

## **A New Core Anchor for a Different Voice: Connection**

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My educational experience in cross-cultural coaching at the Professional School of Psychology (PSP) actually began ten days prior to the start of the Bali class, when I arrived in Singapore to sightsee before our studies began. Traveling overseas solo for the first time, I was worried about being on my own, so had apprehensively made a dinner plan with a classmate for the first evening. I had only met this colleague in class on Zoom, and I worried I might be imposing on his time. I had heard Singapore was fairly westernized and imagined that like the USA it would be “every man for himself”.

My colleague was married and had four sons; I was certain he was busy. I imagined he was simply being polite or ingratiating himself to our professor by being nice to the only present American student, me. I also felt self-conscious as an American traveling overseas after the 2016 election of Donald Trump. Trump had run and become President on an anti-immigrant/foreigner platform. Although I was horrified about the election results, I felt I couldn't expect kindness from Asians when my own country's leader used such hateful rhetoric toward non-Americans. I was ashamed of my country and felt I would understand if people from other countries would want to keep their distance from me, a potential “ugly” American.

I arrived at my hotel and freshened up. In a few hours my classmate, Ivan, showed up to welcome me to his city and country. Having only conversed on a two-dimensional computer screen, I was surprised that we immediately recognized each other in our three-dimensional forms! Although we were virtual strangers, Ivan informed me he had taken some time off from work to accompany me around Singapore, stating I was “a guest in (his) country and that it was (his) intention to take (me) to all the famous sites in Singapore as well as some of (his) own favorite places”. I felt so safe and cared about and was deeply touched by his hospitality. I sadly thought to myself that foreign visitors to the United States are rarely treated with such kindness, especially in the current political climate.

That week, I learned that Ivan really likes all kinds of noodles and a dish called Chicken-Rice and I suspect I ate the best Chinese food in Singapore. Ivan told me about the history of his city and of his family and the story of how they came from China to Singapore. He told me about his parents, his sister, his wife and her family and about his sons. He asked me questions about my husband, children, parents and family background. Ivan is a Chinese Christian, formerly a Buddhist monk. My parents are from New York, I grew up in northern California and am of Jewish Eastern European, Irish Catholic,

Revolutionary War Protestant and a small percentage of Native American descent. Basically, a product of the American melting pot who practices Judaism.

Over the next three days, we talked about our spiritual beliefs and our psychotherapy practices. We also learned that we both had studied martial arts which had greatly influenced our lives and spirituality. We were from different parts of the planet, different cultures and spoke vastly different languages with different alphabets, yet we had so much in common and connected like a brother and sister who had known each other their whole lives. During our three days together, Ivan and I talked and laughed and cemented a deep friendship and professional relationship that has sustained us not only through our doctoral program experience but also through personal tragedies and losses. This friendship, as well as other important connections I have made at PSP, have been the most important part of my graduate school experience. Was my academic education at PSP excellent? Yes! Was the cross-cultural perspective illuminating, unique and inspiring? Yes! But what sustained me, what really mattered to me were the intimate connections.

I had two more cross-cultural educational experiences prior to the start of class in Bali. The first occurred when on my way to a seminar on behavioral medicine in Singapore, I got lost. My phone was not working and I became anxious I was going to be late. Somewhat frantic, I found someone on the street who spoke English. I asked them for directions. Not only did this kind, elderly gentleman give me directions, but he insisted on walking me all the way to the office building where the class was being held. He then insisted on using his own cell phone to call the office and make certain they let me into the building! Again, I felt grateful and valued, but with shame remembered times when people on the streets in Boston had asked me for directions and I had ignored them, not wanting to be late for something in my own life I deemed more important than offering help. I had been too busy to be kind.

The second experience occurred when I shared with Mirasol, a female classmate from Jakarta, by way of the Philippines, that I was feeling frightened about arriving in Bali and taking a cab to the conference. I worried no driver would speak English and I would get lost. It seemed all my anxiety about traveling alone was focused on the idea of being lost and unable to find my way back to familiar faces. I was embarrassed about my feelings. I was a seasoned, worldly traveler. I knew I was being irrational. What was different is that in the past, I had always traveled with a close friend or family member.

The idea of being alone and disconnected had taken on a life of its own. I made fun of my anxiety to Mirasol, but rather than laugh along with me, she took my needs very seriously. It was very important to her that I feel safe in her country. She went to the airport in Denpasar, traced the steps from my arrival gate to the taxi pick-up point and recorded the route. She then sent me the video, so I would be familiar

with the route and could easily find my way. She then sent a driver to the airport to fetch me! It didn't really matter that she must have known my fears were unfounded—the airport was small and everyone working there seemed to speak English and the signs were all very clear. I would have been fine. But what mattered to Mirasol was that while I was a guest in her country, she wanted me to feel safe and secure. I will always be touched by her kindness.

These experiences affected me profoundly. During my time in Southeast Asia, I was treated politely and with kindness. I felt loved and nurtured. As the days progressed, I became deeply happy. I felt connected to other people and the world around me. Life felt meaningful. Although I consider myself to have a happy life in the United States (I have a loving husband, children, family, friends and meaningful work) when I return to the USA from overseas, particularly from a non-Western country, I find I am quite depressed for a number of weeks; I experience a spiritual emptiness here. Americans work too much, most people seem to be overly busy and stressed. People don't spend much time together and often live far from family. Many of us do not have a sense of community. In the USA, I do not experience the kindness and caring I experienced in Southeast Asia on a day- to -day basis. What is missing here is a deep, communal connection. Instead, what I experience is pervasive cultural alienation.

My experiences overseas have caused me to reevaluate my own behaviors and priorities. I am more aware of how I treat foreign travelers. I want to reciprocate the kindnesses I experienced in Singapore and Bali. I pick people up at the airport and invite them to my home. I want them to know they are my honored guest. I take the time to connect and continue to build my international community. As my Chinese-Singaporean classmate Eliza put it “I think, Suzanne, you might have an Asian heart.” I hope so.

So, back to Bali and the seminar. My driver, Wayan, safely delivered me to the Sudamala conference center. After a blissful group exploration of shrines, terraced rice fields, coffee plantations, a silkscreen workshop and then returning to the resort to end the day with a swim, neuro-feedback, and Balinese massage, it was time for our formal studies in Cross-Cultural Coaching to begin. Early on in the course, we explored the topic of core anchors. A core anchor is defined as our prime priority in our work. Edgar Schein, a professor of organizational management at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the 1990's, noted that people have eight priorities in their work careers. He listed these priorities, or “career anchors” as the following: Technical/functional competence, general managerial competence, autonomy/independence, security/stability, entrepreneurial/creativity, service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge and lifestyle. (Bergquist and Mara, 2017.)

The population Schein studied to identify these themes were primarily employees and managers of organizations. Given this population, I wondered if the people he studied were predominantly white

males. Given the decade of the study (1990) it would be safe to assume that most of the managers were male and that the corporate organizations he studied were primarily male-dominated. In class, we were asked to identify our own core anchor. When I reviewed Schein's list, many of his anchors were important to me, but none felt primary. In my work, I like to have a flexible lifestyle and creativity. I am dedicated and passionate about treating trauma survivors and addicts. I like to enjoy financial security, but obviously, if making money was my priority, I would not have gone into the less than lucrative profession of social work or have enrolled in a clinical psychology doctoral program at age 60! I couldn't select just one anchor. I was puzzled. What is the central purpose of my work and life? What, above anything else, makes my work meaningful?

When I reflected on my career and various jobs, I noted that the work and school environments where I thrived were ones where I felt deeply connected to my peers, my colleagues, my group and my clients. For example, when I was the founding director of the Child Sexual Abuse Assessment and Treatment team at the Cambridge Hospital at Harvard Medical School, I worked seventy-plus hours per week, but I didn't feel overworked or burdened, as I loved my colleagues, the work was new, creative, original, exciting and our research was groundbreaking. We worked closely as a group and had meaningful friendships, as well as an important mission.

While I valued our mission, it was the relationships with my colleagues that sustained me and made me want to go to work every day. Another example is, that while I have studied hard at PSP and it has been difficult to juggle work, family and school responsibilities, I have enjoyed my classmates, professors and the cross-cultural education so greatly, that for me, school is a joy, not a drudgery. I love my PSP community and friends. In fact, I am dreading graduation, a dangerous sentiment for a student needing to finish her dissertation!

When I am connected to people, when I belong to a group, I feel a sense of purpose and meaning. My core anchor is Connection. The times in my life when I felt emotionally disconnected from my peers or the organization where I worked were the times I hated my job and felt a general sense of loneliness and alienation. I suspect many psychotherapists have a deep need to connect with others. I cannot imagine any other profession outside of psychology holding my interest for any length of time.

Connection is a core value for many women. All human beings are hard-wired to connect. Infants who are unable to bond fail to thrive and die (Sapolsky, 2018, p. 201). However, Western men are often less aware of this need than Western women, being acculturated to view the need to connect with others as weak, not masculine and therefore, shameful. Perhaps "connection" did not appear on Schein's list as he was male and studying primarily male-dominated organizations. If connection is thought of as weak and

shameful, it would be unlikely for most men to think of it as a core anchor. Furthermore, if there were limited women in the organizations Schein studied, that would further limit the number of subjects who would define connection as core.

Harvard psychologist Carol Gilligan suggests that Western males and females are socialized differently and that females are more likely than males to focus on community and to care about personal relationships. “Women are oriented toward attachment and ‘connectedness’ to others, whereas men are oriented toward individuation and ‘separateness’ from others. The feminine orientation predisposes women toward interest in human relationships, while the male orientation predisposes men toward interest in individual achievement.

One consequence of this difference in orientation is that women find it easier than men to establish intimate relationships.” (Gilligan, in Walsh, p.322.) Gilligan argues a Stage of Ethics of Care theory which defines what makes actions right or wrong. Her theory addresses both care-based morality (female orientation) and justice-based morality (male orientation). In particular, care-based morality emphasizes interconnectedness and universality. Acting justly means avoiding violence and helping those in need. It assumes that if there is a conflict between two parties they are in a difficult situation together and the conflict itself is part of the problem. (Gilligan, pp 170-174.) This perspective hopes to find a solution that will not damage anyone and embrace compromise, thus the connection in the relationship is maintained and is the priority.

Although there was no conflict between us, when I shared with my colleague Mirasol that I was afraid of getting lost in Indonesia, she solved the problem (the conflict) by making me a video to show me the route, a virtual hand-holding that reduced my anxiety and was comforting, enabling me to feel safe in her country. Her solution is an example of care-based morality.

In her book “Text me When You Get Home”, writer Kayleen Schaefer describes why late at night one often hears young American women say to each other “Text me when you get home.”, whereas young men usually say to each other something like “Get home safe.”, with no follow-up, or more often say nothing to each other at all. States Schaefer, “This is because women who say “Text me when you get home”, aren’t just asking for reassurance that you’ve made it to your bed unharmed. It’s not only about safety. It’s about solidarity. It’s about us understanding that women who are alone get unwanted attention and scrutiny. Should I hold my keys in my hand? Why is this driver talking so much? Is this guy following me? Am I too drunk? Is that guy who just said ‘Hey gorgeous’ going to say anything else? My place feels so empty.”

Schaefer then quotes the poet Tyne Baird to further illustrate her point: “We accept this state of constant fear as just another part of being a girl. We text each other when we get home.” States Schaefer, “The words are a web connecting us, winding through the many moments we spend together and apart, helping us to understand that whenever we’re unmoored or terrified or irate or heartbroken or just bored, we’re not by ourselves. It’s a way for women to tell each other ‘I’m always with you, I won’t forget about you when you walk away. I am here when I’m standing in front of you or any other time you need me no matter what.’” (Schaefer, 2018, pp 1-3.) Mirasol had let me know I was safely connected in her web and for that week, Bali became home.

Schaefer explores other aspects of female friendship, such as best friends. She states “Little girls are encouraged to have best friends. They’re often asked by nosy adults, ‘Do you have a best friend?’ ... We’re supposed to seek out best friends when we’re young. The relationship, our parents hope, will teach us how to play nicely with others... As we get older that prominence that a best friend holds can fall away—adult women are more likely to be asked if they have a boyfriend than a best friend and to wear an engagement ring instead of a BFF charm.” (Schaefer, 2018, p. 152.)

I have had a few best friends. My “true” BFF, Erica, has been my friend since childhood. Our parents were friends and political allies and introduced us. We are committed to seeing each other at least twice annually, although we have lived 3500 miles apart for forty years. We talk on the phone and text regularly. We have been there for each other’s weddings, divorces, pregnancies, births of children, illnesses and family deaths. On his death bed a week ago, her father said to Erica “You are lucky in this life if you have five people you can call friends, Erica. Suzanne is one of those friends.” His words meant a lot to me, as my commitment to my friendship with Erica is as important to me as my commitment to my marriage, son, or siblings. I have always felt this way about my close friendships and I am fortunate that my husband understands this essential value I cherish. At PSP I found my “BFF”, Ivan, and we have committed to see each other at least annually until one of us departs this mortal coil.

Another “BFF” was my Boston friend, Rebecca. When we met, we were both single parents, in fact our young sons who were friends introduced us as they “thought we would like each other.” We did! Not only did Rebecca become a dear friend, but years later, after my children had left home, I moved into a building her father owned. In exchange for my husband remodeling several rooms, he allowed us to live in this large Brookline apartment with reduced rent so that my husband and I could save to eventually buy our own home in Boston. Rebecca lived in an apartment on the first floor with her children, her father and step-mother lived on the second floor, and my husband and I lived on the third floor, along with my son, during his summer breaks from college.

Rebecca was from a close-knit, sometimes troubled, but warm and inclusive Jewish family who soon incorporated us into their family and community. We often ate together. I worked part-time for Rebecca's small catering business. We celebrated all holidays together. Given that I live on the other side of the country from my family of origin, being included as part of their family meant the world to me. For years, while my husband was out teaching martial arts classes in the evenings, I hung out in Rebecca's apartment. We drank tea, played Scrabble and talked, while our kids played together and sometimes hung out with us as well. We were family and I believed we would live like this forever. I was part of a rich community and was deeply content, connected and satisfied.

I was shocked to my core, when in 2005, Rebecca broke the news that she had decided to take over her mother's business and would be relocating to Delaware. Although she had apparently been mulling over this opportunity for a year, she had not mentioned it to me, knowing I would be very upset. The withholding of such important, life-changing information to me was a betrayal. For the first time, I questioned the closeness of our friendship. If she considered me such an intimate friend, why would she have kept this secret from me for so long? I was deeply wounded.

Part of the incentive package for Rebecca to move to Delaware was that her mother was going to buy her a home, which Rebecca would then own. Rebecca felt it was an opportunity for herself and her children she couldn't pass up. Although I understood intellectually her need to move, and wanted to support her, I was devastated. For days, I couldn't stop weeping. I felt as if my world was collapsing. I felt as badly as I had felt when I divorced or relatives had died. I retreated from my life and did not get out of bed for two days. My husband tried to comfort me, but I was inconsolable. I could tell he thought my reaction was extreme. "You can visit her," he said. "It won't be the same," I replied. "We are together every day. And I know her. She is terrible at maintaining long-distance relationships. Everything is going to change." "Life changes", said my husband. "That is the one thing you can count on."

Schaefer writes about a woman who loses her best friend, Julia, in an accident. She was "bothered by some people not understanding how important Julia was to her, as if you weren't supposed to mourn best friends with the intensity you do family members. 'I have gotten the sense with different people that they don't really get it.', she says. When she asked for time off from work to help her deal with her grief, she didn't feel like the company was particularly supportive...'It's easier for people to say 'Oh my gosh, you lost your mother, you lost your sister', she says. 'It's hard to communicate to people who don't know or understand, 'This was my best friend for my entire life. I think there is a need to justify why this is taking a toll on me. Because I want to make sure people don't misunderstand. It doesn't matter if they do or not, but it feels invalidating when they don't.'" (Schaefer, 2018, p. 153)

My friendship with Rebecca did not survive the relocation. I tried hard to move through my feelings of loss and betrayal, which I knew, although valid for me, were unfair to Rebecca. She had every right to make a move that would benefit herself and her children. I believed, as her best friend, I needed to support a move that she believed was in her and her children's best interest. However, Rebecca was unable to tolerate my sadness and as time went on, I became aware that I was more attached to her than she was to me. She had immigrated from Israel at age 5 years, which had been traumatic. Her parents had a rocky marriage and divorce and Rebecca's own relationship history had been fraught with trauma. Her children had different fathers and both men had been active drug addicts. Although bright, talented and highly educated,

Rebecca had had her children young, before she was really capable of supporting them. She had always needed financial help from her parents. She had geographically relocated her family several times before moving to her father's building in Boston and had not kept up her friendships from her previous communities. She did not allow herself to form emotionally intimate relationships with men, only sexual relationships. For Rebecca, the close friendship with me had been something of an anomaly. Perhaps we had more emotional intimacy than she could tolerate; she seemed to have an avoidant attachment style. I reflected she had a long history of maintaining distance in her relationships and she was now creating more distance in our relationship, both emotionally and by moving. In fact, despite all her reassurances that "we would stay as close as ever", after she moved to Delaware, Rebecca only called me twice over a two-year period. All the responsibility for maintaining the relationship fell on my shoulders. I had to initiate all the phone calls. I was always the one to take time off from work and make the six-hour-long drive to Delaware to visit her and her kids. On the rare occasion she came to Boston, she would see me for an hour and spend the rest of her visit with family and "friends who never visit Delaware."

One time I learned she had been in Boston and hadn't even called me. When I told her that hurt me she stated "I know I will see you, Suzanne, because you always drive down to Delaware. Most people don't visit me, so I want to have a chance to see them." Her statement angered me. I felt she was taking advantage of my efforts and not reciprocating. I began to visit her less, hoping she would step-up her efforts to connect with me. She didn't, and over time the friendship fizzled out. I wanted more reciprocity.

I no longer felt angry; I just didn't want to be the one doing all the work. Although I have moved on, when I think about what happened I still feel sad. We haven't spoken in years. I don't see her family often, although her children occasionally contact me. She has no idea that my father died, my step-mother overdosed, that I am almost a doctor in psychology, that my step-son with TBI made it through

college, that my mother has Alzheimer's disease or that my brother suffers from Parkinson's disease. It is very sad when a friendship and community disappear.

I don't know if another friend with whom I have as much day-to-day intimacy as I had with Rebecca will ever come into my life again. It is rare in the United States to have enough time to sustain that kind of daily closeness with anyone other than a spouse or work colleague and even a friendly relationship with a colleague needs to have more built-in, protective boundaries. Furthermore, as psychotherapists, we spend so many hours with clients, where most of the sharing is one-sided, that most of our day is spent in a sort of lopsided intimacy. The work can be intense and draining.

Often, when I come home from a long clinical day, I find it difficult to talk to or connect with another person. I often want to sit alone, quietly, reading or watching mindless television shows. I also live in an area of the United States rooted in the Puritan work ethic, the Northeast. The culture here values long work hours and is highly individualistic, which makes it harder to form and sustain deep, intimate, emotional friendships and connections. Although our country runs efficiently (the phones and electricity usually work, the mail is delivered on time and many of us have heat and food) we pay a high price for that efficiency. The price may be the loss of connection and cultural alienation.

Carol Gilligan was an American researcher, writing about American men and women. As mentioned, she found women had a care-based morality that emphasizes interconnectedness and universality whereas men are socialized to emphasize individualism and separateness from others. Through that lens, one can view Northeastern culture as being male-dominant. Even within the United States, I have lived in areas such as Northern rural California, where there was less focus on long work hours and some value placed on recreational and family time. However, in general, American culture is individualistic and people work too much. I have observed that in other countries, while services are not as efficient, both men and women appear to be happier and more connected and caring of each other. As mentioned, my colleague Ivan took time off from his busy life to introduce me, a virtual stranger, to his country. This decision seems more care-based than justice-based.

I once visited my friend, Terrance, a Canadian and member of the Micmac nation, on his reservation in Nova Scotia. Terrance's daily life was community-oriented, not individualistic in any way. His home had a constant open door policy. People on the reservation were constantly dropping by to say hello, to get a ride to the medical clinic, or have a meal. Terrance always had a pot of moose and vegetable stew on the stove and freshly picked blueberries to share. Terrance was one of the wealthier members of the tribe; he had a car, a nice home and plenty of food. He didn't seem to regard what he had as his possessions; rather his wealth belonged to everyone and was to be shared. There was a warm sense of

community and everyone was welcome, even if people were addicted or mentally ill. I met many Micmac people and most wanted me to hear their stories and to learn about me as well. I was invited into people's homes, taught to make moccasins and drums and was even invited to a spiritual sweat lodge ceremony with the chief. Terrance is male, but he certainly has an inclusive, care-based morality, not a separatist, justice-based morality. Although no one in Nova Scotia had met me before, I was included in the community and felt at home.

This loving experience was not what happened to Terrance when he was mandated by the Canadian and United States government in the 1960's to assimilate into Western society by being forced to attend an Indian Residential School in the Northeast, where he was separated from his family for years, not allowed to speak his native Micmac and was brutally physically and sexually abused. Some of the native children were murdered and others died trying to run away and find their parents. His brothers never recovered from the experience; one became schizophrenic and the other severely alcoholic and violent. Although Terrance, too, became addicted to drugs and alcohol, he was able to find sobriety and recovery and has a caring, loving heart. He still wants to give and connect with others. He doesn't look down on people who have less nor does he resent helping them. He lives his life with the idea "we are all in this together."

I am not idealizing life on the reservation; there are tremendous problems including poverty and pervasive addiction, to name a few. However, on the reservation I also experienced the deep community connections and a sense of responsibility the tribespeople had to one another that I do not often experience in the United States. When I returned from Canada, I had similar feelings to those I experience when returning from the third world; I feel overwhelmed by the vast wealth and material comforts available in the United States, but soon feel a simultaneous sense of despair and emptiness. I rapidly become aware of a spiritual vacuum and a lack of connection between people. I observe the road rage and notice that people are often pushy, unhelpful and treat each other rudely. Soon, I notice I put on a sort of emotional armor. I am more tense, angry, feel less valued and am more critical of others. I am happy to have plumbing that works, but is a toilet that flushes more valuable than a loving community? Do we have to choose? Is there a way to have both?

A group of thirteen middle and upper-middle class women in Southern California shared their experiences in the book, "The Necklace" (Jarvis, 2008) of how they transformed their lives by together buying a \$15,000 diamond necklace and sharing it. One woman saw the necklace in a store and desired it, but knew that for her, spending \$15,000 on a piece of jewelry was out of the question. She thought, "what if I pool my money with some others and we share it?". Her idea was that each woman would wear the necklace for a month and when that month was up, would pass it along to the next woman. She found twelve other women who wanted to go in with her on the purchase. At first, the shared feeling for the co-

owners was desire for the necklace, but then that ownership raised other provocative questions in the group. Why are personal luxuries so plentiful for some yet inaccessible to others? What happens when we share what we desire? What happens when a symbol of exclusivity becomes a symbol of inclusivity? (Jarvis, 2008, p. 17).

The owners of the necklace began to meet once a month to negotiate the transactions. Eventually, these meetings became dinners and a strong group bond formed, a community. The group came up with humorous ideas, like competitions for the most outrageous outing for the necklace, which they named “Jewelia”. One woman wore Jewelia skydiving, another on a motorcycle trip, another while having sex with her husband, butt-naked except for the necklace and another on a trip to the gynecologist (who eventually joined the group as well)! The friendships between the women became more intimate. There were some conflicts, but the group contained them and worked them through. No one left the inner circle, in fact, the circle expanded. As the women’s group became safer and more cohesive, the group began to share the necklace more freely with others.

At first, daughters of group members were permitted to wear Jewelia in their weddings. The next evolution was that the group auctioned the necklace off as a prize to be worn for a day to the winner, the proceeds to benefit various organizations and charities. The group took Jewelia to nursing homes and public events where people were allowed to wear the necklace free of charge. The necklace became a symbol of inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness. What struck me in this story was that Jewelia became less important to the women than the deepening bonds of their friendships; the more closely they connected, the less the material value of the necklace mattered. Instead, the women experienced its true value as being the ways in which the necklace could benefit others, and that the sharing of it had facilitated their rich friendships. Stated one of the thirteen, “As a group, we’re so much more powerful than we are as individuals.” (Jarvis, 2008, p. 207.) Stated another “Sharing really is the way to happiness.” (Jarvis, 2008, p. 206.) Said a third, “My life was family and work for a very long time. And everything revolved around work.

I knew it wasn’t the most important thing, but I acted as if it were. Work became a habit, and it was enough...with these women I can let all of that go. The day I know I’m going to a Jewelia meeting that night, the work goes faster, easier. I move with a lighter step. Now I’m always asking, ‘When is the next meeting?’ I had so much fun the night I hosted the group. That was the first time I’d entertained in years, and the first time in my life I wasn’t nervous about having guests. I didn’t want the women to leave. Sharing myself and my house with them made me feel peaceful, made me feel complete. Going to the meetings was the beginning of my saying ‘Yes.’ ‘Yes’ to showing up. ‘Yes’ to reaching out.” (Jarvis, 2008, pp. 54-55.)

As Jean Baker Miller writes in her acclaimed and revolutionary book “Toward a New Psychology of Women” (1986):

“Male society, by depriving women of the right to its major ‘bounty’—that is, development according to the male model—overlooks the fact that women’s development is proceeding, but on another basis. One central feature is that women stay with, build on, and develop in a context of connections with others. Indeed, women’s sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliations and relationships. Eventually, for many women the threat of disruption of connection is perceived not as just a loss of a relationship but as something close to a total loss of self.” (Miller, 1986, p. 83)

Women have a very different approach to living and functioning than the traditional western male approach. In it, “affiliation is valued as highly as, or more highly than, self-enhancement. Moreover, it allows for the emergence of the truth: that for everyone—men as well as women—individual development proceeds only by means of connection.” (Miller, p. 83)

For some women, this may mean a connection to a partner, particularly a male partner; that any accomplishment would not be worthwhile unless there was a man to make it so. That was certainly true for my own mother. Although she rose to the top of her profession and was the first female United States Magistrate in the State of California, she felt her life was meaningless until she secured the love of my step-father, at age 65. I do not share that feeling in terms of having a male partner, although it is true for me that without close friendships or community, my life does not feel meaningful. I love my husband and children and want them to be in my community, but without close friendships, including my relationships with my siblings, my life would feel meaningless.

Continues Miller: “Our only hope, both women and men, really lies in us placing our faith in others, “in the context of being a social being, related to other human beings, in their hands as well as one’s own. Women learn very young they must rest primarily on this faith...Men’s only hope lies in affiliation, too, but for them it can seem an impediment, a loss, a danger, or at least second best. By contrast, affiliations, relationships, make women feel deeply satisfied, fulfilled, ‘successful’, free to go on to other things. (Miller, 1986, p. 85.)

In his expose “Friendship”, Joseph Epstein writes that “although the experiences were fleeting, being part of a community was enormously satisfying. The feeling is one of belonging. You look at the others seated around the fire and feel with equal confidence that you would do almost anything for these people, as they would do almost anything for you. As a member of a community, you feel you have lost yourself, however temporarily, in something larger, of which you are nonetheless an important part. To be part of

a true community is to experience collective friendship, with the associated feelings of mutuality and reciprocity that are normally available only between two people. It's a grand, grand feeling, and all the grander for its rarity." (Epstein, 2006, pp. 164-165.)

Miller notes "Whereas men, too, have deep yearnings for affiliation, their needs are deep under the surface of social appearance...As soon as they grow up in the male mold, they are led to cast out this faith, even to condemn it in themselves, and build their lives on something else. And they are rewarded for doing so." (Miller, 1986, p. 87.) She continues, "Practically everyone now bemoans Western man's sense of alienation, lack of community and inability to find ways of organizing society for human ends. We have reached the end of the road that is built on the set of traits held out for male identity—advance at any cost, pay the price, drive out all competitors and kill them if necessary...It now seems clear we have arrived at a point from which we must seek a basis of faith in connection—and not only faith, but recognition that it is a requirement for the existence of human beings. The basis for what seem the absolutely essential next steps in Western history, if we care to survive, is already available." (Miller, 1986, p. 88)

Miller first wrote these words in 1976, forty-three years ago, but her ideas are still relevant. I believe there have been great changes in our ability to connect with others in the world. Although the technologies are imperfect, I have had many positive, connecting experiences talking to friends and colleagues overseas and in different parts of the country on Skype and Zoom. These tools for communication were not available in 1976. I text and e-mail others constantly, which keeps me rapidly "in touch" with others. However, all our advanced technology comes with a high price. Communication occurs rapidly and our work lives have sped up. We have a highly inflated cost of living, longer work hours and less free time to cultivate relationships.

Often, texting and e-mailing replace phone calls, where one can hear a human voice, as well as face-to-face, in person, three-dimensional contact with an actual live human being. And although these new technologies can be useful tools, they cannot replace authentic human contact and connection, nor were they intended to. In her book "You're the Only One I can Tell", psychologist Deborah Tannen gives multiple examples of ways women use Facebook to maintain connections, but not to share deep intimacies—those are shared in an actual conversation. Each technology has its own etiquette. (Tannen, 2017, pp. 188-189.) If I write a letter and text it to my son, he quickly lets me know I have used the technology inappropriately; that I am only to text short blurbs. If I want to say more I should e-mail, write a letter and mail it by way of snail-mail, or make a phone call! Maybe one day I will figure out all these new rules! Texting seemed like a quick way to send a letter, but alas, I committed a technological faux-pas!

I have observed in my son's generation (he is in his early 30's) that Western men seem to be more caring of each other and nurturing of their intimate relationships and friendships than are men in my own generation, and certainly more than men in my parent's generation. They also seem to be more directly involved in the care of their children and want to have close relationships with their children; most do not appear to view the hands-on raising of children to be solely a woman's job. Observing these changes makes me hopeful that men, too, are learning to value the importance of connection.

Paradoxically, we have also seen in the United States the rise of a white, male-dominated far right that is exclusionary, individualistic, anti-feminist and is moving us away from connection toward alienation from the rest of the world and self-destruction. Perhaps this extreme is a reaction to profound changes taking place in our society that threaten the traditional locus of power. Hopefully, the political and sociological pendulum will swing more to the left again and centralize, rather than polarize. We can then have fruitful dialogue, hear and respect each other's differences and connect. The ability to connect with others is more than a core anchor I espouse; as Miller notes, our survival as a species depends on it.

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This paper is dedicated to my beloved PSP community, most especially to my international cohort. I love you all. Thank you, Bill Bergquist, Haim Weinberg, Gay Teurman, Kathleen Ayers, Agnes Mura and all of my wonderful professors for the experience of a lifetime.

Suzanne Brennan Nathan. July 23, 2019