games and structures we knew would open us beyond our controls. We had been astonished at how our precious assumptions about ourselves and our ability to feel, and understand, now seemed so limited.

We had awakened our bodies by plunging daily in the still frigid snow-fed waters, awakened the sun from the peaks at dawn, chanted nonsense sounds alone and together that would not stay contained in our own separateness. We had prayed and laughed and cried, told our stories, shared long silences and became children again when the sisters' father taught us "the real way" to play kick the can one warm evening.

We had gone out alone like heroes on grail quests in search of dramatic and important visions that would guide our lives and make our decisions for us and had instead found in tiny scale and modest simplicity perfection all around us: a column of ants dragging the last remnants of may flies; sensuous manzanita trunks rising like red muscled limbs out of banks of chartreuse green moss; small trout flashing in the pools; every little soon-to-be-dry brooklet a perfect series of miniature waterfalls, making chords with the pools as if tuned by

master musicians intimate with our deepest longings.

We had fasted, and with parched lips facing east all day had felt the sun moving over our heads from front to back, the north wind drying our tears as we waited and watched, released slow breath by slow breath into deepening surrender, into webs of meanings for which we had taken birth.

And so, back together after such work on this particular day, our last before leaving, we scrambled down-river over rocks and through pools, splashing, noisy, beyond where we could be found, pulled to something, some place, completely without image.

We came upon a huge pool that seemed bottomless, shadings of blue-green darkening almost to black in the depths, sheer walls of blue-gray slate rising 30 feet above either bank, huge rounded boulders above and below the pool over which the water poured in gushing waterfalls.

We fell silent at the sight, knowing somehow that this would be the turning point, "the most sacred", the place of furthest wilderness, for this day, for this trip, for this time in our lives, perhaps in our entire lives.

No one spoke as, one by one, we entered the pool: Later someone would comment that, for the first time on the trip the water did not shock us. We swam, crawled onto the hot rocks, warming our bodies on the smooth surfaces and curves we each found. Many of us slept for a time. Some spoke later of amazingly lucid dreams.

After a time we gravitated towards a large flat space on top of one of the rocks next to the pool and formed a circle, our habit over the previous 12 days. And then there was no distance, an openness into ourselves that was an openness to each other, and which embraced the pool, the river and further out into the wilderness, the "other world", the whole earth, the universe.

We looked frankly at each other, enjoying our clear eyes, our health, smiling, weeping, seeing each other as if for the first time; as if there had never been any distance. Some quietly spoke from their hearts, simple things -- a memory, a thanks, a question.

We sang some of the songs that had been most helpful to us, drawing out our best voices, blending in with the sound of the river.

Then a shadow passed over us, a rare golden eagle passing between us and the sun and we saw that shadows had lengthened along the canyon walls. With a wild cry someone jumped up and dived into the pool. We all followed and the water was icy, shocking us, making our skin feel taut.

We walked slowly back to our camp and quietly cooked our meal, a little shy, many deep looks into the fire.

The younger of the sisters said that night in our last circle "now I'm ready to go back to the other world. I choose not to let a day like this become a common thing."

EXAMPLES OF SOME FINDINGS

From the more than 1,380 persons passing through this program I have collected approximately 700 questionnaires, 700 interviews, 52 longitudinal studies, over 300 stories, myths or poems (personal responses to the trips), plus results of various tests and measures.

Here are a few of the patterns that have emerged:

- 90% of all respondents describe an increased sense of "aliveness", awakeness, well being, energy, etc.
- 90% state that the experience allowed them to break an addiction (defined broadly -- from nicotine to chocolate, hot showers to "the evening news");
- 81% describe an increased sense of empowerment (with a wide variety of meaning and contexts used to define the term)

- 80% found the return initially pleasant or joyful;
- 53% of those found within 48 hours the initial positive feelings turning to depression (occasionally in earlier years quite severe);
- 77% describe a "major life change" upon return (in personal relationships, changes in employment, changes in housing or lifestyle, changes in academic progress (usually for the worse);
- 70% of those tested for stress before and after a trip (110 participants) show an initial lowering of stress immediately upon return, then a rise of stress higher than before the trip, then a gradual decline to around the pre-trip rating;
- 60% of the men, 20% of the women stated that a major goal of the trip was to conquer fear, challenge themselves, expand limits, etc.
- 57% of the women and 27% of the men stated that a major goal of the trip was to "come home" or "return to where I most belong", or some such statement;
- 60% of all participants stated that they had adopted at least one ritual or practice learned and practiced on the trip; 17% of longitudinal respondents (9 out of 50) stated that they still did the practice "quite often" after five years; (The rituals or practices chosen show considerable gender differences, ranging from tuning into cycles (sun, moon, tides, seasons, etc.) to various activities that were more group oriented (chanting, yoga, prayer before meals, etc.);
- 92% of all respondents cite Alone Time as the single most important experience of the trip; getting up before dawn and climbing a ridge or peak in order to greet the sun was cited by 73% of the respondents as the second most important experience of the trip;
- 82% of all respondents called the trip "one of the most important experiences of my life". These are typical comments when asked why:
 - I am as much "nature" as "culture" . . .
 - I learned that I have to heal if our culture is going to heal . . .
 - I learned that I can sing really well . . .
 - I found out that the sun is my ancestor, and never fails . . .

- Mental Health is not the same as wilderness. It's more like a garden, a balance between both mind and nature . . .
 - addiction results from something being left out . . .
 - I learned that the only true freedom is an integration of nature and culture . . .
 - I am a complete person, much more complete than the person I was before . . .
 - that below all the shit and pain is a fountain of basic goodness . . . harsh but good . . .
- etc.

The Prevalence of Fear

If, as we assume, there is a deep-level "shaking" or "disruption" in participants' mode of processing experience, then we would expect frequent references to fear. This is the case. It is very rare that someone ^{mentions fear.} doesn't at one point or another in the trip,

Here are some typical descriptions of fear on post-trip questionnaires:

- It was inexplicable -- vague, yet very real, like I've never felt. Everything familiar seemed to be falling away and it was scary;
- I saw death everywhere the moment we entered the wilderness and for a little while I became terrified that I might die any minute. I realized I'd never thought much about death before . . .
- I became convinced the earth would be blown up by terrorists or somebody while we were out in the wilderness and I wouldn't get to tell my family goodbye . . .
- When you said it felt like a big storm was coming and I knew we couldn't get any weather reports, I panicked . . .
- I was afraid a cowboy (hunter, fraternity guy, man, logger) would attack me during alone time . . .
- I was afraid the group would see what a jerk I am . . .

Perhaps one reason we have almost no reports of fear ~~of~~ the dark is that, though we don't allow flashlights, almost all of our trips are within bright moonlight periods. There are very few mentions of fear of heights because we don't undertake technical climbs.

We find no correlation between the intensity of joy or pleasure experienced and attitudes expressed upon return, although those showing depression upon return had almost universally expressed in one way or another deep satisfaction with the trip.

Among our most vivid findings are changes in dream patterns. 76% of all respondents reported dramatic changes in quantity, vividness, and context of dreams within 48 hours of entering into the wilderness. 82% of those so reporting express a change of content of dreams from "busy", "urban" or scenarios of conflicts at the outset to dreams about the group or some aspect of the wilderness. In other words, it seems on the average to take three or four days for people's dreams to catch up with them! We have said, not completely in jest, that this finding indicates that our culture is only four days deep!

Gender

We find differences in statements between men and women so pervasive, matching our own in-field observations, that

we have come to assume that men and women have, on the whole, rather profoundly different "experiences of wilderness". The transition into wilderness seems easier for women, the transition back into culture seems easier for men. Women tend not to be as interested in "going anywhere" once they've entered the wilderness, men quite frequently want to "cruise and climb". There are so many levels and possible variables here that we have had difficulty sorting out the many patterns that wax and wane from trip to trip. Exploration of this will have to wait until the 6th Congress.

SOME COMMENTS ON THE ABOVE FINDINGS

I think it obvious that even within a relatively similar population and a relatively stable set of goals and procedures, there is a wide variation in how people experience the wilderness.

I have spent considerable time linking similarities and differences in peoples responses to the wilderness experience to the hypothesis that the differences are rooted in differences of processing experiences. I'm trying to get a handle on something that is more psychologically precise (not necessarily more measurable but something that could be accurately articulated by "the naive subject") than "the wilderness effect", or "it was important", "it felt

good" "empowerment" or "increased self esteem".

The reason I turn to "the mode of processing experience" as a measure of change instigated by the wilderness experience is that it is something people can become aware of. For example, tracking inward from a finding that "empowerment" has taken place, one can ask (ask oneself, or a research subject) what defines empowerment: empowerment in what context, according to whom, and in what ways. This might lead to the observation of what the source of the means by which a person processes an experience is. And if the assumption is correct that the source of our belief that we are separate from nature is a flaw in our information processing procedures, then finding a way to track on changes in information processing as a person moves across the boundary between Wilderness and Culture could be very useful indeed in healing the fundamental cause of our continued assault on nature.

I believe it useful in this regard to posit a gradient between the polarity of culture and wilderness. This could be a gradient of "the wilderness effect" -- from "none" (no effect), to "a complete blow-out of one's usual programs for processing reality. And I think we could hypothesize that somewhere along this gradient is a transition point, a point where one's mode of information processing switches from culture-dominated (which in the case of our culture would be dualistic-producing) to nature-dominated (which

would depend on the degree to which a person is able to access natural processes accurately, rather than as projections or other forms of distortion).

I suggest calling this point along the gradient between culture and nature the psychological wilderness boundary. All enter the wilderness physically, many avoid (or are unable for various reasons) entering the wilderness psychologically. Whether one does so depends on all the famous variables: the length of stay, the amount of cultural reminders brought in, the goals of the leader and/or the group if it is a structured trip, and so on.

On the cultural side of the psychological boundary are short(er) trips with goals such as "empowerment" and adjustment to various cultural demands. On the other side -- on the wilderness side of the psychological boundary -- are transformative trips, where a certain portion (sometimes quite a major portion) of the "culture-bound" information processing is dissolved or diminished, to be exchanged by information processing along more "natural processes" lines.

There is nothing wrong with "adjustment" or "empowerment" per se, except that if the culture to which one is adjusting to, or becoming empowered within, is destructive of nature, then we have a problem.

On the other hand, if one crosses the psychological boundary into wilderness and undergoes a transformation in terms of information processing or whatever, the experience of returning to the psychological processes of the culture will be one of dissonance.

The assumption behind this dichotomy is that Western culture is more or less destructive of nature. Therefore personal transformation with regard to the human-nature relationship must take place "out of culture".

Of course this is all oversimplification. Some wilderness trips decondition cultural modes of information processing, such that "transformation" takes place, and yet are still able to function within cultural norms. And some wilderness trips are oriented to goals that are fully compatible within cultural norms that in fact engender personal transformation. I have, however, found the distinction to be helpful as a source of hypotheses as to why participants in trips of short duration tend to fare better in the culture than those out longer; or as to why any goals of different wilderness trips work in the way they do with regard to the juxtaposition of culture and nature.

The question still remains: how much of culture does one leave behind when entering the wilderness for an extended stay, and vice versa, how much of wilderness can coexist with a culture that, inadvertently or otherwise, is killing it.

CONSIDERATION OF CONCEPTUAL MODELS EXPLAINING THE
WILDERNESS EFFECT

The "Hendee/Brown Model" with which I assume most here are familiar is put forth to explain how wilderness experience programs work to achieve "personal growth and inspiration". It is meant to be a comprehensive model that deals with the "common core" of a wide variety of approaches to "personal growth" in wilderness settings. Hendee and Pitstick say in their paper delivered to this Congress:

" . . . just as forest management practices have been developed and refined, based on working hypotheses of how the forest will respond to different actions under different conditions, we propose conditions and working hypotheses on the probable effects of wilderness experiences on people."

I believe the analogy doesn't work. The range of responses of which people are potentially capable under different conditions is infinitely greater than a forest. I believe we will have to look much deeper for management practices that will allow personal growth. (Not the least of the issues is whether such activities should be managed at all, and whether it is appropriate to advocate that such activities take place in our already beleaguered wilderness areas.)

The search for a universal model to explain the wilderness effect surely will be as elusive as the search for

one conceptual model to explain and summarize the wide range of psychotherapeutic practices -- from Freudian psychoanalysis to art therapy. A conceptual model to explain "the wilderness effect" as a universal becomes a "self-fulfilling prophecy" -- it must shape the wilderness activity to fit the set of conditions. But such conditions can be no more universal than the ability of one wilderness guide to conduct a wilderness trip in a near identical manner as another wilderness guide. Even in large wilderness organizations such as Outward Bound, or National Outdoor Leadership School who often give their leaders a standard training, and hold them to a certain set of procedures and standards, ~~and it~~ ^{it is found to be} extremely difficult to impossible to predict standard outcomes, let alone a common set of principles as to why and how success is, or is not, occurring.

The Hendee/Brown model defines personal growth as

" . . . a range of effects toward expanded fulfillment of one's capabilities and potential . . . with a continuum of personal growth outcomes ranging from heightened awareness of needs at the low end of the spectrum, clarified values and purpose in the middle, to transformation or re-direction of one's life at the high end."

This appears to be based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and assumes "transformation" to be a matter of moving from "lower" or more biological needs, to "higher" or more transcendent or spiritual needs. Either way it is a

need-based model and as such it is fundamentally bound into Western cultural assumptions (even though the "high end" of the scale implies a transcendence of need, and thus a transcendence of culture). In other words, cultures are systems of need fulfillment, among other functions. There would be no problem if the culture into which we were embedded was in healthy balance with natural processes. Obviously western culture is not, therefore a need-based model will in essence tie us to the very culture from which we are trying to escape, or at least transform. Maslow himself recognized this issue in his later years and helped create the field of transpersonal psychology to deal with it).

But let us look us look more closely at the model's "five conditions for personal growth . . . essential for growth from wilderness experiences" and see if it at least might work for goals well within our culture's existing values and procedures. Here are the conditions presumably necessary for growth to occur:

Receptivity

"Personal growth from a wilderness experience depends on the participants receptivity"

Receptivity to what? To the goals of a culture-oriented program, or receptivity to the wilderness itself?

Naturally, one would assume a certain degree of receptivity from anyone contracting for a certain wilderness experience.

But to take it further, and assume it be a "real", necessary and measurable psychological state by which to measure the success or failure of a wilderness program would, in my experience, be impossible.

"Receptivity" is one of those psychological terms that sounds like it means something but no one can pin down what it is. There are blocks to communication, blocks to understanding, blocks to experiencing, blocks to processing experience, blocks to the flow of information that could result from experience. One could say that culture is a system of channels and blocks. So, again, by "receptive" do we mean adopting the flow of information that the culture allows?

In my experience blocks exist here and there among the various layers and labrynth of the human psyche, and are mostly unconscious, making the measurement of them impossible. Thus, "receptivity" can only be inferred.

I've tried it. The least receptive-appearing participants in my groups often undergo the most growth, and vice versa.

Another reason I find "receptivity" irrelevant as a

condition for the "wilderness effect" is that at some level (again, mostly unconscious), everyone longs for intimacy with nature. Below "the cultural veneer" our natural processes dance with external natural processes. Our natures are highly receptive to wilderness, no matter what we think . . .

Optimum Stress . . .

"Personal growth depends on the right degree of stress from the wilderness experience"

I think just the opposite. Stress when it exists on a wilderness trip, and it will exist, inevitably, is what stands in the way of "growth" and "transformation" rather than facilitates it.

We can join with natural processes as an act of communion, or we can greet nature from the stance of dominance, as conquerors, or potential conquerors. The former speaks of a healed relationship with nature, the latter perpetuates our culture's tragic and destructive relationship with nature. Using stress to arouse coping behavior in order to arouse learning is a very limited view of learning, reminiscent of 19th-century educational models, or the fitness models of military training.

The less stress, the more we will be able to interact with wilderness at the level where it will be transforming.

Stress as a motivator and necessary condition for learning gives us learning compatible with cultural norms, preventing the kind of learning that allows transformation so that natural processes once more can be experienced and known.

Cultural Change -- A Break From Prevailing Norms

"Wilderness experiences provide a reprieve from cultural influences, especially prevailing cultural norms that govern so much of our behaviour and ways of relating."

Of the five conditions for growth in wilderness settings carried in the Hendee/Brown model, this one is most compatible with my own philosophy of wilderness work. (And, I would have to say, the first "cultural norm" I would consider dropping is Hendee/Brown Condition #2, above, the reliance on stress as a mode of learning.)

As with other conditions of the Hendee/Brown model, this is not exclusive to the wilderness experience. (This has, for example, been studied extensively in the earlier days of the Peace Corps when "culture shock" was incapacitating a rather large percentage of Peace Corps volunteers.)

I would also point out that a "break from prevailing norms" is no small matter to bring off, in wilderness, or any setting. It takes time (for me, two weeks would be

minimum) and very careful structuring. And with what will you replace "prevailing norms"?

(This condition is interestingly interconnected with resistance. To remove prevailing norms would generally arouse resistance to "new" norms. The tendency is usually to reconstruct cultural norms as energetically as possible, unless alternative norms are provided. This is where "soft skills" become a central condition. Etc.)

Opportunity For Atunement With Nature and Oneself

"With cultural influences removed, participants can experience the natural environment and themselves in perspective"

This may be an essential condition for the transformative level of personal growth in the wilderness but ironically may not be necessary, or even desirable, for the less transformative goals of "empowerment" or "adjustment". The reason is that, as stated above, when one fully "attunes" to nature and "experiences the natural environment", one's Western-cultural perspective is challenged, if not dissolved. This is fine, if personal (and cultural) transformation is what you're after; but if you wish to empower people in terms of functioning

more successfully within the prevailing "cultural norms", then this condition might best be left out.

(Also, as above, to remove cultural influences isn't unique to the wilderness experience. Eastern cultural contemplative practices have been doing this for centuries.)

Experiencing Wilderness Metaphors

"Wilderness experiences and activities can provide metaphors that heighten awareness of desirable qualities for application back home in daily lives"

It is hard to know what this means but it is only a condition for personal growth in the wilderness to the degree that such growth is defined by its translation "back home". This would make sense, except for the sense that the meaning of it is to serve the culture rather than facilitate the wilderness experience. Growth can occur in wilderness without it being transferred into language.

Translation "into metaphors" of an experience is usually the point where much of the benefits of an experience are lost, and where culture enters. The reason for this is that most metaphors are drawn from cultural abstractions. At this time, in this culture, we are awash in symbols and metaphors and it is quite a fine art of group procedure to

drop enough so that wilderness can be psychologically experienced at all.

It is not the wilderness that provides metaphors. The wilderness simply is. We humans come up with metaphors, and only to the degree that we are not projecting our needs, and other matters, onto the wilderness is the degree that a primary "wilderness" metaphor might arise -- and it will arise out of the matrix of the non-dualistic merging of one's interior natural processes with the external natural processes.

Metaphors, and the endless chattering about experience that we do, may give the participant something to talk about "back home", but the real growth -- across the line into real psychological transformation based on entry into a relationship with wilderness -- may best be left in silence, or in the knowing looks and touches of fellow travellers who have, more or less, shared the same ineffable experience.

What we need, I believe, is a model that (1) doesn't try to be universal (it would be a great achievement to get one model that works for one particular approach), and (2) that is culture free. Since we're dealing with activities that take place in the one culture-free environment left to us, ~~and since~~ it appears that the full healing of our relationship with nature will have to be a process that

can move freely (as described above) back and forth across the psychological boundary between culture and wilderness. That is, we will have to find the place of human functioning in nature according to nature's conditions, not culture's. And the one universal process in both the cultural and natural contexts is our information processing process. We have to free it from its current "disease; it has to be a healed information processing function that moves between nature and culture.

For now, we must make every effort to keep our dominant culture from destroying the little wilderness we have left. "Using wilderness to heal culture" without realizing how easy it is for our techniques of healing to work like a "trojan horse", entering wilderness in the guise of healing, but actually using wilderness to serve the very processes that destroy wilderness. Etc.

A CONTRASTING MODEL

This is based on 22 years of taking people out and back, on the "findings" a small portion of which is mentioned above, and on the current "ecopsychology" movement, which seeks a language drawn from the science of ecology and a variety of psychologies to articulate the human-nature relationship -- as it is, and as it might be if healed.

These are "conditions" I would find basic to the experience of wilderness as it is, apart from cultural-psychological reality-processing projected onto it. The goal is to begin the personal and cultural rehabilitation of a balanced relationship with nature.

1. Become aware of the dynamics of relationship by
 - (a) learning to recognize an example (via a model, or "vision", or preferably a direct experience) of a healed relationship, and
 - (b) resolve at least one dualism in one's personal life (suggestion: start with the relationship between consciousness and body). A byproduct of this will be enhanced sensory awareness, and learning to make distinctions without making disjunctions;
2. Cross the wilderness boundary psychologically -- whatever it takes -- whatever works: ritual, contemplation, etc. -- leaving behind the myths and programming of our dominant culture, letting the wilderness be the full reality, experienced without projection;
3. Change the time frame (time is at the heart of our acculturated consciousness. Experience life without cultural time structures (and give participants enough time to carry out these conditions for transformation -- if transformation is really what you're after)
4. Community -- create a sub-culture, temporary or not, based on natural processes -- cooperation, sharing, mutual support, respectful of differences; base it on commonly shared deconditioning practices . . .

5. Distinguish the four elements, realize your degree of disjunction from them and reestablish non-dominating, non-exploiting relationships with each -- earth, water, air, fire;
6. Distinguish four directions as a means of "finding your place". Orient sun "movement", moon movement, stars, geographical features -- keep them in mind;
7. Balance solitude with group/community activity -- many times each day -- as a means to practice the wilderness-culture interface (groups are more likely to reflect a culture, out of habit, than individuals) and to anticipate the return at the end of the trip. A number of days in complete solitude may be desirable, as well as a number of days in community but in silence; and a number of days tracking on the quality of communication as an aspect of relationship
8. Practice full honesty. Note exactly how you feel, say exactly what you mean, do exactly what you say, see the wilderness with this kind of full straight-on honesty (death, rotting logs, Bear shit and all). (Sentimentality is the companion of dualism and distorted relationships and will fuzz-up one's capacity to fully enter into a transformative relationship with natural processes)
9. Do not damage that which is your ground for healing. The paradox will sink the whole enterprise;
10. Clean up the messes of past users. It will guide you into an accurate understanding of where your loyalties must be;
11. Awaken, through all of the above, a sense of "aesthetics", of "love", and "sacredness" -- and ponder how to continue arousing these senses as you prepare to leave the wilderness.

If these conditions are met, and probably many more subtle ones that we know how to do but haven't yet discovered, ^{a language for,} participants have an outside chance at experiences that might allow them to "leave the culture" enough to "experience nature" in its full, systemic health. That is the ground of transformation. These are the conditions that reflect the goals and procedures of my work. I cannot say if these would be applicable beyond my own framework.

ABOUT THE RETURN > > >

Given our difficulty with the return (a difficulty we think all groups that are seeking full transformational relationship with wilderness will experience, to some degree)) we have developed "conditions for a return from the wilderness experience that diminishes loss of benefits:"

1. Come back as slowly as possible, preferably "de-compressing" in "half-way houses" for several days prior to full entry in the culture (only a few minutes of the news, someone reads the newspaper to everyone, keep the practices going, a little quiet music, the most courageous and food-wise person makes the first trip to the supermarket, etc.)
2. Leave the wilderness without regret. Don't hold on. Rather, plan to return soon (remember, the healing is in the transition back and forth)
3. Develop a political and cultural relationship with the wilderness you visit -- become responsible for its clean-up, its health, its management, its protection -- and its history (natural and cultural)
4. Continue, rigorously, deconditioning practices when within the culture, so your "information processing processes" will not become embedded in the culture, but can move around across the psychological boundary of wilderness wherever you are (healing should be continuous, not wilderness dependent);
5. continue with the wilderness group, or a comparable group, that supports a healed relationship with nature and enjoys reality-constructing processes done together (something like a 12-step group for "those in recovery from civilization";

"Intertwines"

6. Become aware of the "six famous culture-nature inter-twines" and use them to become continuously aware of the nature-culture interface (get them in balance):

- (a) food gathering, hunting
- (b) cooking, eating
- (c) gardening, pets
- (e) sexual intimacy
- (d) child raising
- (e) shelter, warmth

These "intertwines" are vividly both cultural and natural. Entering into them with full understanding of them as symbiotic processes will give you an easily accessible context for your own merging of nature and culture.

7. Stay as aware as possible for the 4 elements, the 4 directions, and celestial events, even from within the heart of the city.

8. Keep breathing, keep swallowing, blinking, sneezing, notice both ends of the digestive process. These are the wilderness.

9. Look for "that which is not culture" everywhere, the elevator in the high-rise, driving on the freeway. Notice how constantly we are immersed in processes that naturally evolved, were not created by human invention.

FINALLY

Humans have the idea, now centuries old, but an idea crumbling for at least 100 years, that we are above the natural processes rather than immersed in them.

We have thought, and taught our children to think, that we could control nature, based on the meager successes of some of our inventions that manipulate nature. It is still a popular idea, but one we are waking to.

Rather, we are discovering that we can severely damage nature and that we have no choice to find our appropriate role amidst the infinite webs of natural processes. Somewhere in there -- assuming we're not a mutation that failed -- there's a contribution we can make to the whole, something unique, something comparable to the eagle's eyesight, the dolphin's hearing, the salmon's perfect motion when turning to dig the spawning bed in clean gravel.

Perhaps the wilderness experience can help us get there, help us reconnect, open to the wisdom inherent in the information system of the natural networks of nature.

But surely there isn't room to think it necessary that healing can only be done in wilderness. Perhaps the very symptom of our recovery will ^{be} to come to understand that our

healing will be to not demand that wilderness heal us.

A wilderness that must heal us is a commodity, just as the wilderness that must house us or make us wealthy.

If the growth, the learning, the "inspiration" is in fact meant to serve the culture, let it be done in the culture.

Part of our recovery will be to learn to just simply let the wilderness be.

If we do use it, let us use it in ways that will further its rehabilitation as well as ours. Let us use it for those healing processes that cannot take place anywhere else.

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