

# CAROL GILLIGAN

## and the Search for Voice

By  
**Bill Cole**

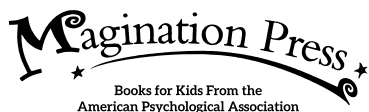
Illustrated by  
**Sarah Green**



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and the Search  
for Voice

For Jaron and Lucy, whose voices of wit and wisdom add  
a little more harmony to the world—*BC*

To my parents and brother, who always encouraged and  
helped me to find my own voice—*SG*



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## INTRODUCTION

**What does the word “voice” mean?** When most of us think of that word we probably think of the sounds we make when we speak. But there is also a deeper meaning to the word voice. It has to do with the way we use it when we speak—think of phrases like “having a say” and “speaking your mind.” And how we use our voice—or how we don’t—makes an enormous difference. The word “voice” can almost be used synonymously with the word “self.”

Carol Gilligan is a world-renowned psychologist who has dedicated her life to the questions of how we learn to use our voices, how sometimes we learn not to use them, and how sometimes we learn to use voices that are not truly our own. She has gone on a life-long journey to help discover, uncover, and recover unheard voices. Through decades of research listening to people, she has sought “the story underneath the

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story,” as she has often said. And what she found has led to an increased understanding of a range of voices in professional fields as diverse as psychology, law, business, nursing, educational leadership, ethics, and gender studies—voices that had been previously ignored. Many transformative moments in our culture since the early 2000s, including the #MeToo movement, heightened awareness of LGBTQ+ rights, Smash the Patriarchy as a viral social media meme, and social-emotional learning initiatives in our schools have roots that can be traced back to ideas Carol has been talking about since the 1970s.

Carol Gilligan came of age on the heels of first-wave feminism, which was the beginning of the modern feminism movement. It started in the mid-1800s and lasted until the mid-1900s, and focused on fights like the right for women to own their own property and to be allowed to vote. The 19th amendment to the US constitution, in 1920, granted voting rights to women and was perhaps the biggest success of first-wave feminism. Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were galvanizing forces in these excruciatingly long and hard-fought efforts.

Second-wave feminism was the women’s rights movement that took root between the 1960s and 1980s, led by influential figures like Betty Friedan, Kate Millet,

and Gloria Steinem. They focused on issues ranging from workplace equity and fair pay for women, to Title IX laws providing girls and women equal opportunities

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in educational settings, to women’s reproductive rights. The movement gradually expanded to be more inclusive and address the needs and concerns of a greater diversity of women, driven by the activism of Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, and Kimberlé Crenshaw. Carol Gilligan’s research and ideas would provide key touchstones for many of the priorities of this second-wave movement.

One of Carol’s mentors, the famous psychologist Erik Erikson, often stressed that “A life history cannot be separated from history itself.” In other words, in order to understand a person, you have to understand the time and place of the world they were living in. Like how a person’s work is influenced by their life experiences; nothing happens in a vacuum. This was a driving belief of Carol’s as she explored people’s voices: how they were used, not used, and even silenced. And it is true of Carol herself, too; when looking at the path of Carol Gilligan’s work, you can find a similar path in her life. These parallel paths tell her story and “the story under the story.” It is a story of voice.