Education for the Development of Critical Moral Consciousness:

A Case Study of a Moral Education Program in a North Carolina Public High School

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ABSTRACT

Education for the Development of Critical Moral Consciousness:
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in a North Carolina Public High School
(under the direction of Dr. George Noblit)

This dissertation consists of a case study of a moral education and community
development program in a North Carolina public high school. The program was specifically
designed to help close the achievement gap between academically disadvantaged,
predominantly minority students and academically advantaged, primarily white students by
seeking to reduce the effects of racism and create conditions for compassionate,
transformative understanding between diverse members of the school community.
Qualitative data on the program was collected during the 2005-06 academic year and
analyzed primarily using Dr. Elena Mustakova-Possardt’s developmental theory of critical
moral consciousness, as well as ideas of such theorists and educators as Paulo Freire, Parker
Palmer, April Crosby, Earle Fox, Jack Mezirow, Robert Boyd, Victor Turner and Emmanuel
Levinas among others. The study determined that the program stimulated the development
of critical moral consciousness, as defined by Mustakova-Possardt, in several participants.
Among the pedagogical factors responsible for this effect appeared to be the program
founder’s success in creating what Mustakova-Possardt calls an authentic moral environment
that amplified participants’ moral motivation in relation to their a) senses of identity, b)
senses of authority, responsibility and agency, c) relationships, and d) questions about life’s
meaning. In particular, the learners’ experience of authentic communication with one
another regarding an issue of moral concern, together with their facilitated reflection on this issue utilizing a conceptual framework that promotes the values of unity in diversity and authenticity and explicitly regards participants as spiritual beings, was found to be especially effective in developing their critical moral consciousness. Other factors reflected in the curriculum linked to this effect were its problem-posing and experiential approach to learning and its encouragement of risk-taking within a safe and affirming learning environment.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Having finally reached the end of the long journey writing this dissertation was for me, I am moved to acknowledge my profound appreciation and gratitude to all those who made it possible. First, I want to acknowledge a special debt of gratitude to Sherlock Graham-Haynes and Elena Mustakova-Possardt. This study emerged from and largely reflects my conversations with both of them and my interaction with and appreciation for their ideas. Furthermore, Elena’s encouragement and generous review of every chapter is deeply appreciated. Similarly, my thanks go to George Noblit, Tim Marr and Dwight Allen for reviewing the chapters of this dissertation and for their invaluable comments and editorial advice. I also want to thank other past and present members of my dissertation committee including Lynda Stone, Mary Stone Hanley, Gerald Unks and David Levine for all they contributed to my thinking and learning. This study obviously could only have been pursued because an inspiring teacher and some very special high school students were willing to share a portion of their lives with me. I cannot mention their names, but nevertheless thank each of them for enriching my life. Finally, I will be forever grateful to my dear wife, İşık, for her patient support and encouragement through the years it took to complete this dissertation. Finishing it would literally have been impossible without her by my side.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I undertook this dissertation with a motivation to explore the possible role education can play in helping learners acquire the attitudes and motives, ways of perceiving and being, and the knowledge and skills, that would help them to become effective agents of their own and their society’s transformation (i.e. that can empower them to creatively address the critical issues human beings face - individually and collectively - at this particular time in history). While educational enterprises that might effectively serve this end would no doubt need to include many different aspects and aim to achieve a wide range of distinct though interrelated outcomes, and while such education would necessarily look different in different social contexts, I am particularly interested in exploring one aspect of such education that I argue must be at the core of any such education in any context, namely a pedagogical means for promoting learners’ moral and spiritual development/transformation. Simply put, successful promotion of profound motivation and commitment to do good, to be of service to humanity, must be at the heart of any adequate educational approach that meets the needs of individuals and society in this arguably unprecedented time of crisis and change. Indeed, it is increasingly recognized that the social change we need to resolve many of the crises we face seems to require a profound transformation in the consciousness and behavior of increasing numbers of people, and therefore a corresponding educational approach that inspires learners to apply productive knowledge and skills to achieving ethical ends.
Clearly, the teaching/learning of knowledge and skills drawn from the traditional academic disciplines is essential to any personally and socially transformative education. But, such knowledge needs to be taught in a meaningful context that appears sadly lacking in many schools today, that is the context and motive for learning provided by developing learners’ morally-inspired motivation to envision and promote positive social change. In such a context, the learning of particular knowledge and skills is given a purpose that learners will perceive to be meaningful and beautiful. Such a context for teaching/learning academic knowledge and skills would be intrinsically motivating and would stand in stark contrast to the compartmentalized, disconnected and impractical manner in which knowledge and skills are generally taught in schools today.

To aid my exploration of how education can promote moral and spiritual transformation (i.e. promote the development of the moral concerns, attitudes and motivation, as well as spiritual capacities/qualities that can inspire, guide, sustain an agent of social transformation), I have chosen for this dissertation to make special use of a particular theory of moral development. I have chosen Elena Mustakova-Possardt’s (2003; 2004) psychological theory of the development of “critical moral consciousness.” My reasons for choosing this theory are first that its description of critical consciousness (which in later work she refers to as “critical moral consciousness”) offers a well-defined and critically valuable aim for education, i.e. the aim of fostering the development of a certain kind of person with certain qualities of consciousness. Furthermore, Mustakova-Possardt’s description of critical moral consciousness brings together in one construct dimensions of human experience (i.e. the psychological faculties of mind, heart, and will, and corresponding dimensions of truth, beauty, and goodness) that appear to me to be in desperate need of integration, but which
unfortunately have historically been compartmentalized and dichotomized arguably through the historical influence of the philosophical shift known as the European Enlightenment.\(^1\) Finally, this theory offers what I view as the most comprehensive and elegant account of moral development I have yet encountered, one that reconciles often conflicting views of 1) the role of moral reasoning versus caring in moral development, 2) the relative importance of justice versus care in morality, 3) the importance personal and private morality within an established social system versus the importance of promoting social justice and social change, and 4) a notion that universal patterns of psychological development may exist versus an appreciation for the contingent influences that particular social and historical contexts and that human agency have on human development.

I have further chosen to study a particular case of an educational program that operated in a public high school in North Carolina between 2002 and 2007, which I refer to in this dissertation by the pseudonym Community-building Institute. This case was chosen because of its seemingly exceptional effectiveness in promoting what appears to be the moral transformation of many of its learners (as attested to by a recent program evaluation). This dissertation, therefore, is essentially a case study whose aim is to assess whether and how the case in question stimulates the development of critical moral consciousness in secondary school students.

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\(^1\) This compartmentalization and dichotomization of mind and heart, of intellect and feelings/intuition, of knowledge and action etc., I would argue, had a detrimental and indeed a pathological effect on Western civilization (despite the clear benefits that derived from the development of “objective” scientific thought). This effect is characterized by an objectification of reality and devaluation of subjective awareness that fragments human experience, and ignores the interconnectedness of the knowing subject and the “objects” of his/her knowledge. It further has resulted in an incapacity to account for and give legitimacy to experiences of intrinsic meaning or beauty.
Elena Mustakova-Possardt’s Developmental Theory of Critical Moral Consciousness

Psychologist Mustakova-Possardt (2003) proposes an elaborate theoretical account of how what she calls “critical moral consciousness” develops in certain exceptional people (“exceptional” because, as she suggests, such consciousness seems to have “always existed as a minority way of being among people of every age and culture”) (p. xix). Mustakova-Possardt’s theory builds on Paulo Freire’s (2005a, 2005b) conception of critical consciousness as well as on a number of theories of psychological development, most notably those of Commons et. al. (2007, 1990), Wade (1996), Danesh (1994), Belenky et. al. (1986), Weinstein & Alschuler (1985), Kohlberg (1984), Kegan (1982), Fowler (1981), Perry (1968), and Piaget (1965). It also draws from critical theory, especially from the work of Marcuse (1989) and Fromm (1983), as well as from eastern and western religious/spiritual traditions. The theory is the result of an empirical, cross-cultural study she undertook that involved interviewing in-depth 28 adult subjects in the United States and Bulgaria. The US sample of 20 adults was statistically selected, while she characterizes her Bulgarian sample of 8 as “unrepresentative…consisting of four men and four women” five of whom lived in the capital city and three of whom resided in a rural Bulgarian town.

Both Freire and Mustakova-Possardt developed their conceptions of critical consciousness in response to their common concern with identifying and describing those qualities of consciousness that they recognized people require to become effective agents of social change. For both, such consciousness is characterized by the ability to separate one’s self from, and to de-reify and problematize aspects of, the socio-historical reality in which

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2 These 20 subjects “constituted a statistically selected sub-sample of Colby and Damon’s (1994) study of midlife social responsibility” (2003, p.21).
one is initially submerged, to critically perceive how that reality was constructed, and to take responsibility to transform aspects of that reality that are oppressive, i.e. that impede the processes of “self-affirmation” and “humanization” that is the central “vocation” of human beings (Freire, 2005b, pp. 43 & 55). For both Freire and Mustakova-Possardt, critical consciousness is “authentic” consciousness that does not dichotomize reflection from action and that realizes and promotes human solidarity. Both theorists, further, developed their notions of critical consciousness in relation and in response to their particular understandings of the nature of the dilemmas and challenges people face at the present period in human history, and both were especially motivated in this work by the goal of determining ways that education can foster the development of the kind of consciousness they identified.

However, Mustakova-Possardt (2004) goes further than Freire in showing how critical consciousness is a highly moral and spiritual consciousness, characterized by a “deepening synergy between mind, heart and will” (p. 258) and a related, unusually strong motivation to prioritize the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness3 over expedient pursuits motivated by fear, self-concern, and conventionality. Given this characteristic synergy between their faculties of mind, heart and will, the judgments and actions of critically conscious individuals tend to be “authentic” in the sense that they involve the “whole person” (i.e. mind, heart and will acting in relative harmony rather than in conflict). Mustakova-Possardt further characterizes the emergence of such consciousness as “an optimal path of human development…characterized by ever-expanding circles of agency in service to humanity” (p. 246). Thus, she views critically conscious people as not only able to critically discern and creatively respond to oppression but as people who exhibit “a wholesome

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3 Note that an account of my own developing perspective on the meaning of these terms and what I believe is their close inter-relationship, a perspective that constitutes a major working premise for this study, can be found in Appendix A of this dissertation.
engagement with meaning” (p. 246), who stand out as “independent and original thinkers” unconstrained by the values and mores of their particular social milieu, and who deliberately choose to enter into “an ongoing dialogue” with other people and with “life” (2003, p. xiv). She notes that such individuals function as “creative agents in their communities, forces of attraction that seem to draw out the best in others,” and exhibit a quality of love that “is notably more all-embracing and is manifested in a deep compassion for the human condition” (2003, p. 4). She further characterizes critical moral consciousness as consciousness in which a moral and spiritual sense of identity dominates “over other, more limited forms of psychosocial identity” and notes that such consciousness is “highly agentic” and responsible (2004, pp. 257-258). “In critically conscious people, we see a strong sense of personal choice. Regardless of what life has handed them, they tend to take responsibility for their own choices. They also live with a deeply felt responsibility to initiate work for positive change and to respond to the needs of the world” (2003, p. 4).

Mustakova-Possardt (2003) eloquently summarizes the somewhat paradoxical and creative nature of this kind of consciousness in the following passage.

People who exhibit it [i.e. critical moral consciousness] strike us as both independent and original thinkers and deeply connected to the rest of humanity, individuals with presence and integrity but not individualists. They identify with no one particular ideology, class, group, or philosophy – they draw on the best in all; yet their personal understanding is not eclectic but deeply integrated. These are people who recognize truth in whatever shape or form it appears, who respond to life with wisdom and enter into an ongoing dialogue with it, not in order to outsmart life with their personal theories but out of awe and reverence for life. These people always stand out, and others are attracted to them and threatened at the same time, because these people fit no easy mold and are not guided by personal interest. These people’s lives are about truth and service, both outdated and discarded words; but they are not moralists. If anything, they are lovers, lovers of humanity, lovers of life. Their hearts embrace and respond deeply to the human condition. Their minds powerfully cut through the rubble of detail and the smoke of words and reach for inner meanings, harnessing
knowledge into understanding, never just caught in the trimmings of knowledge. These are people who are loved and feared and hated but who, whether we like them or resent them, represent our best hope for ourselves… (p. xiv)

How then does such consciousness develop? Based on her research, Mustakova-Possardt (2004) proposes that, for a person to develop critical moral consciousness, a “moral motivation” must come to dominate over “expediency motivation” within that person in relation to four fundamental human concerns or “motivational dimensions.” She identifies these motivational dimensions as “(i) identity; (ii) relationships with external moral authority, and the emerging sense of internal moral authority, responsibility, and agency; (iii) empathic concerns with others, with justice and caring; and (iv) concerns with the meaning of life” (p. 253), and often refers to them by the more abbreviated labels of 1) Identity, 2) Authority, responsibility and agency, 3) Relationships, and 4) Meaning of life (2003, p. 44). By the term “moral motivation,” she means people’s innate concerns with and attraction to truth, beauty and goodness, concerns and attraction that she regards as expressions of the “inherent spiritual potential” of human beings (p. 42). Mustakova-Possardt (2004) further clarifies how motivational development occurs in relation to these four motivational dimensions by noting that,

Every person negotiates to some degree their energy for life and core yearning toward truth, beauty and goodness along the…four motivational dimensions…. The ongoing negotiation of this core yearning may happen unconsciously, sporadically and with many distractions, in the course of which the core yearning may become progressively overlaid by fear and the overall motivation of the person may become predominantly instrumental and expedient (i.e. avoiding discomfort). Or these dimensions may be much more consciously and purposefully negotiated in the context of morally/spiritually oriented environments, in which case the person’s overall motivation becomes predominantly or exclusively guided by moral concerns. In that sense, each dimension represents a continuum between moral and expediency motivation. (p. 253)
With regard to each of the four motivational dimensions Mustakova-Possardt (2003) identifies, what the distinction between an expediency motivation and a moral motivation may look like can be described as follows. With regard to the first motivational dimension of “identity,” an expediency motivation could manifest as a relatively unquestioning acceptance of one’s socially-determined identity, i.e. an identity derived from membership in various social groups and from the social roles and social status one acquires or is given within these social groups. One would then be motivated to protect one’s socially-determined identity and avoid the discomfort, effort and uncertainty involved in questioning it. On the other hand, the dominance of a moral motivation relative to this first dimension can be initially seen in one’s earnest and critical questioning of who and/or what one is (e.g. seeking to understand one’s nature and value, one’s origins and possible destiny, whether one is essentially a material or a spiritual being, one’s ultimate potential and limitations etc.) rather than uncritically accepting a conventionally-established identity. Thus, a moral motivation in this case would be to seek a deeper truth regarding who one is, and arrive at an explanation that one sees as more meaningful and beautiful and allowing for greater goodness than a more limited identity one was offered by one’s society. As a result of such seeking, a “moral identity…and moral character [come to] predominate over and mediate the sense of identity derived from various social configurations such as class, race, gender, ethnic, or other group membership” (p. 43).

In relation to the second motivational dimension of “authority, responsibility and agency,” an expediency motivation reveals itself in a person’s uncritical acceptance of the conventional authorities within the social group(s) with which he/she is identified. Blind acceptance of such authority further requires little personal responsibility and leaves one with
a limited or non-existent sense of agency. An expediently motivated person, with regard to this dimension, avoids taking responsibility for the consequences of his/her attitudes and actions and might understand responsibility simply as expedient reciprocity. He/she also doesn’t feel he/she possesses the power to change his/her perspectives, responses and circumstances. A morally-motivated person, on the other hand, is attracted to “authentic moral authority” (independent of whether this authority was recognized or sanctioned by his/her society) (pp. 158-159). Authentic moral authority, in this context, may be understood as the authority inherent in the integrity of a role model (e.g. the authority of a person whose expressed ideals conform with his/her desires and actions, and who often exhibit wisdom and caring mentorship). Attraction to authentic moral authority motivates one to be more like the source of that authority, and, in so doing, to discover one’s own responsibility and the degree of agency one possesses to become a more moral person (whatever one’s conception of a moral person may be). Thus, one’s receptivity to authentic moral authority is “progressively internalized as personal moral responsibility” resulting in “an emerging sense of internal moral authority and…. a sense of moral agency…which prevails over the tendency to experience oneself as a victim of circumstances” (p. 43).

In relation to the third motivational dimension identified by Mustakova-Possardt, i.e. relationships, an expediency motivation would be visible in a person’s valuing of relationships with others based solely or primarily on the pleasure and/or apparent security or advantage he/she gains from the relationship. In this case, the other’s identity and value tend to be defined based on social convention and/or on one’s self-referential interpretations of past experience with the other. On the other hand, when morally motivated in relation to this dimension, one is attracted to the other because of one’s intuitive recognition of the other’s
intrinsic value. One is then motivated to have authentic, synergistic, loving and just relationships with others (i.e. relationships of service) for their own sakes. A person with such a motivation “is empathically concerned with others…with being loyal and not hurting, and gradually expands that concern beyond interpersonal relationships into larger social concerns with justice and equity” (p. 43).

Finally, in relation to the fourth motivational dimension, i.e. that of concern with life’s meaning, an expediency motivation may be visible in a person’s uncritical and unquestioning acceptance of the explicit and/or implicit understandings of life’s meaning/purpose conveyed by his/her culture. This again implies an unwillingness to make the effort and experience the anxiety that questioning a taken-for-granted view of life’s meaning would entail (despite contradictions this view may suggest). A person who is morally-motivated relative to this dimension, on the other hand, passionately and critically seeks a beautiful meaning for life. He/she is open to life’s mystery and moved by a sense of life unfolding purposefully (rather than randomly and meaninglessly). For this person, “the search for truth provides a larger frame of reference from which to reflect on self and experience and spurs intense self-reflection and critical examination of reality, expanding toward principled, philosophical, historical, and global vision” (p. 43).

When moral motivation dominates over expediency motivation in all four of the motivational dimensions mentioned above, then, according to Mustakova-Possardt, a person can be said to be developing along a “pathway” that consists of various stages in the development of critical moral consciousness. For convenience of reference, Mustakova-Possardt refers to this developmental pathway as a “CC pathway” of development, in contrast to the “non-CC pathway” of development along which people in whom an expediency
motivation is dominant develop (pp. 6-8). Both of these developmental pathways, according to Mustakova-Possardt, are characterized by somewhat similar patterns of structural or cognitive development, which she notes have been described from varying but complementary vantage points by Piaget (1965), Kohlberg (1984), Commons & Rodriguez (1990), Weinstein & Alschuler (1985), c) Kegan (1982), and d) Belenky et. al. (1986) and Perry (1968). However, the two pathways differ in terms of the kind of motivation that dominates (i.e. expedient or moral) within a person developing on one pathway versus a person developing on the other pathway. The diagram below (Table 1, p. 11), taken from Mustakova-Possardt’s (2003) book, Critical Consciousness: A Study of Morality in Global Historical Perspective, shows both the continuity and the distinction between these two pathways. In this diagram, we see that both CC and non-CC pathways of development share a similar structural (i.e. cognitive) developmental axis, but at each stage along this common axis, we also see a person may possess a more or less expedient (or a more or less moral) motivation. Thus, at each stage of cognitive development, a person may reside anywhere on the motivational continuum represented by the diagram’s vertical axis, i.e. anywhere from the lowest of the four levels of motivation indicated, at which level one is entirely motivated by expediency, to the completely morally-motivated level represented by the top of the diagram.

Mustakova-Possardt (2003) further clarifies this model in the following passage.

We all seem to come into the world with this innate undifferentiated knowing that there is something greater in life. We can see it in children in their spontaneous attraction to beauty, goodness and knowledge, which manifests itself along with other impulses of their material nature. To the extent that this spiritual knowledge and attraction are fostered, they increasingly manifest themselves in life as love, mercy, kindness, generosity, and justice…. In most of us, motivation represents an uneasy tension between moral and expediency concerns, but where a moral orientation predominates, people exhibit critical consciousness and can be identified as happier,
Table 1. Diagram of the Full-Range of the CC/Non-CC Continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Pre-CC</th>
<th>Transitional CC</th>
<th>CC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity of self and morality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral concerns dominant over self-interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-interest dominant over moral concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immoral people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structural Develop.</td>
<td>Pre-Conventional</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Post-Conventional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
A: Moral interest
B: Moral authority
C: Moral responsibility
D: Expanded moral and social responsibility
E: Sociopolitical consciousness
F: Principled Vision
G: Philosophical expansion
H: Historical and global vision

more actualized and integrated, regardless of their developmental level. To the extent that motivation is governed by other, more expedient motives, regardless of the person’s ideological or religious claims, she or he manifests the non-CC pathway. Such a person experiences greater tensions and contradictions between mind and heart and varying degrees of disempowerment. The relative weakness of moral
motivation leaves structural development more vulnerable to circumstances…. The different developmental pathways of CC and non-CC themselves represent a continuum, because a predominant expediency motivation can at any point in life be transformed into a predominantly moral motivation (often as a result of peak experiences, such as losses, disease, near-death experiences, and education). (p. 6)

According to Mustakova-Possardt (2004), due to the changes in their cognitive abilities (i.e. their structural development), people developing along a CC pathway (i.e. people in which a moral motivation dominates) become pre-occupied with different tasks or themes at different stages in their lives. She identifies eight “chronologically ascending psychosocial tasks or themes” that morally motivated people negotiate across a lifespan, which are represented in Table 2 below. These ascending tasks or themes are moral interest, moral authority, moral responsibility, expanded moral and social responsibility, sociopolitical consciousness, principled vision, philosophical expansion, and historical and global vision.

### Table 2. Ascendance of Tasks (Themes) in the Evolution of CC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-CC</th>
<th>Transitional CC</th>
<th>CC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral interest</td>
<td>Moral responsibility</td>
<td>Expanded moral &amp; social responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral authority</td>
<td>Sociopolitical consciousness</td>
<td>Philosophical expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical &amp; global vision</td>
<td>Principled vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lifespan Development
The first three of these are negotiated in the first level of critical consciousness that Mustakova-Possardt identifies, i.e. that of “pre-critical consciousness” (or “pre-CC”). The following two tasks/themes are encountered in the second level, i.e. “transitional critical consciousness” (or “transitional CC”), and the last three are negotiated at the third level of “mature critical consciousness” (i.e. “CC”) (2004, pp. 256-258) (2003, pp. 129-139).

Mustakova-Possardt further clarifies that,

Through the negotiation of these themes, there emerges a progressively more wholesome relationship between knowing and being, mind and heart, centered around a caring, increasingly interconnected, justice and equity-oriented view of life. With the structural developmental movement toward greater differentiation and complexity, people engage increasingly in a critical dialogue with themselves and their socio-cultural world, have empathy toward fellow human beings in the larger social world and integrate their social experience. This constitutes a developmental movement towards greater openness to and engagement with the world. (p. 259)

In this passage, Mustakova-Possardt again refers to the synergy of mind, heart and will that she claims characterizes critical moral consciousness. She also further suggests that this synergy is not only the defining feature, but also the cause of such consciousness.

This wholesome way of being [i.e. critical moral consciousness] is the result of a qualitatively different level of integration of human cognitive, volitional and affective capacities, manifested in a deepening lifelong integration of moral motivation, agency and critical discernment. Critical consciousness is in essence optimal consciousness, characterized by the integration of the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual aspects of a human being. Levels and degrees of critical consciousness are the result of the lifelong, synergistic interaction of moral motivation and structural cognitive development, leading to a progressively more harmonious working of mind and heart and an empowered unity of rational understanding, intuitive knowing and inner vision. (p. 248)

Similarly, according to Mustakova-Possardt, whether a person’s motivation is primarily expedient or moral is also a function of congruence between that person’s mind and heart. If the mind’s understanding and the heart’s attraction are both oriented toward
expedient ends, then one will be expediently motivated. On the other hand, if the mind’s understanding and the heart’s attraction are both oriented toward truth, beauty and goodness, then one will be morally motivated. If, however, there is a conflict between mind and heart, then one experiences a crisis that may trigger a shift from a non-CC to a CC developmental pathway, depending on the strength of the heart’s attraction.

This understanding of the critical role of moral motivation and synergy of mind, heart and will in the development of critical moral consciousness clearly distinguishes Mustakova-Possardt’s (2004) theory of moral development from those of Piaget and Kohlberg, both of which equate morality with moral reasoning, emphasize “cognition as the source of moral motivation” and thus view “love and will [as]…by-products of knowing” (p. 251). It also distinguishes her view of moral development from Hoffman’s (2000), with its emphasis on the role of empathy in moral development, and Gilligan’s (1982), with its emphasis on care. Instead, Mustakova-Possardt’s theory integrates aspects of all of these theories. But, unlike all of them, her theory views moral development as stemming from a spiritual impulse, which manifests as an innate attraction to truth, beauty and goodness, and which, when fostered, promotes synergistic interaction between mind, heart and will. Quoting Diessner, Mustakova-Possardt defines spirit as “different from matter, where (i) ‘matter and spirit are interactive, dialectical poles of a unified cosmos’; (ii) ‘Spirit is fundamental to matter; matter is an emanation or appearance of spirit…Spirit is generative or creative’; (iii) ‘Spirit is abstract and transcends time and space’…”(Diessner, 2000, unpublished manuscript, p. 11)” (p. 249). She further explains that spirit is “the ultimate organizing principle in human experience” (p. 253) and accounts for people’s “capacity to experience feelings of awe and wonder, gratitude, transcendence, unity and wholeness, love and serenity,” a capacity she
suggests “needs to be fostered and enriched through education across the curriculum” (p. 262).

In concluding this account of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, one final, yet pedagogically critical, aspect of her theory should be noted. In a partial explanation of why a moral motivation comes to dominate in some people but not others, Mustakova-Possardt notes that people who develop critical moral consciousness seem to have had significant exposure in their formative years to compelling examples of “authentic moral authority” (which has already been explained) and to what she calls “authentic moral environments” (which will be explained in detail in Chapter 5). These factors, according to Mustakova-Possardt, have the effect of amplifying children’s innate attraction to truth, beauty, and goodness, while their relative absence tends to have the opposite effect. Thus, “when the human spiritual striving to know truth, to love beauty, and to exercise choice in the direction of goodness is amplified by early environments, it becomes the motivating force behind the progressive constructions and reconstructions of the true, the good and the beautiful. This essentially spiritual orientation becomes dominant in a person’s life and activates more fully the developing capacities to know, to love, and to exercise free will” (p. 251).

The Community-building Institute was developed at a public high school in North Carolina in 2002 by that school’s “Minority Advocacy Specialist.” Its four stated objectives are: 1) to close the academic achievement gap between minority and majority students, 2) to reduce the effects of racism in the school, 3) to increase parental involvement in the school,
and 4) to create the conditions for transformative, compassionate understanding between members of the school community. The primary method it uses to achieve these aims is to bring together groups of students from intentionally diverse racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds in workshops designed engender between them a profound sense of mutual-understanding, care and community. It seeks to foster a culture of care that overcomes social alienation. By doing this, it also aims to foster an environment favorable to reducing and ultimately eliminating the academic achievement gap between students from more and less advantaged backgrounds, especially where these relative advantages and disadvantages are determined by differences in socio-economic background and race. These workshops, which may be said to constitute the heart of the educational process the Institute promotes, are called We Are One Family workshops and were designed by the Institute’s founder to induce what he calls a “Head-to-Heart Shift” in participants. Another notable feature of the Forum is the Caring Pairs Peer Tutoring Program through which more and less academically advantaged students are paired together in tutoring relationships based on the new found sense of care and commitment to each other’s well-being that the workshop fosters.

Beginning in the Fall of 2005, myself and a few researchers were involved in conducting a program evaluation of the Community-building Institute. This evaluation was completed in September 2006. Its findings suggest that the Institute is an exceptional case of an educational program that appears to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness in adolescents. Two observations particularly suggest this:
1) the similarities that seem to exist between the changes in consciousness and behavior that many Institute participants attributed to their experiences in the Institute and certain qualities of consciousness Mustakova-Possardt suggests characterize critical moral consciousness, and

2) the apparent correspondence between certain elements of Institute’s curriculum and the two main environmental factors identified in Mustakova-Possardt’s research as vital contributors to the development of critical moral consciousness.

Specifically, the findings of the evaluation strongly suggest that the Community-building Institute tends to cause its participants to experience deeper understanding of, care for, and solidarity with others across conventional social barriers based on ethnicity and social-economic status, and to increase their desire and commitment to be of service to others and to “make a difference” in their community and world. It also appears to be effective in transforming students’ self-perceptions, particularly their senses of responsibility and agency in relation to other people and to future goals they envision for themselves. Such attributes appear to be closely related to qualities identified by Mustakova-Possardt as characterizing people with critical moral consciousness. Furthermore, based on participant accounts and on my own field observations, it appears that the environmental factors Mustakova-Possardt identified as most significant in amplifying people’s inclination to seek beauty, goodness and truth, i.e. exposure to “authentic moral authority” and “authentic moral environments,” were both present, to a significant degree, in the experience the Community-building Institute provides its participants.
There are two primary rationales for this case study. The first is its potential benefit to society. I believe this benefit becomes especially apparent when one considers the moral dimension of numerous crises that threaten humanity’s social existence at the present and further when reflecting on what changes in educational practice are called for to adequately address these crises. The second is the contribution this study may make to the field of educational research in general, and to the field of moral education in particular. Thus, my rationales for this study are both socially practical and theoretical. I will initially address the first rationale, i.e. the practical, social benefit that I believe this study could potentially have.

Bearing in mind my suggestion made at the beginning of this chapter about the appropriate aims of education (i.e. that education should aim to prepare learners to promote personal and social transformation in response to the particular, critical needs of human beings and human society at this time in history), I will introduce the first rationale I see for this study by offering a broad view of the global social context education must respond to. Specifically, I will argue that humanity currently faces an unprecedented moral crisis, and that to adequately respond to this crisis, educational systems must concern themselves with fostering the development in learners of precisely those moral qualities and capacities that Mustakova-Possardt includes in her description of critical moral consciousness, key elements of which the Community-building Institute has been designed to and claims to promote.

At the time of this writing, the United States and the world face an economic crisis that is arguably unprecedented (the “Great Depression” of the 1930s providing the closest

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4 I define authentic communication in Chapter V.
comparison). What is particularly noteworthy about this crisis is the degree to which social commentators and political leaders are acknowledging the essentially moral (or, to be more precise, immoral) causes of the crisis. For example, President-elect Obama (2009), in a speech on the economy given on January 8, 2009 at George Mason University, observed that the current crisis is primarily the outcome of “an era of profound irresponsibility.”

The sudden economic collapse we have encountered was preceded only a few months earlier by the ominous that less noticed news of a steep rise in food prices around the world that sparked riots on several continents, a situation that prompted UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to warn that “the rapidly escalating crisis of food availability around the world has reached emergency proportions” and to call on the international community to “take urgent and concerted action in order to avert the larger political and security implications of this growing crisis” (Ki-moon, 2008). This situation exacerbates the persistent state of global affairs reflected in the statistics recently reported by UNICEF (2006) three years ago that, “every year… undernutrition contributes to the deaths of about 5.6 million children under the age of five,” and that “one out of every four children under five – or 146 million children in the developing world - is underweight for his or her age, and at increased risk of an early death” (UNICEF, p. 1). This situation persists despite the fact that more than enough food is available to adequately feed every person on the planet and despite the adoption by world leaders more than eight years ago of the “Millenium Development Goals,” which included the goal to reduce hunger by half before the year 2015. One particularly vivid anecdotal consequence of these unnecessary food shortages, reported by CNN on January 30, 2008, is that many poor people in Haiti are now resorting to eating mud fried in cooking oil to fend off hunger!
Underlying these symptomatic crises are long-standing global inequities. For example, the United Nations Development Programme’s 2007 Human Development Report points out that,

There are still around 1 billion people living at the margins of survival on less than US$1 a day, with 2.6 billion – 40 percent of the world’s population – living on less than US$2 a day…. The 40 percent of the world’s population living on less than US$2 a day accounts for 5 percent of global income. The richest 20% accounts for three-quarters of the world’s income. (p. 25)

At the same time, the gap between the world’s richest and poorest people continues to widen. While in 1960, for example, the richest fifth of the world’s people received 30 times the income of the poorest fifth, by 1997, the same percentage of the world’s richest people received 74 times the income of the poorest 20% (UNDP, 1999, p. 36).

That these inequities are not due to a lack of sufficient resources to satisfy all human needs (as distinct, as Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have said, from the amount required to satiate human “greed”\(^5\)), but rather are reflections people’s materialistic values and limited moral vision and concern becomes increasingly apparent when we compare global spending priorities. For example, the UNDP estimated in 1998 that, during the previous year, the amount of expenditure that would have been sufficient to provide basic education for all children, in addition to what was already being spent globally, was $6 billion, and that the amounts required (again, in addition to what was already being spent) to provide running water and sanitation to every human being and to meet the reproductive health needs of all the world’s women would have been $9 billion and $12 billion respectively. Yet, during that same year, $11 billion was spent on ice cream, $17 billion on cigarettes and $105 billion on alcoholic beverages in Europe alone. Even more disturbing, in light of the degree to which

\(^5\) These words have been attributed to Mohandas K. Gandhi: “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need but not every man’s greed” (as cited in Schumacher, 1989).
basic human needs were not met, are the facts that $400 billion was spent that year on narcotic drugs and $780 billion that was spent for military purposes worldwide (UNDP, 1998, p. 37). More recently, the UNDP (2005) concluded that “failure to tackle extreme inequalities is acting as a brake on progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals” (p. 5), and observed that such failure has occurred despite the fact that “the idea that people should be consigned to an early death, illiteracy or second-class citizenship because of inherited attributes beyond their control violates most people’s sense of what is fair” (p. 52).

Beside the threat to humanity’s ability to meet its most basic needs caused by the inequities and materialistic assumptions alluded to above, many other obvious social and political ills threaten social stability and contribute to untold human suffering. Among the most evident of these are the threats posed by warfare, terrorism, and institutionalized forms of oppression that result in the marginalization of women and racial, ethnic and religious minorities (which in places like Darfur is being taken to genocidal extremes). Equally insidious and devastating in their human consequences are the prevalence of child pornography and the trafficking of illegal drugs and of women and children as sex slaves. Finally, it should be noted that all of the ills mentioned above persist as the media that inundates public consciousness around the world more often than not promotes conspicuous consumption and frivolous forms of entertainment that degrade senses of human dignity and community and focus attention away from the critical issues of the times.

A striking thing about all of the crises and on-going social ills mentioned above is how closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing they are. Indeed, they are so interwoven that together they can be seen to constitute one crisis that can be traced back to pervasive patterns of human behavior and thought that are not only self-centered and irresponsible, but
also unsustainable and indeed ultimately self-destructive given the increasingly obvious and growing interdependence of our world. This moral crisis more than ever appears to transcend national and geographical boundaries. That the crisis is essentially moral can further be seen simply by considering whether the unjust and life-threatening situations mentioned above could persist if the decisions and behavior of most people, and especially people’s leaders, conformed to the “Golden Rule” of treating others as one would want to be treated under similar circumstances (a principle that can be found in most, and perhaps all, of the world’s religious traditions). In other words, this global crisis appears to stem from the underdevelopment of our capacities to perceive and acknowledge the essential interconnectedness of human beings with each other (as well as with the natural environment that sustains us) and the intrinsic and equal value of every human life (perceptions that are implicit in the Golden Rule as well as most other commonly held moral principles). Among the psychosocial signs of this moral underdevelopment are a tendency to view oneself and members of one’s group as having greater value than other individuals from other groups, to measure the value of individuals according to their economic productivity, social status, the self-centered pleasure or benefit one derives from them and other instrumental measures of worth, and to readily succumb to the illusion that the interests of any segment of humanity could somehow be at odds with the interests of the whole of humanity.

Why, we may ask, is the arguably universal acknowledgment of the proposition that the Golden Rule aught to define how people treat each other not strong enough in itself to ensure that this Rule is generally followed and thus to help us avert the crises we face? As Mustakova-Possardt observes, this incapacity may be understood as a reflection of ubiquitous contradictions within and between the human faculties of mind, heart and will, contradictions
that further manifest as contradictions in most every society’s belief and value systems. For example, the Golden Rule that people generally seem to agree should be applied in interpersonal relationships is often not considered relevant when it comes to economic and political relationships. Furthermore, even with regard to our closest relationships, we generally experience a tension between our moral impulses and ideals, on the one hand, and our ego-centric, expedient impulses and pursuits, on the other, a tension which we may experience as a conflict *between* our thoughts and our feelings or as contradictions *within* our thoughts or *within* our feelings. From a deeper perspective, such internal conflicts can arguably be seen as symptomatic of our dishonesty in our relationships to others and to our own selves, of an underdeveloped capacity to genuinely care for and love others (especially distant others), and of our frequent unwillingness to think and act responsibly even when ample knowledge is available pointing to our survival’s dependence on responsible and cooperative behavior. Incongruity within and between mind, heart and will is further evident in the willingness of masses of people to remain ignorant and be blindly led and manipulated, even as they may intuitively sense that something is wrong with the direction we are being led in and that the “lowest common denominator” that is being offered to them as the goal for their aspirations will not ultimately satisfy them.

Underscoring this predicament, Mustakova-Possardt (2003) argues such incongruities characterize humanity’s collective consciousness especially at this time.

We are members of a human race that possesses the knowledge required to feed itself and to provide education and a life of relative health, comfort, and cooperation for all in the context of a globally peaceful and ecologically sustainable planet. Yet, we are still polarized and compartmentalized, torn by racial, ethnic, and class hostilities, religious and sectarian antagonism, and competing special-interest groups and ideologies and steeped in politics as usual, lacking the collective will to extricate ourselves from this quagmire.
In the twentieth century, we have largely managed to shake off the powers of patriarchal oppression, colonialism, and dictatorship and to release on a large scale the human hunger to know from the grips of dogma. Yet, the development of our capacities to love and to exercise our free will responsibly has lagged far behind our power to know. (pp. 1-2)

While some may reasonably object to the apparent suggestion that these human problems are especially characteristic of the present by noting that self-centeredness and injustice seem to have always existed and caused suffering in human societies, I would nevertheless argue that our current global situation constitutes an unprecedented moral crisis. The reason is not that more people are more immoral now than they were in the past, but that, given the unprecedented interdependence of human societies and the power we now possess as a species due to our level of technological development, our immoral, ego-centric attitudes and behavior, our failure to appreciate our interconnectedness, to care and to act accordingly, not only continue to cause suffering as they always have, but at present threaten humanity’s very survival. Many examples already given of the critical problems we have created for ourselves attest to this.

Vaclav Havel (then President of the Czech Republic) eloquently bore witness to this fundamental problem, and suggested what is required to solve it when, in his address to a joint session of the U.S. Congress on February 21, 1990, he noted that,

the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human humbleness and in human responsibility. Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our Being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which this world is headed, whether it be ecological, social, demographic or a general breakdown of civilization, will be unavoidable. (n.d., sect 16 para 2)

Yet, this would seem to be a daunting task given the divergence that seems to exist in our views of the nature of morality and our assumptions about how it should be promoted, a divergence that can be seen to stem in large part from differing views on human nature and
capacities. Indeed, some would consider efforts to engender the kind of “revolution in the sphere of human consciousness” Havel calls for to be futile based on the assumption that selfishness and aggression are inherent human characteristics. Furthermore, the questions of whose values are to be promoted and whose interests particular moral prescriptions really serve, while necessary and important, often act to paralyze efforts to address moral issues in our pluralistic society when the unquestioned assumption underlying these questions is one that views power in social relationships as a matter of dominance over, rather than an outcome of synergy with, others.

The crucial question then is how “a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness” might be engendered. Before considering specific means that may contribute to creating such a revolution, it may help us to understand the origins of the moral crisis we face if we view it in the context of certain global social forces that seem to characterize human history in recent centuries and decades. The rapidly accelerating changes human society is undergoing in this period of history may be broadly described as the outcomes of simultaneous processes of integration and disintegration. On the one hand, technological, economic, political, and social-cultural forces (and some would argue also spiritual forces on the deepest level⁶) are driving an integrative process that is occurring on a planetary scale and bringing diverse people into increasingly unavoidable contact with each other. These forces are giving rise to being further amplified by increasing levels of international cooperation, a heightened consciousness of and concern for human rights, miraculous technical achievements and an unprecedented expansion of scientific knowledge. As a result, opportunities now exist to overcome age-old scourges of humanity (as well as uniquely

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⁶ See my discussion of Bahá’í beliefs and their influence on this study in Chapter 3.
Former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, alluded to this when he reported to the General Assembly in 2005 that,

The unprecedented combination of resources and technology at our disposal today means that we are truly the first generation with the tools, the knowledge and the resources to meet the commitment, given by all States in the Millennium Declaration, “to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.” (UN, 2005, p. 8)

Furthermore, and especially significant in light of both the theory and the case this study focuses on, increasing instances of dialogue are occurring between people from all walks of life, from all nations, cultures, classes, religions, motivated by a rapidly growing recognition of our shared interests and inter-connectedness as a human species. While this dialogue still has the attention of only a small minority of humanity and directly involves and engages an even smaller number of people, in its scope and growing frequency it is nevertheless unprecedented and arguably presages a time when the masses of humanity may actively participate in the building of a truly world-embracing, mutually-beneficial, just and sustainable civilization enriched to a degree never before experienced by cross-fertilization between all of humanity’s cultures and religious traditions.

Simultaneous with this process of global integration (or “planetization” as Teilhard de Chardin referred to it), and also a direct result of it, human societies seem to be challenged more than ever by pervasive fears of identity loss and the existential anxiety/anomie that have resulted from the discrediting, deterioration and abandonment of long-standing institutions, traditions and social narratives that once provided societies with coherent

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7 A few examples of such dialogue are an ever-growing number of United Nations sponsored conferences and summits (e.g. the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the 1994 World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Millennium Summit and Millennium Forums for World Leaders, Religious Leaders and NGOs, recent summits on Global Warming and AIDS etc.), increasingly common parallel conferences organized by elements of civil society (e.g. the World Economic Forum in Davos and the World Social Forum), the Parliament of the World Religions, and the proliferation of less formal, small-scale, yet nonetheless world-embracing forums and dialogues.
orientations towards spiritual values, ennobling purposes, and meaningful senses of identity. This morally and socially disintegrative process can be traced to some of the same forces that drive the integrative process already described. It can also be seen to derive from the inadequacy of traditional narratives (especially when understood literally) and traditional institutions to help people cope with and respond to new knowledge and capabilities and new social dilemmas. Other significant contributors to this disintegrative process include the crisis of authority that has occurred due to visible failures in moral leadership (arguably most damaging in the cases of the moral failures of religious leaders), and the morally corrosive influences of materialism and its offspring, commercialism and consumerism.

The moral disorientation and identity crises that characterize the disintegrative process described above is further resulting, on the one hand, in the atomization of people and a pervasive sense that “anything goes” (as long as it feels good and doesn’t hurt anyone else), and, on the other hand, in fundamentalist and reactionary movements with equally damaging and immoral results. The former tendency is immoral by most accepted standards of morality, while the latter promotes immoral attitudes towards people with different beliefs and group identities and fosters irrational and untenable beliefs by promoting adherence to the outer forms of tradition (an adherence that ironically causes people to loose sight of the original, life-enhancing meanings these traditions once conveyed). Yet a third response to this disintegrative process, which I would also argue is the most authentically moral response, is that of seeking to discover and promote, in morally-motivated dialogue with others, new forms of truth, beauty and goodness better suited to the needs and capacities of humanity at the current juncture in its history. Such a creative and morally-committed response corresponds to Mustakova-Possardt’s description of critical moral consciousness. It
also seems consistent with what Vaclav Havel (1997), in another talk given to the National Press Club in Canberra, Australia on March 29, 1995, suggested is needed in order to reawaken a sense of global responsibility and discover “a framework for the tolerant coexistence of different cultures” that can provide a shared foundation for a single, “truly multicultural civilization” that “will allow everyone to be themselves while denying no one the opportunities it offers,…that strives for the tolerant coexistence of different cultural identities,…that clearly articulates the things that unite us and can develop into a set of shared values and standards enabling us to lead a creative life together.”

The main question is this: where should we look for sources of a shared minimum that could serve as a framework for the tolerant coexistence of different cultures within a single civilization? It is not enough to take the set of imperatives, principles, or rules produced by the Euro-American world and mechanically declare them binding for all. If anyone is to apply these principles, identify with them, and follow them, those principles will have to appeal to something that has been present in him or her before, to some of his or her inherent qualities…. The rules of human coexistence on this Earth can work only if they grow out of the deepest experience of everyone, not just some. They have to be formulated so as to be in harmony with what all of us -- as human beings, not as members of a particular group -- have learned, experienced, and endured.

No unbiased person will have any trouble knowing where to look. If we examine the oldest moral canons, the commandments that prescribe human conduct and the rules of human coexistence, we find numerous essential similarities among them. It is often surprising to discover that virtually identical moral norms arise in different places and different times, largely independently of one other. Another important thing is that the moral foundations upon which different civilizations or cultures were built always had transcendental or metaphysical roots. It is scarcely possible to find a culture that does not derive from the conviction that a higher, mysterious order of the world exists beyond our reach, a higher intention that is the source of all things, a higher memory recording everything, a higher authority to which we are all accountable in one way or another. (para 9-10)

In light of the account given above of the global, moral challenge we face, and the suggestions made about where we must look for the solution, I propose that two critical and urgent questions conscientious educators are obliged to examine are:
1) What kind of a person (i.e. a person with what kinds of motives, qualities and capabilities) is needed to meet the challenges humanity faces at this particular juncture in its history?

2) What kind of education may help foster the development of the motives, qualities and capabilities this kind of a person needs to possess?

In answer to the first question, and again in light of the moral crisis I have described, it seems reasonable to suggest that a person who is equipped to meet the challenges of these times needs to be strongly morally motivated and committed to contributing to the well-being of humanity. Such a person would view the activity of creatively using his/her unique talents and capacities to promote the well-being of the world as his/her greatest source of fulfillment. He/she would intuitively sense and intellectually bear witness to the interconnectedness of all people and feel compelled to exercise the responsibility this entails. In light of these motives, he/she would seek to continually acquire and develop knowledge and skills that could help to address particular human needs at local, regional, national and international levels, especially the knowledge and skills needed to promote justice and unity and to participate constructively in dialogue and cooperative social action. Furthermore, he/she would critically perceive social-historical forces and how social reality is collectively constructed by all of the participants in that reality. On a more psychological level, he/she would utilize his/her faculties of mind, heart and will in an increasingly integrated fashion. In view of the transformations human society must undergo, this person would need to possess the courage, creativity and vision necessary to bring into being new models of social life characterized by greater degrees of justice, caring, and solidarity than humanity generally
experienced up to this point in time. In short, such a person would need to be capable of actively participating in the building of a just, harmonious, sustainable, and global civilization (an undertaking which, as already suggested, must increasingly involve the masses of humanity, and in which educational institutions must play a central role).

Given this admittedly ideal description of the kind of person we need to have more of at this time, the potential social benefit of this study becomes clear in at least two ways. First, it appears that Mustakova-Possardt’s construct of critical moral consciousness includes all of the qualities mentioned above and more, combining as it does a capacity for critical discernment of the social, historical, and psychological forces at work in the world with strong moral and spiritual motivation and agency. Thus, it would seem that inquiry into the nature and development of critical moral consciousness, and how education might stimulate it, could possibly prove to be of considerable social value. Secondly, studying the seemingly promising case of the Community-building Institute in light of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory may suggest a particular approaches or methods that education can use to help stimulate the change in human consciousness that arguably needs to occur in increasing numbers of people. Of particular interest, in view of the pivotal role that Havel suggests authentic dialogue between people from diverse cultural backgrounds must play in resolving the moral crisis we face, is the unusual and authentic communication between learners from diverse social backgrounds that the Community-building Institute reportedly engenders and the profound transformative effect the experience of this kind of communication is reported to have.

With regard to the implications this study may have for educational practice, it may be recalled that I suggested at the opening of this chapter that all useful and learning is
enhanced when it occur in the context of an awakened moral motivation and a morally-inspired vision of the purpose for learning. Such a context can give coherence and meaning to the learning of discrete facts and concepts and allows learning to lead to transformative action. Thus, the pedagogical principles that may be derived from studying the Institute would also seem to be potentially applicable across the entire curriculum of any school. This is not to say that I suspect the Community-building Institute might provide the answer when it comes to adequately addressing the short-comings of modern educational systems, but rather that it may potentially offer an important part of an answer to the problems that currently plague most educational institutions.

Thus, both the theory and the case that provide the focus of this study seem to be particularly promising inasmuch as they could shed light how education can influence the roots of human motivation. This is of critical importance to society since, as has already been suggested, it seems that intellectual knowledge alone (even knowledge of moral precepts and skill at moral reasoning) is not enough to ensure moral behavior. Mustakova-Possardt’s theory indeed suggests that human consciousness (i.e. both the way we see and what we see) is largely determined by what most fundamentally motivates us. Thus, Mustakova-Possardt suggests that motivation is prior to knowledge inasmuch as it determines the ways we construct knowledge (i.e. our fundamental motivation determines the degree to which our mind, heart and will operate in an integrated, synergistic manner). This study, then, will hopefully offer some useful insights into how moral education can help learners not just to gain explicit knowledge of moral principles and skill at moral reasoning, but of equal if not greater importance, to develop authentic moral motivation. The potential importance of such research becomes even more apparent when recognizing the inadequacy
of the most prevalent approaches to education in general, and to moral education in particular, when it comes to engendering such motivation, as witnessed by the relatively small number of people who can be identified as possessing critical moral consciousness.

What seems most lacking (despite the existence of a small number of educational models that seem relatively successful, some of which I will describe in my literature review), and what both the theory and the case this study focuses on suggest is possible and desperately needed, is an approach to education that trains not only the mind, but also the heart and will in an integrated manner.

This Study’s Potential Contribution to Knowledge in the Field of Educational Research

This study may constitute a significant contribution to knowledge in the field of moral education simply by virtue of the fact that no other study of which I am aware has undertaken to explore the role education can play in stimulating critical moral consciousness. Furthermore, the combination of this study’s aim and its methodology also seem to make it distinctive. While other case studies and classroom ethnographies focusing on moral education in the United States exist, in my review of the literature I did not discover any other study that focused primarily on studying the ability of a particular curriculum to engender a well-defined type of moral consciousness, and that involved both analyzing this curriculum in action and the self-reported experiences of the learners’ exposed to the curriculum. To further clarify what appears to me to be the novelty of this study, I will compare its aims and methods to those of four noteworthy examples of recent ethnographic studies of classrooms in the United States that aimed at gaining insight into how moral
education occurs in these settings. These four studies are those of Philip Jackson, Robert
Boostrom & David Hansen (1993), George Noblit & Van Dempsey (1996), Brian McCadden

Jackson, Boostrom & Hansen (1993), in their influential book, *The Moral Life of
Schools*, undertook an ethnographic study of “eighteen classrooms, located in two public,
two independent and two parochial schools (an elementary and a high school of each type) in
the Midwest.” This study also “included conversations and periodic discussion with the
teachers in charge of those rooms” (p. xiv). Their aim was to highlight the “moral
significance” and “moral implications” of much of what occurs in US classrooms often
“without the awareness and thoughtful engagement of those in charge” (p. xii). They further
stress at the beginning of their book that their aim is not to “concentrate on specific ways to
remedy the current situation [i.e. the current state of morality in schools and/or society]” nor
on “moral instruction…other than to say that a lot of it is going on within the schools we
visited.” Nor do they “deal with the question of how to structure regular classroom activities
in a way that might enhance the likelihood of their having positive moral outcomes.” In fact,
they “largely ignore outcomes per se” (p. xi). Needless to say, my case study aims precisely
at what Jackson et. al choose to “ignore.” This is a study of a specific curriculum and mode
of instruction that seems to hold promise as a “remedy” to “the current situation” and is thus
directly concerned with studying “outcomes.” While open to discovering unanticipated
instances of moral significance, this study is motivated by a vision of specific desired
outcomes that are not only theoretical (i.e. described by Mustakova-Possardt’s theory) but
also to some extent visible in the some of the outcomes that appeared to derive from the
particular curriculum I chose to study. This study also directly examines students’ own
interpretations of their experience in the educational process that was observed, which is something Jackson et. al. do not aim to do. Another noticeable difference between this study and Jackson et. al.’s is that the scope of the latter study is much wider than that of my study. This is appropriate given the difference in our aims. Jackson et. al. seem to be concerned with surveying “what goes on in classrooms” in the United States that is of moral significance. My interest, on the other hand, is in studying a particular phenomenon in detail, i.e. to gain insight from studying a particular curriculum that seems to hold some promise in producing a particular desired outcome.

A different kind of school ethnography than Jackson et. al.’s was undertaken Noblit and Dempsey (1996). Their book, The Social Construction of Virtue: The Moral Life of Schools, is the outcome of a collaborative oral history project they facilitated, which focused on two elementary schools that had served a town in the southern United States during the time of racial segregation. In the process of recording the recollections and “moral narratives” of adults who had gone through these schools, one of which was an African-American school that was closed during desegregation and the other of which served the town’s white population until it was integrated, Noblit and Dempsey were especially interested in examining how these adults used their memories of their experiences in these schools to construct their present views of moral virtue. They note that the people’s collaborative construction of oral histories of these two schools was itself “a moral enterprise through which people constructed the meaning of their schools for their own lives and the lives of their communities” (p. 15). Thus, in contrast to Jackson et. al., Noblit and Dempsey looked for and found “the moral significance of schooling… not so much in what is taught to children…as in what children and adults do with their schooling experiences,” since, these
authors suggest, “the moral and the virtuous are created with, more than learned in, schools” (p. 13).

More recently, McCadden (1998) was similarly interested in studying the process of how morality is constructed in educational settings. McCadden’s “participant-observation study” and “classroom ethnography” of a kindergarten classroom is described in his book, *It’s Hard to Be Good: Moral Complexity, Construction and Connection in a Kindergarten Classroom* (p. xvi). He was motivated to undertake this ethnographic study, as he states, by an interest “in developing a grounded theory of moral construction in the classroom” as well as by an interest “in understanding how this field experience influenced my conception of what interpretive social science research is, or can be” (p. xx). He also makes explicit an underlying assumption he had, which he derived from his readings of theorists such as Robert Coles (1987; 1989) and which he believed his own observations corroborated, namely that “young children possess a sort of simple wisdom and clear conception of morality that escapes their elders,” but that they are often unfortunately “socialized away from” (p. xv). Therefore, his study contrasts the way the kindergartners he observed constructed morality among themselves in the playground with the way it was taught to them (explicitly and implicitly) by their kindergarten teacher in their classroom.

Unlike both Noblit & Dempsey’s and McCadden’s studies, my interest in this case study is again in how a certain kind of consciousness (i.e. critical moral consciousness as described by Mustakova-Possardt) develops, and particularly, how a certain kind of education may possibly contribute to this development. While the question of how the particular learners I studied constructed their moral understandings and narratives in response to their experiences in a particular educational setting (i.e. under the influence of a particular
curriculum) is related to my interest, my primary focus in this study is not so much on how these learners constructed their moral conceptions, meanings and values per se as on whether and how this construction process may have contributed to the development of a particular form of consciousness and how their experiences with a particular curriculum may have influenced this. In other words, unlike Noblit & Dempsey and McCadden, I undertook this case study in order to determine if and to what degree the case I chose to research may usefully be viewed as a unique case of an educational approach that can stimulate the development of the general phenomenon of critical moral consciousness. Nevertheless, by focusing on learners’ experiences (i.e. their own accounts and interpretations of their experiences) with a certain curriculum, as well as observing the curriculum in action, my study clearly is also concerned with how the learners I studied constructed morality under the influence of a particular curriculum and thus, while different in its focus from Noblit & Dempsey’s or McCadden’s studies, it resembles their studies in this respect more than Jackson et. al.’s study.

More recently, Simon (2001) engaged in another classroom ethnography with the aim “to inquire simultaneously into the intellectual, moral, and spiritual/existential integrity” of the classroom interactions she observed (p. 37). In other words, she was interested in how moral and “existential/spiritual” education are integrated in a variety of educational settings with more traditional intellectual or academic education, and specifically in “the balance among the intellectual, moral, and existential elements” in classroom discussions she observed (pp. 37-38). To accomplish this, she observed a number of classes in one public and two religious schools in the United States. She chose to focus “mostly on the explicit
curriculum” of the classes she observed, and especially on “the intersection of course content with moral and existential concerns” (p. 52).

A significant difference between my study and Simon’s is that my study is not focused on examining ways in which moral and spiritual questions are currently being integrated with academic content in academic courses in some classrooms in the United States, but rather again with understanding the moral impact on learners of a specific curriculum designed to promote moral transformation. To study this moral impact, I study learners’ self-reported experiences with the curriculum in question. Simon’s study, on the other hand, looks only at curriculum in action for instances of what she considers (and I agree is a significant aspect of) desirable pedagogy, i.e. an approach to moral education that is “broader and deeper than learning right from wrong or making choices about behavior” and “is connected to deeper questions of meaning” (p. 28). But she does this without examining the impact these instances actually had on the students from their own perspectives.

The Central Research Questions of this Dissertation

Having identified the Community-building Institute as a possible case of an educational program that is effective in stimulating the development of critical moral consciousness, my interest for this dissertation is to more carefully determine how closely the experiences of Institute participants coincide with and diverge from Mustakova-Possardt’s account of the nature and development of critical moral consciousness, as well as to determine in what ways and how the Institute’s curriculum changes consciousness. In other
words, while the focus of the program evaluation of the Community-building Institute that I
was involved in was on assessing what some of the significant outcomes of the Institute have
been in terms of the program’s own stated goals and the priorities of the school system, the
aims of my dissertation are rather to more deeply examine selected participants’ stories of
how their perspectives regarding who they are, how they are connected to and responsible
for/with other people, what meaning and possibilities they see for their lives and how much
agency they experience in relation to these possibilities may have changed due to their
experiences in the Institute. Furthermore, my purpose is to consider how these self-described
changes relate to Mustakova-Possardt’s description of the development of critical moral
consciousness, and may be accounted for by particular aspects the Institute’s curriculum.\textsuperscript{8} In
this way, I hope to determine whether the curriculum may have stimulated the development
of critical moral consciousness, and if so, what specific elements of the curriculum appear to
be most responsible for this effect.

I summarize these aims in the following two research questions that will provide a
focus and framework for this dissertation.

1. Does the Community-building Institute stimulate the development of critical moral
   consciousness?

2. If so, what factors in the Community-building Institute’s curriculum, and in the
   students who appear to have been most strongly affected by the Institute, contribute to
   this effect?

\textsuperscript{8} Note that I use the word “curriculum” here in the broadest sense to refer to the entire formal and informal,
intended and not necessarily intended, experience that the Institute provides for its participants. It thus includes
not only pre-selected curriculum “content,” but also significantly the skill and “presence” of the Institute’s
founder/facilitator and the social environment he manages to create.
An Overview of the Following Chapters

In the following chapter, I will present my review of literature relevant to better understanding and appreciating Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of the development of critical moral consciousness. This will include a review of related developmental theories and of the philosophical history and application to education of the concept of “authenticity.” I will also review selected literature on pedagogical theories and models that seem related to the Community-building Institute and that I categorize as theories and models of what I term “morally transformative education.” Next, in Chapter 3, I will describe the methodology I used for this study. Chapter 4 presents my own observations of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum in action. This is followed in Chapter 5 by an analysis of my observations of the curriculum that makes use of the pedagogical aspects of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory as well as concepts taken from my review of theories and models of morally transformative education in Chapter 2. Chapters 6 and 7 examine the accounts of fourteen learners who were participating, or had participated, in the Institute at the times I interviewed them. I analyze these accounts primarily in light of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory in order to assess the degrees to which these learners can be said to be developing critical moral consciousness and to identify what it was about their experiences in the Institute that they believe was most responsible for the effects these experiences had on them. Finally, in Chapter 8, I offer my concluding thoughts regarding this study’s findings on how and why the Institute’s curriculum seems able to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness in learners and some philosophical and pedagogical implications I see for these findings.
CHAPTER II
A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

To assist in answering my previously stated research questions, this literature review focuses on theories and research related to two particular domains. The first domain consists of theories and concepts related to the construct of critical moral consciousness and Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of how such consciousness develops. Investigating literature related to this domain will help to contextualize and clarify Mustakova-Possardt’s theory. This investigation will involve reviewing the historical, philosophical origins of the idea of critical consciousness itself, as well as the origins and development of the related concept of “authenticity.” Furthermore, since Mustakova-Possardt adds to Freire’s idea of critical consciousness a dimension connected with developmental psychology, it will be helpful in order to better understand Mustakova-Possardt’s developmental theory, to review both some of the developmental theories that she says she has built hers on as well as some current critiques of developmental psychology and developmentalism in general. The second domain I will review consists of literature providing overviews of current approaches to moral education, as well as literature specifically pertaining to a category of moral education that I have named morally transformative education (which includes approaches that have been described as experiential education, transformative education, spiritual education, and “encounter groups”), a categorization that I feel most closely fits the approach taken by the
Community-building Institute. The purpose of reviewing literature from this second domain is to situate the pedagogical approach of the Community-building Institute within the broad and diversified field of moral education and to identify some specific elements of and concepts related to morally transformative education that may be useful in analyzing the Institute’s curriculum.

**Critical Consciousness**

Arguably, the roots of the concept of critical consciousness can be traced back to classical Greek philosophy. Perhaps most famously in his allegory of the cave, Plato distinguishes between uncritical consciousness dominated the illusion of appearances and critical consciousness, which through sustained intellectual and moral effort in search of Truth, Beauty and Goodness is capable of having authentic knowledge of reality. Within this classical perspective, critical consciousness has been characterized as “the impulse and willingness to stand back from humanity and nature, to make them objects of thought and criticism…instead of remaining enslaved to custom, tradition, superstition, nature, or brute force of political or priestly elites” (Thornton, 2005, pp. 3-4).

The modern version concept seems to have developed mainly out of Marxist thought, especially in the Frankfurt School. In this tradition, critical consciousness is conceived primarily as the capacity to see through the veils of “false consciousness”, i.e. a state of consciousness produced by hegemonic social forces, which keep oppressive social relationships in place and hidden from view. The idea of false consciousness originates in Marx’s and Engels’ writings on “ideology,” specifically their ideas of how the intellectuals
who created dominant ideologies legitimizing the structures of their societies deluded themselves into ignoring the reality of oppressive class relations. The concept of false consciousness (a term Marx and Engels actually never employed themselves) was further developed by Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukacs, who conceived of it as “a distorted and limited form of experience in society that could be applied to all social groups and classes”, i.e. not just to intellectuals (Eyerman, 1981, p. 43).

Beginning in the 1930s, this idea was considerably elaborated on by the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, particularly by Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Fromm who made the problem of reification and the social and psychological mechanisms that produced “false consciousness” a primary focus for their research and theorizing (p. 52). Particularly noteworthy in this regard is Fromm’s (1983) detailed psychological description of “alienation” (i.e. another term for false consciousness). For Fromm, alienation refers to a state of consciousness, which he associates especially with the effects of living in a capitalistic system, in which a person “does not experience himself as an active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished ‘thing,’ dependent on powers outside of himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance” (p. 114).

While these critical theorists of the Frankfurt School wrote detailed explanations of the nature and origins of false consciousness, their depiction of the nature and development of a form of critical consciousness capable of seeing through and transcending false consciousness appears to be less developed (perhaps because it was taken for granted that such consciousness was simply consciousness characterized by a developed capacity for critical thought). However, the task of defining critical consciousness was taken up later in the twentieth century by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Indeed, it is with Freire that the
term critical consciousness is most commonly associated, especially as it applies to education. Freire (2005a) understood critical consciousness to refer to the capacity that distinguishes human beings from all other animals, the capacity to “experience [the] world as an objective reality, independent of oneself, capable of being known” and to “relate to their world in a critical way…apprehend the objective data of their reality (as well as the ties that link one datum to another) through reflection” as opposed to being “submerged within reality” as other animals are, unable to “relate” to reality consciously but rather only responding to it “by reflex” (p. 3). According to Freire, such consciousness allows human beings to “organize themselves, choose the best response, test themselves, act, and change in the very act of responding” (p. 3). Thus, to possess critical consciousness is to be capable of transforming one’s reality through the praxis of reflection and creative action (Freire, 2005b, p. 87). To further clarify the nature of critical consciousness, Freire (2005a, 2005b) points out that such consciousness enables a person to be a Subject rather than an object of epochal, historical forces.

An historical epoch is characterized by a series of aspirations, concerns, and values in search of fulfillment; by ways of being and behaving; by more or less generalized attitudes. The concrete representations of many of these aspirations, concerns, and values, as well as the obstacles to their fulfillment, constitute the themes of that epoch, which in turn indicate tasks to be carried out. The epochs are fulfilled to the degree that their themes are grasped and their tasks solved…. Whether or not men can perceive the epochal themes and above all, how they act upon the reality within which these themes are generated will largely determine their humanization or dehumanization, their affirmation as Subjects or their reduction as objects. For only as men grasp the themes can they intervene in reality instead of remaining mere onlookers. And only by developing a permanently critical attitude can men overcome a posture of adjustment in order to become integrated with the spirit of the time. (2005a, pp. 4-5)
A related theme, which both Freire and Mustakova-Possardt explicitly connect with the concept of critical consciousness, and whose relationship to education a considerable amount of recent literature has explored, is the notion of “authenticity.” Kreber et. al. (2007) recently conducted a review of literature on authenticity and its relevance to education, noting that interest in this theme is especially pronounced in North American literature on adult and higher education. In the context of this literature, authenticity is generally lauded as a valuable goal for education in that it is assumed to help learners become, among other things, “more whole, more integrated, more fully human, more aware, more content with their personal and professional lives, their actions more clearly linked to purpose, ‘empowered,’ better able to engage in community with others” (p. 24). This literature also frequently suggests that, to achieve the goal, it is “critical that educators be authentic themselves” (p. 25).

How then is the term authenticity understood within this literature? My review of relevant literature shows that the term is frequently linked with the notions of true or genuine identity, self-determination, critical reflection, and consistency between values and actions. For example, authenticity has been defined as having “a sense of self that is defined by oneself as opposed to being defined by other people’s expectations” (Tisdell, 2003, p. 32) and as “being conscious of self, other, relationships, and context through critical reflection” (Cranton and Caruseta, 2004, p. 288). It is said to involve critical reflection on how we have “uncritically assimilated” social norms and to further involve determining what we each “really believe” and “hold dear” independent of other people’s views and opinions (Cranton,
2006, p. 84). To further clarify the relationship between the concepts of authenticity and self-determination, it should be noted that, while the literature generally associates authenticity and identity, not all identities are considered authentic. Rather, a person’s identity is understood to be authentic only to the degree that it has been self-determined or self-discovered rather than having been passively received from and determined solely by one’s social environment (Tisdell, 1998, 2003). Furthermore, in seeking to explain its relevance to teaching, Cranton and Caruseta (2004) offer a fairly extended description of authenticity as “a multifaceted concept that includes at least four parts: being genuine, showing consistency between values and actions, relating to others in such a way as to encourage their own authenticity, and living a critical life” (p. 7).

The concept of authenticity is explicitly associated with “transformative learning theory” (which I will write more about later in this review) especially as developed by Robert Boyd and his associates (Boyd, 1989, 1991; Boyd & Myers, 1988). Building on Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning, which presents an approach to education meant to help learners transform their “meaning schemes” (specific beliefs about self or world) and “meaning perspectives” (comprehensive worldviews) through critically reflecting on underlying premises (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 6-7), Boyd and Myers (1988) propose an alternative approach to transformative learning grounded in Jung's concept of individuation. They propose that their approach to transformative learning ideally “moves the person to psychic integration and active realization of their true being. In such transformations the individual reveals critical insights, develops fundamental understandings and acts with integrity” (p. 262).
The relationship between the concepts of authenticity, identity and integrity has been further elaborated on by Parker Palmer (1993, 1998, 1999), known for his extensive writings on the role of spirituality in education. In his book *The Courage to Teach*, Palmer (1998) suggests that “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique” but rather “comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p. 10). Here, Palmer defines *identity* as “an evolving nexus…a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human” (p. 13). He then describes *integrity* as “relating to those forces in ways that bring me wholeness and life rather than fragmentation and death” (p. 13). For Palmer, integrity further implies “that I discern what is integral to my selfhood” and thus become “more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am” (p. 13). Palmer argues that this inner connectedness or wholeness is vital to a teacher if he/she is to be successful in creating the kinds of connections that, according Palmer (1999), constitute good teaching.

I’ve asked students around the country to describe their good teachers to me…all of them describe people who have some sort of connective capacity, who connect themselves to their students, their students to each other, and everyone to the subject being studied…bad teaching involves a disconnect between the stuff being taught and the self who is teaching it. Throughout the secularized academy, there is a distance, a coldness, a lack of community because we don’t have the connective tissue of the sacred to hold this apparent fragmentation and chaos together…there’s a wholeness in our lives, but it’s a hidden wholeness. It’s so easy to look on the surface of things, especially in the academy, and say there is no community here at all… But if you go deep, to the depths you go when you seek that which is sacred, you find the hidden wholeness. You find the community that a good teacher evokes and invites students into, that weaves and reweaves our lives, alone and together.” (p. 27)

Palmer (1993) summarizes this approach to education by noting that to truly teach is “to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced” (p. xii). To clarify this idea, he proposes that educators should,
re-vision education as a communal enterprise from the foundations up – in our images of reality, in our modes of knowing, in our ways of teaching and learning. Such a re-visioning would result in a deeply ethical education, an education that would help students develop the capacity for connectedness that is at the heart of an ethical life. Such an education would root ethics in its true and only ground, in the spiritual insight that beyond the broken surface of our lives there is a ‘hidden wholeness’ on which all life depends. (p. xix)

Finally, it is worth noting, consistent with Parker’s last statement above, that authenticity, especially inasmuch as the term refers to a sense of “true” identity and integrity, is frequently connected with the concept of “spirituality.” Many theorists, such as Fox (1995), Palmer (1998), Kessler (2000), Miller (2000), hooks (2003), Mustakova-Possardt (2003, 2004), Tisdell (2003), Chickering et. al. (2006), and Dillard (2006), emphasize that living authentically implies finding and acting out of the center of one’s being, i.e. an essential core of one’s self that has been alternatively referred to by such terms as heart or soul or spirit etc. These scholars also frequently call for education “to engage not only the rational mind but also the ‘hearts and spirits’ of educators and students” (Kreber et. al., p. 27).

**Philosophical Origins of the Concept of Authenticity**

The philosophical origins of the concept of authenticity are explored by Charles Taylor (1991) in his book, *The Ethics of Authenticity*. In this book, Taylor points out that the notion of authenticity, as currently understood in the fields of philosophy and psychology, is peculiar to the modern era, originating in the late eighteenth century with European Romanticism. At that time, building on earlier forms of individualism, such as Descartes’ disengaged rationality (the principle that each individual has the responsibility to think for
his or her self), and the political individualism of Locke (the view that individual agency is prior to social obligation), the idea came to be increasingly articulated and widely accepted that each human being possesses an inner voice or intuitive sense of right and wrong to which he/she aught to listen and remain true. This idea presented “a new form of inwardness, in which we come to think of ourselves as beings with inner depths,” depths that “we have to attain to be true and full human beings” (p.26). Perhaps the most prominent early articulation of this idea appears in the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who argued that achieving true morality is a matter of “following a voice of nature within us” and so “recovering authentic moral contact with ourselves” (p. 27). Rousseau similarly promoted the closely related notion that to be free, the individual must decide for himself how he/she will think and behave (i.e. who he/she will become) rather than allowing him/herself to be passively shaped by external, social forces. Taylor goes on to point out that, after Rousseau, this idea was further developed by Herder, who suggested that every individual human being has “an original way of being human” (p. 28). In this perspective,

there is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s…this gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for me” (pp. 28-29).

Subsequent to its origins in the Romantic movement, the concept was significantly further developed in the twentieth century philosophical schools of Phenomenology and Existentialism. This articulation of the concept is most often traced back to Kierkegaard. In the context of defending his notion of religious faith, Kierkegaard proposed that “subjectivity is the truth,” thus suggesting that being true to one’s inner, intuitive sense of truth, beauty and goodness aught to take priority over following any system of universalizable ethical rules. In this view, to be authentic is to freely choose one’s actions based upon one’s own
Kierkegaard contrasted this authentic way of being with the tendency to accept and follow what he called “the crowd of untruth,” by which he appeared to refer to prevailing public opinion (Crowell, sect. 1.1, para 1-4).

Later, similar to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche also concluded that the blind following of social convention led to a weakened and enslaved condition for human beings. But, contrary to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche saw the restoration of psychological/existential health and strength to human beings as stemming from one’s autonomous choice to create one’s own meaning and value in the world based on one’s own inclinations and passions, rather than as lying, as Kierkegaard believed, in one’s choice to have faith in a transcendent foundation for authentic meaning and value (Tarnas, 1991).

After Nietzsche, the most significant articulation and development of the idea of authenticity arguably appears in Heidegger’s existential phenomenology. Like Nietzsche, Heidegger argued that authentic existence involves seeking and confronting truth for oneself rather than allowing one’s identity and worldview to be determined by comfortable routines and social norms. For both philosophers, this was seen to involve facing one’s own possibilities and ultimate limits, the most significant limitation being the fact of one’s mortality. Heidegger elaborated the concept by using a phenomenological method to contrast authentic living with two other human conditions that he called “everydayness,” i.e. unconsciously accepting and doing what everyone else is doing, and “inauthenticity,” i.e. consciously doing the same and so deliberately concealing one’s authentic being from others. Heidegger also originated the existentialist notion that to exist as a human being does not simply denote a neutral condition of merely being. Rather, engagement in a “project” is inherent in every instance of human existence. Thus, intentionality for Heidegger is
inseparable from being. Human existence is always oriented towards a future possibility (the aim of one’s project), in light of which one evaluates the past (determining what remains to be done and no longer needs to be done) and gives meaning to the present (giving relative significance to present conditions in accordance with their relation to what needs to be done). So, for Heidegger, all human actions “historize”, i.e. imply a narrative unity with beginning, middle, and end. To exist authentically, in this view, is to consciously commit oneself to projects that aim at possibilities that are uniquely one’s own and so have the potential to give a sense of wholeness or completion to one’s existence (Crowell, 2004, sect. 4.1; Kreber et. al., pp. 31-32).

Following Heidegger, a similar conception of authenticity came to be central to Sartre’s existentialist philosophy. For Sartre, to live as a human being is to make choices, and every human life is “an original project” (Kreber et. al., p. 32). Every individual human existence is defined by its capacity to determine itself, to create its own meanings and possibilities, and to constitute its identity (i.e. to decide for one’s self who one is). In the context of this idea, the distinction between living authentically and inauthentically is determined not by whether one chooses but rather by how (or the attitude with which) one chooses. For Sartre, to live authentically is to live a life in which one fully commits to projects of one’s own choosing, as opposed to choosing projects solely because they are what one is supposed to do and/or because one believes one has no other choice, which, according to Sartre, is to exhibit “bad faith”. Thus, living authentically involves taking full responsibility for the life one creates, i.e. for the results of one’s projects. So it is that, for Sartre, authenticity implies a kind of integrity, a willingness to commit to acting in ways one has decided for oneself are meaningful to one (Crowell, 2004, sect. 2). Some authors have
further developed this idea to suggest that the authenticity of a person’s life lies in the integrity of his/her life’s narrative, in the wholeness, the unique creativity and self-reflexive truthfulness reflected in that story (Nehamas, 1998; Parker, 1998; Ricoeur, 1970).

The perspective of Landmark Education on authenticity, based originally on the philosophical insights of Werner Erhard, deserves to be mentioned at the conclusion of this review of philosophical thought pertaining to the concept of authenticity because it arguably represents a recent, significant elaboration of the concept, and particularly because it provided a direct inspiration for certain elements of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum (I will say more about Landmark Education at the end of this chapter, but, for now, will confine myself to writing about its view of authenticity). In Landmark Education, the concept of authenticity is viewed in light of a distinction it makes between two selves. In this view, the self one is normally aware of is the “me” in the story one creates of one’s life. One creates this story through normally subconscious, socially-constructed interpretations of one’s experiences. The “objective” experiences themselves can never be separated from our interpretations of them. Thus, in a very real sense, one (in concert with other people and social forces) is the author of one’s own story and identity. The other self is referred to in Landmark Education as the “The Transparent ‘I’”. This self is the author of the story, the source of one’s agency as interpreter of one’s experiences, but is itself “transparent”. It is the observer/interpreter, not the observed. Thus, it has “no fixed or even identifiable characteristics…In its transparency, it is beyond all identities; it is nonpersonal, nonpositional, and non-narrational. It is more like a ground of being” (McCarl et. al, n.d., sect. 5 para. 2). In this view, authentic living becomes possible when one becomes conscious that one is in reality the unlimited Transparent “I” and not the “me” who is the central
character in one’s story of one’s self. In the context of this idea, then, authenticity “entails being true to myself as agentic transparent I, to myself as a possibility free from undistinguished stories with which I have unwittingly identified” (ibid, sect. 6, para. 3). It further entails living a life in which one is true to the personally meaningful “possibilities” one creates and brings into being by speaking and acting in a manner consistent with the possibility (i.e. a possibility that thus is alive in the present rather than existing merely as a wish for the future).

**Authentic Relationships**

Another dimension of authenticity, which is central the discourse on the vitalizing role authenticity can play in education, is the concept of “authentic relationships.” I have already alluded to this idea in my earlier discussion of Palmer’s ideas about what constitutes good teaching. As I noted, for Palmer, a good teacher is one who possesses personal integrity (i.e. authenticity), which enables him/her to engender authentic relationships between him/herself and his/her students, between the students themselves, and between the learning community (i.e. teacher and students) and the subjects being taught. By implication, such authentic relationships are characterized, among other qualities, by genuine care and commitment.

The latter notion of care can again be traced back to Heidegger, who argued that to exist is not only to possess inherent intentionality, but also necessarily to care. In Heidegger’s view, while all human existence involves caring, some forms of “caring” are inauthentic, namely when they involve one’s manipulation of the other for one’s own selfish
purposes. Authentic caring, on the other hand, is characterized by genuine concern for the other. Specifically, it involves allowing and helping the other to develop his/her projects in his/her own unique way rather than seeking to make the other conform to our own desires and ends. To care authentically thus means to allow the other the freedom and the responsibility to develop him/herself rather than to assume full responsibility for the other. In other words, to care authentically for another is to promote the other’s, as well as one’s own, authenticity (Crowell, 2004).

In the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, care theory has marked a further development of Heidegger’s ideas on care. Originating in Carol Gilligan’s (1982) feminine alternative to Lawrence Kohlberg’s (1971, 1984) model of moral development and later considerably further developed in Nel Noddings’ (1984) ethics of care, care theory is intended to counter what these women view as a masculine bias in most psychological theories of moral development and in traditional ethics. This masculine bias, they argue, is apparent in the tendencies of these theories to emphasize moral reasoning and principles of justice. As an alternative, care theory proposes an approach to the subject of morality they believe to be more consistent with women’s experience in general, an approach which gives greater emphasis the affective and context-specific phenomenon of caring.

Noddings defines care, in its most basic form, as a relationship or encounter between two people (a carer and a recipient of care) in which the attitude of the carer towards the cared-for is characterized by “engrossment” and “motivational displacement” and in which the cared-for acknowledges and willingly receives the carer’s care. In this context, engrossment refers to “an open, non-selective receptivity to the cared-for” when “I really hear, see, or feel what the other tries to convey” (Noddings, 1992, pp. 15-16) and “am totally with the other” (1984,
p. 32). Motivational displacement or “displacement of interest” refers to “the sense that our motive energy is flowing toward others and their projects…in a way that furthers the other’s purpose or project” (1992, p. 16).

Finally, William Hatcher’s (1998) recent ethics of authentic relationships is worth noting given its close conceptual connection with Mustakova-Possardt’s theory. In his book, *Love, Power and Justice: The Dynamics of Authentic Morality*, Hatcher suggests that the irreducible foundation of authentic relationships, and of morality, is the perception/recognition of the relative intrinsic values of entities (a value being “intrinsic” when it “arises from the inherent properties of an entity,” as opposed to “extrinsic” values which people “attribute to an entity through subjective preferences…and social conventions”) and acting in a way that is consistent with this recognition. Most especially, morality is founded on the perception/recognition that human beings in particular (i.e. all human beings) possess the highest value in the phenomenal world due to the spiritual potential inherent in human consciousness (pp. 1-3). In this view, entities with lower degrees of intrinsic value (e.g. minerals, inert objects) can legitimately be seen as means, and those with higher value (e.g. human beings) must be treated as ends in themselves. In this view, the intrinsic values of entities have an objective reality, rather than existing solely as social constructions. These values can be perceived by any person when his/her capacities of mind to discern truth, of heart to love beauty and goodness, and of will to do what is good are properly developed. Thus, authentic living for human beings involves the proper development and use of the capacities of mind, heart, and will, and human relationships are authentic to the degree that they are consistent with a correct view of the intrinsic value of those others one is in relationship with. Thus, according to Hatcher,
[t]he mark of authenticity in interhuman relationships is the presence of self-sacrificing love or altruism. Non-authentic relationships are based on various forms of egotism and self-interest, and are characterized by conflict, disharmony, manipulation, cruelty, jealousy, and the like (p. 6).

Such authenticity in relationships, again, must involve “the whole person”, in other words one’s mind (understanding), heart (motivation) and will (action) (p. 16). In this regard, at the conclusion of the above sections of my literature review pertaining to the concept of “authenticity” and its application to the field of education, it is worth noting that not only is the word frequently used to in Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of critical moral consciousness, but also that her theory can be viewed as an attempt to operationalize authenticity in the sense of a person’s “integrity” or “wholeness” by describing how the faculties of mind, heart and will, and motivational and cognitive development interact within a person.

*Review of Developmental Psychological Theories that inform Mustakova-Possardt’s Theory of CC Development*

As I explained in the introduction of this dissertation, Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of how critical moral consciousness develops builds upon and re-visions a number of other developmental theories. One of the characteristics that makes Mustakova-Possardt’s theory distinct is the way it theorizes not solely about “motivational” development nor solely about “structural” (i.e. cognitive) development but rather considers the synergistic interaction between these two dimensions of psychological development. She proposes that whether one is on a CC pathway or on a non-CC pathway of development is not a factor of one’s degree of cognitive development (contrary to Piaget’s and Kohlberg’s conclusions about moral development), but rather a factor of the relative presence or absence of certain motivational
characteristics acting in synergy with, or “morally coloring,” cognitive development. Specifically, she suggests that when one’s motivating concern with and attraction to Truth, Beauty, and Goodness predominates over one’s instrumental/expediency concerns, and when this predominance manifests in all four of the “dimensions of motivation development,” i.e. the dimensions of 1) identity, 2) authority, responsibility and agency, 3) relationships, and 4) meaning of life, then one can be said to be on a CC path of development. In this case, one’s degree of cognitive development determines where one is on the CC path of development, as it does when an instrumental/expediency motivation dominates (i.e. on the Non-CC path of development), but, one’s degree of cognitive development does not determine whether one is on a CC or Non-CC developmental path. In other words, motivation determines if one is on a CC or a Non-CC developmental pathway, while cognitive or structural development determines at what stage on either path one is.

As for how Mustakova-Possardt (2003) conceptualizes cognitive/structural development, she characterizes it through “four central structural dimensions of consciousness,” which she identifies these as:

a) The ability for logical and casual reasoning
b) The social-cognitive ability to know oneself in social situations
c) The evolving sense of self and other
d) The evolving ways of knowing (p. 34)

To understand and evaluate development within each of these dimensions, she makes particular use of the relevant developmental theories of a) Commons et. al. (1990, 2007), b) Weinstein & Alschuler (1985), c) Kegan (1982), and d) Belenky et. al. (1986) and Perry (1968), which correspond respectively to each of the structural dimensions listed above.
Since these theories provide a substantial part of the foundation for Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, I will review them here. Before doing so, however, it should be noted that the first three (i.e. the theories of Commons et. al., Weinstein & Alschuler, and Kegan) can be characterized as neo-Piagetian. Therefore, before reviewing these theories Mustakova-Possardt made most direct use of, a brief review of Piaget’s theory of cognitive development would be helpful. Similarly, because Kohlberg’s theory of moral development builds on Piaget’s work, is arguably the most influential psychological theory of moral development, and is also frequently referred to by the theorists mentioned above, I will follow with a brief review of Kohlberg’s developmental theory of moral reasoning.

Piaget proposed, based on his empirical research of children’s cognition, that the manner in which human beings construct knowledge develops through four stages (each of which he further divided into sub-stages). He concluded that these stages were universal and invariant in sequence, with the cognitive abilities associated with each subsequent stage incorporating and building upon the less complex abilities developed in the prior stages. He named these four general stages 1) Sensorimotor, 2) Preoperational, 3) Concrete Operational, and 4) Formal Operational. According to Piaget’s model, in the first Sensorimotor stage, infants understand the world through physically interacting with it. They begin by responding to their environment with simple physical reflexes and then gradually develop more complex “schemes” (i.e. organized patterns of behavior). In the subsequent Preoperational stage, the child no longer relates to the world solely through physical perceptions and responses. He/she now develops the ability to represent objects and events in the world with symbols (words, mental images, gestures etc.). Over time, the child comes to use these symbols in increasingly organized and logical ways to describe him/herself and
his/her world. However, at this stage, the child’s thinking is limited by its rigidity and egocentrism. In the following Concrete Operational stage, the child begins to develop and make use of concepts or principles to explain phenomena. These concepts, or “operations” as Piaget calls them, include such operations as conservation (e.g. if you pour all of the water from one container into another, you will be left with the same amount), reversibility (e.g. if you pour all the water back into the container it was in, the situation you have will be the same as before), and addition-subtraction (e.g. If you add some water to the container, you will have more water than before. If you pour some out, you will have less water). The limitation of this stage is that the child only applies these operations to think about concrete phenomena physically present in their experience. Finally, in the Formal Operational stage, the adolescent develops the ability to think abstractly. In this stage, he/she can draw conclusions not just about actual situations but also about hypothetical situations. He/she develops meta-cognitive strategies for solving general classes of problems, i.e. “formal operations” that can be applied to solve problems in many different real or hypothetical contexts (Miller, 1993; Papalia & Olds, 1992).

Building on Piaget’s concept of developmental “stages” and his other ideas about the general nature of cognitive development, Lawrence Kohlberg (1971, 1984) later theorized (based again on considerable empirical research) that capacity for moral reasoning develops through stages. The general progression of this development can be characterized as movement from thinking characterized by superficiality, simplicity and “self-centration” to reasoning characterized by mental coordination, increasing complexity and “decentration.” In other words, infants and young children tend to center their attention on single salient features of phenomenon including their own immediate needs and perspectives relative to a
situation. But as they grow and develop cognitively, they become increasingly able to simultaneously consider multiple features and multiple perspectives, which enables them also to be less self-centered in their moral judgments.

Kohlberg identified three “levels” of moral reasoning, each of which has two “stages.” The first these levels is what he called the Preconventional Level. At this level of moral reasoning, one is aware of cultural mores and labels of good and bad, right and wrong, and evaluates these in terms of the pleasurable or painful consequences that doing what is right or what is wrong will have on oneself, and particularly in terms of how a more powerful authority figure will respond. Within this level, the first stage is the Punishment and Obedience Orientation in which the physical consequences of one’s actions determine their goodness or badness and avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to external authority are the primary motivating values. In the second stage, i.e. the instrumental relativist orientation, rightness of actions is determined by how they instrumentally satisfy one’s own needs and occasionally the needs of others. At this stage, the primary motivating value is the promotion of self-interest, but people in this stage also seek to negotiate mutually-beneficial deals with others. Thus, some elements of fairness and reciprocity are understood and accepted (e.g. “you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours” or “an eye for an eye”) (Kohlberg, 1984; 1971).

Kohlberg calls his second level of moral reasoning the Conventional Level. At this level, one gives paramount importance to fitting into, being loyal to and honored by, and actively maintaining and justifying the social order one sees oneself as being a part of. The first stage in this level (i.e. stage 3 overall) is called the Interpersonal Concordance Orientation. In this stage, notions of justice and other shared moral norms develop as guides
to interpersonal relationships within a social group with whose members one has direct contact. The norms followed are understood to be the result of general, informal agreement. Maintaining mutual trust and social approval are primary motives in this stage and are thought to be gained by being “nice.” Thus, the intentions of a person’s behavior become important for the first time. In the subsequent stage, i.e. the “Law and Order” Orientation, people take this sense of obligation and responsibility to the next level of abstraction, understanding that their loyalty should extend beyond the limits of a social group all of whose members he/she knows personally to the larger social system and its formal laws. In this context, one’s right behavior consists of doing one’s duty, respecting authority, and maintaining and defending the social order that provides the basis for social life on a large-scale (Kohlberg, 1984; 1971).

The third and final level named by Kohlberg is the Post-conventional, Autonomous, or Principled Level. At this level of moral reasoning, one seeks to define moral principles whose validity does not depend on sanction of the authority figures or the traditions and laws of one’s group or society. The initial stage within this level (i.e. stage 5 in Kohlberg’s overall model) is called the Social-Contract Legalistic Orientation. Rather than simply accepting all the rules of society as they currently exist, the individual in this stage arrives at rules to guide behavior based on what he/she believes, sees or reasons would be most conducive to equity and the general welfare of all members of society. Right action tends to be defined in terms of human rights. There is an awareness of the relativity of personal values and an emphasis on procedural rules for reaching consensus. The result is a legal point of view, which, unlike at stage 4, is concerned with the rights of minorities in society and emphasizes the possibility of changing the law as a result of “rational consideration of
social utility” (Kohlberg, 1971, p. 88). In Kohlberg’s sixth and final stage, which he names the Universal Ethical-Principal Orientation, right actions are considered to be acts of conscience that conform with moral principles. These principles are reasoned to be universalizable (i.e. applicable to all times and places among all people), reversible (i.e. one would find it equally acceptable to be on the giving or the receiving end of an action, if that action is to be considered moral), and prescriptive (i.e. emphasizing positive prescriptions rather than negative proscriptions) (Kohlberg, 1984; 1971).

According to both Kohlberg and Piaget, progress through the stages results from a person’s active construction of “cognitive structures” that shape moral reasoning. Thus, moral development is driven by “the interaction between the child’s structuring tendencies and the structural features of the environment.” Kohlberg further suggests that “cognitive conflict or imbalance is the central ‘motor’ or condition for such reorganization [i.e. of cognitive structures] or upward movement…stage change depends on conflict-induced reorganization.” (Kohlberg, 1971, pp. 49-50). In this way, Kohlberg views moral development as a correlate of cognitive or structural development. Thus, Kohlberg defines morality,

in terms of the formal character of a moral judgment or a moral point of view, rather than in terms of its content. Impersonality, ideality, universalizability, and pre-emptiveness are among the formal characteristics of moral judgment. These are best seen in the reasons given for a moral judgment, a moral reason being one which has such properties as these (Kohlberg, 1971, p. 55).

It should be noted that it is for this view of morality that Kohlberg’s theory has perhaps been most often criticized. Specifically, a number of theorists that questioned Kohlberg’s nearly exclusive emphasis on moral reasoning and disregard for the role of affect and empathy in moral development (Gibbs, 2003), its defining of morality in terms of
principles of justice rather than the capacity to care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984), and its
general lack of concern with moral actions. Mustakova-Possardt (2003) also differs with
Kohlberg, noting that “moral development is more than the cognitive achievement of mature
rationality, in which the individual is motivated by cognitive dissonance.” She points out
“the complexity of morality and the impossibility to reduce it to only values, or character, or
moral reasoning, of even commitment,” and highlights the failure of Kohlberg’s model
(along with many other psychological theories of morality) to recognize “the source of moral
motivation” in “the human spiritual impulse” (p. 41).

Returning now to Mustakova-Possardt’s “four central structural dimensions of
consciousness” mentioned earlier, the primary theory she uses to view and assess
development within the first of these dimensions (i.e. “the dimension of logical and causal
reasoning”) is the “Model of Hierarchical Complexity” developed by Michael Commons and
his associates (Commons & Rodriguez, 1990; Commons, 2007). This model is based on the
application of mathematical principles to quantify the complexity of various mental tasks and
so to place these different tasks in a hierarchical order based on their varying levels of
complexity. A person’s ability or inability to accomplish different kinds of tasks (i.e. to
solve different kinds of problems) is thus the standard according to which this model
determines stages of cognitive development. The model delineates 14 stages of cognitive
development, each of which is defined by the ability to accomplish increasingly complex
tasks. These 14 stages are identified as follows: 1) sensory or motor, 2) circular sensory-
motor, 3) sensory-motor, 4) nominal, 5) sentential, 6) preoperational, 7) primary, 8) concrete,
9) abstract, 10) formal, 11) systemic, 12) metasystemic, 13) paradigmatic, and 14) cross-
paradigmatic (Commons, 2007). Commons (2007) points out that the first three of these
stages can be seen to correspond to Piaget’s Sensorimotor stage, stages 4 and 5 to Piaget’s pre-operational stage, stages 6 through 8 to Piaget’s Concrete Operational stage, and stages 9 through 11 to Piaget’s Formal Operational stage. The last three of the Commons’ 14 stages are “post-formal” stages, which themselves represent a significant addition Commons and his colleagues made to Piaget’s model. According to Mustakova-Possardt (2003), Commons’ last formal operational stage (i.e. the “systemic” stage) and the subsequent three post-formal stages are associated with mature CC (p. 34). The characteristics of these four stages (i.e. stage 11 through 14) can be described as follows. At the systemic stage, one is able to consider the relationships between specific problems and their larger contexts, e.g. causal links between particular problematic situations one encounters or is exposed to and certain attributes of the larger social system in which these situations occur. At the metasystemic stage, the person develops the additional capacity to compare and contrast diverse systems, and to consider how metasystems may be developed which link smaller systems together. Next, the paradigmatic stage entails developing the further ability to synthesize metasystems into “paradigms,” and finally, the cross-paradigmatic stage involves developing the capacity to compare different paradigms and “form new fields by crossing paradigms” (Commons, 2007, p. 3).

As for the second structural dimension of consciousness, i.e. the “social-cognitive ability to know oneself in social situations”, to understand and assess development within this dimension Mustakova-Possardt primarily relies on Weinstein & Alschuler’s (1985) theory of self-knowledge. This theory identifies four stages in the development of self-knowledge, 1) Elemental Self-knowledge, 2) Situational Self-knowledge, 3) Patterned Self-knowledge, and 4) Transformational Self-knowledge. The first stage of Elemental Self-
knowledge is one in which a person sees and describes him/herself as a collection of separate, unrelated, externally visible characteristics. In this stage, a person refers minimally to inner states, i.e. only to the extent of referring to what makes him/her happy or sad and what he/she likes and dislikes etc., and doesn’t refer at all to internal reasons why he/she does the things or has the characteristics he/she does. The next stage, i.e. Situational Self-knowledge, is one in which a person sees and describes him/herself in terms of situational stories (e.g. I am the girl who fell off of that ledge and hurt her knee and who responded in this way. etc.). In this stage, one describes oneself in terms of situations one was in, the consequences these situations and how one reacted to them. Although a person still focuses primarily on his/her external features, he/she also exhibits increased awareness of and ability to express some internal feelings such as physical sensations and emotions. The third stage of Patterned Self-knowledge involves the developed ability to see and describe oneself in terms of coherent patterns of emotions, thoughts and behaviors derived from many situations and stories (e.g. I am someone who likes such-and-such, who reacts in such-and-such a way in such-and-such situations.). Finally, in the fourth stage, which Weinstein & Alschuler name the stage of Transformational Self-knowledge, a person develops a meta-cognitive and dynamic understanding his/her own patterns of feeling, thought and behavior as well as a sense of agency, i.e. of possessing the ability to change oneself. People at this stage can “describe how they consciously monitor, modify or manage their inner patterns of response…. In the previous pattern stage, people describe their stable pattern of responses to external situations. In the transformational stage, they can describe the repertoire of inner processes they use to alter their inner life. They are proactive in influencing inner states” (p. 21).
To analyze development in the third “structural dimension of consciousness” that she identifies, i.e. “the evolving sense of self and other” (2003, p. 34), Mustakova-Possardt utilizes the theory of the development of the self put forward by Robert Kegan (1982). In his influential book, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development*, Kegan is mainly concerned with showing how people’s self definitions develop in terms of who and what they perceive as “other” than themselves. Kegan defines the “self” as that in which one is embedded at any point in one’s psychological development and the “other” is that which one has differentiated oneself from and therefore can be in relationship with. Thus, the process of self development is characterized by Kegan as “a succession of qualitative differentiations of the self from the world, with a qualitatively more extensive object with which to be in relation created each time…successive triumphs of ‘relationship to’ rather than ‘embeddedness in’” (p. 77).

Kegan (1982) identifies six stages in the development of self; stage 0 - the Incorporative Self, stage 1 - the Impulsive Self, stage 2 - the Imperial Self, stage 3 – the Interpersonal Self, stage 4 – the Institutional Self, and stage 5 – the Inter-Individual Self. In the first of these stages, i.e. the Incorporative Self, the infant is psychologically embedded its own reflexes. The infant does not think of its self as *having* reflexes; he/she *is* these reflexes. At this point, because nothing in its experience has been differentiated from its self, it recognizes no “other.” In the subsequent stage of the Impulsive Self, the preschooler begins to identify his/her self with his/her impulses and perceptions and distinguishes his/her reflexes as other. “In disembedding herself from her reflexes the two-year old comes to have reflexes rather than be them, and the new self is embedded in that which coordinates the reflexes, namely, the ‘perceptions’ and the ‘impulses’” (p. 85). In the next stage, the
Imperial Self emerges. In this stage, one identifies with and is embedded in one’s needs, interests and wishes, and one has perceptions and impulses, which now are seen as other than one self. This differentiation of one’s perceptions from one’s self allow for the “emergence of a self-concept.” At this stage, “the child seems to ‘seal up’ in a sense; there is a self-containment that was not there before…the child no longer lives with the sense that the parent can read his private feelings. He has a private world, which he did not have before” (p. 89). With the capacity to control one’s impulses, he/she gains a “new sense of freedom, power, independence – agency, above all” (p. 89). Kegan calls the next stage the Interpersonal Self. At this stage, the person is embedded in interpersonal relationships and mutuality. He/she has distinguished him/herself from his/her own personal needs, interests and desires, but now becomes identified with mutual needs, interests and desires shared with others. “The self becomes conversational” and “embodies a plurality of voices.” It is unable to consult itself about the reality it shares with others “because it is that shared reality” (pp. 95-96). In other words, this stage may be considered one of “co-dependence” in which one’s self is embedded in one’s group/community.

Following the Interpersonal Self, the Institutional Self develops. In this stage, an autonomous sense of identity emerges independent of one’s interpersonal relationships. One’s self is now identified with and embedded in an “identity” that is differentiated from shared, interpersonal reality. Kegan describes this stage as “institutional” because all the aspects of the self are now governed by a set of roles, norms and procedures (resembling, on a microcosmic scale, the macrocosmic organization of social institutions). A hallmark of this stage is the capacity to self-regulate one’s feelings. However, one’s sense of identity here is derived from norms and roles given to one by one’s society and not from an “authentic”
“source” or “truth” that could provide a vantage point from which one could judge between various social norms, roles and procedures with which different institutional selves are identified (i.e. between different identities) in order to be able to choose an identity that is most fulfilling and desirable to one. Rather, one is one’s social identity or role and so feels naturally compelled to defend this identity. Finally, in stage 5 of Kegan’s model, the Inter-Individual Self emerges. This self has the sense of being an individual who can “reflect upon, or take as object, the regulations and purposes of a psychic administration” that one previously was identified with and embedded in. “There is now a self who runs the organization, where before there was a self who was the organization” (p. 103). At this stage, a person recognizes the limitations of his/her self-definitions and opens his/herself up to genuine dialogue with others. Mustakova-Possardt (2003) explains that “mature CC,” requires “at least 4/5 ego-system…able to open itself to an interdependent inter-individual process,” meaning that a person with mature CC (in contrast to Transitional CC or Pre-CC) should at least be developing a sense of self that is transitioning between stage 4 to stage 5 in Kegan’s model (p. 34).

To analyze the fourth “structural dimension of consciousness,” which Mustakova-Possardt (2003) identifies as “evolving ways of knowing” (p. 34), she applies two well-known theories of epistemological development, namely those of Belenky et. al (1986) and Perry (1968). Based on their analysis of 135 interviews with women, which were designed to explore women’s ways of constructing knowledge and the influence of gender-based forms of discrimination on these ways of knowing, Belenky et. al., in their ground-breaking book, *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind*, present a model of women’s ways of knowing that suggests that women’s knowledge tends to develop
through five stages, 1) Silence, 2) Received Knowledge, 3) Subjective Knowledge, 4) Procedural Knowledge, and 5) Constructed Knowledge. In the first of these stages, the woman’s knowing is totally dependent on the views of external authorities. At this stage, the woman’s knowledge is limited to knowledge of actual, concrete, and practical matters, the rules and procedures pertaining to which are viewed in dualistic, “black and white” terms. A person in this stage has practically no sense of an independent self and describes her life in terms of when she is permitted to have a voice and when she must be silent. In the second stage, the woman understands knowledge to be that which she receives from authorities and is able to correctly reproduce. At this stage, paradox and ambiguity are not tolerated. Her increased sense of agency (relative to the first stage) consists in her belief that the harder one works/studies within a conventional/authoritative paradigm, the more knowledgeable one can become. She looks to others for self-knowledge and has little confidence in her own voice. In the third stage, i.e. the stage of Subjective Knowledge, truth and knowledge are conceived of as deriving from personal experience and intuition. The woman at this stage distrusts logic, analysis, abstraction, sometimes seeing these as belonging to men. She still lacks a secure, integrated and enduring self-concept, but a sense of having her own distinct voice begins to emerge. At the next stage, i.e. the “Procedural Knowledge” stage, the woman comes to rely on systematic procedures for obtaining, testing and communicating knowledge. She thinks in accordance with the rules of these systems (or paradigms) but does not yet question the system/paradigm itself. She sees knowledge as deriving from both detached observation and analysis, on the one hand, and caring dialogue and empathy on the other. Finally, in the Constructed Knowledge stage, the woman views all knowledge as contextual and relative. She now has a high tolerance for contradiction and ambiguity and resists
compartmentalizing reality. In this stage, she possesses an integrated and narrative sense of self.

Belenky et. al.’s theory was significantly influenced by an earlier model of epistemological development proposed by William Perry (1968). Based on the findings of his 15-year study of the cognitive development of college students in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, Perry identified nine “positions” or ways of knowing. He uses the term “position” to distinguish his understanding of the nature of these cognitive structures from the standard Piagetian understanding of “stages.” While he agrees with Piaget (and Kohlberg) that cognitive development is driven by the active assimilation and accommodation of new information into existing cognitive structures, and that cognitive development consists of movement through a sequence of cognitive structures that are logically and hierarchically related to each other, he resists the static connotation of the concept of a “stage” and also gives much greater importance to the notion of “positionality,” i.e. that learners approach knowledge from different perspectives associated with different social positions related to their gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic class etc. Perry further categorizes his nine positions into four broad ways of knowing, which he names 1) Dualistic Knowledge, 2) Multiplistic Knowledge, 3) Relativistic Knowledge, and 4) Committed Knowledge. In the Dualistic Knowledge position (corresponding to Belenky et. al.’s “Received Knowledge” stage), one sees things in dualistic terms as being either good or bad, true or false, black or white etc. From the next position of Multiplistic Knowledge (roughly corresponding to Belenky et. al.’s “Subjective Knowledge” stage), one recognizes that multiple perspectives exist and that each of these has its own distinct premises and logic. Truth here is seen as relative to one’s frame of reference. Subsequently, in the Relativistic
Knowledge position (which corresponds roughly to Belenky et. al.’s Procedural Knowledge), one sees that there are multiple perspectives, but that within a given context or system of knowledge, some solutions to problems are better than others. In the final position, one develops Committed Knowledge (corresponding to Belenky et. al.’s Constructed Knowledge). Here one recognizes that a stable point of view is necessary for a sense of identity and to take resolute action in the world. One reflects on learned knowledge in the light of personal experience and commits to those perspectives/explanations that appear to be most inclusive, reasonable and satisfying to oneself at the present, while continuing to recognize the relativity of knowledge and accepting that one’s own knowledge commitments should continue to evolve.

**Critiques of Developmentalism**

Having reviewed the developmental theories that inform the structural dimension of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of CC development, it may now be useful to review some current critiques of the field of developmental psychology in general. In recent decades, the traditional assumptions on which developmental psychology is based have been increasingly contested, particularly in light on postmodern, poststructuralist views of knowledge. A good starting point for this review would perhaps be developmental psychologist Martin Woodhead’s (1999) observation that, since the 1980s, increasing numbers of psychologists studying child development have begun to acknowledge that, they are part of, not detached from the social and cultural world within which child development questions are identified; that they are subject to the same psychological processes they seek to describe; that there may be a connection between the ‘inner child’ of their own autobiographies and the ‘outer’ child they seek to describe; that
they are literally creating their subject, in so far as child development theories and research shape the environments in which children develop; and that their scientific claims to objectivity rest on assumptions that their own theories of human cognition cannot sustain (see for example Gergen, 1982, 1985; Gergen and others, 1996; Bradley, 1989; Burman, 1994, 1997; Stainton-Rogers and Stainton-Rogers, 1992; and Morss, 1996) (p. 12)

It has been frequently noted by critics that the notion of “the individual” and “the child” presupposed by developmental theory are cultural inventions. Among the first psychologists to highlight the culturally specific nature of the concept of ‘the child’ were Ingelby (1974), in *The Psychology of Child Psychology*, and Kessen (1979), in his influential essay, *The American Child and Other Cultural Inventions*. More recently, Forrester (1999), among others, has similarly pointed out that, in the field of developmental psychology in general, “our own Western, linguistically embedded criteria informing what we take to be subjectivity, separateness and individuation are somehow cast as the undeniable facts of experience.” Echoing postmodern critiques of modernism, he notes that this view “fails to recognize the problematic nature of language…[that what presumably] constitutes cognition (e.g. knowledge emerging out of the object/agent experiences of the child) is akin to the subject/predicate formulations of syntactic knowledge” (pp. 307-308). Woodhead (1999) further notes that, “developmental psychology has traditionally projected a standardized image of childhood, especially through the emphasis on describing universal stages of psychological growth in what are assumed to be normal childhood environments. These reifications of universality and normality have in turn regulated social action at individual, family and school level” (p. 3).

As this quote from Woodhead attests, not only is the subject of developmental studies being deconstructed, but so is the notion of development itself. Morss (1996; 1992) similarly points out that the concept of “development” as a process that naturally and universally
happens in the same way in all contexts, i.e. “as the gradual revelation or unrolling of something already in existence…becoming gradually less disguised” (1992, p. 461), is not consistent with mounting evidence that development occurs differently within different social contexts and is, in fact, a product of inventive human activity within those contexts. Underscoring this point, Zimiles (2000) attests to the role of “historical embeddedness” in human development (p. 240).

As a result of [the current] veritable earthquake of social and technological change, children come to school with markedly different, and more varied, life experiences that may well give rise to a different constellation of children’s development needs….The circumstances that shape children’s behavior are changing so rapidly that Gergen [1994] has pointed to the futility of relying on cumulatively derived knowledge to account for the ongoing behavior of children (pp. 240-241).

The notion that moral development is “a linear, unidirectional process” that necessarily connotes “progress” is criticized by educational researcher Brian McCadden (1998, p. 11). His research of moral complexity and moral construction in a kindergarten classroom led him to the conclusion that,

children…do not develop into progressively ‘better’ moral beings as Piaget (1932/1961), Kohlberg (1981), and Gilligan (1982) indicate. Rather, they are moral beings from a very young age who develop over time a more and more nuanced ability to understand to navigate the codes and ‘recipe knowledge’ (Bowers, 1984) of moral interaction… The irony as I see it is that this developing ability to navigate moral rules actually may make children (and us as adults) increasingly less moral as we mature, in that it acts to move us away from the simple precept of loving and accepting ourselves and others that I saw the children in Green End Elementary trying to enact, yet moving farther away from as they were socialized to institutional life (pp. 10-11).

Walkerdine (1993) similarly critiques the notion of progress inherent in the modern concept of development, noting the Western origins of this notion within the social milieu of the European Enlightenment.

Development as progressive evolution is not an object but a central trope in modern narratives of the individual. Development is presented as towards a goal, indeed a
goal that not all reach, but which is surely the logocentric pinnacle of advanced, rational [sic] abstract thought. It is this goal which is understood as the most civilized, in the move from the animal, savage, primitive and childlike towards the adult and civilized… the postmodern move disrupts this notion of civilization and of science as rationality and advancement. They are shown up to be historically specific practices produced in the history of the domination over Others (pp. 454-455).

These critiques reflect general features of the postmodern and poststructuralist approach to knowledge. From this perspective, “scientific statements are regarded as reflections of the contexts in which their underlying observations were made as well as the motives of their authors and those who choose to promulgate them [Lubeck, 1996; Usher & Edwards, 1994]” (Zimiles, 2000, p. 241). As products of social contexts, scientific knowledge is seen not as value-neutral and objective, but rather as reflecting and legitimizing social power arrangements.

[S]eemingly abstract scientific attitudes and ways of describing the world have their counterparts in ideas that govern and regulate the citizenry as well. Modes of ordering phenomena in scientific investigations may serve as the prototypes for reasoning about more complex, earthly issues and may thereby become mechanisms of social control. The behaviors we see, the ways we have for defining our social reality, do not reflect the natural order of things. Rather, they are socially constructed, they are the outgrowth of particular forms of social arrangement and conditions.” (p. 242)

Postmodernism is further defined by its rejection of, or incredulity toward, claims of universal applicability and what it terms “totalizing” scientific models/theories. It rejects modernism’s search for certain and absolute truth and its production of “grand narratives” that presume to apply one set of general categories and principles to all particular contexts and thus inevitably marginalize the values, assumptions and perspectives of those who did not produce the narratives. For example, in reference to developmental psychology in particular, Walkerdine (1993) criticizes its “totalizing” tendencies by noting how it “universalizes the masculine and European, such that peripheral subjects are rendered
pathological and abnormal.” She argues instead for “the possibility of the production of thinking in historically and geographically specific practices” that would not “fetishize western rationality as the universal pinnacle of development” (p. 451). Thus, as Zimiles (2000) points out, some proponents of a postmodern view of knowledge propose “a pluralistic view of science, conceive of a world of different scientific studies each reflecting the interests, needs, and circumstances associated with the locale and value structure of each scientific investigation” (p. 241).

In light of these challenges to developmental psychology, some have suggested that the concept of development be abandoned altogether (e.g. Walkerdine, 1993). Others seek ways to “reconstruct” developmental psychology in ways that acknowledge the cultural embeddedness of “development” and the socially-constructed nature of scientific endeavor, but nevertheless retain some of the assumptions and goals of scientific method. Woodhead (1999), for example, suggests that, while a reconstructed approach to developmental psychology should acknowledge that “all theories are representations expressed in the shared language of the research community,” it may reasonably continue to be guided by an assumption that “some accounts of childhood are more adequate than others, more comprehensive, making better sense of a wide range of observations and capable of being put to more effective use, within an explicit framework of goals and values, both about childhood and about what counts for knowledge” (p. 13). Similarly, while Sternberg (2003) underscores how developmental psychology has traditionally failed to account for the inherent and profound influence of cultural contexts on both the actual ways people develop and the different ways this development is understood, he nevertheless warns against extreme cultural relativism.
Positions of cultural relativism, taken to the extreme, become traps. In essence, the theorist sets a trap for him or herself. If everything is culturally relative, then does one need a separate child psychology for each culture, especially if child psychology, like the child, is culturally relative? If so, how many child psychologies do we need? And can one really stop at cultures? What about subcultures, such as exist in the United States?...Eventually, one ends up at the level of the individual, and there is no scientific reduction: One needs a separate child psychology for each individual. At some level, that may be, but it makes science, which is in part about understanding of complex phenomena through some set of somewhat generalizable principles, difficult. (sect 3, para. 3)

My own response to the critiques of developmental theory and developmentalism I have presented above, which is in some ways similar to Woodhead’s and Sternberg’s and which I will revisit in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, may be briefly stated for now as follows. While I agree with post-modernists and post-structuralists that all human knowledge is socially-embedded and socially-constructed, the fact that human beings are at all capable of communicating inter-subjectively across cultural divides suggests that there are some core commonalities and archetypal themes/patterns in human experience. Furthermore, as Sternberg suggests in the last quote, some (albeit forever tentative) generalizations would seem to be necessary when constructing new knowledge if that knowledge is to have any practical value (i.e. to be applicable beyond the immediate case it refers to). A problem that often occurs when constructing or applying new (or old) knowledge is that we make the mistake of reifying a concepts, i.e. treating them as if they were the things they seek to explain. It must be understood that the map is never the same as the territory. Yet, at the same time, this cannot mean that all maps are equal. There surely is a territory to be mapped, and the more diverse perspectives that are brought to bear on mapping that territory through communicative and dialogic action, as suggested by Habermas (1985), the more useful the map will be. Finally, while I again agree with the postmodern view on the importance of asking what social power arrangements are legitimized by particular forms of knowledge, it
is equally important to acknowledge that the assumption that different groups have different interests and the view of power as a means of dominating and taking advantage of others, rather than as resulting from increasingly inclusive cooperation and synergy between people, is itself a social construction that legitimizes perpetual social conflict and an “us versus them” attitude.

*Mapping the Field of Moral Education*

We can now move on to the second domain for this literature review mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, namely the domain of literature that seeks to map the field of moral education and literature regarding certain particular approaches that I categorize as *morally transformative education*. The purpose for this is to help situate the Community-building Institute within this field and to identify certain elements of and concepts related to morally transformative approaches that may be useful in analyzing the Institute’s curriculum. To accomplish this, I will first review a number of schemas for categorizing diverse approaches to moral education that have been suggested by Katherine Simon (2001), Robert Nash (1997), Jo Ann Freiberg (1987), Barry Chazan (1985), and Barbara Stengel and Alan Tom (2006). Then, I will then give special attention to four (inter-related and over-lapping) approaches to moral education, which are relatively neglected in the schemas mentioned above, but which are nevertheless especially significant for the purposes of this study because of what appears to be their close connection to the philosophy, approach and methods of the Community-building Institute. These four approaches are:
• “Experiential education” (e.g. Outward Bound and other models of “adventure learning”)
• “Transformative Learning Theory”
• what may be called “spiritual education” as specifically conceived by Farzam Arbab and Rachael Kessler
• the “Encounter group” approach to inducing personal transformation specifically used by Landmark Education

What the Community-building Institute and these four approaches arguably have in common, and how they differ from other approaches, is that they all aim to have a morally transformative effect on consciousness and behavior using methods that are holistic (i.e. that engage more than just the learner’s rational capabilities). In other words, they are neither solely intended to convey knowledge of moral principles or virtues, nor to simply develop moral reasoning ability, nor solely to instill moral habits divorced from critical reflection. Rather, these approaches are designed to radically, and in many cases suddenly, transform (or shift) learners’ fundamental perspectives or worldviews, i.e. their senses of identity and views of others, their basic values and attitudes, and other assumptions and predispositions that shape their views of reality and the manner they interact with it. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will categorize this general approach to moral education as “morally transformative education”.

The domain of contemporary moral education has been variously mapped by educational researchers. For example, Katherine Simon (2001) identifies four salient schools of thought in moral education, 1) the “virtues approach” to character education, 2) values clarification, 3) Kohlberg’s cognitive-developmentalism and just community schools, and 4)
Noddings’ ethic of caring. To briefly clarify some distinctions between these four approaches, by “virtues approach” Simon refers to the approach to moral education associated with William Bennett, Thomas Lickona, and Kevin Ryan, that “was informed by the Aristotelian tradition and was embedded in a larger conservative, political framework.” This approach relies on methods such as directly naming and conveying knowledge about specific (presumably universal) moral rules and virtues of character, reading stories with moral messages, providing teachers who model these virtues and opportunities for learners to practice them (p. 18). The values clarification approach refers to an approach popular in the 1970s, which, contrary to the virtues approach, supposedly does not encourage any specific virtues, but rather creates opportunities that allow learners to “clarify” their values (largely through discussions in which the teacher was supposed to play a neutral, value-free role as a facilitator). The third approach Simon mentions is that taken by the “just community schools” associated with Lawrence Kohlberg. In these schools, learners’ moral development was to be encouraged by confronting learners with hypothetical moral dilemmas and alternative ways of reasoning about these dilemmas that were at one Kohlbergian stage higher than it was believed the learner currently operated in. Learners’ moral development was also fostered by creating a “moral atmosphere” in schools characterized by democratic deliberation on real-life moral issues arising out the school’s community life. The fourth category of moral education noted by Simon refers to approaches based on Nel Noddings’ ethic of caring. Such approach would seek to encourage and provide opportunities for learners to develop their ability to care for their selves, intimate others, associates and acquaintances, distant others, nonhuman animals, plants and the physical environment, human-made world of objects and instruments, and for ideas (Noddings, 1992).
In his book *Answering the “Virtuecrats”*, Robert Nash (1997) uses more overtly political and philosophical criteria than Simon to identify three approaches to moral education, which he labels Neo-classical, Communitarian and Liberationist, before arguing for a “Post-modern Alternative” for “cultivating democratic dispositions” (p. 162). The Neo-classical approach refers essentially to the same category of moral education that Simon refers to as the “virtues approach” (and critiques it for ”going too far in separating moral reasoning from moral conduct” and for fostering “an ethos of compliance in schools wherein indoctrination and rote learning replace critical reflection and autonomous decision making”) (p. 30). Nash distinguishes communitarian from neo-classical approaches to moral education by their greater emphasis on civic issues and duties, public consensus and public good and their “critique of liberal excess – especially excessive forms of individualism, ‘rights talk’, and secularism and pluralism” (p. 54). This approach sees morality as rooted in community membership and cultural or religious tradition and therefore emphasizes elements of tradition and the fostering of those virtues “that will sustain and strengthen local communities” grounded in shared religion or culture (p. 64). Nash critiques some cases of this approach as encouraging “a morality of conformity, a provincialism that binds individuals to ideologically restrictive groups” (p. 79). The third approach, which Nash labels as the “liberationist initiative”, is associated with such educational theorists as Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, and Michael Apple. According to Nash, this approach to education generally seeks to promote “transformative dispositions” by encouraging systematic critique of social, political and economic institutions and underlying hegemonic ideologies, analysis of particular forms of oppression, and by using pedagogical strategies designed to “liberate” learners from these various oppressions (p. 102). His critique of this approach is that its
ideological rigidity and pretentiousness has served to “subvert its own important moral insights…by ‘privileging’ a morality of habitual contestation over a morality of reconciliation” (p. 124). The final approach for which Nash argues is one based on “a morality of conversation” (p. 160) designed to develop “conversational virtues and democratic dispositions” (p. 163).

Four distinct ”major approaches to moral education” are also highlighted by Jo Ann Freiberg (1987), namely “the Cognitive Developmental approach of Lawrence Kohlberg, the ‘Philosophy for Children’ approach of Matthew Lipman, the Values Clarification approach developed by Louis Raths, Merill Harmin, and Sidney Simon, and the conception of moral education offered by John Dewey” (p. 187). Since the first and third approaches have already been described above, I will focus here on Freiberg’s explanations of the second and fourth categories. As Freiberg explains it, the Lipman’s ‘Philosophy for Children’ approach developed in the late 1980s uses a series of “philosophical novels” to help learners vicariously experience the ramifications of philosophical, especially ethical, issues and thus seeks to stimulate both imagination and reasoning capability for the purpose of developing learners’ abilities to make adequate moral judgments. Dewey’s approach to moral education specifically, and education in general, involved providing opportunities for democratic/dialogical and scientific problem-solving focused on real or authentic problems and dilemmas that arise from normal social situations in school. In this way, it resembles Kohlberg’s “just community schools” (which Dewey’s philosophy in fact helped inspire). As I will discuss later, the current “experiential education” movement has roots Dewey’s philosophy of education.
Relating different schools of thought in moral education to key concepts of moral philosophy, Barry Chazan (1985) identifies five “major twentieth-century exemplars of schools of moral education” in his Contemporary Approaches to Moral Education. These are 1) Durkheim’s moral education as moral socialization, 2) John Wilson’s moral education as rational utilitarianism, 3) moral education as values clarification, 4) Kohlberg’s cognitive-developmental approach to moral education, and 5) Dewey’s interactionism. Since the last three categories have already been described, I will here only concern myself with briefly describing the first two categories. Chazan suggests that Emile Durkheim, regarded by many as one of the founders of the modern social science of sociology, may also be considered “the father of modern moral education” (p. 9). Durkheim viewed morality essentially as a social invention consisting of social rules and norms that make society possible. Thus, the goal of moral education in his view was to instill these social norms into the members of a society. According to Durkheim, the pedagogical means accomplishing this socialization process should have three central elements, 1) a teacher who plays the role of benevolent authority figure and moral exemplar, an element Durkheim considered key to helping students develop a sense of duty, 2) a social context which encourages students to view their class at school as a microcosmic social group to which they belong and feel a sense of loyalty, and 3) formal content that emphasizes “the analysis and explication of process and events of history and life via the subjects of science, history, and sociology” (p. 27).

The second example of moral education that Chazan presents -- Wilson’s approach to moral education -- is essentially one that equates moral education with the teaching of moral philosophy, specifically utilitarian ethics. It aims to help a learner become a “rational, autonomous, moral person” (p. 43) by developing his/her ability to apply specific procedures
for moral reasoning to given situations in order to arrive at principled decisions about what actions should be taken.

Finally, and most recently, Barbara Stengel and Alan Tom (2006) use the purely pedagogical criterion of how different programs or proposals relate moral education to academic education to delineate five ways to develop the moral life of schools. Thus, they distinguish and give specific examples of five approaches in which the relationship between the academic and the moral is treated as either 1) Separate, 2) Sequential (with either academic or moral being taught first), 3) Dominant (such that either the academic or the moral dominates), 4) Transformative (such that either the academic or the moral component of the curriculum sets the agenda and transforms the other component), or 5) Integrated (in which case the academic and the moral are entirely blended and fused, with each affecting the other and with neither taking precedence over the other).

*Four Approaches to Morally Transformative Education*

As I suggested to earlier, the above “maps” of moral education, while pointing out approaches to moral education that contain some elements of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum, do not contain any single category into which the Institute seems to fit well. While some elements of Kohlberg’s “just community schools” and Dewey’s approach to moral education can be seen in the Institute’s method of confronting real-life moral issues that immediately and powerfully impact students’ experience in their school community, and while it does make use of the language of “virtues” and includes critical reflection of social experience that often characterizes what Nash referred to as “liberationist” education,
nevertheless the Community-building Institute cannot usefully or accurately be placed, in its entirety, under any of these four categories. It is for this reason that I have suggested another category distinct from any of those within the maps reviewed above. As previously mentioned, I name this category morally transformative education for the purpose of grouping together approaches to moral education meant to radically transform (or shift) learners’ fundamental worldviews, senses of identity, values, attitudes, and behavior. In this final section of my review of the literature, I will highlight four examples of morally transformative education, namely experiential education, transformative learning theory, Farzam Arbab’s and Rachael Kessler’s distinct approaches to spiritual education, and the “Encounter group” approach specifically taken by Landmark Education, Inc.

Experiential Education

The term “experiential education” is most often associated with outdoor adventure programs (Outward Bound being the most notable example), but also refers to a general philosophy and approach to education that can be applied in a wide variety of contexts to facilitate learning of nearly any content. This educational approach has been defined as one in which students are “actively engaged in exploring questions they find relevant and meaningful” and in which it is understood that “feeling, as well as thinking, can lead to knowledge” (Chapman et. al., 1995, p. 239). Similarly, Proudman (1995) defines experiential education as “emotionally engaged learning” that “combines direct experience that is meaningful to the student with guided reflection and analysis,” and as “a challenging, active, student-centered process that impels students toward opportunities for taking
initiative, responsibility, and decision making” and “allows numerous opportunities for the
student to connect the head with the body, heart, spirit, and soul” (p. 241). Crosby (1995)
additionally describes it as any approach to education based on the belief that “learning will
happen more effectively if the learner is as involved as possible, using as many of his
faculties as possible, in learning; and that this involvement is maximized if the student has
something that matters to him at stake” (p. 5). Horwood (1999) further defines the closely
related concept of “adventure education” as learning characterized by uncertain outcomes,
risk, inescapable consequences, energetic action, and willingness to participate. An implicit
definition is also offered by Bialeschki (2006), who suggests that there are “three Rs for
experiential education,” namely 1) Relevance (i.e. experiential education makes content
“personal and meaningful to individuals in their day-to-day lives”), 2) Relationships (i.e.
experiential education provides “supportive environments in which relationships are
promoted and valued as integral to human development”, and 3) Real (i.e. experiential
education provides opportunities in which learners can “be themselves (or find out things
about themselves)”, can “be authentic and make a difference,” as is the case with activities
that cause them “to engage with the environment, a particular group of people, or maybe
with the community through activities like service-learning” (pp. 366-368).

In literature seeking to explain the philosophy behind experiential learning, the
educational philosophies of John Dewey and Kurt Hahn are most often referred to as
providing the conceptual underpinnings of the approach. According to Crosby (1995), as
well as other advocates of experiential education (e.g. Bialeschki, 2006; Hunt, 1995), the
philosophical heritage of and foundation for experiential education can be traced back to
John Dewey. Crosby notes that Dewey rejected the dichotomies between Ideal Reality and
the sensible world as well as between theory and practice, which had been traditional features of western philosophy, and that, for Dewey, over-emphasis on cognition to the exclusion of affect and activity had the effect of alienating human beings from their environment and their own selves. In light of this perspective, Dewey developed an approach to education that did not teach abstractions and facts in isolation from experience but rather started with and was grounded in experience itself. For Dewey, human experience, when subjected to systematic investigation, naturally leads to growth of human consciousness and capabilities. The process of experience and reflection on experience, according to Dewey, begins with the felt and aesthetic quality of inchoate and undistinguished experience. The problematic nature of unexplained, unexamined experience presents a “felt difficulty” and thus a condition for inquiry. The next step is to reflect on experience, to seek to explain and make it meaningful. This process of reflection involves articulating the problem, hypothesizing possible solutions, testing these, and further refining or changing hypothesized solutions in the light of additional experience. Finally, this process eventually has a “consummation” or what Crosby calls “closure” that adds to the pragmatic knowledge and meaning one can then apply to (and test in light of) new experiences. From this perspective, human life can be regarded as “a rhythmic movement from events of doubt and conflict to events of integrity and harmony,” a movement whose goal is “to change the problematic to the integrated and consummated” (p. 11). Thus, according to Crosby, the point of education for Dewey and for experiential education generally is “to intentionally use experience in its dynamic form to divest experience of its indefinite and unintelligible nature, and to bring about consummations in life.” Such education finds its “epistemological starting point in experience as felt, rather
than as objective,” and proceeds to help learners “to understand and to use [their] experience” (p. 12).

In this model, the teacher aids the student in developing an approach to his own experience by structuring the student’s experience so that he may move from a challenge to a resolution… After resolution comes reflection on the movement so that what is learned may be generalized and used again…. In experiential education, the learner-involved-in-immediate-experience is the object of knowledge, and the activity in, and reflection on, that involvement are the means of knowing. Experiential education attempts to blur the distinction between cognitive and affective learning because experience does not come distinguished this way and is not lived this way (pp. 12-13)

The other person regarded as a pioneer of experiential education is Kurt Hahn, the German-born founder of Outward Bound. The experiential approach to education that he developed is particularly noteworthy because of its explicitly moral aims. Developing his educational approach in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, Hahn created an alternative model school named Salem designed to provide a healthy environment and instill habits that would protect young people against “the deteriorating values of modern life” as manifested in general “declines…in fitness, skill and care, self-discipline, initiative and enterprise, memory and imagination, and compassion” (James, 1995, p. 35). Hahn’s outspoken and courageous opposition to the rising tide of Nazism eventually led to his imprisonment in 1933. Fortunately, he was released that same year thanks to the intervention of the British government, which arranged for his subsequent emigration to the United Kingdom. In his new home, he founded the organization for experiential education now known as Outward Bound, which he based on the educational philosophy he developed during his years in Germany. Among the elements of his philosophy were the great emphasis he placed on the wholesomeness of direct and extended encounters with nature and promotion non-competitive physical activity and personal hygiene. He further created learning communities
in which students and teachers interacted cooperatively and democratically and were
involved in various forms of service to their surrounding communities. At the heart of his
philosophy and methods was Hahn’s belief that in all people, and especially evident in youth,
there exists “a grand passion, an outlandish thirst for adventure, a desire to live boldly and
vividly in the journey through life,” a passion which he was very concerned must not be
“misdirected and turned to inhumane ends” (p. 39) (as the Hitler Youth movement did,
ironically by using some of the very methods Hahn had pioneered). Thus, for Hahn,

the grand passion of the young must be embraced in wholesome ways by adult power.
It must be nurtured instead of deformed and punished. Its creative force must be
harnessed to the quest for a good society, the aim of Plato’s educational designs (p.
39)

To accomplish this, Hahn believed

that some separation from the existing human world, into the intensity of the journey-
quest, confronting challenges and transforming opportunities for service, could
change the balance of power in young people. Then they would be more inclined to
use their lives, back in the world from which they came, to bring the good society into
being (p. 39).

These educational principles that Hahn developed and promoted are reflected in present-day
Outward Bound’s “six core values”, which, according to the organization’s US web site,
form the basis of all its courses and programs. These core values are 1) Adventure &
Challenge, 2) Learning by Doing, 3) Compassion & Service, 4) Social and Environmental
Responsibility, 5) Character Development, and 6) Inclusion & Diversity (Outward Bound
Wilderness, n.d., para 4-12).

Laura Joplin (1995) provides a noteworthy distillation of characteristics and
principles underlying experiential education in her “five stage model” and eight
characteristics of experiential education. Her five stage model, with which she seeks to
highlight five essential components of educational process that call themselves experiential,
consists of stages or components she names 1) focus, 2) action, 3) support, 4) feedback, and 5) debrief. In the focus stage, the learner is presented with the subject of study and the task to be accomplished and prepared for the challenging action/encounter to come. The action stage places the learner in a challenging situation which calls for action “that maybe be physical, mental, emotional, spiritual” and which “involves the student with the subject, occupying much of his attention and energy in sorting, ordering, analyzing, moving, struggling, emoting, embracing” and “gives the learner great responsibility” (p. 17). Support and feedback refer to components of the process that are present throughout. Support involves providing “security and caring in a manner that stimulates the learner to challenge himself and to experiment” while feedback learners are given by facilitators on the quality of their interactions and work (p. 18). Finally, the debrief stage of any experiential learning activity provides learners with the opportunity to reflect on and learn from their experiences, and to articulate the knowledge and insights gained. Joplin then suggests eight characteristics to “further clarify how this involved paradigm is characterized in educational settings” (p. 19). These are 1) student-based rather than teacher-based, 2) personal not impersonal nature, 3) process and product orientation (i.e. giving equal emphasis to both), 4) evaluation for internal and external reasons (i.e. for both institutional and learners’ purposes, 5) holistic understanding and component analysis, 6) organized around experience, 7) perception based rather than theory based, 8) individual based rather than group based (i.e. assessment should stress individual development rather than group norm ratings) (pp. 20-21).

Proudman (1995) offers a similar, though not identical, list of 10 “working principles” that he believes characterize experiential learning. These are:

- Mixture of content and process
• Absence of excessive teacher judgment
• Engaged in personal endeavors
• Encouraging the Big Picture Perspective (i.e. providing “opportunities for the students to see and feel their relationships with the broader world”)
• Teaching with multiple learning styles
• The role of reflection
• Creating emotional investment
• The Re-examination of values
• The presence of meaningful relationships (i.e. relationships of “learner to self, learner to teacher, learner to learning environment” including other learners)
• Learning outside of one’s comfort zone

A few final observations regarding experiential education are worth noting here, especially with regard to their relevance to analyzing the Community-building Institute’s curriculum. First, it has been noted (Andrews, 1999) that experiential education (particularly wilderness adventure programs) can be characterized in terms of the anthropological concept of rites of passage. As first introduced by Arnold Van Gennep and significantly further developed by Victor Turner, the concept of a rite of passage refers to a ritualized experience in which the person under-going, or being initiated through, the experience is inwardly and outwardly transformed (i.e. both their inner sense of self and view of the world and their outer social status undergo transformation). According to Van Gennep, all such rites can be seen to have three stages, a separation stage (in which initiates are separated from their normal, conventional social existence), a liminal stage (during which the initiates become transformed usually by facing and going through a challenge or ordeal from which
transformative lessons are learned), and finally a *re-incorporation* stage (in which the transformed initiates re-enter their society with a new status and role to play). The second *liminal* (and transformative) stage of this process was of particular interest to Turner, who further characterized it as a condition of being “betwixt and between” normal social categories (Turner, 1969, p. 95). He noted how, given their ambiguous and fluid quality, such liminal conditions also have a special intensity, present special challenges and risks, and provide unique opportunities for discovery and transformation. Significantly, Turner also noticed that such situations (which he recognized also occur spontaneously under certain conditions, and not only in ritualized settings) naturally evoke a sense of authentic community (as opposed to normalized social interaction that is grounded in predetermined social roles and rules) among those going through the experience together, a phenomenon that Turner named *communitas*. Ken Andrews (1999) points out that these same stages of rites of passage can be seen to characterize processes of experiential education, particularly wilderness expeditions such as the ones he himself facilitated.

A correspondence between the view of experiential education as rites of passage and M. Scott Peck’s (1998) model of community development is also worth noting here. According to Peck, the experience of authentic community, which occurs within groups of people under certain conditions, can be seen to develop through four stages: 1) *Pseudo-community* (in which social interaction within the group is defined by given, uncritically – and often unconsciously - accepted social norms and roles), 2) *Chaos* (in which expected patterns of social behavior based are disrupted, usually due to one of the group members’ authentic expression of a feeling or perception that are normally socially repressed and guarded against), 3) *Emptiness* (in which normal, predetermined social roles and inauthentic
identities are abandoned, corresponding to Turner’s description of liminality), and 4) True/Authentic Community (true unity in diversity, Turner’s communitas, true community based on authentic bonds of acceptance, love and recognition of the unique – and inherent – value of each other, leading to transformed personal and group identities).

Finally, an eloquent description of the “spiritual core” of experiential education by F. Earle Fox (1995) is worth presenting, again considering its relevance to analyzing the Community-building Institute. In describing this spiritual core, Fox (1995) begins by explaining two “elemental themes” of the Judeo-Christian tradition (which are arguably also at the core of all religious traditions), namely the fundamental, existential problem for human beings, and the solution to the problem. According to Fox, “the problem is the child side of ourselves, our contingent, dependent, and somewhat broken nature,” which causes us to feel basically insecure, to “tend to build a closed, defensive circle about ourselves,” and to keep the central and inner most parts of ourselves “hidden even in [our] most intimate relations” (pp. 155-156).

Dealing with our hurts and fears and insecurities through defensive mechanism, power plays, and manipulation works for a while…. But most of our defenses have the disadvantage of increasingly cutting us off from reality. That part of us that is being defended, the hurting, frightened child within, by that very defense is frequently cut off from the learning experience that could possibly heal and strengthen and mature. Our castles become our prisons… (p. 156).

According to Fox, the solution is “faith,” which he defines as “openness to experience and to reasoning about it” despite the fact that “reality is not always experienced as a friendly place in which to remain open and vulnerable to learning experience.” Faith then is “the choice to risk the hurt and rejection and disappointment” by trusting instead in the possibility that ultimately reality is inherently “gracious and friendly despite the hard knocks.” It follows that developing faith involves “learning with the whole of me.” This kind of
learning, i.e. learning which involves not only the learner’s intellect, but his/her feelings and actions, is characteristic of experiential education. This further implies that, in order to “assist the healing and maturing of the whole person,” experiential education “must provide the context within which one can experience the need and desirability and possibility of facing, rather than avoiding, the brokenness within” (p. 156).

That is, experiential education must provide the context within which one can reexperience one’s dependency and come to terms with it as a good thing, rather than a thing to be denied and defended against. I must experience the ability and the right to be myself and to share that self without denying, hiding, or making excuses for my dependency… Until I can find some place…which I can experience as safe and nourishing and supportive, it will never be possible for me to let the defenses down which prevent the growth and maturing I hopefully seek (p. 158).

In order to create such a context, two key elements should be provided to learners by the facilitators of experiential education, namely “unfailing acceptance” and “uncompromising discipline” or “what might be called the mothering and fathering sides of life.” These complementary elements together create a learning environment characterized by “Tough Love”, in which the message the learners receive from the facilitators is “I will never let you down, I will never let you off.” In such a context, “the hurting child within begins to experience the encouragement to return to full relationship with life…. The child begins to experience the freedom to choose the open road of faith rather than the closed circle of defensiveness” (p. 158).

Transformative Learning Theory

The term transformative learning theory is primarily associated with the work of Jack Mezirow, which he initiated in the late 1970s and continues into the present. This work has
roots in and builds on the philosophies of Paulo Freire and Jürgen Habermas. Extensive research and development of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory has occurred over the last 30 years (for good overviews of this research see Taylor 1998, 2006; Cranton, 2006c, Mezirow, 2000). A significant, alternative approach to and model of transformative education, grounded in Jungian psychology, is also noteworthy. This approach, which I will describe after reviewing Mezirow’s theory, was developed by Boyd and Myers (1988) and continues to be researched and further developed by a number of educators.

Mezirow (1997) defines transformative learning as “the process of effecting change in a frame of reference.” Frames of reference, according to Mezirow, are “the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences,” which “selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings” and “set our ‘line of action’” (p. 5). As such, frames of reference constitute a “double-edged sword” in that they “given meaning (validation) to our experiences, but at the same time skew our reality” (Taylor, 1998, p. 7). The assumptions that comprise a person’s frame of reference derive primarily from his/her “cultural assimilation and the idiosyncratic influences of primary care-givers” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). The goal of transformative learning then is to help the learner “move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience” (ibid, p. 5) and to “become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her values, meanings, and purposes rather than to uncritically act on those of others” (ibid, p. 11).

Mezirow (1997) suggests that to achieve these goals, learning needs to be communicative. Borrowing from Habermas’ theory of communicative action, Mezirow distinguishes communicative learning from three other kinds of learning, instrumental
learning (“learning to manipulate or control the environment”), impressionistic learning (“learning to enhance one’s impression on others”), and normative learning (“learning oriented to common values and a normative sense of entitlement”) (p. 6). Communicative learning, in contrast, refers to the striving of a group of people to reach mutual understanding (and ideally consensus) regarding “the meaning of an interpretation or the justification of a belief.” It involves understanding and being “critically reflective of the assumptions underlying intentions, values, beliefs, and feelings” (p. 6). Taylor (1998, 2006), a notable contributor to research on transformative learning, further clarifies that, in transformative learning, critical reflection most often,

occurs in response to an awareness of a contradiction among our thought, feelings, and actions. These contradictions are generally the result of distorted epistemic (nature and use of knowledge), psychological (acting inconsistently from our self-image), and sociolinguistic (mechanisms by which society and language limit our perceptions) assumptions. In essence, we realize something is not consistent with what we hold to be true (1998, p. 9).

According to Mezirow (1997), it is primarily by means of critically reflecting on assumptions that underlie problems defined by the learners themselves that learners come to transform their frames of references (p. 7).

In Mezirow’s model of transformative learning, critical reflection occurs mainly in the context of what he calls discourse, which he defines as “dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically examining evidence, arguments, and alternative points of view.” Discourse does not simply refer to theoretical discussion on any given topic, but rather focuses on experience that learners recognize as problematic. In discourse, “the meanings that learners attach to their experiences may be subjected to critical scrutiny” and “the teacher may try to disrupt the learner’s worldview and stimulate uncertainty, ambiguity, and doubt in learners about previously taken-for-granted
interpretations of experience” (Tennet, 1991, p. 197). Mezirow (1991) further clarifies that discourse is engaged in “when we have reason to question the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness (in relation to norms), or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what is being asserted or to question the credibility of the person making the statement” (p. 77). Through such discourse, learners can “learn together by analyzing the related experiences of others to arrive at a common understanding that holds until new evidence or arguments present themselves” (Mezirow, 1997, pp. 6-7). It should further be noted that the Mezirow’s educational model emphasizes problematizing social constructs as opposed to more personal, psychological complexes. Thus, transformative learning theory has been characterized as being “grounded in a critique of the contemporary social world” (Elias, 1997, para. 5).

Mezirow offers some suggestions about what his model of education may look like in practice. According to Mezirow, transformative learning must provide learners with opportunities to “practice…recognizing frames of reference and using their imaginations to redefine problems from a different perspective” and “to participate effectively in discourse” (p. 10). The success of such learning,

depends on how well the educator can create a situation in which those participating have full information; are free from coercion; have equal opportunity to assume the various roles of discourse (to advance beliefs, challenge, defend, explain, assess evidence, and judge arguments); become critically reflective of assumptions; are empathic and open to other perspectives, are willing to listen and to search for common ground or a synthesis of different points of view; and can make a tentative best judgment to guide action (ibid, p. 10).

According to Mezirow, therefore, such an educational approach should be “learner-centered, participatory, and interactive, and...involves group deliberation and group problem-solving” (p. 10). Cranton (2002) has further developed this model by suggesting seven detailed transformative teaching strategies, which she names 1) Creating an Activating Event (i.e. one
that exposes learners to “viewpoints that may be discrepant with their own”), 2) Articulating Assumptions, 3) Critical Self-reflection, 4) Openness to Alternatives (i.e. to alternative perspectives), 5) Discourse, 6) Revision of Assumptions and Perspectives, and 7) Acting on Revisions. At the same time, she qualifies her listing of strategies by pointing out that, “there are no particular teaching methods that guarantee transformative learning” (p. 66). Nevertheless, for Cranton, there are a few essential ingredients that should be present when applying any of the seven teaching strategies. These are namely that the teacher should provide for an “environment of challenge…combined with safety, support and a sense of learner empowerment” (p. 66).

A noteworthy alternative conception of transformative education, grounded in Jungian psychology, was developed by Boyd and Myers, who, together with a number of other theorists who have expanded on their work (e.g. Boyd, 1989, 1990, 1991; Boyd & Myers, 1988; Cranton, 2006; Cranton & Roy, 2003; Dirkx, 2000, 2006; Scott, 1997), argue that Mezirow’s approach to transformative learning is limited in its over-reliance on rational methods of reflection. This alternative approach differs from Mezirow’s by virtue of the equal importance it gives to “extra-rational” sources of knowledge and meaning and the vital role it sees for affective and intuitive perception, in addition to rationality, in developing not only a learner’s ability to critically reflect but also what Boyd and Myers (1998) call their capacity for “discernment” as means for personal transformation (characteristics that, in some ways, align their approach to transformative learning more closely with the Community-building Institute than Mezirow’s approach).

According to Boyd and Myers, the goal of the transformational process, and thus of the educational approach they designed to facilitate this process, is “the expansion of
consciousness and the working toward a meaningful integrated life as evidenced in authentic relationships with self and others” (p. 261). They distinguish this goal from Mezirow’s pedagogical aim, which they characterize as that of helping “the ego take control of one’s life by becoming aware of the prohibitions within the personal unconscious and the restraints of reified socializations,” and suggest their goal encompasses and supercedes Mezirow’s by pointing to a more profound and holistic kind of transformation (p. 263). The model of transformative education Boyd and Myers propose, in order to achieve their educational aim, is characterized by three kinds of activities, those designed to facilitate 1) receptivity, 2) recognition, and 3) grieving. In activities designed to elicit receptivity, the learner “assumes the posture of listener, open to receive the symbols, images, and alternative expressions of meaning” that arise from normally unconscious aspects of his/her psyche (p. 277). This involves opening up to and “staying with” feelings, and seeking to discover their meaning.

In the second category of activities that are meant to facilitate recognition, the origins and meanings of feelings, images, and symbols arising from the unconscious become clearer. In these activities, learners are assisted to take ownership of and responsibility for attitudes, behaviors and problematic situations that they had unwittingly helped to create and sustain.

Boyd and Myers (1988) give special attention to the third category of activity in their model of transformative education, namely those that help facilitate a process of grieving, an emotional dynamic which they clarify is “inseparable from psycho-spiritual adjustment to loss” (p. 276). Grieving, according to Boyd and Myers, is a natural response to “the loss of prior ways of seeing reality” (p. 277). It “entails an involuntary disruption of order” which causes “the previous assurances and predictable ways of interpreting reality and making meaning [to] collapse” (p. 278). When the alternative meanings derived from having entered
into “direct dialogue with other components of the Self” call into question prior “assumptions and basic habits of interpretation, the continuity of one’s life is broken and the process of grieving is triggered” (p. 278). “Potentially, grieving becomes a transporting process through which the person may eventually arrive at a fuller, more transformed life,” a transformation which Boyd and Myers emphasize is “more than just a change in ego’s identity, more than just an adjustment in the ego’s control of one’s journey” (p. 278). The grieving process results in “illumination” and “discernment” that allows those who successfully complete the process to review their lives and “arrive at synthetic judgments concerning what they are to let go of and surrender to the past and what they are to hold on to and bring forward into the future” (p. 279). As a result, the learner achieves a “new vision of Self” and a “new transformative relationship” between his/her self and the world (p. 280).

Boyd and Myers (1988) finally note that the key to facilitating an educational process in which the three kinds of activities mentioned above can successfully occur is that the process should be facilitated by educators who practice “two fundamental virtues.” These two virtues are “seasoned guidance and compassionate criticism.” The first refers to “educator’s ability to help individuals carry on the journey’s inner dialogue…to accurately name…emotions…to trace those experiences to their source” (p. 282). The word “seasoned” here implies that the educators are themselves “actively involved in the inner dialogue of their own personal journeys. They must have traveled a similar road” (p. 282). The second virtue of “compassionate criticism” refers to the ability to encourage learners “to question their present mode of operation and way of viewing reality” and to do so with empathy and affection for the learners and reverence for their distinct journeys (p. 283).
This alternative approach has been criticized for being overly psychological and therapeutic and for having lost sight of the dimension of social transformation suggested in Mezirow’s approach. However, it should be noted that it has also been argued that the two approaches to transformative education need not be seen as contradictory or mutually exclusive, but rather may be complementary (Cranton, 2006; Cranton & Roy, 2003).

Farzam Arbab’s and Rachael Kessler’s Two Approaches to Spiritual Education

Beginning in the 1970s, Farzam Arbab (1994, 2000) together with a number of other colleagues in the South American nation of Colombia developed a distinctive approach to education focused on teaching capabilities for facilitating personal and social transformation initially to socially and economically disenfranchised people in rural regions of that country. This approach, embodied in the programs of FUNDAEC (Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias), of which Arbab was one of the founders, integrates moral and spiritual learning with the learning of more standard academic content and skills by utilizing a unique conceptualization of capabilities. Arbab defines a capability is “a developed capacity to think and act in a well-defined sphere of activity and according to a well-defined purpose,” and further clarifies that “the gradual acquisition of a given capability, in addition to the mastering of skills, is…dependent on the assimilation of relevant information, the understanding of a set of concepts, the development of certain attitudes, and advancement in a number of spiritual qualities” (Arbab, 1994, 42). The aim of the resulting educational approach, which Arbab argues should be the aim of any adequate education at this time in history, is “personal growth and social transformation” (FUNDAEC, 2003, p. 17), a “two-
fold purpose” the two aspects of which are viewed as being “reciprocal” and “fundamentally inseparable” (p. 45).

In order to give focus to the specifically “spiritual” aspects of this educational process, I will further highlight a few other specific concepts and principles proposed by Arbab. Arbab (1994) suggests that “the most basic concern of any educational endeavor” is to help learners “develop the gift of understanding” (p. 5). By understanding, he means more than acquisition of information or even intellectual comprehension of concepts (though this latter capacity is one to which he nevertheless gives great importance and sees as generally lacking in modern education). True understanding, according to Arab, also depends on using powers of the human heart and soul such as inner vision and attraction to beauty. He further suggests that true understanding necessarily involves not just theorizing but action.

Intimately connected to the development of understanding are “three other fundamental concerns” of education, which Arbab identifies as “the development and change of attitudes, the enhancement of spiritual qualities, and the acquisition of skills and abilities” (p. 33). By “spiritual qualities”, Arbab refers to “inherent qualities of the human soul, such as love, justice, truthfulness, generosity and compassion, the development of which determines in a fundamental way the patterns of thought and action of an individual” noting that “attempts to change a person’s behavior that pay no attention to these basic spiritual qualities can have partial success at best” (p. 34). He further notes that developing these spiritual qualities is “an essential requisite for achieving a balance between the forces at work in the human mind and heart,” in other words a “balance between personal liberty and social obligation, between being the master of nature and living in harmony with it, between humanism and science, the rational and the emotional.” Furthermore, these qualities should be developed so that they
“moderate one another” (i.e. “justice moderated by compassion, not half-justice; lavish generosity together with humility, not cautious giving; absolute truthfulness acting in the medium of love, not the mixing of truth with lies whenever it is convenient” etc.).

“Otherwise all that is achieved in the name of spirituality is self-righteousness and fanaticism” (FUNDAEC, 2003, p. 84). Arbab adds a further clarification of his view of spirituality by defining it as “an inner condition that should manifest itself in action, in everyday choices, in profound understanding of human nature, and in meaningful contributions to community life and society” (ibid, p. 83).

A survey of Arbab’s writing reveals a few specific pedagogical principles and methods for developing spiritual qualities and integrating spirituality with academic education in general. Arbab (2000) suggests that education must encourage learners to “become increasingly engaged in a quest for meaning” by confronting questions often viewed as being in the province of religion, particularly questions relating to “the nature of the human being, the underlying purposes of individual and collective life, and the direction of society” (pp. 177-178). In addition, stimulating and encouraging the learner’s innate attraction to beauty is another vital means by which education can “sharpen the faculties of the human soul”.

One of the greatest powers that motivates us, and in fact motivates existence itself, is the power of attraction to beauty. [Educators] should be conscious of this fact and constantly strive to awaken this power within the soul of the student. Individuals should be exposed to true beauty from earliest childhood…. The light of beauty has an extraordinary effect on the inner eye, the spiritual eye. It opens it and rends asunder the veils that dim its vision…. Appreciation of beauty is not a matter that is confined to a specific academic subject. It must be addressed in all subjects…” (Arbab, 1994, p. 26).

Finally, spirituality is fostered through breaking down the false dichotomy between theory and action and cultivating of an overall ethos within a learning community that causes
learners to view personal and social transformation as the goals of their education and to seek happiness and fulfillment that can be found in service to humanity. At the same time, Arbab and his colleagues warn of the danger of “identifying spirituality exclusively with service” noting that spirituality is not solely equivalent to certain kinds of activity, but also refers to an internal state of being that education can nurture by allowing for “manifestations of the most profound yearnings of the human soul, such as the search for nearness to God through prayer and meditation” (FUNDAEC, 2003, p. 84).

Another approach to spiritual education worth noting for its utility in analyzing the Community-building Institute’s curriculum is described in Rachael Kessler’s (2000) book, *The Soul of Education*. Kessler explains what she means by “soul of education” in terms of what it looks like “when soul is present in education.” As she explains it, when education has soul,

> the quality of attention shifts, we listen with great care not only to what people say but to the messages between the words – tones, gestures, the flicker of feeling across the face…. When soul enters the classroom, masks drop away. Students…risk exposing the pain or shame that peers might judge as weakness. Seeing deeply into the perspective of others, accepting what has felt unworthy in themselves, students discover compassion and begin to learn about forgiveness…. I use the word *soul* in this book to call for attention in schools to the inner life, to the depth dimension of human experience, to students’ longing for something more than an ordinary, material, and fragmented existence. (p. x)

Based on her years of experience teaching a course called “Senior Passage” to high school seniors (a course she developed that incidentally includes several elements of experiential education mentioned earlier), Kessler identifies “seven gateways to the soul in education” (p. 17). These gateways represent seven different kinds or qualities of learning experience that Kessler found have “a powerful effect in nourishing the spiritual development of young people” (pp. 15-16). She suggests that these gateways “offer both a
language and a framework for developing practical teaching strategies to invite soul into the classroom” (p. 16). She names these seven gateways, 1) the yearning for deep connection, 2) the longing for silence and solitude, 3) the search for meaning and purpose, 4) the hunger for joy and delight, 5) the creative drive, 6) the urge for transcendence, and 7) the need for initiation. The first gateway refers to “a quality of relationship that is profoundly caring, is resonant with meaning, and involves feelings of belonging, or of being truly seen and known.” This sense of deep connection that learners experience may be “to themselves, to others, to nature, or to a higher power.” Kessler describes the second gateway, i.e. longing for silence and solitude, as a “respite from the tyranny of ‘busyness’ and noise” which “may be a realm of reflection, of calm or fertile chaos, an avenue of stillness and rest for some, prayer or contemplation for others.” The third gateway “concerns the exploration of big questions, such as ‘Why am I here?’ ‘Does my life have a purpose? How do I find out what it is?’ ‘Is there a God?’” etc. The fourth gateway may consist of experiences such as “play, celebration, or gratitude” and “also describes the exaltation students feel when encountering beauty, power, grace, brilliance, love, or the sheer joy of being alive.” The fifth gateway, i.e. the creative drive, is connected with all of the other gateways and is experienced through any activities that encourage and elicit creative expression (be it artistic, scientific, inter-personal, philosophical etc.). The urge for transcendence, which is the sixth gateway, refers to “the desire of young people to go beyond their perceived limits” not only in terms of spiritual understanding and awareness per se, but also to experience “the extraordinary in the arts, athletics, academics, or human relations.” And finally, the gateway which Kessler calls “the need for initiation” refers, as its name suggests, to need for rites of passage, which in secondary education involves “guiding adolescents to become more conscious about the
irrevocable transition from childhood to adulthood” and giving them “tools for dealing with all of life’s transitions and farewells” (p. 17).

The “Encounter Group” Approach of Landmark Education

This researcher is aware from conversations with the founder of the Community-building Institute that his prior experience with Landmark Education had a significant influence (though by no means the sole or over-riding influence) on his development of the Institute’s curriculum. Given its significance for understanding the Community-building Institute, this literature review would not be complete without further reviewing this educational approach in addition to the mention we made of it earlier in this chapter when discussing authenticity. Landmark Education, Inc. might be characterized as the offspring and latest version of the somewhat controversial EST training seminars developed by Werner Erhard in the 1970s. Landmark Education provides intensive large group seminars designed to help participants “bring about positive and permanent shifts in the quality of [their lives],” such as major, positive changes in “the quality of their relationships,” “the confidence with which they conduct their lives,” “the level of their personal productivity,” “the experience of the difference they make,” and “the degree to which they enjoy their lives” (Landmark Education, Inc., 2008a). To achieve these aims, Landmark Education offers a series of courses of which the most frequently taken is the three and a half day, introductory course known as the Landmark Forum. In this and other Landmark courses, trained facilitators use what may be characterized as a “Socratic” method to “challenge conventional thinking, discursively examine the nature of human nature, and facilitate participants' explorations of
their lives” (McCarl et. al., n.d., sect. 1 para. 6). While Landmark Education explicitly avoids characterizing its educational approach as moral education (preferring instead to describe it as “philosophical counseling”), central to the self-reflective and transformative educational experiences it seeks to provide is the rigorous exploration and application of such arguably moral principles as “authenticity,” “integrity,” and “responsibility,” for the purpose of inducing what I would characterize as a morally transformative effect on participants.

Earlier in this chapter, I have described a central concept or distinction that is taught and applied in Landmark’s curriculum, namely the understanding that a person’s experience of his/her self and of the world he/she interacts with are not objectively real, but rather is profoundly shaped and constructed, albeit usually unconsciously, by the person him/herself in unconscious collaboration with other participants in a person’s social environment. The Landmark Forum offers a number of private and group learning exercises designed to help the participant reflect on his/her way of being and experience how he/she is constantly involved in (again, usually unconsciously) creating his/her reality by the way he/she interprets experience. The freedom to create new possible ways of being then comes from distinguishing limiting stories of one’s self that one had unwittingly identified with from one’s authentic self as the author of those stories. In this perspective, to live authentically is to live as the conscious author of one’s experience, the creator and realizer of possibilities that one chooses because they bring him/her freedom, joy and fulfillment. To help learners realize this kind of authenticity, the Forum guides learners to recognize and take responsibility for their inauthenticities, which are recognized as attitudes and behavior motivated either by conscious dishonesty and pretense or by the desire to “look good” or by undistinguished stories. Transformative breakthroughs occur when one admits to others and
takes responsibility for these inauthenticities and seeks to “restore” authenticity to relationships that had been damaged or limited by one’s prior inauthenticity.

Sharing such inauthenticities in a large group has the remarkable effect of generating collective awareness of our human commonalities. To protect one's own secret inauthenticity is no longer so vital. We see and appreciate our relatedness by acknowledging together our frailties, shortcomings, and self-imposed limitations (McCarl et. al, sect. 4).

This practice with taking responsibility to restore authenticity to one’s significant relationships leads up to the segment of the Forum that allows learners to invent, in the presence and through the affirmation of others, new possibilities for their lives in general. These possibilities are created and lived by declaring them to others in language that “enrolls” the listeners (i.e. makes them believers and willing supporters) in one’s possibility. This is in keeping with another key element of Landmark Education’s philosophy, namely that new possibilities are literally brought into being through declarative and committed use of language (reminiscent of Freire’s discussion of the “true word” which is at the same time a “praxis” involving reflection and action, and which when spoken transforms the world (Freire, 2005, p. 87)). Integrity, in this view, is “honoring one’s word as oneself.”

By understanding a declaration to be my creation—existing only because of my extant speaking—declaring becomes linked to my very existence. In addition it becomes clear that declarations carry weight only to the extent that I stand for and behind them, as answerable both for carrying them out and confronting the consequences. Integrity and responsibility feed on one another (McCarl et. al., n.d., sect. 9 para. 2).

Summary

In this literature review, I have surveyed literature in two broad categories or domains. The first domain consisted of theories and concepts related to the concept of
critical moral consciousness and Mustakova-Possardt’s psychological theory of how such consciousness develops. The second domain included some overviews of the current field of moral education, as well as literature specifically pertaining to what I have called *morally transformative education*. The purpose of my review of the first domain was to clarify the significance of Mustakova-Possardt’s developmental theory of critical moral consciousness by examining the background, within the fields of philosophy, psychology and education, of key elements of her theory. I also sought to consider how certain of these elements, particularly the concept of psychological development, may be contested. The purpose of my review of the second domain was to situate the Community-building Institute’s educational approach within the broader field of moral education and to identify certain key concepts, principles and curricular elements from morally transformative approaches in particular that may prove to be useful for my analysis of the Institute’s curriculum in action in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER III
THE METHODOLOGY FOR THIS STUDY

In my research for this dissertation, I have chosen to use a case study approach with qualitative methods, since I am examining the Community-building Institute as a possible case of an educational project that stimulates the development of critical moral consciousness as described by Mustakova-Possardt (2003, 2004). A considerable amount of literature on case studies and related research methods exists. Some noteworthy resources for conducting case study research, especially as applied to the social sciences in general and educational research in particular, can be found in Denzin’s (1984) *The Research Act*, (1989) *Interpretive Biography*, and (1989) *Interpretive Interactionism*, Hamel’s (1993) *Case Study Methods*, Denzin & Lincoln’s (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Bernard’s (1995) *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Stake’s (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*, Merriam’s (1997) *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, Patton’s (2002) *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, and Yin’s (2003) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Of these resources, I have chosen Stake’s *The Art of Case Study Research* as a primary guide for developing my study. The choice of Stake’s book seemed particularly suitable because of his emphasis on “the unique case,” his focus on qualitative research methods, and his claim that his case study approach is particularly “effective” for “studying educational programs” (Stake, p. xii). These features seem to make Stake’s guidelines and
advice suitable for my purposes since the case I chose to study was of a unique educational program, i.e. the Community-building Institute is a novel educational program created by one person and implemented in only one high school (which, nevertheless, speaks to broader issues of moral development, particularly to how education may help to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness).

This case study of the Community-building Institute is what Stake terms an 
*instrumental*, as opposed to an *intrinsic*, case study. My choice to study this case was instrumental inasmuch as it was made for the purpose of exploring a particular issue that was of interest and concern to me prior to learning about the case. This general issue may be stated in the form of a question as follows: In what specific ways, or by applying what principles and methods, might educational curricula, environments and teaching approaches effectively stimulate moral development such that learners became committed to seeking truth and beauty and empowered to promote unity, justice, and well-being within their societies? In other words, what factors help to make education effective in preparing and motivating learners to be active agents of their own personal transformation and their society’s transformation? This issue is the primary motivation for my research, and I view the case I chose to study as a means for gaining insight into it. My research questions, my choice of the theoretical framework for the study, and the conceptual structure for my study all stemmed from my interest in this issue. On the other hand, if my primary interest had been in the case itself, and if the central issues with which the study deals had emerged from researching the case, then my study would have been what Stake termed an *intrinsic* case study (Stake, p. 16). This is not to say that no new issues arose from researching the case itself. In fact, the question of just how the “Head-to-Heart Shifts” that the Community-
building Institute facilitates may be related to the development of critical moral consciousness as described by Mustakova-Possardt is an example of an issue that emerged from the research.

_Data Sources and Sampling Strategies_

This case study was conducted during the 2005-2006 school year primarily in the high school that hosted the Community-building Institute, but also in the homes of some students and in off-campus locations where the _We Are One Family_ workshops I observed took place (which included the homes of supportive parents and, on two occasions, a site on a near-by University campus). The public high school that hosted the Institute from 2002 until 2007 is highly-ranked in North Carolina and is located in one of the state’s most affluent school districts. Despite the apparent advantages of this situation, the school and the entire school district suffer (as do many public school systems in the US) from a significant academic achievement gap between white and minority students. The school system’s recognition of the need to remedy this situation provided the original impetus for the development of the Community-building Institute.

In light of the research questions presented at the end of my introductory chapter, the research this case study involved had two foci, 1) describing and analyzing the Institute’s curriculum in action, and 2) studying the effects of the curriculum on learners and other experiences and aspects of participants’ worldviews relevant to assessing their moral

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9 As suggested earlier, I take the Institute’s curriculum to consist not only of its intended outcomes, syllabus, lesson plans and underlying philosophical assumptions, but also of the embodied curriculum in action, i.e. the observed interactions between the learners themselves, between the learners and the Institute’s facilitator, and between the learners and the content of the curriculum.
development according to their own accounts (as well as those of a few of their parents/guardians). In relation to the first focus, data was gathered primarily from my own observations of the We Are One Family and the Applied workshops. Records of these observations took the form of videotape recordings and field notes. In addition, some data on the curriculum was also obtained from conversations with the founder/facilitator and from studying relevant documents produced by the founder as well as by other volunteer supporters of the program. Observations of the program founder’s day-to-day interactions with students in his office space (i.e. the “lavender room”) also provided additional data on what I call the program’s informal curriculum.

As for the second focus of my research mentioned above, my research subjects constituted a sample of 14 current and former participants in the Institute whose ages ranged between 15 and 19 years. In addition to these participants, I also sought some cross-validation of some of their accounts of the effects participating in the Institute had on them from four parents/guardians and one teacher at the high school. Half of my sample of 14 Institute participants are female and half male. Furthermore, eight can be categorized as white (or Americans of European descent), two as African-American, two as Asian immigrants to the United States, one as of Middle-eastern descent but born in the United States, and one as a Hispanic-American adopted by a white family. The sample included learners from both socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds.

The primary method I used to collect data pertaining to the Institute’s participants’ experiences with and impressions of the Institute’s curriculum, as well as other experiences and perspectives relevant to assessing their moral development, was one-on-one interviews.10 The interviews were mostly conducted at the high school, but in some cases occurred at the

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10 The questions I used as guides for these interviews appear in Appendix B.
students’ and parent/guardians’ homes and in one case at a café. Everyone who was interviewed signed a consent form that explained the purpose of the study and how their privacy would be safeguarded. In addition, in the cases of those learners interviewed who were under 18 years of age, a parent or guardian was also required to sign a parental permission form.

To select the 14 students I interviewed, I used three sampling strategies identified by Michael Quinn Patton (2002), namely criterion sampling, intensity sampling and opportunistic or emergent sampling (pp. 234-240). I used a criterion sampling strategy to limit the sample of students I would interview to current or former participants in the Institute’s Caring Pairs Tutoring Program. I also selected my sample with an eye towards ensuring that the sample reflected ethnic and gender diversity and a balance between students from academically (i.e. social-economically) advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. I used these criteria because the Caring Pairs participants could be said to have fully participated in the entire Institute process (as opposed to those who only attended a workshop and did not go on to participate in caring pairs tutoring). I also wanted to ensure racial, gender and socio-economic diversity in the sample because the creation of authentic bonds of community that transcend normal social barriers in the high school is a central purpose of the Institute and, according to the program evaluation findings, was also one of the Institute’s most outstanding outcomes, and further because the ability and tendency to foster such relationships may be viewed as an indicator of developing critical moral consciousness. Thus, it made sense to examine the perspectives of students from many sides of the social divides the Institute was designed to help participants transcend. It must, however, be acknowledged that my final sample was not as reflective of the above criterion (i.e. of a
balance between ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds) as I had hoped. As noted earlier, eight of the sample of 14 learners interviewed were white or European-American. Furthermore, within their tutoring pairs, nine had functioned as “Facilitators,” four as “Believers,” and one had played both roles (i.e. a majority were academically advantaged). Thus, my final sample included more white and advantaged and fewer minority and disadvantaged students than I had hoped. While limiting the generalizability of my findings, this fact does not, I will argue, invalidate this study’s findings regarding the Community-building Institute’s ability to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness.\(^{11}\)

An intensity strategy was also applied inasmuch as I was especially interested in focusing on the students who, from the founder’s perspective, were relatively responsive and committed participants in the Institute and who seemed to have had transformative experiences in the Institute. Since, for this dissertation, I am examining a phenomenon similar to conversion (i.e. a significant change of consciousness implied in the idea of the Head-to-Heart Shift and/or of shifting from a non-CC to a CC developmental pathway) as well as pedagogical factors (i.e. the curriculum and the role of the facilitator/founder) that stimulate such a conversion, and am not interested for the purposes of this study in evaluating the curriculum’s efficacy overall,\(^{12}\) it seemed that focusing my study on cases of those who seemed to have experienced such conversion also made sense.\(^{13}\) While additionally studying workshop participants who did not seem to experience such a conversion or shift in

\(^{11}\) See Chapter 6 for further discussion of this issue.

\(^{12}\) This was the purpose of the program evaluation of the Institute.

\(^{13}\) While one of my purposes for this dissertation is to understand the nature of the Head-to-Heart Shift rather than to determine what percentage of Institute participants experienced this shift (i.e. to speak to the efficacy of the Institute’s curriculum), it is nevertheless worth noting that the program evaluation results do show that large numbers of freshmen who went through a version of the workshop as a whole class activity showed in their responses to a questionnaire that the curriculum did appear to be particularly effective in stimulating self-reported Head-to-Heart Shifts in participants.
consciousness may also be instructive in determining factors that may make some adolescents less disposed to respond positively to the curriculum, this does not seem to be essential for studying the phenomenon of the shift in consciousness and the role that education can play in inducing this shift. Finally, I did at times use an opportunistic or emergent sampling strategy, especially in selecting parent/guardians to be interviewed and in three cases when opportunities arose to interview three former high school students who had participated in the Institute while at the high school.

Since the data collection phase of my research of the Community-building Institute simultaneously served two different purposes, i.e. a program evaluation and this dissertation, I feel it necessary to say more about how I distinguish these two purposes, and, at the same time, how the research and data relevant to each purpose were related and overlapped. The program evaluation of the Institute, which was invited by the Institute’s founder, was designed to assess the Institute’s effectiveness in reaching its four stated goals. As previously noted, these goals were 1) to close the academic achievement gap between minority and majority students, 2) to reduce the effects of racism, 3) to increase parental involvement in the school, and 4) to create the conditions for transformative, compassionate understanding between members of the school community. There was a verbal understanding between myself, the Institute founder and other researchers involved in the evaluation, that I would use the data collected for the purposes of my dissertation as well. The purpose of my case study (i.e. my dissertation) is quite distinct from that of the evaluation. Unlike the program evaluation, this dissertation is not concerned with assessing and measuring the Institute’s effectiveness (even though its apparent effectiveness, which was confirmed by the program evaluation, is the reason I chose to study this case). Rather, I
seek in this case study to gain insight into the phenomenon of how critical moral consciousness develops and how curricula and teaching methods may help to stimulate such development. This distinction between purposes is further reflected in the difference between which sources of data are given greater attention and weight in the program evaluation and in the dissertation. Determinations of the Institute’s effectiveness, i.e. the findings of the program evaluation, were based primarily on quantitative and qualitative data derived from the questionnaires. Indeed, the questions on the questionnaires were primarily designed to help the evaluators make these determinations. On the other hand, data derived from observations of Institute’s curriculum in action and interviews with workshop participants, while somewhat useful as a source of supplementary anecdotes to confirm the evaluation’s findings, was of primary importance for answering the research questions with which this case study is concerned.

Data Analysis

I subjected my interview transcripts and records of the Institute’s curriculum (i.e. video recordings, field notes, notes of my conversations with the Institute’s founder, and documents produced by the founder and other supporters of the Institute) to a content analysis in order to identify significant patterns and themes. The significance of the patterns and themes that emerged was determined by their relationship to my research questions and to Mustakova’s theory of critical moral consciousness. Significant themes and patterns thus identified were coded to facilitate cross-referencing. Consistent with the case study approach, in addition to offering generalizations about these themes, I have also presented
some representative examples of the themes in the form of narratives that tell specific aspects of the Institute’s story. These narratives include stories told in the participants’ own words, stories which can themselves be viewed as unique cases embedded within the larger case of the Institute itself. I analyzed both the accounts of selected participants in the Community-building Institute and my recorded observations of the Institute in action by relating them to Mustakova-Possardt’s description of critical moral consciousness and how it develops, as well as to other concepts taken from some of the pedagogical theories and models reviewed in the previous chapter. I also compared aspects of the accounts of Institute participants I interviewed that seem to closely match Mustakova-Possardt’s description of critical moral consciousness with some other aspects that do not seem to match Mustakova’s construct as closely. Furthermore, I analyzed the Institute’s curriculum with the help of some of the categories and questions for analyzing curriculum suggested by George J. Posner (1995), particularly in relation to identifying the curriculum’s purposes, content, organization, the context in which it developed, and, on a deeper level, to examine its underlying epistemological, psychological and pedagogical assumptions.

Triangulation, Reflections on Positionality and Other Measures Taken to Enhance the Study’s Credibility

In designing and implementing this study, I have sought to ensure what Stake (1995) refers to as “data source triangulation” and “methodological triangulation” by relying on four different research methods and data sources, 1) interviews with student participants, parent/guardians and one high school teacher, 2) observations of the curriculum as recorded in videotapes and field notes, 3) document analysis and conversations with the Institute’s
founder, and 4) the findings of the program evaluation report which are based largely on data derived from questionnaires. Furthermore, I sought to apply “investigator triangulation” and “theory triangulation” by asking independent readers (including members of my dissertation committee) to read portions of my study in order to point out aspects that appear unconvincing to them and to suggest alternate interpretations of my data (pp. 112-114).

In addition to utilizing these forms of triangulation, I also sought to enhance the study’s validity and credibility by viewing the case I was studying from multiple-perspectives (i.e. from the perspectives of student participants, parents/guardians, one teacher, and other stake-holders including the founder/facilitator of the Institute, and from my own perspective as an independent observer and occasional participant). This allowed me to study the curriculum and its impact from both what might be called relatively “objective” and “subjective” vantage points, i.e. by independently and directly observing the Institute workshops and, at the same, eliciting participants’ accounts of their experiences in the workshops and the effects they feel these experiences had on them. I further sought to increase the study’s validity by frequently using the subjects’ own words (and thus to represent an emic perspective), in addition to using theoretical, etic terminology, to characterize their experiences, and by eliciting parent/guardian observations to cross-validate some students’ accounts of changes in their awareness and behavior (i.e. changes that students and/or their parent/guardians attributed, at least in part, to the students’ experiences in the Institute).

14 The questionnaires that were used in the program evaluation were responded to by a total of 93 students who, to varying degrees, had participated in Institute activities. These questionnaires included a pre- and post workshop questionnaire for 27 participants in two We Are One Family workshops in the fall of 2005, another questionnaire completed by 14 participants in the Institute’s caring pairs program, and an additional questionnaire filled out by 52 participants in the two “Applied” workshops given in the spring of 2006.
To further enhance the study’s credibility, I also have examined and will now explicate my view of my own positionality. I note first that my socio-cultural background as a white American male may certainly be a source of bias in interpreting the account of those from different backgrounds. Likewise, I must acknowledge that my personal concern and interest in the goals of the Institute and my choice of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory as the primary theoretical construct I use to analyze my data stem largely from my religious convictions and motivations as a member of the Bahá’í Faith, convictions and motivations I share to a large extent with the Institute’s founder and with Mustakova-Possardt, who are also Bahá’ís. In other words, I recognize that my perspective as a Bahá’í has had a determining effect on what I decided I was interested in looking for and better understanding at the outset of my research and on how I interpreted what I observed during this research. My understandings of the development of critical moral consciousness and the Head-to-Heart Shift, for example, are inevitably colored by my (forever limited) understandings of Bahá’í teachings such as those regarding the nobility of human nature, the interaction between the lower (animalistic) and higher (spiritual) natures of human beings, the process of purifying the human “heart,” the oneness of humanity and the value of diversity, and the goals of overcoming prejudices of all kinds and promoting social justice by synergistic means that unite rather than divide people. Similarly, the perspective I shared in my opening chapter regarding the simultaneous, global processes of integration and disintegration I suggested are currently at work in the world and how these have the potential to eventually lead to the emergence of a just and sustainable world civilization is also a reflection of Bahá’í teachings (although a number non-Bahá’í observers of globalizing trends are reaching similar conclusions). While I am aware that my perspective as a Bahá’í organizes my view of the
data I’ve collected, I regard this perspective as an advantage for this study, since my experience as a Bahá’í gives me a clear, experiential sense of precisely what kind of consciousness and quality of interaction between people that I am looking for in my research, and since the Bahá’í teaching regarding the moral obligation human beings have to independently seek truth conspires against any inclination I may have to ignore certain data and findings simply because they may seem to disconfirm other Bahá’í beliefs.

Furthermore, I have striven to respect the fact that the views and experiences of the Other (in Levinas’ sense of the Other) are distinct from my own views and experience. I accept Levinas’ (1969) vital insight (which indeed I see as implicit in the Bahá’í perspective on “unity in diversity” as I explain in Chapter 8) regarding the “unknowability” of the Other and the ethical responsibility and rigorous openness this entails. Therefore, I have sought to minimize the undue influence of all the sources of potential bias mentioned above by striving to adopt a posture of Patton (2002, p. 84) refers to as “empathic neutrality” while conducting my research of the Institute as well as by my efforts to apply investigator and theory triangulation to this study as I have already mentioned.

I am also aware that my posture as a researcher no doubt affected the data I collected. In conducting my research, I played the simultaneous roles of what Stake (1995) terms the “Case Researcher as Evaluator” (pp. 95-96) and the “Case Researcher as Interpreter” (pp. 97-99). As Stake explains, the former seeks to determine and document a “program’s strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures”, while the later “recognizes and substantiates new meanings” and seeks to be an “agent of new interpretation, new knowledge” (pp. 96-99). I felt that the former posture, in particular, had an effect on the data I collected. For example, it may have influenced the founder/facilitator to possibly feel some internal, conscious or
subconscious, pressure to highlight and steer me towards what he saw as the more successful aspects of his program. Nevertheless, at no time did I sense that he deliberately sought to conceal or misrepresent any aspect of the program. To the contrary, given our mutual interest in the goals of the Institute, I believe that both he and I had a genuine interest in determining, as clearly and objectively as possible, what outcomes the Institute was producing. At the same time, I recognized the founder’s interest in having me and other members of the evaluation team document (and so lend publicity and legitimacy to) what he, and several other observers including myself, saw as the program’s remarkable successes. Be this as it may, I don’t believe the effect of this interest on this study has not have been negative, since the phenomenon I wish to study is likely the same one that accounted for the most successful and noteworthy outcomes of the Institute. I further believe my role as evaluator may have also affected what the student participants in the Institute shared with me. Yet, this effect I suspect may also have been a beneficial one for the purposes of this study, since these students understood, as was generally explained to them by myself and the Institute’s founder/facilitator, that what was learned through the evaluation would ultimately help to strengthen and improve the Institute. This, and the founder’s encouragement of the students I interviewed to be truthful, seems to have motivated these students, especially those very committed to the program, to be forthcoming about both their positive experiences and limitations they perceived in a program which they nevertheless generally seemed to value.
Summary

In this chapter, I have described why I selected Stake’s (1995) *The Art of Case Study* as a primary guide for designing my study. I noted why this case study is what Stake calls an instrumental rather than an intrinsic case study, i.e. because my primary interest is in studying a certain phenomenon or possibility (i.e. how education may stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness) and my interest in the particular case is secondary to this. I also gave some information about the study’s setting, pointing out that I collected my data for this study primarily during the 2005-2006 academic year in a highly-ranked public high school in North Carolina located in an affluent school district in that state.

I then pointed out how my research has two foci that significantly influenced its design, namely 1) describing and analyzing the Institute’s curriculum in action, and 2) studying the effects of the curriculum on learners according to their own accounts (as well as those of a few of their parents/guardians). The primary data I used to address the first focus was collected from my observations of the *We Are One Family* and the *Applied* workshops, records of which took the form of videotape recordings and field notes. Additional data was also gathered from studying documents related to the Institute, informal conversations with the Institute’s founder/facilitator, and observations of what I have called the Institute’s “informal curriculum.” Data relevant to the second focus of my research was obtained primarily by interviewing 14 current and former participants in the Institute (as well as four parents/guardians and one teacher at the high school). These participants ranged in age from 15 and 19 years and were half female and half male. Furthermore, eight of them were white Americans (i.e. of European descent), two were African-American, two were Asian
immigrants to the US, one was of Middle-eastern descent but born in the US, and one was a Hispanic-American adopted by a white family. I noted that I used three sampling strategies suggested by Patton (2002) to select the members of this sample, namely “criterion sampling,” “intensity sampling” and “opportunistic or emergent sampling” strategies to select the members of this sample. I explained why the criterion I used for the first of these strategies were that the members of the sample should be current or former participants not only in the Institute but also in its *Caring Pairs Tutoring Program*, and that the sample should reflect ethnic and gender diversity of the Institute as well as a balance of students from academically (i.e. social-economically) advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. At the same time, I acknowledged that I fell somewhat short of achieving the balance of ethnic backgrounds and of advantaged and disadvantaged students that I had hoped, but further suggested that this fact does not significantly affect the validity of my findings (for reasons I discuss at the beginning of Chapter 6).

I further described how I subjected my interview transcripts and my records of the Institute’s curriculum to a content analysis to identify significant patterns and themes, which were coded to facilitate cross-referencing. Both the participants’ accounts I gathered and my recorded observations of the curriculum in action were examined in light of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of critical moral consciousness and how it develops, as well as some other concepts taken from some of the theories and pedagogical models reviewed in the previous chapter.

Finally, I explained how I sought to enhance the credibility of this study through applying what Stake (1995) has referred to as “data source,” “methodological,” “investigator” and “theory triangulation.” I further suggested that my attempts to view the
case and phenomenon I am studying from multiple-perspectives (i.e. from the perspectives of student participants, parents/guardians, one teacher, and other stake-holders including the founder/facilitator of the Institute, and from my own perspective as an independent observer and occasional participant) also increases the study’s validity. To further enhance credibility, I described what I view to be my positionality in this study, giving special attention to considering how my perspective as a member of the Bahá’í Faith motivates, shapes and informs the research I have undertaken and my interpretation of my findings. I further bore witness to the ethical responsibility I understand derives from acknowledging what Levinas (1969) calls the “unknowability” of the Other, i.e. the imperative to strive for rigorous openness to the Other and the responsibility to strive to faithfully represent them. Therefore, I strove as a researcher to adopt the posture Patton (2002) refers to as “empathic neutrality” (p. 84). I finally discussed how, during the data collection phase of my research especially, I simultaneously played two different researcher roles, i.e. what Stake (1995) terms “Case Researcher as Evaluator” (pp. 95-96) and “Case Researcher as Interpreter” (pp. 97-99), and how this may have affected the data I collected.

I turn now to describing in Chapter 4 the Community-building Institute’s curriculum based on my observations of it in action.
CHAPTER IV

OBSERVING THE INSTITUTE’S CURRICULUM IN ACTION

As alluded to in my introduction, when I refer to the Community-building Institute’s “curriculum,” I use this term in a more expansive sense than is often the case. The conception of curriculum I intend here is consistent with one of the six alternative definitions of curriculum offered by George J. Posner (1995) in his book Analyzing the Curriculum. Namely, I treat a curriculum as “planned experiences” meant to promote learning, as opposed to viewing it solely as a formal list of planned learning outcomes or as a syllabus, or as a content outline, or as a collection of lesson plans. As Posner explains, this perspective on curriculum views it as being comprised of “all the experiences of the students” within an intentional learning situation (p. 7). This understanding of curriculum seems particularly well suited to examining the Community-building Institute’s definitively experiential curriculum. Indeed, to view the Institute’s curriculum, which fosters learning primarily by seeking to create a social and educational context in which authentic communication and relationship is likely to occur, solely as a static and formal “plan” consisting solely of intended outcomes and content to be covered would be to miss something crucial about the process of learning the Institute promotes.

In this chapter, I will seek to present some of my own observations of the Institute’s curriculum in action in the form of a story. Elements of the learners’ own stories of their
experiences with the Institute’s will in turn be presented in Chapters 6 and 7). My hope in this chapter is that the story I tell will capture the dynamic interactions I observed between four dimensions of this learning process (i.e. of the curriculum) I identified. These dimensions are 1) the pedagogical art exhibited by the Institute’s founder/facilitator, 2) the learners’ individual and collective contributions to the learning process, 3) the pre-planned conceptual content and learning activities chosen by the founder/facilitator, which give the curriculum its structure, and 4) relevant aspects of the larger socio-cultural context within which the learning process takes place. In so doing, I also provide information, as suggested by Posner, regarding the curriculum’s intended purposes, organization and underlying assumptions.

The story told in this chapter is a composite story based primarily on my observations of five of the Institute’s workshops (three of these I observed in person and subsequently again on videotapes, and two others which were observed solely by viewing videotaped recordings). This account is also based, secondarily, on my review and analysis of some documents produced by the Community-building Institute, on conversations between myself and the Institute founder/facilitator (who I will refer to from now on by the pseudonym Jeremiah Watson), on observations of what I call the Institute’s informal curriculum (consisting primarily of Jeremiah’s day-to-day interactions with, and the counseling and “coaching” he provides to Institute participants who frequently come to visit him in his office – i.e. the “lavender room”), and on my observations of two promotional events for the Institute I attended (i.e. a talk Jeremiah was invited to give by a local pastor at her church, and an end-of-year “banquet” hosted by the Community-building Institute for all student participants, their parents, school teachers and officials, and other friends of the Institute).
After relating this story in this chapter, I offer an in-depth analysis of my own observations of the curriculum in Chapter 5.

It should also be noted, given my interest in moral development, that the story of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum offered in this chapter naturally focuses on and emphasizes those moments that seemed to be most reflective of and responsible for instances of moral growth and transformation. This means that my story has necessarily left out many other things that happened in the Institute workshops and other components of the curriculum. Also, I did not emphasize the founder/facilitator’s apparent missteps and less successful moments (though some of these may be included in the story). There were instances, for example, when Jeremiah asked questions of workshop participants without waiting to hear their answers, and times when he appeared more distracted or mildly annoyed, and less engaged with the participants than usual. My interest was in those instances when the curriculum seemed to “work,” i.e. that seemed successful in inducing the kind of transformation intended. I therefore chose to focus primarily on these moments and to treat less successful moments as being of secondary importance or as “noise” relative to the “signal” of the successful moments.

*The “Head-to-Heart Shift”*

At the heart of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum, according to both the founder/facilitator, Jeremiah Watson, and most of the student participants I spoke with, is an experience Jeremiah terms the “Head-to-Heart Shift.” It is this experience that the curriculum is primarily designed to engender in learners, and which seems to account for the
Institute’s significant successes (as attested by the program evaluation) in achieving some of its aims. What the founder means by this term may perhaps best be illustrated by a story, which Jeremiah himself frequently shares as an illustration, of two young men who participated in an Institute workshop. The following account is based on one of these two students’ telling of the story, on Jeremiah’s recollections of the incident, and on some videotaped footage from the workshop in which the “Shift” both students apparently experienced occurred.

Jordan, a young white man from an affluent family, describes his life prior to the We Are One Family workshop he attended in 2004 as a period of “innocence.” According to Institute’s founder, the social status of Jordan’s family is evident from the facts that he used to drive a Mercedes-Benz to school and was president of the school’s “yacht club”. After sitting in one of the recruitment sessions Mr. Watson gives to attract students to participate in the Institute, Jordan decided to come to an Institute workshop, a decision that, by his own account, would “transform” his life. In the workshop he attended, Jordan heard much from Jeremiah and from his fellow students about some of their own and other people’s challenging and painful life circumstances. In his own words, Jordan was “shocked” by the “revelation that everything in the world that we live in is not good all the time, that everything isn’t always happy.” Of the stories he heard that day, one particularly impressed Jordan. It was the story shared by a young African-American man, Steve, of his personal experience with his parents taking his lunch money to pay for their cocaine habit. When Jordan heard this, he began to cry. Jeremiah, as the facilitator of the workshop, asked Jordan if he would share why he was crying. Jordan responded through his tears that he was “angry” with himself for “wasting the first 17 years of my life and not knowing that these
things were happening and not trying to change things.” Then, by Jordan’s account, when Steve, “heard me say that and…saw my tears for him, he accepted me as his brother, and when I heard that, it brought such light and happiness in my heart that I accepted him as my brother.” Jeremiah usually concludes his telling of this story by recalling how two days after the workshop, and after Jordan and Steve chose to be paired in the Institute’s *Caring Pairs Tutoring Program*, he asked Steve and Jordan to visit him in his office. When they were in his office, Jeremiah asked Steve, “Son, would you have allowed Jordan to be your tutor before the Institute workshop?” and Steve replied, “No.” Then, Jeremiah asked, “Why are you letting Jordan be your tutor now? What has changed?” and Steve answered with conviction and without hesitation, “Because he’s my brother.” Jordan describes their relationship from that point until they both graduated from high school (after which they lost touch with each other) as one in which “if either one of us ever needed anything…I would do anything within my power to help him…. We were welcome in each other’s homes and he could call me anytime, day or night if he needed me…. And same thing if I needed him.”

At first glance, this example of a Head-to-Heart Shift shows that the Shift clearly involves a transformation in one’s view of and relationship with another. But not any such transformation can be characterized as a Head-to-Heart Shift (e.g. one’s view of the other may have “transformed” simply because one shifted from one opinion or stereotype of the other to another different opinion or stereotype without ever encountering the other in an authentic way). By Head-to-Heart Shift, a more particular and profound kind of transformation seems to be intended. To clarify the idea of a Head-to-Heart Shift, based on my observations of the curriculum and Jeremiah’s uses of the term, I will here tentatively define it as a shift *from* a conventional, instrumental, fear-based perspective on and mode of
interacting with others (which gives salience to relatively superficial characteristics of the other and works to keep one’s own “authentic” feelings and sense of self hidden from the other) and a shift to compassion-based, morally-motivated communication with others (communication motivated by a desire for truer and deeper appreciation of and connection with the other). This shift may further be described as a shift from superficial to authentic relationship with the other, i.e. a shift towards a way of relating in which the normally hidden depth and value of the other is encountered, encouraged and affirmed and in which one feels similarly encouraged to share one’s own authentic depth.

In Jeremiah’s words, as a result of making this Shift, people develop “a new grammar of compassion” and “come together as a family.” In so doing, they discover they can “have a different kind of conversation,” a conversation in which they can resolve practically any problem they face, especially those caused and perpetuated by people’s estrangement from each other (including, Jeremiah suggests, the core problems plaguing public education in the United States).

If we are one family, the question is not “Who is wrong? Who is to blame?” The question is “what is missing?”…. If we’re one family, there can’t be any winners [i.e. if someone else loses]. If we’re one family, all of us have a piece of what’s missing. If we’re one family and we ask the question “What’s missing?” and we have a safe space where we can have that conversation…then together we can find what’s missing.

On the other hand, Jeremiah notes that, “if we are separated, cut off (from each other), if some people know and other people don’t,” then any attempt to solve such a problem “doesn’t work.”

In light of this point, the connection that the Institute’s founder sees between engendering a Head-to-Heart Shift and the goal of reducing the achievement gap in his high school can be well understood. The achievement gap, in Jeremiah’s perspective, is merely a
symptom of deeper “gaps” between students from diverse backgrounds, between students and teachers, between schools and communities, between parents and their children, and between parents and their children’s teachers, all of which reflect a pervasive lack of authentic communication and connection between human beings (i.e. an essentially moral problem). Jeremiah emphasized this idea during the presentation I saw him give at a local church, when he observed,

We don’t understand what the word “understanding” means. Typically, people only understand things cognitively in their heads. For example, if I say “I love you, X,” and I say it a thousand times, you might say “Of course. I hear the words.” Most of us live in the world of words, the menu of concepts. But, this young man might come by and, without saying a word, he might interact with you in such a way that you get present to the presence of love. You would have to argue that he is being more eloquent than all my thousand words. But, most of us don’t notice that, and we don’t notice that because we very seldom experience the experience. It’s not often that I see a person and experience being seen, or that I meet a person and experience being met. Do you know what it means to be seen, to feel like you are seen?

Here, Jeremiah points out a fundamental epistemological premise underlying his curriculum (a premise which can be seen to resonate with similar observations made by Paulo Freire as well as various proponents of experiential and holistic/spiritual education, as I will discuss further in the next chapter). True understanding, as Jeremiah explains it, involves integrating “the head, the heart and the belly -- knowledge, volition and action.”

If you only know the cognitive, the head stuff, you only know a piece of it. You don’t know all of it. But, that’s what schooling has come to be about, to learn and regurgitate information, to be able to pass a test, but you don’t know what you’re passing. This is the state of education in this country… There are a lot of kids in our schools that are having some difficult lives. They need people to be able to relate to them, not theoretically, but experientially. Kids need to know that you see them and that you know where they come from. You’ve got to honor and validate them. Their experiences are real.

To shift, in the context of a particular situation/relationship, towards the kind of authentic understanding of the other Jeremiah describes above (understanding that is authentic
inasmuch as it involves the whole person whose faculties of mind, heart and will work in harmony in response to the other’s truthful revelation of some aspect of his/her self) is arguably another way that the Head-to-Heart Shift might be defined. Furthermore, this shift is linked, in Jeremiah’s view, with the experience of “oneness” with the other and a simultaneous appreciation for the uniqueness of the other (I discuss this seeming paradox in greater detail in Chapter 8). Jeremiah also explains that the experience of this Shift quite naturally evokes the question and sentiment, “How can I/we help?” This connection between the Shift and the desire to help others is underscored by another story that Jeremiah frequently shares, both inside and outside of the Institute workshops, to illustrate what he means by Head-to-Heart Shift, namely a story of an experience author Steven Covey had on a New York City subway one Sunday morning.

According to this story, which Jeremiah took from Covey’s book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Covey is riding on the subway one Sunday morning. There are a few other people sitting quietly in the subway car with him. Then, suddenly a father and his children enter the subway car. As the father sits next to Covey and closes his eyes, his children are running around the subway car yelling and throwing things. Covey becomes increasingly annoyed by this disturbance and, finally, turns to the father and says, “Sir, could you kindly control your children?” The father is startled and replies apologetically explaining that they had just come from the hospital where they had spent the whole night and where the children’s mother died one hour earlier. With that new piece of information, the scene Covey was witnessing took on an entirely different meaning. All of the irritation Covey had been experiencing evaporated immediately and was replaced by the genuine feeling and question ‘How can I help?’
One more aspect of the Institute’s underlying philosophy is worth noting at this point, namely that Jeremiah links the Head-to-Heart Shift directly with what he understands to be true education. He frequently makes this connection by pointing out (again, both within and outside of the workshops) that the Latin root of the word education is *educare*, meaning “to lead out the self”. Thus, Jeremiah suggests that, “when you get educated, you get to know who you are fully. You make the Head-to-Heart Shift and become a fully functioning human being, living on principle, fighting the right fight…with a commitment to serve others.”

*Purpose and Components of the Curriculum*

Based on the principles described above (among others), Jeremiah developed the Community-building Institute for the purpose of addressing what his high school’s School Improvement Plan regards as the school’s “greatest challenge,” i.e. to eliminate the achievement gap between academically, socially and economically advantaged white students, and relatively disadvantaged, predominantly black and Latino students. While his curriculum is distinctive, it should be noted that its overall design and approach has a historical lineage. It has already been noted in Chapter 2, that the Institute was significantly influenced by Landmark Education. It was also influenced by Institutes for the Healing of Racism, which were developed by Nathan Rutstein (1993). Borrowing a some elements

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15 Institutes for the Healing of Racism are proposed by Rutstein in his book, *Healing Racism in America: A Prescription for the Disease*, and may be described as combining elements of fairly standard approaches to “diversity training” or “anti-bias training” developed in the 1960s ad 1970s with the notion of racism being a disease and with some elements of 12-Step Programs. Prior to developing the Community-building Institute, Jeremiah had some association with this other Institute and with Rutstein. The Institute for the Healing of Racism’s influence on the Community-building Institute may be seen in that both focus on a similar issue of moral concern, aim to engender sharing of personal experiences regarding this issue, suggest similar, though not identical, “guidelines for sharing,” and appeal to the concept of “oneness” (though the Community-building Institute focuses more on engendering an “experience of oneness,” in addition to the presenting the idea, than
and inspiration from these two sources, Jeremiah developed a nevertheless distinctive curriculum/learning process, which was, as noted in the introduction, intended to achieve four objectives: 1) to close the academic achievement gap between minority and majority students, 2) to reduce the effects of racism, 3) to increase parental involvement in the school, and 4) to create the conditions for transformative, compassionate understanding between members of the school community. However, of these four inter-related objectives, the fourth one seems to be given the greatest priority by Jeremiah. It is the fostering of Head-to-Heart Shifts among students, and ultimately many other stake-holders as well, that Jeremiah believes provides the surest foundation for achieving the other three objectives (though it could also be said that to achieve this fourth objective is also necessarily to achieve the second, i.e. the second and fourth objectives may be seen as nearly synonymous, albeit the fourth seems more specific). In fact, according to the findings of the Institute’s program evaluation, it is in achieving this goal that the Institute has experienced its most remarkable success, apparently due in turn to its success in facilitating Head-to-Heart Shifts among student participants.

The two primary components of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum can be said to be the We Are One Family workshop and the Caring Pairs Tutoring Program. Other significant components are what I call the informal curriculum and the Institute’s main promotional event, i.e. its annual, end-of-year banquet. Of these components, it is the

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the Institute for the Healing of Racism seems to). But there are also significant differences in both conceptual content and methods. For example, as will be described in this chapter, the Community-building Institute’s asks learners to examine quotes regarding how human beings construct knowledge (i.e. how “the way we see the problem is the problem” and how it is possible to consciously choose to shift from one way of seeing to another) and uses methods explicitly designed to induce “Head-to-Heart Shifts.” This significantly contrasts with the Institute for the Healing of Racism’s seemingly more intellectual approach to learning about and discussing fairly standard topics studied in many workshops and trainings designed to address racism and other forms of discrimination (e.g. the history and nature of racism, institutionalized racism, white privilege, ally-building etc.).
workshop that may be considered the core of the curriculum (and that is indeed considered as such by Jeremiah and by most of the student participants in the Institute this researcher spoke with), since it is primarily through this activity that students are led to experience the Head-to-Heart Shift. Because of this priority given to the workshop, because it constitutes the most successful aspect of the Institute’s curriculum, and most importantly, because, of all the components of the Institute’s whole curriculum, the workshop provides the most outstanding example of what I have referred to as morally transformative education, my analysis of the Institute’s curriculum will focus primarily on the workshop.

In emphasizing the workshop, I will notably be de-emphasizing the Caring Pairs Tutoring Program. This is in keeping with the purposes of this study to examine how education in general, and the Community-building Institute in particular, may help to stimulate critical moral consciousness. Nevertheless, for the sake of providing a complete and accurate picture of the Institute’s entire program, I will briefly describe here this less successful component of the Community-building Institute. After having experienced a Head-to-Heart Shift in the We Are One Family workshop and come to view each other as members of one family, workshop participants are offered at the end of the workshop a practical means by which the authentic caring they have experienced between each other may be sustained and translated into a means whereby every family member may be able to achieve academic success. This suggested means is the Caring Pairs Tutoring Program. Each workshop participant is invited to join a tutoring pair either as a “Facilitator” (i.e. an academically advantaged student) or as a “Believer” (i.e. a disadvantaged student in need of assistance with academic learning). The former provides academic support to the latter inside a relationship based on mutual care and on the premise that both parties in this tutoring
partnership have something to offer and something to learn from each other (i.e. though the academic learning will most likely be facilitated primarily by one person and received by the other in the relationship, there are other kinds of learning in which these roles may be reversed). The advantage of this approach to peer tutoring, in theory, lies in the strong degree of commitment both parties will have to the other in the relationship. However, while program evaluation results did show that some notable, committed caring pairs did result from the workshops and had the desired results of helping “Believers” significantly improve their academic performance (as measured by improvements in their GPA), in most cases, these tutoring relationships failed to continue functioning after only a few meetings due in part to the lack of an administrative structure to monitor and support the tutoring pairs’ functioning after they had formed and in part to lack of sustained commitment by one or the other party in the caring pairs. As a result, the Institute’s most limited success was in relationship to its first objective, i.e. eliminating the achievement gap in the high school.

Before moving on to describing the We Are One Family workshop, I will offer a few observations of the Institute’s informal curriculum. What I refer to as the Institute’s informal curriculum consists of Jeremiah’s day-to-day interaction with, and encouragement and “coaching” of students who daily come to visit him in his office. Three accounts of visits to Jeremiah’s office may suffice to illustrate the important role and effect of this component of the curriculum. The following account was offered by CJ, a young African-American man (More about CJ and his story will appear in later in this chapter and in Chapter 6).

Coming into to Mr. Watson’s office, I feel like it’s a safe place where I can go where I can just talk and explain about my feelings and stuff. You can trust Mr. Watson. By coming into his room, you can feel comfortable. You don’t have to feel judged, because you know there’s someone who understands. Not everything is about race. It’s actually personal things that’s happening in your life that affects when you come to school, and so when you come to Mr. Watson’s office, you can tell him.
Daryl, another participant in the Institute about whom we will hear more later, had this to say about his visits to Jeremiah’s office, when he was one of the MCs at the end-of-year banquet.

The lavender room [i.e. a reference to Jeremiah’s office, which was painted lavender at his request and which he has decorated and furnished so as to create a peaceful oasis that contrasts significantly with the institutional feel of the rest of school building] is an escape from the stress-filled atmosphere of high school. Just simply looking at the lavender room you can see its difference from every other room in the high school. Students come to the lavender room at lunch or before or after school for advice, just to talk, or to escape from the madness in the cafeteria during lunch. Without Jeremiah, the Lavender room would not exist. Jeremiah is to many students a mentor, a role model, and most of all a friend.

Finally, Jeremiah himself offers this account of a coaching experience he had when another teacher at the school brought a young African-American woman who was disrupting his class to see Jeremiah. Jeremiah asked her to look at a picture he has in his office (I will write more about this picture later in this chapter) of a cat looking in a mirror and seeing itself as a lion.

All of my students have to look at this picture, because I can put a whole life together with this picture. It’s a very important picture, for me as it relates to education as I understand it. So I asked her to describe the picture and she described it, and I said “Do you know why I asked you to describe this picture?” She said “no.” I said, “Let me tell you why I asked you to describe it. If the cat can see itself as a lion, can you see yourself as a princess? I see you as a princess.” I asked her for her name, and she said her name was Olivia, and I said “From now on I will refer to you as princess Olivia.” She smiled. Then, a few seconds later, I said to her, “But, I’m not the only person who sees you as princess Olivia. Your parents also see you as princess Olivia because they put braces in your mouth.” And she got that I saw her a little deeper, and within seconds she began to cry. And I was surprised. Why is she crying? I didn’t think I had said anything to cause her to cry. Then I asked her why she was crying. She said because she felt “loved.”

The “We Are One Family” Workshop

In describing the We Are One Family workshop, first a few words should be said about how workshop participants are recruited. As already mentioned, Jeremiah gives
presentations in regular classes at the high school for the purpose of informing students about
the work of the Community-building Institute and recruiting those who are interested to
participate in a *We Are One Family* workshop. He also strongly encourages the “at-risk”
students he works with in his role as the high school’s Minority Advocacy Specialist to come
to a workshop. These students are brought to Jeremiah’s attention, or “assigned” to him, by
other guidance counselors at the school or by parents who hear of Jeremiah’s reputation as a
dedicated, caring advocate for minority students and who seek him out personally to request
that he help their son or daughter. Finally, another recruitment method is via certain students
who are already involved in the Institute and who interest some of their friends to come to a
workshop. As a result of these recruitment efforts, Jeremiah is able to ensure that
intentionally diverse groups of students participate in each workshop. Normally, roughly
half of the students who attend a given workshop will be white Americans and the other half
will belong to ethnic minorities with the majority of these being African-American, but
which will usually also include a few Hispanic and Asian students.

The Community-building Institute’s workshops generally occur on weekends in the
homes of well-to-do parents who support the work Jeremiah is doing and who usually have a
son or daughter who previously attended a workshop and became very committed to the
Institute as a result. Occurring as they do outside of school facilities and normal school
hours, attendance is necessarily voluntary. Recent exceptions to this pattern were two
“Applied” workshops that took place for the first time in the spring 2006 during regular
school hours at a location on the campus of a nearby University. These workshops were
given to all the high school’s freshman biology students, at the request of the school’s
Biology teacher, for the purpose of improving classroom dynamics. They were treated as
field trips requiring parental permission to attend, but if such permission was received, attendance was expected. Another distinction between these and normal We Are One Family workshops is that the “Applied” workshops were not intended to lead to the creation of tutoring pairs as are the normal workshops. Aside from these differences, the content of the normal and the “Applied” workshops is largely similar.

As students arrive at the home where the workshop takes place, usually a comfortable suburban home with a living room large enough to accommodate a workshop with anywhere from 20 to 30 high school student participating. They are generally greeted by Jeremiah and asked to write their names on sticky nametags and to wear these during the workshop. They are also asked to write their names and contact information on a sign-in sheet. At this point, the booklet/handouts made for the workshops are distributed, one for each participant. When a sufficient number of students have arrived, the workshop begins. We Are One Family workshop generally appear to have seven parts, which I label as follows; 1) Introductions (to the Institute, to the workshop, and of all the participants and the facilitator to each other), 2) Presentation of the Conceptual Framework for the Head-to-Heart Shift, 3) Video Segment from The Color of Fear, 4) “Sharing”/Dialogue Time (during which the Head-to-Heart Shifts generally occur), 5) Dinner (a meal is usually prepared by the host(s) for all of the participants), 6) an Introduction and Invitation to the Caring Pairs Tutoring Program, and 7) Assessment and Closure.
Introductions

From the outset of the typical workshop, and throughout most of it, the learners/participants usually sit in a circle or semi-circle on chairs or couches and on the living room floor facing Jeremiah. Also from the beginning, Jeremiah’s uncommonly engaging presence is felt. His eye contact, which he tries to make with every participant from the beginning, is powerful, earnest and affirming. A large, black man of Caribbean decent, his imposing physical frame and resonant voice also seem to make an impression. The students listen to what he has to say. Jeremiah almost always begins, after giving his name and the name of the workshop, by acknowledging the participants for coming to the workshop on a weekend when they could have been doing something else. He then promises them that they will have much closer relationships with each other at the end of workshop than they do now at the start. “People you thought you knew before, you’re going to know them in a different way. You’re going to say ’Wow! I didn’t know that about them!’” Jeremiah tells the participants, “We’re going to experience that we are really one family, not just as an idea but for real. So that you X (pointing out and naming one of the workshop participants) can know for real that Y (pointing to and naming another participant) is your brother/sister. And since we are one family, we’re going to learn to take care of each other.” Usually, at this point, the hosts for the workshop are introduced and thanked with a round of applause, and any guest observers (such as graduate student researchers like myself and/or any other visitors who are not high school students) are also introduced.

During this introductory part of the workshop, there are a number of ideas, anecdotes and personal testimonies Jeremiah makes use of (not necessarily always in the same order
and all in the same workshop) to articulate in a compelling fashion what he sees as the central problem human beings are facing at this time (i.e. lack of unity, true connection and care), and, at the same time, to refer to ideas and experiences he suggests can solve the problem. He does this with reference to both local and global manifestations of the problem and with allusions to how the experiences they are going to have in this workshop can be part of the solution. He also does it in such a way as to get across the immediate relevance of these ideas to the learners.

Usually, Jeremiah begins by sharing that, when he was studying philosophy in Massachusetts, he encountered an idea or story that became an inspiration for the work he is doing with the Community-building Institute (an idea that in fact comes the teachings of the Bahá’í Faith). Jeremiah shares that, according to this idea, the human family can be compared to a rose garden with roses of many different colors, and all being nourished by the same sunlight. He notes that if the roses in the garden were all the same color, the garden would be monotonous and less beautiful. Jeremiah shares that when he first heard this story, “I came to the conclusion that I’m a black rose in the garden of life and I have a right [Jeremiah usually emphasizes this word in this context] to be on the planet.” Then, Jeremiah usually singles out one of the participants in the audience and observes, “X, I see you as my white rose sister/brother” and asks “Can you see me as your black rose brother?” The participant he is speaking invariably responds affirmatively (i.e. with what appears to be genuine sympathy for the idea), and Jeremiah then asks the whole group, “Isn’t that a nice idea? What if we could all see each other like that?”

To bring home (or, as Jeremiah says, to “presence”) personal and local manifestations of the problem (i.e. of the “limit situation” that “dehumanizes” them, to use Freire’s
terminology) (2005b, p. 99 & p. 43), in a way that seems to make the problem recognizable to all of the participants, Jeremiah usually observes that, “It’s not often that I see a person and experience being seen, or that I meet a person and experience being met.” “Do you know what it’s like to be seen? Do you know what it’s like to be met? It feels nice to be met, to be validated as a human being.” Another question Jeremiah often poses, to make the same point is, “Have you ever had that feeling that ‘They don’t get me. They don’t understand me.’?” When some of the participants indicate that they have, Jeremiah notes, “Well, it’s true. ‘They’ don’t get you. They don’t understand you.” From this point, Jeremiah again come back to suggest that all people have a need and longing to be truly seen, understood and affirmed as human beings.

As for the local, social manifestation of the problem, Jeremiah will either make or solicit the observation that estrangement between diverse groups of the students in the high school is very common. “You have whites sitting over there in the cafeteria, while blacks sit over here, and Hispanics over there.” Students walk down the same hallways and may go to the same classes and most don’t know each other. As a young man in one of the workshops observed, “Now a days people don’t take the time to get to know each other. You might be sitting next to someone and not know anything about them.” Jeremiah alludes to the institutional and systemic nature of the problem by noting that “We have a problem called racism…Typically, the kids in the AP classes are usually white, and the one’s making Ds and Fs are students of color.” Jeremiah also points out global manifestations of the problem of human estrangement with reference to current events and situations. At the time of my research, he often referred in the workshops to Hurricane Katrina that hit New Orleans in August 2005 and its aftermath, noting how on television, “You saw people dying in the flood
waters. You noticed that most of the people who died were black people. Something is wrong. Some of my colleagues were surprised that there was so much poverty in New Orleans. Why didn’t they know that?” The points of how normally unconscious we are of each others’ suffering and how easily we complain about our own situations when many others face much worse is made, and is underscored by the seriousness and moral passion apparent in Jeremiah’s voice and eyes. In the previous year’s workshops, he emphasized the same point of the tragedy of human estrangement by noting that, “we live in a world where people are beheading each other on TV.” In addition, in every workshop this researcher observed, Jeremiah shares a statistic, which he asks that participants not “listen to…as a fact, but listen to it as a concern and think about what your education may help you to do to alleviate this problem.” Namely, he points out that, according to then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, “of the six billion human beings in the world, three billion of us are living in the world on less than two dollars a day, when we currently have enough resources in the world so that all of us could be living in a comfortable cottage and having three meals a day.” Jeremiah then observes that all of the workshop participants should consider how they are more fortunate than that and suggests that, “it’s your generation that must change this situation.”

This leads to a presentation of the workshop’s purpose. “In our high school, you see a lot of separation, right? You see black kids here and white kids over there. But in this room, you have a lot of different people coming together. The purpose of our coming together is to produce what I call the Head-to-Heart shift, to move from our heads to our hearts, because as Gandhi said ‘Until the hearts of men change, nothing will change.’” This statement by Gandhi also appears on the cover of and again inside the booklet/handout for
the workshop that each participant receives, and will likely be referred to more than once
during the workshop, sometimes followed for the sake of emphasis with the observation
“Notice, he didn’t say ‘until the heads change’, but ‘until the hearts change.’ Typically, in
school, we gain a lot of head stuff. We learn a lot of facts that we regurgitate on tests, but we
don’t know what those facts mean. It doesn’t make a difference.”

To clarify what he means by Head-to-Heart Shift, Jeremiah shares one or both of the
stories referred to earlier in this chapter as examples of the shift (i.e. the story of Jordan and
Steve experience in the Community-building Institute and Steven Covey’s story in the New
York City subway). He may also note that the shift can also be understood as moving from
the “menu” of words and concepts, which people engage with in their “heads”, to the “meal”
of experience, which occurs when we authentically come to know and connect with other
people through the heart. He also often points out, bringing home the importance and
relevance of the work they are doing in the workshop, that those workshop participants who
are getting Ds and Fs will be able to find new family members who can help them improve
academically. Furthermore, he suggests that those participants who may “grow up to be in a
position to help shape public policy, it will make a big difference that you know where
people with very different experiences from yours are coming from, and the policies you
make will be more sensitive.”

During this introductory portion of the workshop, Jeremiah also plays a seven-
minute, introductory video about the Community-building Institute that a couple former
Institute participants produced for him. The video begins with segment from Martin Luther
King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, with a musical soundtrack added, followed by scenes
recorded at previous We are One Family workshops interspersed with text frames that
provide a written narration and explanation of key points of the Institute’s philosophy. Some of these emotional scenes from previous workshops appear to capture moments some workshop participants experienced (and articulated) profound realizations (i.e. Head-to-Heart Shifts).

Also, during the introductory segment, Jeremiah usually shares what amounts to a personal testimony that serves both to demonstrate his authenticity when sharing the ideas he does in the workshop (i.e. by showing that he is speaking from his own experience, not just in platitudes, and cares greatly about the ideas he shares) and to encourage and show what is possible to participants who may be going through similar difficulties to those Jeremiah overcame. In one workshop, this testimony consisted of something like the following:

I came to this country and I overcame a lot of difficulties including homelessness. I went to two of the best schools in this country. I’m saying for you to see what’s possible and why I’m doing this work…I’m trying to introduce you to myself by showing you that I saw something that needs to happen in our world. As Gandhi says, we need to be the change that we want to see happen in the world, so I’m trying to be the change. I came from downtown Jamaica and I went uptown to Harvard University so that I could come to mid-town [to their high school] to connect heads with hearts…because you are the next generation and I would like you, when you grow up and when you become future leaders, to be more sensitive and make public policies that are more sensitive because you won’t be separated from others, because you will understand what X is going though and X will understand what you are going through.

While Jeremiah has this introductory conversation with the workshop participants, some fear and discomfort may be visible on some faces of participants, but, for the most part, participants appear to be very engaged by Jeremiah and impressed by the earnestness and passion with which he speaks and looks into their eyes. The majority of them sit quietly, watch Jeremiah and listen to what he is saying, sometimes nodding their heads in agreement with some of the things he says.
Another thing Jeremiah usually does during the introductory portion of the workshop is introduce the format for the remainder of the workshop.

First we will introduce ourselves in a particular way, then there will be a presentation in which I will share with you a particular ‘lens’ that I invite you to look through. I invite you to pay attention to some ideas I’m going to share with you to provide a context for your listening, so that we can actually see that there are ways we appropriate information. Following this, we’re going to create an experience in which we can experience that we are one family. Afterward, we’re going to have a meal. Have you brought your appetite? Then we’re going to have a discussion about the Caring Pairs Tutoring Program.

Finally, in the introductory portion of the workshop, Jeremiah guides the participants to introduce themselves. He does this by going around the room and asking each participant to share their name, one good thing about themselves that other people in this room don’t know, and what are your hopes and concerns are for the workshop. Jeremiah also often asks individual participants how many other people in the room they know. Typically, the participants remark that they have seen a number of the other participants in school, but that they don’t actually know more than one or two other participants personally. Then Jeremiah may make a point, as he did after a workshop participant indicated that he knew only one of other person in the room, by saying to the group, “I want you to all take note of this. What does this say about our high school? Are you excited about the possibility of getting to know each other deeply?! Isn’t that a good idea?”

After each person introduces him/her self to the group, Jeremiah generally makes an appreciative and affirming comment about each one, and not infrequently leads the whole group to applaud something noteworthy that an individual has shared about themselves. This authentic modeling of an affirming attitude and behavior in relation each participant (though understandably not always achieved with equal success in relation to every participant), seems to have the effect of gradually helping the group to become increasingly comfortable
with each other and with the workshop and to help them develop the habit of affirming each other and of viewing and treating one another as members of one family. It also seems to help participants become increasingly comfortable sharing with the group. Some examples of Jeremiah’s affirming interactions with participants during this activity can be seen in the following composite account.

After having given his instructions about what he wishes each participant to say when they introduce themselves, Jeremiah asks a white female student sitting immediately to his right to introduce herself. She shares her name and notes that the reason she came to the workshop is, “I think this workshop is important because we are the future and it’s important that we realize we’re all in this together. I also want to get to know people.” When Jeremiah asks her what one good thing is about herself that he would like to share, she says with a slight smile, “I’m athletic and I’m a good student.” Jeremiah responds saying “Very good!” and claps. A hand-full of other workshop participants join in the applause. The next person sitting in the circle is a young African-American man, CJ, who shares his name and that he came to the workshop because he thinks it’s important for “different ethnic groups to come together.” Asked to share something good about himself, he hesitates and appears to be having difficulty thinking of something to say. Jeremiah helps him by suggesting that he, “Say, ‘I’m lovable.’” CJ repeats, “I’m lovable,” and then breaks out in a big smile. Jeremiah says “Excellent!” and applauds him. More participants join in the applause this time. (Jeremiah and CJ already know and have bonded with each other at this point in time. Jeremiah has been counseling and “coaching” him at school.)

The next person in the circle is a young African-American woman, who Jeremiah invites her to introduce herself. She shares her name, states that one good thing about herself
is that “I’m good at writing” and shares that the reason she came to the workshop is, “I also think it’s important that lots of ethnic groups come together, because I think that’s the problem with half the things going on in the world is that people just can’t get together…I like the idea that people who were complete strangers can get to know and learn about each other.” Jeremiah replies, “Thank you so very much for coming.” Then, the next person in the circle, a soft-spoken young African-American man, says his name and in a calm, unassuming voice shares that, “One thing I’m proud of is that I’m helping to raise my little brother who never knew who his father was.” He indicates that he doesn’t have anything more to say with the words, “That’s it.” Jeremiah, touched by what the young man’s shared, says, “That’s beautiful!” and then asks the whole group “Do you hear that?!?” Looking directly into the young man’s eyes, Jeremiah says, “You’re an extra-ordinary person and you have the kind of stuff that the world needs. And I acknowledge you for that.” Then, addressing the group, Jeremiah says, “Give him a hand!” and leads all of the workshop participants in applauding the young man. Next in the circle, a white female student shares her name and that “I came here because I thought it was a great idea that people not caring about what color they are come together and are like family and that people are learning from each other.” “Excellent!” says Jeremiah. Next, he invites a young white man, who is next in the circle, to introduce himself. The young man says his name and shares,

I’m here because I’m really frustrated by what I see in school. As a senior, it seems like with every year that passes in my classes there are fewer students who are different than me. The majority in my classes are white or Asian and rich. I hardly get a chance to meet African Americans or Hispanics or anyone that might come from a lower class background. I value diversity I really want to learn from other people. I think it is overall important for people to come together and get to understand each other.
Following up on what the young man shared, Jeremiah asks, “How do you suppose your education has been robbed by not having more diversity in your classes?” The young man responds saying, “I think the biggest things it does is it makes people think a certain way and they don’t come to see other people. I know a lot of people who were really nice but now have become more racist and I think not being exposed to diversity caused that.” Jeremiah looks at the young man and affirms his sentiments saying, “We need more people like you, because you care.” Then, Jeremiah acknowledges another young white man in the circle, who hasn’t introduced himself yet, noting that, “I want you know that you have beautiful eyes. I look at you and I really get that you’re looking at me. Do you get that? Do you know what I mean?” The young man says ‘yes’. Jeremiah emphasizes for the sake of the whole group understanding, “That’s authentic communication.”

The “Lens”: Jeremiah’s Presentation of the Conceptual Framework for the Head-to-Heart Shift

After explaining that he is now going to present a “lens” that he is inviting the participants to see through in preparation for the dialogue they are going to have with each other after they watch a video clip together, Jeremiah uses an overhead projector to project a series of quotes and images on a screen, quotes and images that also appear in the booklet/handout each of them received at the beginning of the workshop. In addition to reinforcing and deepening the idea of the Head-to-Heart Shift, these quotes and images present a message and argument about how people construct, and have the power to re-construct, their views of themselves and their world. The basic idea may summarized as follows, 1) that our problems stem from how we perceive our selves and our situations, 2)
that some ways of seeing are self-defeating/disempowering and focus on superficial
differences, while others are empowering and bring into focus our deeper connection and
oneness with others, and 3) that when they become aware of this, every person has the power
to choose how they to perceive themselves and others. Though not always presented in the
same order in every workshop, the quotes and images that Jeremiah presents in this segment
of the workshop are the following.

Jeremiah is likely to start with a quote from Steven Covey, which he projects on a
screen using the overhead projector. The quote is, “The way we see the problem is the
problem.” With this and every subsequent selected quote, Jeremiah asks one participant in
the audience to read the quote and then shares some comments. He will likely follow up the
reading of this quote with an explanation such as, “If you have a glass like this [pointing to a
glass that is half empty/half full], how would you describe it? You can see it as half empty or
half full. Those who see it half empty are pessimists and those who see it half full are
inclined to be optimists. You choose how to see it. If you have a choice to see it half empty
or half full, why choose to see it half empty?”

This thought is followed (or sometimes preceded) by a quote from Albert Einstein,
which states “The problems we face cannot be solved at the same level at which they were
created.” In one workshop, Jeremiah offered the following comment after this quote was
read.

At our high school, we have a problem called the academic achievement gap. Black
kids and white kids are sitting separately in the cafeteria and they tend not to be given
the same opportunities. We’re trying to solve a problem, but we have to go to a new
place to solve the problem. We can’t stay at the same place. This problem was
created by cognitive people without a lot of heart. So we’re trying to create a new
come-from place where we have a Head-to-Heart shift so we can get to know each
other more powerfully. Not to ignore the head, but to include the heart.
The next idea that Jeremiah shares is through an image, which as he always points out in workshops is a picture that he has framed in his office and that always he asks students who come to his office to look at and describe. The image is of a cat looking into a mirror and seeing in the mirror an image of a lion. “What matters most is the way we see ourselves,” Jeremiah comments.

Here we see the choice we all can make. Here is a cat looking in a mirror and choosing to see itself as a lion. Why is this important? All of us have lion or lioness inside of us. When you X [referring to one specific workshop participant] choose to be a lion, you can go anywhere in the jungle. If you behave like a cat, you can’t really be powerful in the world. So, I use this image in my office to show students that if they choose to see themselves as a cat and they get Ds and Fs and get into a lot of trouble, then they’re not honoring the lion inside them. It is a choice to see yourself as a cat or a lion.

In the first workshop this researcher observed, these ideas at this point led to an interesting exchange which I include here to show among other things, that it is not uncommon that Jeremiah’s sharing of this “lens” provokes questions or comments from some workshop participants, which lead to brief discussion. A participant raises his hand, and, when called on by Jeremiah, asks, “Isn’t how you see things determined by your circumstance? Let’s say the glass used to be completely full and I drink it half way, then it would be half empty, because it was already full.” Jeremiah shows appreciation for the thoughtful question, and then replies, “The context is key. Relative to the glass that was full, if you drank half of it, it’s now half empty. But, if I ask you independently of the past to describe the glass right now, you have a choice of saying it’s half full or half empty. What I’m asking you to consider is that it is better to try to look at the glass in a more optimistic way.” Then, another participant in the workshop interjects, “I agree that there are more optimistic ways to look at it, and maybe that’s a good way to look at it, but both ways are true [i.e. the glass is both half empty and half full].” Jeremiah responds to her by noting,
“Yes, both are true. The cat, for example, is a cat. The cat is not wrong to see itself as a cat. But what I’m saying is that there is something inside the cat that sees itself as something more. For example, when I first came to this country I didn’t have my mother or father or brothers and sisters to help me. I had to find the lion inside myself to help me overcome homelessness. If I had identified only with the cat in me, I wouldn’t have been able to go to Harvard.”

Another image that Jeremiah shares is a classic picture which looked at one way appears to be a young woman with her head turned, and viewed from another perspective looks like an elderly woman. Jeremiah asks, “How many of you have seen this picture? What do you see in this picture?” Invariably, some will see the young woman and not the old one, some will see the old woman and not the young one, and one or two, who may already be familiar with the picture, will see both women in the image. Jeremiah invites one of those who see both women to come up to the screen where the image is projected and point out how to see the young woman and how to see the old woman. In one of the workshops, after a participant explains the two ways to see, another participant in the audience suddenly exclaims, “Ohhh!!” Echoing her, Jeremiah also says “Ohhh!!” with some laughter, and then comments to the whole group.

Excellent! Did you hear when she said “Ohhh!”? That is a very important point for this workshop. Something got turned on in her head that wasn’t there before. It’s a new understanding. You’re seeing something you didn’t see before. That’s called a new possibility (here, Jeremiah refers to an idea from Landmark Education – see Chapter 2). You remember the story of Jordan that I told earlier. The same thing happened then. He saw something he hadn’t seen before and his heart got touched. He moved from his head and his heart got engaged and he began to cry. So, the way we see the problem is the problem. This is very important.

The next idea Jeremiah shares is from chemistry. It’s worth noting that for some workshop participants (most likely ones that haven’t taken chemistry before) show some
difficulty in understanding this example, but some others seem to appreciate it. This idea is conveyed by means of a table with three columns and two rows. At the top of the first column is the word “water,” at the top of the second column “salt,” and at the top of the third column “Epsom salt.” The first row is labeled “atomic lens” and shows that the chemical formulas for each of these three substances are different. The second bottom row is labeled “sub-atomic lens,” and looking at this row we see the three apparently different substances are, in fact, made up of the same things, i.e. neutrons, protons and electrons. Jeremiah comments that, “It’s important to not privilege the surface of who we are over the essence of who we are. Here is an excellent example. If we look through the atomic lens, we see that water and salt have different chemical make ups and different properties, but when we look these three things through a sub-atomic lens, we see that they are made of the same things, protons, electrons and neutrons.” In this way, Jeremiah attempts to reinforce the idea that a deeper oneness can be seen to underlie human diversity. In one workshop, a young African-American woman comments “I think it’s kind of cool that if we look at it one way, the three different things look completely different. But if you look at what they’re made up of, if you look deeper and closer, they turn out to be made of the same things.” Jeremiah responds saying, “Excellent! That’s the point. Similarly, if we see cognitively through the head, we see differences. But, when we see through the heart, we see the same thing. So, the purpose of this workshop is to make a Head-to-Heart shift, so that, when we see through the heart, we don’t see differences, we see the same thing.”

Then, Jeremiah shares a quote from Teilhard de Chardin that reads, “Rather than seeing ourselves as human beings having a spiritual experience, we should see our selves as spiritual beings having a human experience.” He comments on the idea.
Can you see the same shift again? In other words, rather than see ourselves as blacks and whites sitting in chairs, we can see ourselves as spiritual beings having a human experience. If the cat saw itself as a lion, then this is analogous to the human being seeing itself as a spiritual being. There’s something in us that is ineffable, that is more powerful. We need to privilege that. This is why I can see X and Y [referring to two participants in the workshop] as my brother and sister, as my family. But there are some people who still cannot see them as family, because they are looking at the surface. We can choose to identify with how we look on the surface or we can choose to identify ourselves as deeper, spiritual beings. I’m saying that I am a spiritual being having a human experience because it gives me more access to power. It gives me more access to being able to control and invent my future.

Another key quote that Jeremiah shares, and that he sometimes begins this segment of the workshop with, is from Martin Luther King. The quote is, “Men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don’t know each other; they don’t know each other because they are often separated from each other.” Jeremiah usually follows the reading of this quote with the observation, “Wouldn’t you say this is true for our high school?” Inevitably, one or more student answer, “yes,” and then share specific examples of how it is true in their experience (e.g. the separation of ethnic groups in the cafeteria and their estrangement from each other in the hallways, the near total absence of minority students from AP Honors courses, etc.).

Jeremiah usually concludes this segment of the workshop with a quote attributed to Nelson Mandela (but which, in fact, aren’t his words, but rather are those of author, Marianne Williamson). This quote states,

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.
Being the longest quote that he uses in this segment, Jeremiah often congratulates the participant who he asked to read it by saying something like, “Excellent! You read that very well.” and then applauding. Jeremiah then shares comments such as these, which he offered in one of the workshops I observed. “What he’s saying here is that it is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. And the light is analogous to our lion inside. So, when we come together and work together in this workshop, what we’re trying to do is let our lion selves out…How would it feel to be met and heard and “held well” and just to be who you are without apology? Wouldn’t that be great?” This idea and possibility tends to evoke sympathetic and affirmative responses from the workshop participants.

In one workshop, this segment ended with a conversation that I believe is worth noting here. Jeremiah notices one of his students, a young white woman named Mary (more about her appears later in this chapter and in Chapter 7), who was deeply affected by the presentation and has tears in her eyes. He observes, “Mary, something’s happening with you,” and asks “What are you thinking or feeling?” Mary responds, saying, “I don’t know. It’s just that there are things that are more important than just appearances. There’s more things and I know I’m going to learn a lot more [in the workshop].” Jeremiah then says, “Mary, you have a beautiful heart. Did you know that? I can feel your heart. You have a beautiful heart. Can you all feel that?” This last question is addressed to the whole group, and a number of people in the group respond affirmatively, at which point Mary smiles.

Jeremiah then goes on to speak to group with considerable passion,

I’m in the heart business. Our high school is in the head business, but I’m in the heart business. Do you all know what education means? How many of you have heard of what the word education derives from. This is something you must never forget. The word education comes from the Latin word *educare*, and it means ‘to lead out the self.’ That lion inside is analogous to the self, and our job is to lead it out so we can have power and dominion over our lives. Not just to collect more data, but to develop
our hearts so that we will understand that we are brothers and sisters and so we will reach out to, and love and help each other. Ask, “How can I help?” Isn’t that a good idea?

These words and the passion with which they are spoken move a number of participants whose facial expressions show total engagement with the thoughts Jeremiah is offering and who indicate their agreement by nodding their heads and/or saying “yes.”

*Video Segment from “The Color of Fear”*

These preparatory learning activities described above have been leading up to the central “experience” to which Jeremiah has been alluding. Evoking this experience in the workshop involves creating a context for kind of communication that is conducive to and made possible by what Jeremiah has been calling the Head-to-Heart Shift. While all that has come before this point may be understood as helping to create this context, Jeremiah now provides what might be thought of as a pivotal ‘code’ (to use Freirian terminology) for participants to reflect on, a code that seems to have been selected due to its effectiveness in evoking a powerful emotional response and also because it provides a model of the Head-to-Heart Shift. This code will provide a focus for the dialogical portion of the workshop that will follow (i.e. the portion devoted to “sharing”). This code is a nine-minute segment from a video documentary named *The Color of Fear*. This documentary, which is 90 minutes in its entirety, documents a gathering that took place in California in the early 1990s, which brought together men from white, black, Hispanic and Asian American backgrounds to talk about race relations in the United States.

Jeremiah prefaces this segment of the workshop by noting that,
We’re going to see…an encounter between an African-American man and a white man, and the African-American man is going to get very angry. In the second scene, you’re going to see where the white man has something happen in his heart, which causes a shift in the black man. After that, we’re going to have a conversation… It’s going to be very powerful. We’re going to move from the head to the heart so that we can have a different kind of conversation.

When the video segment plays, the faces and body language of the participants in all of the workshops I observed indicate that they are intensely engaged with it. No evidence of distraction or lack of interest is observed. The first scene of this video segment consists of a conversation between a black man and a white man that becomes very animated and intense. At first, the white man asks the black man why he and other black people seem to think that whites are obstacles to their progress. Why, he asks, can’t they (i.e. black people) just think of themselves as Americans and as humans equal with others (which he insists is how he sees black people). The black man points out, at first with composure, how whites often conflate being human and being American with being like white people and how they tend to view people who have difficulty or don’t want to be like them as being a “problem.” As the conversation progresses, the black man becomes very passionate, enraged and eloquent regarding this issue and how he feels to not have his experience acknowledged. As the black man yells, the white man sits quietly, his body language showing defensiveness and resistance to what the black man is saying. In the next scene, the white man is confronted gently by a third man of oriental descent who asks him what is preventing him from believing that what the black man said he experiences in American society is his actual experience. The white man doesn’t want to believe that such injustice can exist, that “man can be so cruel to himself or his own kind,” but finally admits that the situation must be real given what has been shared with him by all of the men of color present at the retreat. Tears begin to well up in his eyes. Seeing this, the black man, who has calmed down again,
responds by saying, “From here, I can work with you.” The conversation continues with the white man expressing the desire to help the black man, and the black man responding by noting that the best way he can help black people is by understanding himself better, by becoming aware of the invisible pretension and privilege that is part of being white in present-day America.

When the video clip is finished there is a pregnant silence in the room. It is clear that most of the workshop participants have been moved by what they just saw. Some are wiping away tears. Others have serious expressions on their faces, and some others look stunned.

*The “Sharing” Segment of the Workshop*

After the video segment has finished playing, Jeremiah explains that they are going to share their responses to the video with each other, and that by “sharing” he does not mean to intellectual analysis or opinions about what they saw, but rather to share, “What feelings you are present to? What emotions come up for you?” in response to the video. But, before this opportunity for sharing, he explains that they are first going to read together the guidelines for sharing and then sit for three minutes to reflect quietly on what feelings and/or images arose for them when they watched the video. Jeremiah then asks a different individual participant to read each of the seven “Guidelines for Sharing” contained in the workshop booklet/handout. These guidelines are:

1. We are here to experience oneness - not just talk about it - since the menu is not the meal.
2. In experiencing oneness, we will necessarily experience our true selves; that is, spiritual beings having a human experience, and not, as we have tended to view ourselves, as mere human beings.
3. We will begin to solve our own difficulties, once we begin to ‘hold each other well,’ once we begin to really ‘see’ each other, and once we really begin to ‘meet’ each other as noble human beings.
4. Similar to looking at a magic eye picture, we must learn to detach ourselves from our expectations.
5. We must always remember that we are choosers of our thoughts - hence, we can choose to see the glass half empty or full.
6. We will laugh together, cry together, get angry together, but this is simply a necessary part of the process on the road to realizing and experiencing oneness.
7. This is not an arena for advancing one’s personal or private agenda. Rather, it is an arena for healing and becoming whole by coming to experience the implications that underlie the reality of the oneness of humankind.

After the guidelines are read, Jeremiah has the participants, “take three minutes to quietly reflect on what you saw [in the video]. Close your eyes and think about what images came to your mind and what feelings came up for you when you watched the video clips. We are going to share this afterwards.” All the participants sit quietly and reflectively for three minutes. When the three minutes of silence are finished, Jeremiah opens up the time for “sharing” by reminding participants again, “I want you to give yourselves your best attention and listen carefully. We’re going to share our hearts, not our heads. What feelings came up for you? What were you present to?” The following account represents a composite of highlights from all the five instances of this part the workshop that this researcher observed.

Jeremiah notices that Mary, a white female participant referred to earlier in this chapter, has been deeply moved. He observes, “Mary, you seem to be very touched by what you’ve seen. What touched you?” Addressing participants sitting near Mary, he asks for someone to pass a box of tissues to Mary. The box is passed and Mary takes a tissue. Speaking again to Mary, he asks gently, “What are you feeling, Mary?” At first, Mary is unable to answer. Then, speaking through flowing tears, she says, “When that guy got angry, it just made me cry.” Jeremiah responds by sharing that, “The passion of his anger, it affects
people. It makes me cry every time I see it. He eloquently expressed what it’s like when your humanity isn’t being affirmed, and you can’t be seen. He went from the atomic to the sub-atomic [i.e. the ‘atomic’ and ‘sub-atomic’ ‘lens’ referred to earlier].” Mary then continues sharing, noting that the black man’s “anger and what he said” was “overwhelming.” Jeremiah asks, “How did that make you feel?”, and Mary, with tears still flowing, responds, “It’s kind of sad, because… I don’t know what to say.” Jeremiah thanks her for sharing and then moves on to a young African-American woman. “Catherine, what did you feel? What emotions did you get present to?” Catherine replies,

My first reaction was just how sad it is that we can live in one country and don’t see the obvious pain that other people see and live every day. That’s so sad that we live in ‘the land of the free and the home of the brave’ but we’re not brave enough to step outside of our neighborhoods and our worlds and see how just sad other people’s lives really are. That was my reaction, but my second reaction was just how deep and life-changing that moment was for that white guy when he just considered that that was real, how magic that was, just completely realizing and stepping into that emotion for five seconds. So, I feel it’s sad how separate we are, but I think it’s wonderful and magical that it’s possible that it’s not permanent, that it’s possible to reach over the habit, to reach past color.

Jeremiah replies, “Excellent! Thank you for sharing.” and then moves on to the next person in the circle, a young man who looks African-American. “John, how did you feel? What emotions came to you today as you watched the video and listened to the discussion?” John replies,

I saw all those different racial backgrounds and I thought about something my mother told me the other day. She was remembering when we lived in [a nearby town] and we used to go through a lot of racism, and she told me that everybody is a minority, because there’s nobody who is pure blooded. Nobody is pure white. Nobody is pure anything. When I think of myself, I think multi-racial, and I look at everybody here and I think of them as multiracial… The other day, this girl got in a fight and she was saying that all people the people there that were white were ‘bitches,’ and I told her big brother that he needed to take care of her and send her home or something, because I’m not black and I’m not white, but my mother is white. It made me sad to see that a seven-year-old girl already with so much racism in her.
Jeremiah interrupts John saying, “Let me just ask something” and then asks the whole group, “How many of you knew that his mother was white before he just said that?” Nobody indicates that they knew. “Did something happen for you when he said that? Something happened for me. I spoke to your mother on the phone and I didn’t know that she was white. Excuse me, so you were saying that you felt offended when the girl said that.” John continues,

I felt offended on all fronts, especially because the person she was addressing was not even white. She was Hispanic…. A lot of people these days say, ‘I don’t see people as black or white, I see people as people.’ But then when you walk down Main Street you kind of look on the sides of the road and you see different people of different ethnicities in their own groups on the side of the road. And I just sit there and shake my head, because there’s nothing I can do about it. I might can make a little change, but it’s not like I can change the world. I can change my community, which is good enough for me, but it’s also not good enough for me.

“Good for you,” Jeremiah replies, “Thank you very much for sharing.” Then turning to a young white female participant, he asks, “Valerie, what are you present to?” Valerie responds, her voice cracking with emotion, “The video made me so, so mad, that the world can be like this, that such a simple thing as color can…I don’t know, it just made me so mad.” “Are you mad, or are you hurt? Are you sad?” asks Jeremiah. At this point, Valerie begins to cry. Speaking through her tears, she answers, “I’m sad that we can’t see past such a stupid thing like color and I…” Her tears prevent her from finishing her thought. All of the workshop participants are looking at and listening intently to Valerie, engrossed in and some visibly moved by her sharing. “What are you present to when you’re crying? What is the source of that?” asks Jeremiah gently. Valerie’s mumbled response is unintelligible.

Jeremiah now stands in the middle of the room in the center of the circle of workshop participants who are sitting in chairs, sofas and on the floor around him. He speaks with passion to the whole group, looking intensely into the eyes of those around him as he talks
You see, she needed to do that [referring to Valerie’s crying]. This is important. This is real education. She needs an opportunity to share that, **but typically in our world, we have no space for her to say that! You get that!?** So, we as an audience will provide her with a lot of love, so that Valerie can be Valerie, so that she can get more of herself. **Do you get that!? Because she doesn’t need to apologize for what it means to be human!** Those tears are honest. And the extent to which we can open a space for her to be loved, to shed those tears, **then tomorrow there’s going to be more of Valerie!** Am I making sense? So, do we love Valerie?

A few affirmative responses are audible from some participants. Jeremiah continues, “So, can we say, ‘Valerie, we love you!’” The group responds nearly in unison, “We love you Valerie!” and from their facial expressions and tone, it can be seen that the sentiment appears genuine. Jeremiah notes, “**That** is education! I suggest to you just this one conversation makes a world of difference.” Then, he turns again to Valerie and asks, “Is there anything more you want to say?” Valerie, still crying, says “No. I’m fine.” Then, Jeremiah asks, “Are you happy you came?” Laughing slightly through her tears and sighing a bit in relief, Valerie smiles and says “Yeah!” Jeremiah looks into her eyes and says, “You’re an angel, a princess. And because of your contribution [to the dialogue], you’re making a big difference, because big things can happen when we come from our hearts. So thank you so very much.”


I was feeling what the dude was saying, how he gave his feelings out, and then the white man said ‘If there’s anything I could do for you, I would.’ And the back man said, ‘I can work with that.’ People don’t really look at us like how we were treated. People don’t think about that enough. I mean I still think about it. But, I mean, we ain’t helping, black people ain’t helping, ‘cause now we’re basically killing ourselves. You got black people killing themselves. You got gangs. We ain’t helping. That’s how I see it…As far as back in the day and everything, that’s the past. Still, I hope that Caucasians can look at us right now and see that we are strong people. I hope they see us like that. That’s all I got to say.
“Beautiful. Thank you.” is Jeremiah’s response to Harold’s sharing. Next, he asks a Latina participant, Alejandra, what she is “present to.” Alejandra’s voice sounds emotional and she has tears in her eyes. “Even though I’m not African-American, I still see this in school. I still see it in people’s faces. Even though it’s not in the world now as much as it was before.” Alejandra pauses and Jeremiah asks, “What is making you cry?” Alejandra shares through her tears, “Even though I’m Hispanic, I don’t like it when people call me Mexican, because that’s not what race I am. I’m Puerto Rican. I like to be known for what I am, not for something that they think I am. I don’t like that. That really hurts me.” Jeremiah thanks her for sharing.

Then, Jeremiah looks at a young white woman, Ruth, (more about Ruth will appear in Chapters 6 and 7) who is crying and holding a tissue in her hand. Jeremiah asks gently, “Why are you crying, Ruth? What are you present to right now?” Through her tears, she replies, referring to the video segment they watched, “It’s just sad that people can think that way. Even if it’s not conscious but just a subconscious feeling that people grow up with, it’s just sad that people can do that to one another.” In response to Ruth’s sharing, Jeremiah addresses the whole group again with considerable passion.

Did you hear what she said? You see, that’s education. Her heart is being affected. You see, you guys have to change it [i.e. racism]. Do you understand that? We have to change it. We can’t just have it be like that. We sometimes pretend to be laughing in the world when we’re really hurting inside. [Somebody in the audience says ‘Uh Huh’ in agreement.] It’s when we create spaces like this that Ruth has an opportunity to express what has been bottled up. Is that a good thing or what?… You’re going to have to change it! Not just by becoming bright physicists and doctors in your head, because if you have pure head knowledge and no heart, trust me, you’re going to have more of the same. Does that make sense? [Somebody in the audience again expresses agreement.] Do you have anything else to say Ruth?

Ruth answers, “I just hope that this can change, because this shouldn’t happen,” to which Jeremiah replies, “Yes. It shouldn’t, indeed. Thank you so much.” Jeremiah moves on to a
young African-American women participant. “Angela, what was there for you when you
saw that?” Angela shares that she “felt kind of bad just to know that color got in the way of
people getting…of not having the privilege to do what other races got to do. It’s like, Wow!
Just to let color get in the way of letting people do what they have the desire to do. That’s
really what I saw in the movie.” Jeremiah then asks her, “Did you feel any feelings? Did it
make you sad? Were you angry? Upset?” Angela answers that she “felt sad, because I’m
African-American, so I kind of related to what the African-American man was saying.” “He
was very eloquent,” observes Jeremiah, “wasn’t he?” Angela replies “Um Hmm” and nods
in agreement.

After thanking Angela for sharing, Jeremiah comes back to Mary and asks if there is
anything else she would like to share. Mary has a tissue in hand and tears still coming to her
eyes. In a soft voice, she shares, “After the man got angry, the white guy was just sitting
there. That’s what got me. It was just sad, because they’re in their own world and they never
get to go to other people’s worlds. They don’t get to know different people.” While Mary
speaks, Ruth looks at her sympathetically and nods her head in agreement. Jeremiah
responds to Mary. “Right. So, in light of what you’re saying, Mary, how do you feel in this
room now where we see a diversity, where we’re trying to start something at our high school
that can change that. How does that make you feel? Does that make you feel hopeful?”
Mary responds by nodding her head in agreement. Jeremiah continues. “Do you see that by
being here, you’re making a contribution to change that?” Mary again nods her head, this
time with a slight smile and with a facial expression showing relief and hopefulness. Then,
addressing the whole group, Jeremiah asks, “Do you understand that?” Some participants
nod to say yes. Jeremiah thanks Mary again for sharing.
Maggie, another white female participant, is next to share.

I just felt so guilty because I’m white and that terrible man was white, and I just feel so guilty for what my race has done to everyone else. But then I caught myself thinking ‘My race? What race am I?’ I know I’ll never be able to fully relate to people who haven’t been as lucky as I’ve been, but I want to. I just want to connect, and I just feel so bad for all the injustices that we’ve, that I’ve ever ignored, or that my great, great ancestors ever did. It makes me so mad and just like…I don’t know.

Jeremiah responds to Maggie, saying, “I can feel that. So, what I want to say is that you’re in the right place and we’re doing some work about this, because if you don’t pay attention to it, it will subsist in the background. So, here we at least have an opportunity to pay attention to it, and see if we can move through it. Thanks for sharing.” Then, Jeremiah calls on Lakshmi, a shy young woman from India, who shares with some timidity.

I kind of agree with the African-American guy. I feel that if we want to make a difference…I’m from India and we got independence in 1947…and as Gandhi said, we believed that we…

At this point she buries her face in her hand and starts to cry. The tissue box is passed to her by another participant. She takes a tissue and continues.

…we believed we will be able to achieve independence, we’ll be able to get away from the British. We followed our goal and we got independence. So if we believe that we will be able to agree and be equal, we should take the action and try to be equal with everybody and not distinguish. I mean I don’t face any kind of racism because I’m Asian, but when I see people like the Latinos and the African-Americans being criticized by the other people because of their race, I really feel sad…I mean, you are what you are.

Jeremiah responds to Lakshmi with the words, “Beautiful. Very nice. Thank you so much for sharing!” Then, he calls on Alan, a young white man, and asks him what he felt when he watched the video. Alan replies animatedly, “Oh man! That was really powerful, that whole situation. I felt like a ton of different emotions.” Jeremiah asks him to “share some of them” and Alan continues, “I felt sad for everyone who can’t really feel what the other people are feeling. And I really understand that. And sort of mad at the people who
don’t even try to feel what other people are feeling. Oh man! Lots of stuff.” Jeremiah looks at Alan with appreciation and shares, “I’m glad you’re here, Alan. I’m very happy you’re here. You’re a beautiful white rose brother.” Upon being called a “white rose brother”, Alan relaxes his body, smiles and says “Thanks.” At the same moment, an African-American female participant sitting in front of him turns around and looks at him with a smile.

Jeremiah then calls on a young African-American man, Daryl, who seems to have something he wants to share. Daryl is a regular at the We Are One Family workshops as well as a regular visitor to Jeremiah’s office at the high school.

The black dude, when he blew up, I really felt his anger, because I’ve felt that throughout my life being an African-American male. And I’m sure every other black dude here can agree with me, because every day it’s like sometimes you just walk and go to school and what not and sometimes you get that feeling, “Hey, am I being judged? Do they actually judge us all the time?” I really felt his anger when the white guy told him to try to do something so we can be equal, and he was like ‘What? Be like you?’ It was like ‘How dare you tell me to be who I’m not. How come I can’t be myself and have you still accept me?’ [At this point, Ruth and Alejandra are looking at Daryl and nodding their heads, agreeing with and affirming his sharing.] And I also felt like he was hurt and still the white dude didn’t get it because he hasn’t walked in his shoes. … It’s sad. I’m trying to keep hope alive but how can I keep hope alive when there’s Katrina, people getting beat up by police, racial profiling. How can I keep hope alive when I see things like that happening every single day.

Upon hearing Daryl talk about losing hope, a profoundly anguished expression comes over Ruth’s face. She weeps. Jeremiah responds to Daryl’s sharing by addressing the group.

This is why we need to have a lot more Community-building Institutes around the country, because this conversation is an important conversation to have. When was the last time in our high school you had a conversation with this diversity of people at this level? You tell me! Never. But you get a lot of cognitive facts, you pass SATs, you regurgitate stuff, and you go off to MIT or Harvard or Duke University and you haven’t really gotten present to who you are as human beings. Do you understand that?

Several participants nod their heads in affirmation. Ruth seems comforted by what Jeremiah is saying, and her anguish at Daryl’s prior sharing appears to subside. Jeremiah continues
speaking with earnestness and passion, looking around the room into the eyes of individual participants as he speaks to the whole group.

You see education…What is education? Do you know what education means? It’s derived from the Latin word *educare*, which means to lead out the self. There’s a little person, there’s a little girl in you Maggie, there’s a little boy in you Chris that wants to be recognized, that wants to be known, that wants to be loved, but we often don’t get the opportunity to have that. So, it’s suppressed. It’s down there. It’s squelched. So, when I said earlier that we need to invite your full human being to come into this room and not to check it at the door, I meant that! I want for you to be fully present! That’s a nice experience - that most people don’t have. Do you get that?! Do you all really understand that?! [Some more affirmative nods can be seen from the audience.] She’s still crying here [referring to Ruth] because she’s experiencing some freedom, she’s experiencing a space, a rare space. All human beings aught to be in a space like this! This should be normal!!

Jeremiah makes this last point with even more than his usual degree of passion, with his eyes flashing wide open and gesturing with his hand for emphasis! He continues. The participants are quiet and appear completely attentive to and engaged by what Jeremiah is saying.

Do you understand that this should be normal? Do you get that this should be normal? [There is a pregnant silence among the participants. All eyes are on Jeremiah and some affirmative nods can be seen.]… Something is happening here. I like these tears, because when you grow up, Ruth, because of those tears, because of what you’re present to and because all of you guys are feeling what you’re feeling, we’re going to be having adults that are going to shape public policy that’s going to be more sensitive. Do you think there’s a good chance of that coming from this room? Do you all get that?

More nodding heads and ‘um hmm’s are seen and heard from the audience, while a few fidget uncomfortably, apparently due to the intensity of the emotion in the room.

Jeremiah then returns to facilitating participants’ sharing, inviting Marjorie, a young African-American woman, to share. “Well, at first,” says Marjorie, “I was a little afraid of the black man because he seemed so angry, but as I sat there and listened to what he was saying, it is SO true.” Jeremiah interrupts to address the whole group again. “Did you hear
what she said? At first she was afraid of the black man because he was so angry, but as she stayed with it, it was so true. Sometimes we run away from things that frighten us, but if we just hang in there a while longer, we can see the truth in it.” He addresses Marjorie again.

“So, I really want to acknowledge you for your eloquence in expressing that. So, then what happened?” Marjorie continues.

I agreed with every word he was saying. And then the white man was laughing at him at one point, and I was like ‘How dare you laugh at him! [At this point, tears come to Marjorie’s eyes and her voice cracks with emotion.] He’s spilling out his guts, and you’re laughing at what he’s saying, and it’s not just what he’s saying, it’s what he’s saying for his people.’ It was like, I don’t know, it felt like even after it was supposed to be like they were making a truce or whatever, I don’t think the white man really got what he was saying at all. [At this point, Ruth is looking at Marjorie, nodding in affirmation and agreement.] If it was the other way around and it was the white man spilling out his guts, and if people was picking on him because of his race, I don’t think the black man would be laughing at him. It just made me really upset. I was angry.

Jeremiah responds to Marjorie with appreciation, saying, “Excellent! Excellent analysis. Nice sharing. I appreciate it.” Then, he invites a young African-American man, Dominique, to share. Dominique shares that he, “felt really bad because I’m a person who gets along with all different kinds of races. Like I’ve never experienced somebody being racist to me, because I grew up around white people and I went to a white elementary school and stuff like that. And once I saw the movie (i.e. the video), I felt scared.” Jeremiah interjects, “You felt scared?”, and Dominique answers ‘Yeah.” Jeremiah asks him to “say more about that.” Dominique continues. “It made me feel different, even though I’m black, because no one has ever been racist towards me.” “You know, this is a very good point,” is Jeremiah’s response.

I’ve shown this documentary many times and I’ve noticed that the assumptions you guys have about racism, 40 years ago in this country when you had Jim Crow laws and KKK and all of those things – You’ve read about those things, right? – you’ve never really experienced that. So, your experience is not that, but there is a residue of
that still affects you. Do you understand that? But, in terms of your experience, the possibility that you all now want to be friends…in my office, for example, every day I see white and AP Honors and struggling students come together and we’re like family. So, [addressing Dominique] you’re right about that.

Jeremiah then turns to another participant, Beatrice, and asks her to share what she is feeling. She replies,

For people that don’t know me that well, I’m mixed as well, so I basically know what John is going through. I was with my mom, and things that she says I don’t understand. Because I hang out with so many African-American people, and she always gets…she’s never racist but it’s like stuff that African-American people say, like they talk so much slang and like white people really don’t understand it, and I’ve learned how to talk that way…. I live with my mom and I get so mad at her because I understand what African-Americans are saying. I can relate to that, and when I hear African-Americans speak their mind, I’m proud to be black. I’m not disappointed that they had to go through that, because I think of what they went through and how they stayed strong through that. If the people like Martin Luther King didn’t do what they did, we would probably still be in slavery, and if it wasn’t for people like that, then we would probably be going through worse things now. And I’m proud to be white. I could understand what white people were saying sometimes, and sometimes I could understand what African-Americans were saying. And not one time am I disappointed to be mixed, because I live in different cultures and learn so much from my mom and I learn so much from my dad and my grandparents.

“Did you hear that?!” Jeremiah asks the group in response to what Beatrice shared.

“Excellent! Excellent! Thank you so much!” Jeremiah then leads the whole group in applauding Beatrice. Chris is the next person to share. “I’m also multi-racial,” she says. “I grew up here until seventh grade and then I moved to a place called…which is predominantly black. Around seventh grade, that’s when you like start to understanding what’s going on around you… And so that’s the main reason I moved back down here, because racism is not as bad down here. I think racism depends on the diversity in an area.” Jeremiah then requests of all those of mixed racial heritage present in the workshop to share what it feels like to hear about each other’s experience. A couple of them share that for them it was “wonderful” to learn that they’re “not alone.” Jeremiah then observes,
This is a human thing. It's really a human thing. We have to raise the level of the discourse higher. This program is about helping human beings re-connect with what it means to be human. If you want to see me, you should close your eyes, because this [referring to his body] is not who I am. We are all fundamentally one family...Despite our superficial differences, we’ve got to get present to our oneness...How different the world would be if we all understood that and live that. So, this is what we're trying to engender here.

Jeremiah then calls on a white female participant who shares that the video made her feel “bad.” “I knew, but I didn’t know. I didn’t know that it hurt that much.” Next, a young black man shares that he felt “it was good for white people to hear what the black man had to say, so they can know how tough it is.” “And why is it important to you that they know?” asks Jeremiah. The young man replies, “So, that they can understand where we’re coming from.” The young man is thanked by Jeremiah for what he shared. Then, a young white man shares, “I felt sad and even sick after seeing that. Just watching the black guy with so much anger. I asked myself, how did he have all that? Then, something clicked inside my head. I understood that this really is real. It’s happening today.” “Beautiful,” Jeremiah responds, and then asks a follow up question. “And how is that going to effect how you treat your fellow students who are Latino or African-American?” The young man replies, “I’m going to try to treat them the way I would want to be treated and not label them.” Jeremiah responds with a “Thank you.” A young white woman is the next to share. She thinks that, “it all comes back to that quote you shared by Albert Einstein, that ‘the problems...’.” She is not able to remember the quote, so Jeremiah finishes it for her. “The problems we face cannot be solved at the same level at which they were created.” “Yeah,” the young woman says, “I think to solve the problem, everyone - like we’re doing here - everyone needs to sit down and just talk freely and say what they want to say.” “Exactly,” Jeremiah replies, “This is a different kind of conversation. This is education, leading out the self. Thank you.” A
young African-American man then says that he is “happy for the black dude because he
finally got to express himself in front of white people.” He shares that he feels he can “be
more real now” because he sees that some people in the workshop “from different ethnicities
know how black people feel.” Another young African-American male participant shares
that, “It felt good that the black man [in the video] got a chance to say that and get it off his
chest. I’m basically in the same position as him. Every day black people can’t go to some
places that white people can go… Well, it’s not exactly that I can’t go. But they can go and
feel comfortable and I can’t feel comfortable.” Jeremiah immediately zeroes in on this
comment and wants to make sure the whole group heard it. “Did you all hear that?! He’s
saying loudly for his fellow white students to hear that there are some places you can go that
he can’t go.” Addressing some of the white participants, Jeremiah asks, “Did you know that?
How does that make you feel?” A white female participant replies with sadness in her eyes.
“It makes me feel sad and ignorant because I didn’t know that today we have so much going
on that he feels that he can’t go places that I can go.” When Jeremiah then asks the young
black man who had just shared how it feels to hear his white sister say this, the young man
shares that it feels good that he can express himself and be heard. Jeremiah then says, “I
really want to thank you for your contribution,” and applauds the young man. Most of the
group joins in the applause. Jeremiah then addresses the whole group.

You see, here we have a context for a conversation that can transform us. We have
here at our high school something special that you guys are helping to pioneer. This
Institute is not a club! It’s a privilege to be a part of this. It’s not a joke! We’re
about transforming lives! I want you [referring to the white participants] to see your
black rose brothers and actually stand for them! If they are struggling, reach out and
say ‘How are you doing?’ Give them a call. [Some of the white participants are
nodding their heads in agreement.] And vice versa. So that we as a group can show
the high school, and show our town, and show the world that we, together, through
love, can make it happen! We can make As and Bs, go to good schools, and become
decent human beings. We can do it!... If you can lend some of what you have and
give some love, if we can talk to each other, we can make it through. We can make an impact on the world! That’s what I’m trying to do. We can make an impact on the world!

Jeremiah asks the young woman whose family is hosting this workshop to share some words before they break for dinner. She shares that she’s “so happy that I could be a part of this and that so many people showed up! [There are between 25 and 30 participants at this workshop.] … After the video, it felt like everyone really got touched and really understood the problem and knew that we have to do something about it. I guess it comforts me to know that there are other people who want to do something about it.” Jeremiah acknowledges her as a special person and thanks her for hosting this workshop. Then, he asks Carolyn, an African-American woman who has attended a previous workshop and, in fact, is helping to videotape this workshop, if she would share how she felt about the workshop. Carolyn shares that she feels,

sad and angry but also challenged when I walk into a room and people see me and act like they know me because they’ve already stereotyped me… Now, I see it’s possible that there can be a world where I’m not seen as female or black or poor, where I can just be myself, and where I can honor the same thing in each of you. Being here and hearing all of your stories, I might never see you again, but you’ve touched me and you’ve made a difference in my life. I’m not the same person that I was just ten minutes ago before X you spoke and Z you spoke and I heard your stories. I have the faith that things are going to be different and that what we’re doing here is part of making that difference.

Jeremiah then offers to the group, “So really we are one family. But, we can’t just say we’re one family. We have to actualize it. We have to make it happen.” Jeremiah now notices Adrian, a young African-American man who has come late to this workshop and has also attended a previous workshop, standing near one of the entrances to the living room.

Jeremiah says, “Adrian, come in,” and then asks all the participants, “Do you all know Adrian?” Several participants say “Yeah” and some smile. Adrian flashes a quick peace
sign to the group as he comes in and takes a seat. Jeremiah continues. “Everyday, Adrian comes to my office and gives me a hug. I can depend on that. So why do you [addressing Adrian] always come give me a hug and why are you here?” As an aside to the rest of the group, Jeremiah quickly notes, “He told me he was going to be late, so I knew that.” Adrian then replies to Jeremiah’s question.

I told you I wasn’t coming, but my plans got changed and I could have gone home, but I wanted to come here because I didn’t want to miss this because I’ve only been to one of these [workshops]. I think one of the main reasons I’ve stuck around for about a year or a year and a half now is I see the seriousness in you [referring to Jeremiah] to really spark change in the world, and I just want to be a part of that. That’s why I come and see you every day. That’s just part of my schedule to stop by there at lunch. I just got to stop and say ‘Hey’ and just let you know that I’m still there with you. I understand what you’re fighting for, the point you’re trying to get across. Your message is my message.

It is worth noting that, in all of the workshops this researcher observed, there were always a few participants who had also attended previous workshops and clearly wanted to keep coming. These students may be considered allies of Jeremiah who are excited by and committed to the work Jeremiah is trying to accomplish in the workshops. Jeremiah also seemed to regard and treat these students as allies and resources by being asking them, as he did with Adrian, to give testimonies regarding their previous experiences in the workshops and the Institute and to otherwise contribute to the sharing in order to help create an atmosphere that encourages others attending a workshop for the first time to share and to feel comfortable.

In response to what Adrian shared, Jeremiah says, “Beautiful! Isn’t that beautiful?” Then, addressing the whole group, he says “Alright. So, thank you all. Thank yourselves.” He applauds the group and they all join in the applauding each other. “Alright,” Jeremiah continues,
We’re going to break for a meal now, and then we’re going to come back and talk about pairing and the tutoring program… So, what we just experienced a while ago is called the Head-to-Heart Shift. Do you see that there is more heart in the room now? Do you all get the sense that the room is different now than when you first came here? Do you see that you now know some people in a way that you didn’t know before? [In response to these questions, a number of participants from diverse backgrounds are saying “Yeah” and nodding their heads in affirmation.] There’s more love and more trusting. This tutoring program is grounded on love, that we’re family. We’re white rose brothers, yellow rose brothers, black rose brothers…We’re all going to work hard so that there are no D and F students among us, because he’s your brother, she’s your sister.

Dinner & Introduction to the Caring Pairs Tutoring Program

Sharing together a meal that has been prepared for all of the participants by the hosts of the workshop is a regular and important part of the workshop. This break for dinner, in fact, plays a significant role in helping to foster and strengthen the quality of relationships that the workshop aims to create. Typically, during dinner, the workshop participants sit together, eating and conversing in small groups of two, three or four. Some participants who perhaps felt they wanted to get to know each other better during the formal part of the workshop now have an opportunity to just that by socializing informally. On the whole, the participants appear much more comfortable and connected with each other than they were at the beginning of the workshop. Some lively conversations and laughter can be heard. It is apparent that this unstructured, social portion of the evening plays an important role in building community and in allowing for some relaxation and informal debriefing after the intense sharing portion of the workshop, which was just completed.

After dinner, the Caring Pairs Tutoring Program is introduced. A sheet listing the responsibilities of the “Facilitator” and the “Believer” is passed out and read. Jeremiah
emphasizes that these tutoring partnerships are premised on the principle that, “Every student has something to offer. Every student has something to learn.” Workshop participants are asked to think about who they might want to be paired with. While some pairs are arranged at that time during the workshop, most of the caring pairs will be arranged by Jeremiah in school later that week, after he has a chance to meet individually with each of the “Believers” as well as some potential “Facilitators” who were participating in this workshop. At this time, Jeremiah also asks each “Believer” to write an essay over the next few days to bring to his office next week. The purpose of this essay is for them to “invent their future” (i.e. write about what they would like their life to be like in 15 or 20 years time). Jeremiah again enlists the help of some of his allies who have gone through this process already to explain what it means to “invent” one’s future and share how they benefited from that. Jeremiah will use these essays to remind and motivate students regarding the need to do well in school if they want to reach their goals. Jeremiah finishes the conversation about the Caring Pair Tutoring Program by emphasizing again that, “This Institute is not a club. It is a privilege to be able to help each other. The Community-building Institute is about more than helping some students to improve academically. It’s about caring about and serving each other.”

Assessment and Closure

In this final part of the workshop, Jeremiah asks the workshop participants to share what they feel they got out of the workshop. Catherine shares that,

At first I thought this was just a tutoring program, but after today I learned that it is more. It gets real deep. I didn’t know the workshop would be so emotional. I’ve actually come to like it, but it was overwhelming at first because I didn’t know what I
was getting into. I was confused and nervous and came in with a headache, but now I’m better.

During and since the dinner break, Catherine and Mary have been sitting next to each other and have clearly bonded through the workshop. Noticing this, Jeremiah asks them to share something with the group about their newfound friendship. He asks if they knew each other before the workshop, and they indicate that they did not. Then, he asks each of them if she is happy to have met the other one. With beaming smiles, they both look at each other and say “yes.” Jeremiah asks Catherine why she is happy to have met Mary. She replies, “I think it was cool because I was interested in hearing how she wants to be a musician when she grows up. I have a general idea of what I want to do but I don’t have a set job in mind. It’s cool that she has a direction she wants to go in.” Then, turning to Mary, Jeremiah asks, “Mary, what’s it like for you to meet a new friend?” Mary shares, “I got to know her ideas and I was interested in what she had to say during the workshop, and it’s so cool that she’s not sure what she is going to do after she graduates, but I know she will succeed in whatever she chooses to do. It was fun to learn what she’s like.”

Another white female participant shares next, “When I came here, I didn’t know what to expect at all. I didn’t know what was going to happen. Now I feel a huge sense like we’re all really coming together and trying to change.” And another of the young African-American woman participating in the workshop shares,

When I came to the workshop, I knew one or two people. On the one hand, I thought this is a great thing to be getting into, but on the other hand I had a cynical side that thought this is kind of idealistic but it won’t work. But now it seems less like this is how we’d like the world to be and more like this is how the world is going to be because of what we’re doing.

Notably, one young African-American man, who during most of the workshop had appeared sad, subdued and withdrawn, now shares with a smile that, “It makes me happy that
black people and white people can come together and talk about things like racism and that some people aren’t racist.” Jeremiah notes how different the young man looks now, and tells him, “I really want you to know from my heart to your heart that I appreciate you.”

During this portion of the workshop, it can be easily seen that the atmosphere within the group has changed. The discomfort and reticence that characterized the group of participants at the beginning of the workshop, followed by the intense emotions of the “sharing” portion of the workshop, has now given way to a relaxed and celebratory mood. Clearly, the group has bonded. As a final activity, Jeremiah offers unique words of appreciation and encouragement to each one of the workshop participants, noting special qualities and character traits he perceived in each of them during the workshop. For example, Jeremiah offers the following parting words to Harold. “I appreciate you for allowing yourself to come to this workshop and for doing what you had to do to get here and for being a son to your mother and for being coachable. I appreciate the strides you’ve made and the things you’ve overcome. Your being here this evening has a made a difference for our high school. You’ve gotten a lot of love and respect and you’ve given a lot of love and respect too. I’m looking forward to helping you graduate from our school. You can count on that.” To Alejandra, he says, “You have a very beautiful heart. I appreciate the way you heard the video and the impact it had on you and the eloquence with which you spoke. I appreciate your being here so that we can work together to expand this to the Latino community because they are our brothers and sisters too. They need to be here. So, thank you for coming tonight.” To Alan, he offers, “I appreciate the quality of your listening and the sincerity in your eyes. I feel I want to get to know you a lot better. I feel when you look at me that you like me and you support who I am. If we had more white rose brothers like
you in the world, I feel the world would be a better place. I want you to know that I see you and I appreciate who you are.” To some of those who have come to previous workshops, he says with a smile, “Guess what?” It is clear from their smiles that they know what is coming next. “You know what I’m going to say,” says Jeremiah with a smile, “I love you and adore you.” Jeremiah continues, “I think it’s a shame that we live in a world where thousands of soldiers have been killed in this war [in Iraq]. Little boys and girls are strapping bombs to their bodies and killing each other, and I can’t say ‘I love you!’ That’s sad, isn’t it? Love is what we need. So, I’m going to tell you that I love you, without apology, because sometimes we don’t get seen, validated and appreciated in the world.”

Summary

It should be clear from the preceding account of Community-building Institute’s curriculum that the learning process the Institute promotes stands in stark contrast to what is normally thought to constitute schooling in the United States (or in any other modern society of which I am aware). In some ways, as the Institute’s founder/facilitator makes explicit in his workshops, the kind of learning the Institute facilitates is intended to be a corrective to, and even a remedy for, the way schooling is normally done, even in (or perhaps especially in) a highly-ranked American public high school in a predominantly affluent community. In the founder’s words, he intends to provide high school students with something that seems largely missing and desperately needed in their educations, namely an “education of the heart.” The educational process he developed to accomplish this, while including a number of themes, ideas and learning activities that can be found in other educational models
(particularly those “morally transformative” models described in Chapter 2 and some elements of “diversity training”), appears also to constitute a relatively unique configuration of these themes, ideas and activities. It is not purely an example of traditional “diversity training” or ”anti-bias training,” as these terms are commonly understood, nor does it entirely conform to most well-known models of experiential, libratory or holistic education. At the same time, many of the pedagogical principles underlying the Institute’s curriculum are also found in these other models (in the following chapter, I will identify and explicate what some of these principles are).

I have chosen to view the learning process that occurs in the Institute, and most especially in its workshops, as a form of moral education in general, and morally transformative education in particular, because its most notable outcome, as the above account suggests, appears to be the moral impact it has on learners (as will be further demonstrated in Chapters 6 and 7 where I present and analyze individual learners’ accounts of their experiences in the workshop). Particularly, to use its own terminology, its most remarkable success seems to lie in its ability in engender a “Head-to-Heart Shift” in learners, which in itself constitutes a quintessentially moral outcome, in accordance with the particular understanding of the moral domain (or, in classical philosophical terminology, of goodness) I use in this study. I explain this understanding in some detail in Appendix A of this dissertation (along with my understanding of the related classical categories of Truth and Beauty), but I should note for now that in this study I take morality (or, in the language of classical philosophy, Goodness) to refer to those qualities of consciousness and behavior that promote authenticity, integration and synergy within human relationships.
CHAPTER V

ANALYZING THE INSTITUTE’S CURRICULUM IN ACTION

Chapter 4 presented the story of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum in action based on my own observations. In the current chapter, I begin my analysis of the curriculum by first returning the two research questions that are the focus for this study and considering how much closer we are to answering them. As may be recalled, these research questions are “1) Does the Community-building Institute stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness?” and, “2) If so, what factors in the Community-building Institute’s curriculum, and in the students who appear to have been most strongly affected by the Institute, contribute to this effect?” It is apparent that we are still not in a position to satisfactorily answer the first of these questions. This will require analyzing learners’ self-reported experiences in the Institute and the effects they believe these had on them, as well as in some cases the corroborating observations of parents/guardians, a task that will be the focus of Chapters 6 and 7. Nevertheless, at this point, based solely on a review of the account of the Institute’s curriculum in action presented in the previous chapter, it can be said that the learning process the Institute facilitates seems unusual in the degree to which it elicits strong emotional responses, fosters more open and seemingly “authentic” communication between learners than apparently is the norm in their high school outside of the Institute (according to the learners’ own testimonies in the workshops), and increases
participants’ sense of inter-personal, cross-cultural community, responsibility and desire to be of service.\textsuperscript{16}

My observations of the curriculum in action further suggest that participation in the \textit{We Are One Family} workshop appears to amplify learners’ moral concerns and motivations (at least during the time they are in the workshop). Indications of this could be seen in the ways participants from diverse backgrounds frequently expressed in these workshops their feelings of sadness and/or anger at the instances the workshop brought to their attention of the oppressive estrangement (i.e. the lack of validating regard) that often characterizes relationships between diverse peer groups and between individuals in general. It can further be seen in their expressions in the workshop of a strong sense that “this shouldn’t happen,” and in their testimonies that, because of their experiences in the workshop, they could now relate to people differently than before and were more motivated to “make a difference” in their community and world.

Particularly outstanding examples in the workshops I observed of such amplified moral concern could be seen in the poignant distress learners like Ruth, Valerie and Mary revealed in response to instances of estrangement and injustice they saw resulting from racism and other forms of oppression, and in their emotionally-charged, adamant assertions that these situations “shouldn’t be.” Equally significant examples are the expressions of passion for justice expressed by Daryl and Marjorie when they shared how they felt upon seeing, in the segment of \textit{The Color of Fear} video they viewed during the workshop, the black man’s anger and the white man’s inability (at least initially) to respectfully hear and affirm what the black man was sharing. An amplified moral concern also seems clear in Alan’s sharing about the same video clip that he “felt sad for everyone who can’t really feel

\textsuperscript{16} These outcomes were also confirmed by the findings of the Institute’s program evaluation.
what the other people are feeling and...mad at the people who don’t even try to feel what
other people are feeling.” Yet another notable example is the clearly concerned observation
made by another young man that, “Now a days people don’t take the time to get to know
each other. You might be sitting next to someone and not know anything about them.” An
increased thirst for goodness resulting from the workshop can similarly be seen in the
expressions of relief, hope and inspiration apparent in many learners’ faces and affirmative
verbal responses when Jeremiah suggests that the oppressive situation they bore witness
could change and that they could be part of the change.

In light of these observations, it seems we may be justified in reaching at least a
preliminary conclusion that the Institute’s curriculum shows signs of amplifying the moral
concerns and motivation of at least some learners, and, furthermore, that it seems to do so
most especially in relation to the third motivational dimension Mustakova-Possardt (2004)
identifies, i.e. “empathic concerns with others, with justice and caring” (p. 253). Therefore,
we may also be justified in tentatively suggesting at this point that the Institute’s curriculum
seems to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness in learners. Again, it
should be born in mind that determining this suggestion’s validity will further depend on
analyzing the learners’ accounts of their experiences in the Institute given in their interviews,
and on seeking indications in these accounts that the seemingly transformative effects they
may claim to have had in the workshops were sustained over time (thus indicating that these
effects constitute a true transformation of consciousness rather than mere moments of
heightened emotion).

Assuming for now that the Community-building Institute’s curriculum is able to
stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness, the focus of this chapter will be
on identifying pedagogical principles, strategies, and methods discernable in the Institute’s curriculum in action that may be responsible for this effect. To do so, in this chapter I will analyze the Institute’s curriculum in terms of the pedagogical aspects of Mustakova-Possardt’s developmental theory of critical moral consciousness. In this regard, it should be noted that central to the pedagogical aspect of her theory are her ideas about the key roles exposure to authentic moral authority and authentic moral environments play in amplifying moral motivation. In addition to utilizing these concepts, I will also relate my observations of the Institute’s curriculum to a number of the other educational theories and approaches reviewed in Chapter 2, including Freire’s pedagogy for fostering critical consciousness, Palmer’s ideas regarding authentic teaching, and the four approaches to morally transformative education described in that chapter. I will also apply a few additional theoretical perspectives introduced in this chapter such as Arrien’s “principles of deep engagement,” Bass & Steidlmeier’s and Barbuto’s ideas on “transformational leadership,” and most significantly my own conceptualizations of what I term authentic communication and authentic relationships. But, before analyzing the curriculum in terms of these concepts, it will be helpful to more thoroughly examine Mustakova-Possardt’s psychological operationalization of the concept of authenticity, its possible connection with the experience Jeremiah calls the “Head-to-Heart Shift,” and Mustakova-Possardt’s inter-related concepts of authentic moral authority and authentic moral environments.
Perhaps the single most critical concept for understanding the Community-building Institute curriculum’s impact on its learners is the concept of authenticity. While I reviewed the philosophical history of this concept and how it has been applied to the field of education in Chapter 2, further consideration and interpretation of how Mustakova-Possardt operationalizes the concept would be helpful. As noted in my literature review, this concept has been used to characterize both an individual’s inner life and his/her relationships with others. The term authenticity is generally used to describe worldviews, senses of identity, and ways of living and relating that are both critically-examined and self-determined (as opposed to being determined entirely by the conventions of one’s society) by the person in question. While equating authenticity with self-determination (consistent with the European Enlightenment’s predilection for individualism) is problematic given the failure of such an understanding to acknowledge the inseparability of the individual and society, relating the idea of authenticity with a commitment to rigorous critical self-examination of one’s identity and worldview would seem to provide a useful way to understand authenticity. Perhaps one of Mustakova-Possardt’s most significant contributions to psychological theory is her attempt to operationalize this view of authenticity in terms of its impact on psychological development. Her research strongly suggests that whether a person consciously, critically and earnestly examines his/her own beliefs regarding who he/she is, what is real or true, what is valuable or good etc. (i.e. whether he/she is motivated primarily by a concern about truth, beauty and goodness), or alternatively does not generally feel a strong need to make such a concerted effort and instead passively accepts pre-established social-cultural roles, identities,
values and worldviews, makes a significant, qualitative difference in that person’s psychological health and development.

This linking of authenticity with critical reflection further suggests a connection between living authentically and possessing the moral qualities of truthfulness and honesty (as I indicated at the end of the previous chapter and as I explain in greater detail in Appendix A, I use adjective *moral* here to refer to qualities of thought and behavior that tend to promote synergistic integration in human relationships). In other words, the person who is living authentically is a person motivated to consciously seek truth. Furthermore, when truth is discovered – and/or constructed - with concerted effort and honesty by one living authentically, such truth allows him/her to more effectively and responsibly interact with and transform his/her world (as Freire emphasizes). This further implies that a person who can be said to be living authentically is committed to expressing truth (as he/she sees it) when communicating with others, since honest communication with others is more likely to reveal truth (and foster trust and synergy in relationships). On the other hand, a person living inauthentically is not highly motivated to seek truth or to be honest, and therefore is not “morally-motivated” to use Mustakova-Possardt’s term. Rather, the fear and self-centeredness that more likely primarily motivate this person incline him/her to be dishonest when it suits his/her expedient purposes and/or to distort truths that might cause discomfort or require acceptance of responsibility.

This observation also links authenticity with the choice and act of paying greater attention to the inner depth or core of people’s beings and inauthenticity to a primary focus on superficial, projected self-images (both of one’s own self and of others). This is in line with distinctions Sartre makes between the self-image one projects (i.e. the mask one wears)
and one’s honest sense of one’s self. This latter, deeper, “true” identity is one that a person living inauthentically seeks to conceal (both from others and from his/her own self). Thus, to live authentically is to live without fear of being and expressing who one senses one truly is, while inauthenticity may be equated with a tendency to deliberately project inauthentic images of him/her self to others and to deceive him/her self and/or others for strategic/expedient purposes.

Given the preceding characterization of authenticity as involving truthfulness and as focusing on the inner depth (i.e. the heart) of one’s self and others, and inauthenticity as involving dishonesty, deception, and a focus on exterior surfaces and deliberately projected images, we can clearly see how authenticity directly relates with Mustakova-Possardt’s notion that optimal human development (i.e. development of critical moral consciousness) is characterized by a synergistic relationship between mind, heart and will. Indeed, the idea of living authentically (i.e. truthfully/honesty) and the idea of having one’s mind, heart and will work in synergy can be viewed as practically equivalent, since inconsistency between what the mind thinks or believes, what the heart feels and perceives, and what one wills to do is the mark of some degree of dishonesty within a person. For example, if one believes (in one’s mind) that one loves another but is unwilling to listen to or care about the other’s values or problems (i.e. if one’s heart and will fail to respond in accordance with the mind’s belief), this implies that some distortion exists in one’s view of oneself and/or the other, and that, at least with regard to this particular area of one’s life, one is not being honest with oneself. On the other hand, when these three faculties function in relative harmony, they act as correctives to each other and thus help to ensure a more truthful view of reality and approach to living. Mustakova-Possardt (2004) further clarifies this idea by noting that,
Critical consciousness is a precarious balance between mind and heart, where each serves as a corrective of the other, as a result of which the faculties of love, knowledge and will function in relative unity. The heart has a deep capacity to discern, be attracted to and be moved by beauty, truth and goodness…. But that capacity is feeble until strengthened by the relentless critical examination of an ever-stronger rational mind. The mind, on the other hand, can easily become locked in circular self-referential reasoning without the corrective of a heart aware of, attracted to and moved by its spiritual source. (p. 260)

Regarding this characterization of authenticity, it is worth recalling from the introductory chapter that Mustakova-Possardt (2003) suggests most people’s consciousness and behavior reveals a mix of authenticity and inauthenticity, or as she phrases it, “an uneasy tension between moral and expediency concerns” (p. 6). Nevertheless, according to Mustakova-Possardt, when a person is developing optimally, authenticity becomes his/her dominant way of being.

It is also worth noting how this understanding of authenticity as harmonious, synergistic interaction between mind, heart and will correlates with several of Freire’s ideas. Specifically, Freire (2005b) suggests that “true perception,” “true knowledge” and the “true word” must involve an on-going praxis of critical reflection and action that necessarily has the effect of transforming the world. As Freire expresses it, “[t]he oppressed must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality. A mere perception of reality not followed by this critical intervention will not lead to a transformation of objective reality – precisely because it is not a true perception” (p. 52). Similarly, “true knowledge,” for Freire, is knowledge that does not dichotomize the knower from the world and thus does not separate reflection upon reality from active intervention in it. “Education as the practice of freedom – as opposed to education as the practice of domination – denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract
man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world” (p. 81). Translated into Mustakova-Possardt’s terms, “people in their relations with the world” can be understood to be people who not only think about the world, but who also fully connect to it with their hearts and willfully choose to take responsibility to interact with and transform it. Thus, authentic knowing, which both Mustakova-Possardt and Jeremiah suggest must engage the mind, heart and will in an integrated fashion, can be understood, in Freire’s terms, as the way of knowing that involves dynamic connection and interaction with one’s world (i.e. one’s concrete social and historical context), and that thus necessarily transforms the world.

It is similarly noteworthy that Arbab (1994) characterizes true understanding as involving not only acquisition of information and intellectual comprehension of concepts but also the capacity for inner vision and attraction to beauty that he suggests characterize the human soul. Furthermore, the approach to learning he helped develop assumes that the ability to theorize, on the one hand, and the application and testing of theory in transformative acts of service, on the other, constitute a necessary unity. Likewise, as noted in Chapter 2, experiential education also rejects prevalent dichotomies between theory and practice and between cognition, affect and action. In other words, engages “the whole person” (Fox, 1995, p. 156) inasmuch as it fosters openness to, responsible engagement with, and reflection on authentic “experience,” i.e. experience that necessarily engages not only a learner’s mind, but his/her heart and will.
The Head-to-Heart Shift as a Key to Authentic Knowing and Learning

In the terminology of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum, the central concept and experience, which can clearly be seen to be directly related to the preceding account of authenticity, is what Jeremiah terms the Head-to-Heart Shift. As noted in Chapter 4, Jeremiah himself explicitly suggested this by noting that “true understanding” involves integrating “the head, the heart and the belly -- knowledge, volition and action” (i.e. categories that can be seen to correspond to Mustakova-Possardt’s mind, heart and will). To further clarify Jeremiah’s perspective, it would also be useful to consider again the following statement of Jeremiah’s presented in the previous chapter.

If you only know the cognitive, the head stuff, you only know a piece of it. You don’t know all of it. But, that's what schooling has come to be about, to learn and regurgitate information, to be able to pass a test, but you don’t know what you’re passing…. There are a lot of kids in our schools that are having some difficult lives. They need people to be able to relate to them, not theoretically, but experientially. Kids need to know that you see them and that you know where they come from. You’ve got to honor and validate them.

With these words, Jeremiah suggests that the way of knowing associated with the “head” involves memorizing and reproducing information (in other instances he also associates “analysis” with the head’s knowledge). He further suggests that, when isolated from the knowledge of the heart, the head’s way of knowing is incomplete and tends to separate the knower from the object of knowledge, and thus to separate people from each other. In contrast, he suggests that the heart’s way of knowing enables one to “experientially” (as opposed to “theoretically”) relate to the other, which, in turn, evokes the desire and ability to “honor and validate” them. Jeremiah further elucidates this idea in his workshops by characterizing the Head-to-Heart Shift as a shift from living in the “menu of concepts” to
partaking of the “meal of experience,” thus suggesting that the head, when functioning in relative isolation from the heart, constructs abstract concepts that tend to remove one from direct experience whereas the heart when working with the head enables one to have authentic experience.

Jeremiah further connects “head” knowledge (or more precisely the “head’s” way of knowing when operating in isolation from the “heart”) with the fragmentation of our views of reality, and suggests that through integrating the knowledge of the “heart” we can perceive our connection and oneness with each other. As noted in Chapter 4, he stated in one workshop that “if we see cognitively through the head, we see differences. But, when we see through the heart, we see the same thing.” Jeremiah reiterates this point when, in reference to the quote he presents from Teilhard de Chardin (i.e. “Rather than seeing ourselves as human beings having a spiritual experience, we should see our selves as spiritual beings having a human experience.”) and the “cat-lion” image, he noted that,

rather than see ourselves as blacks and whites sitting in chairs, we can see ourselves as spiritual beings having a human experience. If the cat saw itself as a lion, then this is analogous to the human being seeing itself as a spiritual being. There’s something in us that is ineffable, that is more powerful. We need to privilege that. This is why I can see X and Y as my brother and sister, as my family…. We can choose to identify with how we look on the surface or we can choose to identify ourselves as deeper, spiritual beings.

It is also worth noting how the distinction Jeremiah makes between these two ways of knowing seems closely related to the ideas of Palmer (1993) reviewed in Chapter 2. Jeremiah’s description of the “head’s” way of knowing when not integrated with that of the “heart,” for example, seems closely akin to the approach to knowledge that Palmer’s describes as “objectivism.” The objectivist way of knowing, according to Palmer, is motivated to predict, control and manipulate “objects of knowledge.” In other words, this
way of knowing objectifies what it seeks to know and examines these objects in a detached manner (i.e. assuming no inherent relationship or responsibility to/with the objects it studies) mainly using the cognitive tools of logic and analysis. The effect of this approach to knowledge, according to Palmer, is to isolate the knower from the known and to discount the inner, subjective being of both. Objectivism is further characterized by its sole reliance on physical sensation and rationality for information about the objects it studies. Yet, Palmer asks, “why assume that sensation and rationality are the only points of correspondence between the human self and the world? Why assume so, when the human self is rich with other capacities – intuition, empathy, emotion, faith, to name but a few?” He further suggests the possibility that the world’s “wholeness” may “be known only as these [other] faculties are brought into full partnership with our senses and reason” (p. 52).

In contrast to objectivism, the preceding questions Palmer poses point to an alternative approach to knowing that closely resembles the way Jeremiah connects with the “heart.” Palmer characterizes this other way of knowing as a “spiritual” and as consistent with the meaning of the Germanic root of the word “truth.” As he explains, the etymological roots of “truth” can be traced to the word “troth” which implies “a pledge to engage in a mutually accountable and transforming relationship” with that which is known (p. 31). Thus, rather than isolating the knower and objectifying the known, this kind of knowing perceives and honors the knower’s connection with and responsibility to that which it seeks to know. In Palmer’s words, this way of knowing “weds the knower and the known.” Furthermore, to know in this sense “is to allow one’s self to be known as well, to be vulnerable to the challenges and changes any true relationship brings” (p. 31). Such a “wedding” of knower and known, i.e. of self and other, is the primary intended outcome of the Head-to-Heart Shift,
which, as Jeremiah frequently points out, is meant to bring people into closer and deeper relationship with each other to the extent that they experience their “oneness.” The dynamic and pivotal role of the Head-to-Heart Shift in the Community-building Institute’s curriculum will be further discussed in sections of this chapter dealing with the crucial roles the provision of a seemingly authentic moral environment, and more specifically the encouragement of authentic communication, appear to play in the Institute’s curriculum.

*Mustakova-Possardt’s Concept of Authentic Moral Authority*

Having discussed Mustakova-Possardt’s psychological operationalization of the concept of authenticity and its relation to the Head-to-Heart Shift (as well as to ideas of Freire, Arbab, Palmer and exponents of experiential education), I turn now to clarifying the first of the two environmental/pedagogical factors that Mustakova-Possardt (2003, 2004) identifies as crucial to promoting the development critical moral consciousness, i.e. authentic moral authority. Following this clarification, I will examine the role this factor may play in the Community-building Institute’s curriculum. This will involve analyzing my observations the Institute’s curriculum in action to try to determine whether Jeremiah, in his role as teacher/facilitator, could justifiably be said to have provided a source of authentic moral authority for his learners. I will also point out some specific pedagogical strategies/practices I observed Jeremiah using whose apparent effectiveness maybe connected to the influence of authentic moral authority. This will further lead to an examination of the issue of how technique and even charisma are distinct from, and yet, may also be related with authentic moral authority.
According to Mustakova-Possardt (2003), signs of a “yearning” to actualize their “potentiality for knowledge, love and goodness” can be detected “in the childhood of all moral leaders and critically conscious people” (p. 28). In critically conscious people, she further notes,

this yearning, characteristic of all people to some degree, has been particularly nourished through the presence of ideals in their early environments, poignantly embodied in significant models of moral authority. Often, these ideals are drawn from an overtly religious orientation, present in their early environments…but in many cases, they came from subtler spiritual attitudes of moral rectitude. Regardless, the presence of these embodied ideals seems to have strengthened the innate yearning of the soul, in contrast to it becoming overlaid by other considerations in the lives of the majority of people. (pp. 28-29)

Further clarifying this point, Mustakova-Possardt explains that children’s “inherent moral sense needs to be continuously drawn forth through discussion and living examples of virtues such as patience, trustworthiness, kindness, justice, mercy, generosity, courtesy, respect, purity, and love” (p. 158).

The development of discernment of and respect for authentic moral authority in others, and the gradual evolving of personal moral authority and responsibility depends on the presence of figures of authentic moral authority in one’s life…. There is a general outcry for authentic moral authority, different from hypocritical, self-righteous, and moralistic pseudo-religious authorities, and from equally hypocritical, alienated, and ideological secular intellectual authorities (Abdullah, 1995; Bellah et. al, 1985; Rutstein, 1994; Wilshire, 1990)…. Engaging young people in an on-going dialogue with authentic exemplars of the human spirit is a powerful way to help them recognize and develop their own moral authority, responsibility and agency. (pp. 158-159)

Mustakova-Possardt suggests that an authority figure is authentically moral when the moral ideals articulated by that person, and the implications of these ideals, are reflected not only in his/her words, but also in his/her motives and actions. A person who embodies and conveys authentic moral authority is thus a person in whom a high degree of congruence exists between mind, heart and will. This means that he/she is also a person in whom moral
motivation dominates to a high degree, since, bearing in mind the earlier discussion of
authenticity in this chapter, harmony between mind, heart and will implies the absence of
deception and presence of truthfulness, a moral quality that reflects and further enhances
one’s innate attraction to truth, beauty and goodness. In other words, a person who is a
source of authentic moral authority for others is him/herself a person who has developed
critical moral consciousness to a relatively high degree as a result of choosing to live
authentically. This does not mean that an authentically moral authority figure must be
morally perfect, but that he/she is not hypocritical and strives to live a moral life.
Furthermore, as Mustakova-Possardt points out in the preceding quote, exposure to such
authentic moral authority helps others to eventually internalize their own personal sense of
moral authority and develop an expanding sense of moral responsibility and agency.

*The Institute’s Facilitator as a Possible Source of Authentic Moral Authority*

In view of the above description of authentic moral authority, to determine what role
the presence of authentic moral authority may play in producing the effect the Community-
building Institute seems to have on its learners it will be necessary to assess the degree to
which Jeremiah himself can be said to be predominantly morally rather than expeditiously
motivated (i.e. the degree to which he can be said to possess critical moral consciousness).
Yet, making such an assessment would seem to be, to some extent, beyond the scope of this
study. This is the case since my research questions are not directly concerned with Institute
facilitator’s moral development but rather with that of his students, and since my data for the
study did not include an in-depth interview with Jeremiah that might have helped me to
assess Jeremiah’s own degree of critical moral consciousness. Nevertheless, based solely from my observations of Jeremiah’s role as facilitator of the Institute’s curriculum, some indications that Jeremiah functions as a source of authentic moral authority for his learners are apparent.\textsuperscript{17}

Indications of Jeremiah’s seemingly authentic moral authority are particularly visible in four qualities/practices Jeremiah relies on when facilitating the Institute, namely what I would describe as the \textit{moral passion} Jeremiah exhibits in (and outside of) the \textit{We Are One Family} workshops, his closely related ability to “enroll” learners (in Landmark Education’s sense of the word) in a moral possibility, his use of personal testimonies, and his habitual ways of affirming learners (both in the workshops and in his informal interactions with them). I will examine each of these qualities/practices in this section.\textsuperscript{18} It will be noted, consistent with Mustakova-Possardt’s observations regarding the powerful influence that exposure to authentic moral authority has on the development of a sense of moral responsibility and agency, that these qualities and practices Jeremiah exhibits appear to constitute significant factors in the Institute’s curriculum that may explain its seeming ability to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness.

One of the ways Jeremiah gives an impression of authentic moral authority in the workshops I observed is in the way he frequently exhibits in these workshops what I would call moral passion. An example of this is the passion Jeremiah conveyed through a combination of his words, tone of voice, facial expressions, and piercing eye contact with his

\textsuperscript{17} These indications, as will be seen in Chapters 6 and 7, are generally corroborated learners’ own accounts.

\textsuperscript{18} An additional significant indication that Jeremiah may justifiably be viewed as a source of authentic moral authority for his learners can be seen in the way he provides coaching and mentorship to individual learners as part of what I have termed the Institute’s \textit{informal curriculum}. I will not focus on this possible indication of Jeremiah’s authentic moral authority in this chapter, but rather will leave it to the learners themselves, in their accounts presented in Chapter 6, to describe their experiences of being individually coached and mentored by Jeremiah.
learners when he observed (following Ruth’s and Daryl’s sharing in one workshop as described in Chapter 4),

There’s a little person, there’s a little girl in you Maggie, there’s a little boy in you Chris that wants to be recognized, that wants to be known, that wants to be loved, but we often don’t get the opportunity to have that. So, it’s suppressed. It’s down there. It’s squelched…. I want for you to be fully present! That’s a nice experience - that most people don’t have. Do you get that?! Do you all really understand that?! She [i.e. Ruth] is still crying here because she’s experiencing some freedom, she’s experiencing a space, a rare space. All human beings aught to be in a space like this! This should be normal!! …. I like these tears, because when you grow up, Ruth, because of those tears, because of what you’re present to and because all of you guys are feeling what you’re feeling, we’re going to be having adults that are going to shape public policy that’s going to be more sensitive.

In another instance that may also be recalled from Chapter 4, Jeremiah again spoke with excited passion after some particularly significant and poignant sharing by a few learners.

Here we have a context for a conversation that can transform us. We have here at our high school something special that you guys are helping me to pioneer. This Institute is not a club! …. It’s not a joke! We’re about transforming lives! I want you [referring to the white students present] to see your black rose brothers and actually stand for them! If they are struggling, reach out and say ‘How are you doing?’” Give them a call. And vice versa. So that we as a group can show the high school, and show our town, and show the world that we together through love can make it happen! …. Kofi Annan….said there are six billion human beings in the world, yet three billion of us are living in the world on less than two dollars a day. All of us in this room are better off than that. So, as bad as your circumstances are, if you can lend some of what you have and give some love, if we can talk to each other, we can make it through. We can make an impact on the world!

Yet another example of what I am calling Jeremiah’s moral passion can be seen in the manner in which he sometimes earnestly punctuates a morally evocative story of thought that was just shared by himself or by a workshop participant with the question addressed either to the group or to other individual participants, “Do you get that?! Do you really get that?!”

In these and many other instances when Jeremiah’s demonstrates moral passion, it may be surmised from observing the effect these demonstrations seem to have on learners that this passion impresses learners with a sense that Jeremiah’s words are authentic, i.e. that
he strongly feels and believes what he is saying and is committed acting accordingly (a conclusion that is further confirmed by some of the learners’ accounts presented in the following two chapters). One might further surmise from the affective responses of learners to such instances (responses visible in their wide-eyed engagement with and silent attention to Jeremiah and the thoughts he shares) that this apparent authenticity also tends to impress learners with a sense of the seriousness and importance of the thoughts being shared and of the responsibility they therefore have to consider and authentically respond to these ideas.

The manner in which Jeremiah spoke in the instances recounted above and the response he elicited from learners may be more fully appreciated if viewed as examples of what in Landmark Education is known as “enrollment,” which may be defined as the act of articulating a compelling possibility with such conviction and determination that one inspires and enlists the support of listeners in realizing the possibility. The ability to effectively enroll others in a possibility can be seen to stem from and reinforce the speaker’s authenticity inasmuch as one who is able to enroll (as distinct from manipulating or coercing) others possesses this ability to the degree that he/she is being honest, that his/her “heart is in it” (i.e. in what he/she is saying), and that his/her commitment to doing what is necessary to realize the possibility is apparent (i.e. the speaker “takes a stand”). In this way, enrolling others in a possibility can be seen to be an act conforming to Freire’s (2005b) assertion that “to speak a true word is to transform the world” (p. 87). In the instances described above, Jeremiah articulated the attractive and beautiful possibilities of helping to change the world for the better by living authentically and creating authentic, caring relationships with others. Admittedly, distinguishing between this kind of enrollment and the sometimes manipulative influence that rhetorical skill and charisma can have on listeners may not always be easy.
(note that the distinction between authentically moral leadership and charisma will be considered in the following section). Nevertheless, my observations of Jeremiah lead me to conclude that his words were “true words” in the Freirian sense. The reason they seem true, and thus capable of “enrolling” his listeners in a moral possibility, is not so much the content of the words alone as it is the moral passion with which they were articulated.

Another note-worthy way that Jeremiah effectively conveys an impression of authenticity is through the personal testimonies he offers in his workshops. As with the factor of moral passion and the related ability to enroll others, the pedagogical effectiveness of such testimonies seems to lie in the way these stories convey a sense of the authenticity with which Jeremiah seems to be communicating. One frequent example of such testimony, as noted in the previous chapter, is the way Jeremiah often shares in workshops about how he was once homeless but overcame that difficult situation and went on to study at Williams College and Harvard University. This again seems to have the effect of eliciting learners’ openness and responsiveness to what is being shared with them. Such testimony seems to demonstrate that the thoughts their teacher is sharing are not purely theoretical but derive from his/her lived experience, i.e. that the speaker “knows from experience” what he/she is talking about. Together with the passionate and enrolling manner in which he offers moral possibilities, such testimonies seem to play a significant role in creating a safe and encouraging environment in the workshops by conveying trustworthiness (which is specifically corroborated by learners’ accounts presented in the next two chapters). In other words, when hearing such testimony from their teacher, we may surmise that learners notice that the disconnect they often see between a teacher’s words/knowledge and his/her emotions and experience seems absent in the case of Jeremiah. They sense that Jeremiah is “for real,”
and thus are more willing to trust him and more interested in what he has to share. Most significantly, such testimony also encourages learners who may be experiencing similar difficulties to those that he overcame (which some accounts of learners in the following two chapters again corroborate).

Finally, one of the most effective ways Jeremiah conveys authentic moral authority, and thus amplifies learners’ attraction to beauty, goodness and truth, is the manner in which he constantly affirms his learners. Among the ways Jeremiah does this is by the care often evident in his eye contact and voice when conversing with individual learners, by frequently applauding individual learners (sometimes to encourage less articulate or shy learners, and sometimes to honor what he recognizes as particularly significant sharing), by thanking learners for their authentic sharing and/or expressing appreciation for their presence in the workshop, or by appreciating and honoring special qualities he notices in individual learners. Some specific examples of ways he honors learners for their special qualities include times when Jeremiah may tell a particular learner (while looking directly and earnestly into his/her eyes) that he or she has a “beautiful heart” or that he sees and acknowledges that they are sincere, or thoughtful, or brave, or a good listener, or considerate, or that they have contributed something important, or that they have a special talent or potential etc.19

It is worth noting that these qualities and practices I observed in and from Jeremiah while he facilitated the Institute’s curriculum are consistent with what Palmer (1998, 1999) describes as the “connective” capacity he believes characterizes good teachers. In other words, as Palmer suggests is true of good teachers, Jeremiah seems to not only authentically connect with the learners but also to authentically connect them and himself with the ideas he

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19 This practice of affirming learners appears to be particularly vital to creating what Mustakova-Possardt calls an authentic moral environment, a topic I will discuss shortly in this chapter.

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shares, and (as will be discussed further later in this chapter) to connect the learners with each other. Indeed, in the case of the Institute, these three forms of connection seem to be not only mutually reinforcing, but inseparable.

The different ways in which Jeremiah conveys an impression of authentic moral authority discussed above are perhaps best distilled in the words of Angeles Arrien’s (2001) essay, *The Way of the Teacher: Principles of Deep Engagement*, especially in her eloquent description of particularly three of the four “archetypes” she suggests can help teachers “restore and sustain Spirit in our schools” (p. 157). Indeed, these three archetypes (all of which seem to describe authentic ways of living and relating) seem to summarize well the characteristics of those moments when Jeremiah’s workshop facilitation appears most powerful/effective. The three archetypes are those of “the Warrior/Leader,” “the Healer” and “the Visionary.” The first of these (i.e. the Warrior/Leader archetype or principle), according to Arrien, involves choosing to be “present” and “visible,” to “take a stand” and, through the power of one’s “example and intention, to empower and inspire others by what we model.” According to Arrien, teachers who do so are “both firm and yielding, honoring [their] own individual limits and boundaries as well as the limits and boundaries of others.”

Furthermore, “when challenges present themselves,” these teachers “embrace them with full-bodied presence rather than pull[ing] away or constric[ing] with fear.” Alternatively, the Healer is characterized by the careful manner in which he/she pays “attention to what has heart and meaning.” This involves opening “oneself to the possibility of removing the blocks and obstacles to receiving love and giving love.” Finally, Arrien describes the Visionary as one characterized by the willingness to “tell the truth…without blame or guilt.” Such a teacher is “one who brings his or her voice into the world and refuses to edit, rehearse,
perform or hide,” one “who knows that the power of creativity is aligned with authenticity” (pp. 149-151).

It should be emphasized that I do not mean to suggest I saw Jeremiah perfectly exhibit all of these characteristics all of the time, nor that I think any teacher can or needs to embody these characteristics perfectly at all times in order to be an effective moral educator. What I am suggesting is that the instances in which Jeremiah appears to have been successful in manifesting these qualities described by Arrien (many of which I have previously recounted) are the instances in which he seems to have most profoundly affected those learning from him.

**Authentic Moral Authority versus Charisma**

After considering the indications described above that Jeremiah may be a source of authentic moral authority for his learners, it may be legitimately objected that personal testimonies, affirmations, and even moral passion and a related ability to “enroll” others, could conceivably be imitated and/or be used for self-promotion (though my own sense is that Jeremiah’s way of conveying what I call moral passion would be hard to imitate if it were not sincere). In other words, these could be signs of personal charisma that do not necessarily indicate authentic moral authority. Indeed, while charisma may arguably be used to serve authentically moral ends, it must also be acknowledged that it frequently is used for what ultimately prove to be self-serving ends, even when the charismatic figure in question appeals to moral ideals and values in order to achieve his/her expedient aims. How then can we be sure from observing Jeremiah’s apparent effectiveness in communicating with and
inspiring his learners that this effectiveness is in fact an indicator of authentic moral authority? To respond to these objections, it would be useful to more closely examine the relationship and the distinction between the concepts of charisma and authentic moral authority.

In considering how these two concepts may related to and distinguished from each other, I believe it would be instructive to consider a distinction Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) make between “authentic transformational leadership” and “pseudo-transformative leadership,” which can be seen to correspond to a distinction between what Mustakova-Possardt terms moral motivation and what she would likely characterize as a sophisticated form of expediency motivation. Since Bass & Steidlmeier clearly link transformative leadership with a moral motivation and commitment that brings out “the best in people” (p. 188), for the purposes of this analysis I will consider authentic moral authority and “authentic transformational leadership” as synonyms (p. 186).

Bass and Steidlmeier contrast “authentic transformational leadership” and “pseudo-transformative leadership” in terms of what they regard as “the four components of transformational leadership.” These four components are “idealized influence (or charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration” (p. 186-187). In relation to the first component of “idealized influence,” Bass and Steidlmeier note that,

if…leadership is transformational, its charisma or idealized influence is envisioning, confident, and sets high standards for emulation…. A…difference between authentic transformational leadership and pseudo-transformational leadership lies in the values for which they are idealized. For instance, the authentic leader calls for universal brotherhood; the pseudo-transformational leader highlights fictitious “we-they” differences in values and argues that “we” have inherently good values and “they” do not…. Pseudo-transformational idealized leaders seek power and position even at the expense of their followers’ achievements…. authentic transformational leaders
promote ethical policies, procedures and processes within their organizations. (pp. 186-187)

Bass and Steidlmeier further emphasize that the unifying values promoted by authentic transformational leaders are not only espoused but also put into practice by them, i.e. that their commitment to these values is authentic.

In relation to the second component of transformational leadership the authors identify, namely “inspirational motivation,” they further clarify the distinction they make between authentic and pseudo-transformational leadership by suggesting that,

the inspirational appeals of the authentic transformational leader tend to focus on the best in people - on harmony, charity and good works; the inspirational appeals of the pseudo-transformational leader tend to focus on the worst in people - on demonic plots, conspiracies, unreal dangers, excuses, and insecurities. Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) (pp. 61ff) have linked this to an empowerment process. For them, empowerment is….motivational and enabling, highlighting a new realization and transformation of the person.

Idealized, inspirational leaders, who are pseudo-transformational, may mislead, deceive and prevaricate. They can be subtle and speak with a forked tongue, for instance, offering followers empowerment, yet continuing to treat them as dependent children (Sankowsky, 1995). They talk about empowerment but actually continue to seek control (Conger & Kanungo, 1998)…. The authentic are inwardly and outwardly concerned about the good that can be achieved for the group, organization, or society for which they feel responsible. The inauthentic and pseudo-transformational may publicly give the same impression and be idealized by their followers for it, but privately be concerned about the good they can achieve for themselves. (p. 188)

Bass and Steidlmeier further suggest that authentic and pseudo-transformational leaders can further be distinguished from each other by the type and degree of intellectual stimulation they facilitate for their followers (i.e. in reference to their third component of transformational leadership, that is “intellectual stimulation”). An authentic transformational leader, they suggest, “helps followers to question assumptions and to generate more creative solutions to problems” (p. 188). Such leaders “persuade others on the merits of the issues” and “openly bring about changes in followers' values by the merit and relevancy of the
leader's ideas and mission to their followers' ultimate benefit and satisfaction (Howell, 1988)” (p. 189). The intellectual stimulation offered by pseudo-transformational leaders, on the other hand, “manifests a logic containing false assumptions to slay the dragons of uncertainty. Pseudo-transformational leaders overweight authority and underweight reason. They take credit for others’ ideas but make them scapegoats for failure (Sankowsky, 1995)” and “substitute anecdotes for hard evidence” (p. 188). Furthermore, they tend to “set and control agenda to manipulate the values of importance to followers often at the expense of others or even harm to them” and to “substitute emotional argumentation for rational discourse” (pp. 188-189).

Finally, in relation to the fourth component of transformational leadership, i.e. “individualized consideration,” Bass and Steidlmeier observe that, while “the transformational leader treats each follower as an individual,” “provides coaching, mentoring and growth opportunities (Bass, 1985),” and is genuinely “concerned about helping followers to become more competent,” pseudo-transformational leaders, in contrast, are “more concerned about maintaining the dependence of their followers.” The latter type of leaders “exploit the feelings of their followers to maintain deference from them (Sankowsky, 1995),” “welcome and expect blind obedience,” “attempt to enhance their personal status by maintaining the personal distance between themselves and their followers,” and promote “favoritism and competition among followers in the guise of being helpful” (p. 189).

Another researcher of transformational leadership, Barbuto (1997), further suggests that the concept of charisma should be distinguished altogether from that of transformational leadership. While noting that “the concept of charisma” is “inherent in most theorists’ articulation of transformational leadership,” Barbuto proposes that “a critical assessment of
both constructs reveals two quite different, perhaps incompatible constructs, necessitating that clear distinctions be maintained” (p. 689). “Charisma,” he explains, “is described as the leader’s ability to generate great symbolic power with which to identify. Followers idealize the leader and develop strong emotional attachments (Bass, 1985). Charisma is often defined with respect to how followers perceive and act towards the leader” (pp. 689-690). Barbuto further explains that charisma, as originally theorized by sociologist Max Weber, is a phenomenon associated with social crisis. Weber’s idea was that, in times of social crisis, “leaders with extraordinary appeal emerge with a radical vision that provides a solution to the crisis, attracting followers who strongly identify with the leader” and “may often perceive them as saviors.” While such leaders might serve moral ends, Barbuto notes that “a leader can be ‘transformational’ without necessarily employing a ‘charismatic’ style, just as ‘charismatic’ leader may not necessarily be ‘transformational’.” As a case in point, he notes how many charismatic leaders, “foster dependency relationships with followers, relying on commitment and unquestioned obedience” (pp. 690-691). In contrast, he suggests, transformational leaders seek to lift individuals from idolizing the individual to directing followers commitment and energies towards the organization and its goals…. Transformational leaders….transform and motivate followers…inducing them to transcend their own self-interests…activating their higher-order needs. (p. 691)

Barbuto admits that the ability of the transformational leader to inspire (which he, like Bass and Steidlmeier, believes is an essential characteristic of transformational leadership) is closely connected in many people’s minds with the concept of charisma, he nevertheless argues that the two concepts should not be conflated. The difference he sees between inspirational leadership and charismatic leadership lies in his view that, inspirational leaders lift people out of their petty preoccupations, carry them above the conflicts that tear a society apart, and unite them in the pursuit of objectives
worthy of their best efforts. Charisma, in contrast, is often defined as an extraordinary power (Conger & Kanungo, 1987), a personal magic of leadership arousing special popularity loyalty or enthusiasm for a popular figure (House, 1977; Weber, 1947).” (p. 692)

Jeremiah’s Charisma and Authentic Transformational Leadership

In light of the distinction Bass and Steidlmeier make between authentic and pseudo-transformational leadership, I will argue in this section that Jeremiah’s manner of facilitating the Institute’s curriculum may be more appropriately characterized as a form of authentic transformational leadership than as an example of pseudo-transformational leadership. Furthermore, in consideration of Barbuto’s distinction between transformational leadership and charisma, I will also argue that the inspirational or charismatic abilities Jeremiah appears to possess vis-à-vis his learners, particularly as exemplified in the qualities and practices mentioned earlier (i.e. his moral passion and ability to “enroll” others, his use of personal testimonies, and his ways of affirming his learners), while not in themselves equivalent to authentic moral authority, may be viewed as complementary abilities or talents, which, while they might reflect knowledge and talents that could conceivably be used for expedient ends, seems nevertheless to be used by Jeremiah to serve a primarily morally-motivated purpose.

In support of characterizing Jeremiah as an authentic transformational leader (and therefore as a source of authentic moral authority), it can first be noted at this point that the values Jeremiah espouses are clearly unifying rather than divisive. In other words, he does not promote an “us v. them” perspective, but rather a vision of oneness, of mutually encouraging/supportive relationships between people, and of an open-ended rather than a
closed community. His passion regarding this perspective and its promotion further suggest he is authentically motivated by these values.

At the same time, my observations of the ways in which Jeremiah continuously seeks to affirm learners in his workshops, seem to suggest that he aims to bring out “the best in people” rather than to appeal to and reinforce people’s beliefs in “demonic plots, conspiracies, unreal dangers, excuses, and insecurities.” Indeed, he seems to aim to induce what Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) called “an empowerment process” that is “motivational and enabling, highlighting a new realization and transformation of the person” (pp. 186-188). Furthermore, his affirmation and empowerment of his learners is in keeping with Bass and Steidlmeier’s observation that “the transformational leader treats each follower as an individual,” “provides coaching, mentoring and growth opportunities,” and is genuinely “concerned about helping followers to become more competent,” whereas pseudo-transformational leaders are “more concerned about maintaining the dependence of their followers” (p. 189).

An alternative explanation for Jeremiah’s habitual affirmations of his learners might be that he uses these affirmations of people as a means for winning them over and enlisting them as allies in pursuit of his own expedient aims. My counter-argument to such an explanation is first that I presume it would be very hard for someone over the long-run to evince the kind of affection Jeremiah shows towards his learners unless this affection was genuine, i.e. I presume that if a person only pretends to care, their pretense becomes increasingly difficult over time to hide from the people he pretends to care for. Proof then of the authenticity of Jeremiah’s care for those learning from him would seem to lie in the degree to which his learners continued to feel over the course of a year or more of personal
association with Jeremiah that they were truly cared for, “seen” and “met” by him. In addition, if Jeremiah’s affirmation and empowerment of learners is authentic, those he affirms should presumably feel empowered by him to pursue their own projects, to discover and develop their own unique talents, as opposed to feeling constrained and deceived into supporting an agenda that serves Jeremiah first and foremost and/or that pits them (i.e. his “followers”) against others in a competition for power.

Applying these standards to evaluate Jeremiah’s style of leadership, an examination of learners’ accounts of their interactions with Jeremiah contained in the next two chapters will be seen to support the conclusion that Jeremiah’s care for and affirmation of his learners was, at least in the majority of cases, authentic and obviously empowering. This is not to say that Jeremiah accomplished such affirmation and empowerment perfectly with each learner (i.e. not all his attempts to affirm learners appeared to be equally successful, which may be in part because some students are easier for him to relate to than others), but rather that when he was successful in affirming and empowering a learner (which was not infrequently), the seemingly impressive and sometimes transformative effect this had on the learner in question was arguably a sign and consequence of Jeremiah’s authentic and morally-motivated affirmation of and caring for them. Conversely, those moments when Jeremiah was less successful seem to suggest that at those moments he was being less authentic.

As for Bass and Steidlmeier’s (1999) assertion that an authentic transformational leader intellectually stimulates his followers (or in our case, learners) by helping them “to question assumptions and to generate more creative solutions to problems,” evidence for this

20 Interestingly, during the workshops, this effect seemed to have been felt not only by the learners he directly affirmed, but also by observers, i.e. this researcher saw evidence that witnessing Jeremiah’s affirmation of another often profoundly affected some other participants as they listened and watched.
may also be seen in the manner in which the curriculum is designed precisely to lead learners to question their assumptions and biases about the other, a process of questioning that is both caused by and opens the way to experiencing authentic communication and relationship with the other (p. 188). On the other hand, it could be argued that his presentation of certain ideas and perspectives in the workshops seemingly without encouraging critical questioning of these ideas and without giving consideration to alternative explanations, as well as what some might consider to be signs of his substitution of “anecdotes for hard evidence” and of “emotional argumentation for rational discourse” is not in keeping with Bass and Steidlmeier’s description of the kind of intellectual stimulation that authentic transformational leaders are said to provide, and therefore question the authenticity of any moral authority he seems to convey (p. 188). This apparent anomaly is further discussed in the last section of this chapter before the conclusion. For now, to counter this characterization of Jeremiah’s as a pseudo-transformational rather than an authentic transformational leadership, suffice it to point out that Jeremiah does not offer concepts he shares in the workshops as dogma, but rather as a “lens” that learners are invited to see through and assess in light of the kind of experiences this seeing through lens might make possible. Furthermore, his use of stories (i.e. anecdotes) instead of “hard evidence” to make certain points, may arguably be due to the fact that this most suitable means for communicating the ideas/possibilities he wishes to get across.

Finally, when we consider the distinction Barbuto (1997) makes between “inspirational leaders” who “lift people out of their petty preoccupations, carry them above the conflicts that tear a society apart, and unite them in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts” and charismatic leaders, where “charisma” is understood “as an extra-
ordinary power, a personal magic of leadership arousing special popularity loyalty or enthusiasm for a popular figure,” it may reasonably be argued, based again on my observations of Jeremiah’s facilitation of his workshop as well as on the findings of Institute’s program evaluation and the accounts of learners to be presented in the following two chapters, that while Jeremiah probably can be said to possess “charisma,” in line with Barbuto’s definition, he also fits Barbuto’s above description of an “inspirational leader” (p. 692). Since it has been repeatedly suggested that consideration of the learners’ accounts of how they feel they were affected by Jeremiah’s personality, presence and style of teaching is key to evaluating the degree to which Jeremiah could be said to have exhibited authentic moral authority, this issue will be revisited in Chapter 7.

**Authentic Moral Environments**

In addition to authentic moral authority, a second, albeit closely related, factor Mustakova-Possardt (2004) identifies as critical in the formative experiences of people developing critical moral consciousness is exposure to what she calls “authentic moral environments,” which, like exposure to authentic moral authority, progressively “amplifies” the “moral yearning inherent in human nature” to “engage life fully and responsibly” (p. 248). Authentically moral social environments, according to Mustakova-Possardt model and encourage people to engage in “ongoing reflection and reconstructions along four central themes or dimensions of existence: i) identity; ii) relationships with external moral authority and the emerging sense of internal moral authority, responsibility and agency; iii) empathic concerns with others, with justice and caring; iv) concerns with the meaning of life” (2004, p.
253). She further describes social environments as being authentically moral when, contrary to the “general cultural swing” towards “soft relativism,” they are characterized by “an explicit orientation to values greater than the self,” and when “they both foster the authentic quest of individuals and challenge them to keep aligning themselves with horizons of greater significance through the combined exercise of knowledge, love and will” (p. 256).

According to Mustakova-Possardt (2003), central to such environments is on-going, authentic and moral “discourse which gives a name and a principled explanation to living life from a moral and a spiritual center” (p. 150), which treats people as “primarily moral beings, struggling to understand more fully morality as a balanced and respectful approach to all life,” and which takes for granted that the act of explicitly discussing and constructing moral values ought to be “central to public discourse.” Furthermore, such discourse “models tolerance of ambiguity, respectful and truly open and thoughtful consultation across different worldviews, and a fundamental recognition of our collective journey as a human family” (pp. 155-156). Elaborating on this theme, Mustakova-Possardt notes that the innate yearnings of children “toward truth, beauty and goodness” are amplified, by exposing them to moral discourse as an organizer of experience and cultivating in them a general moral orientation to life, stimulating moral interest and a preoccupation with questions regarding authentic moral authority and moral responsibility, as well as by exposing them to a range of living examples of uprightness, moral earnestness and idealism and cultivating a sense of relatedness….The presence of explicit moral values in a child’s environment, of moral induction practices coupled with optimal empathic arousal, which allow moral self-attribution to occur (Hoffman, 1991) and significant and authoritative moral voices to be internalized are all important conditions. (2004, p. 256)

It should be noted that the phrase “moral induction practices coupled with optimal empathic arousal” in the above passage refers to the work of Martin Hoffman and can be understood,
for the purposes of this study, to point to communicative practices involving a parent and child (or in this case a teacher and learner) that generally facilitate the child and/or learner’s consideration of others’ feelings and perspectives, and more specifically that encourage the child/learner to consider how his/her actions were perceived and felt by others, particularly when one’s actions have hurt the other. It is also noteworthy that this quotation makes explicit the notion that exposure to authentic moral authority and authentic moral environments are not only complementary factors that both amplify moral motivation, but that the presence of authentic moral authority is implied and subsumed in the broader category of authentic moral environment.

*The Community-building Institute as an Authentic Moral Environment*

At this point, based on the observations of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum in action previously presented, it can be justifiably claimed that there are many indications that the Community-building Institute provides for its participants with an authentic moral environment according to Mustakova-Possardt’s definition. Firstly and very importantly, with reference to the inherent link Mustakova-Possardt (2004) makes between the concepts of authentic moral authority and authentic moral environments (i.e. when she notes that the latter exposes young people “to a range of living examples of uprightness, moral earnestness and idealism”) (p. 256), it should be noted that inasmuch as, and to the degree that, Jeremiah functions as a source of authentic moral authority, we may also expect the social environment he fosters through the way he relates to and teaches his learners to be
an environment in the process of developing the characteristics of an authentic moral environment.

In addition to the presence within it of what may be a living example of authentic moral authority, we can further see how the Community-building Institute seems to conform to Mustakova-Possardt’s description of authentic moral environments as being characterized by “an explicit orientation to values greater than the self,” an orientation that she asserts tends to “foster the authentic quest of individuals” and to “challenge them to keep aligning themselves with horizons of greater significance through the combined exercise of knowledge, love and will” (p. 256). The Community-building Institute’s curriculum seems to accomplish this by explicitly naming, promoting and modeling in action particular moral values such as the values of affirming others, of caring and love, of appreciating humanity’s oneness while respecting its diversity, of being responsible in one’s relationships to and with others, and of helping/serving others. It should also be noted that the curriculum promotes these values by presenting them as possibilities rather than as dogma and by demonstrating these values in action (i.e. in the authentic way Jeremiah interacts with his learners), which thus attract learners to the degree that they perceive truth, beauty and goodness reflected in these values. This is in contrast to the way moral dogma can be and often is inauthentically taught in terms of injunctions regarding what one “should” or “should not” do in particular circumstances, proscriptions that are not necessarily reflected in the behavior of the teachers or the qualities of the learning environments that ostensibly seek to promote them.

We can further see that Mustakova-Possardt’s (2003) observation that authentic moral environments view and treat people as “primarily moral beings, struggling to understand more fully morality as a balanced and respectful approach to all life” may also be made of
the Community-building Institute (p. 156). This is evident in the way Jeremiah presents the problem of estrangement/injustice/oppression and the possibilities of authentically relating to, caring for, and being members of one family with others. In other words, when presenting these problems and possibilities, he appeals to a deep, inherent moral yearning that he assumes exists in every one of his learners. In confirmation of the pedagogical efficacy of this aspect of authentic moral environments, it can be seen that by regarding and treating his learners in this way, Jeremiah does seem successful in evoking and amplifying signs of this moral yearning in learners.

Mustakova-Possardt (2003) also significantly describes authentic moral environments as being characterized by “authentic moral discourse” (p. 156) that “gives a name and a principled explanation to living life from a moral and a spiritual center” (p. 150) and acts as an “an organizer of experience…cultivating in them [i.e. learners] a general moral orientation to life” (2004, p. 256). In regard to this characteristic of authentic moral environments, the Community-building Institute’s curriculum clearly presents and fosters a morally-oriented discourse, a discourse that explicitly problematizes estrangement/injustice and refers to the possibility of experiencing authentic relationship and oneness, that “gives a name and a principled explanation to living life from a moral and a spiritual center” (p. 150) by making a distinction between only thinking with the “head” versus seeing through the “heart” and advocating the possibility of solving problems (that otherwise could not be solved) by making the Head-to-Heart Shift and solving the problems from a more functional and/or higher/deeper perspective etc. This discourse is implicitly offered to learners as “an organizer of experience” through which they can view and understand their social experiences in and outside of school. Similarly, the Institute’s discourse also focuses on or
“presences” the possibility of living as “a spiritual being having a human experience,” of bringing out the “lion” inside them rather than behaving like the “cat” they appear to be on the surface.

Mustakova-Possardt additionally suggests that “authentic moral discourse… models tolerance of ambiguity, respectful and truly open and thoughtful consultation across different worldviews, and a fundamental recognition of our collective journey as a human family” (p. 156). This characteristic of authentic moral environments is exemplified in the Community-building Institute in the way that it models respectful, open and thoughtful “sharing” across different worldviews and fosters a fundamental recognition that the workshop participants all belong to one human family (which seems to further reinforce this respect and openness). It should be acknowledged that the “sharing” that occurs in the Institute’s workshops may not rise to the level of “consultation” that Mustakova-Possardt refers (i.e. since consultation implies deliberating together to arrive at a common understanding and course of action), but this may simply be due to limitations of time and of the specific objectives of the workshop. Nevertheless, the Head-to-Heart Shifts that occur in the We Are One Family workshops would seem to provide an opportune foundation for consultation. In further regard to Mustakova-Possardt’s characterization of authentic moral discourse in the last quote above, the Community-building Institute can also be seen to encourage “tolerance for ambiguity” inasmuch as it fosters learners’ interest in knowing and understanding others’ experiences and perspectives. In other words, a genuine interest in knowing the other would seem to preclude the tendency to fit the other into a predetermined category and thus must allow for the “ambiguity” that results when one does not succumb to pigeon-holing or stereotyping another person.
Considering the quality of the “sharing” that occurs in the workshops, we can also see how the workshops clearly encourage “preoccupation with questions regarding…moral responsibility” by the way some learners verbalized their concerns and reflections regarding how their attitudes and behavior might have affected others (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004, p. 256). This fact further points to another way in which the social environment fostered by the Institute may be classified as an authentically moral one. As previously noted, Mustakova-Possardt describes authentic moral environments as being characterized by “moral induction practices coupled with optimal empathic arousal, which allow moral self-attribution to occur (Hoffman, 1991)” (p. 256). Clearly, the “sharing” of learners with diverse others of personal experiences regarding the moral problems of estrangement and injustice, which occurs in the We Are One Family workshop, can be seen to arouse obvious signs of empathy (as numerous instances already described attest). As for “moral induction practices” (i.e. practices to promote reflection on how one’s words and actions have affected, or presently affect others), a specific practice that Jeremiah uses while facilitating the “sharing” portion of the workshop to stimulate “moral induction” is worth noting. When some significant sharing by a person from a particular social group (a group most often defined by racial and socio-economic characteristics) about their view of and experience with people in another group occurs in workshops, it can be seen that Jeremiah will often ask another learner from the other group in question how it felt to hear what the person just shared. As a result, the original sharer is assisted to understand the positive or negative impact his/her words and actions have on others. A specific example of this, which may be recalled from the previous chapter, was when Jeremiah, in one workshop, asked a young white woman how it felt to hear a young black man share that he didn’t feel comfortable going to some places where white people go.
After she expressed surprise and sadness at learning this, Jeremiah then asked the young black man how he felt at hearing the young white woman’s response, to which he responded that it felt good to be heard.

_The Key Role of Authentic Communication and Relationship in Fostering an Authentic Moral Environment in the Institute_

Because of the particularly prominent role it plays in the Institute’s curriculum, one of the ways the Institute manages to create an authentic moral environment (i.e. an environment that amplifies moral concern and motivation) mentioned above should be especially emphasized, namely the quality of “sharing” that the curriculum engenders. To help explain the profound effect that this sharing seems to have in fostering an authentic moral environment in the Institute (an effect that stands out both in my personal observations of the curriculum in action, and, as will be seen in the following two chapters, also in learners’ accounts of their experiences in the Institute), I now introduce the concepts I term _authentic communication_ and _authentic relationship_. For the purposes of this study, I define authentic communication (or authentic dialogue) as the kind of communication between people that occurs when their words are truthful (i.e. honest, not intended to deceive), in harmony with what their feelings (i.e. their hearts are engaged in the act of communicating), and reflected in their behavior (i.e. their wills are also engaged in what they are saying). As this definition implies, and as my research confirms, such communication not only stems from a moral motivation, but also clearly further amplifies such motivation (i.e. by amplifying learners’ attraction to beauty, goodness and truth). Thus, authentic communication, as I conceptualize it, is necessarily morally motivated and morally motivating inasmuch as it is motivated by a
strong interest in understanding another person’s perspective and experience, and because actually engaging in such communication tends to greatly increases one’s attraction and commitment to truly knowing and affirming the other’s authentic self. In other words, the experience of such communication stimulates empathy and care for the other, appreciation of the beauty of the other’s authentic self, and a profound sense of connection with and responsibility for/with the other. Furthermore, experiencing such communication encourages one to question and transform one’s prior assumptions about the other (and thus stimulates attraction and commitment to seeking truth). On a deeper level, this motivation can be understood as deriving from the tacit recognition authentic communication awakens of the intrinsic value of the other, as noted by Hatcher (1998), and of one’s inherent connection with the other.

Thus, the experience of authentic communication should necessarily transform those who engage in it by enriching and broadening their knowledge and perspectives (i.e. expanding their consciousness), stimulating openness of heart, and eliciting synergistic, growth-producing relationships between those who are communicating authentically. These characteristics of authentic communication further promote social transformation by enabling learners to overcome the conventional social barriers that formerly separated them and to develop strong bonds of community transcending these barriers. Authentic relationship then may be understood as the kind of relationship that results from authentic communication between people, especially when such communication translates into their synergistic interaction with each other (i.e. in Jeremiah’s terms, when the question/sentiment “How can I help?” that naturally arises from making the Head-to-Heart Shift is translated into affirming, caring, and committed relationship).

22 See Chapter 2.
Given this view of authentic communication and relationship, we may further conclude, consistent with Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, that the chief psychological obstacles to such communication and relationship include the dominance in a person of fear, self-centered expediency, and/or conventionality over his/her innate attraction to truth, beauty and goodness. Such a psychological condition is further reflected in and reinforced by what Freire refers to as concrete, social “limit situations,” i.e. oppressive social conventions that promote estrangement between members of different groups or generally between individuals.

The descriptions of authentic communication and relationship presented above are based on my impressions of the special quality of the “heart-to-heart” communication I often observed occurring in the We Are One Family workshops (especially in the “sharing” portions of the workshops), as well as on my own personal experiences in similar contexts. As will be seen in the next two chapters, they are also corroborated by the accounts of participants in these workshops. Yet, even before considering the accounts of individual participants presented in the following chapter, there are many indications from my observations of the workshops that the kind of communication I describe above did in fact occur in the workshops.

Before pointing out indications of authentic communication in the Institute’s curriculum in action, one other point should be made. It is worth noting that the transformation that authentic communication fosters seems closely connected to, and to some degree may be treated as synonymous with, the Head-to-Heart Shift, since both phrases can be used to characterize the same occurrences. However, the distinctiveness of each concept seems to lie in the latter’s greater emphasis on epistemology (i.e., as discussed earlier in this
chapter, the concept of the Head-to-Heart Shift explicitly refers to a shift from one way of knowing to another) and the former’s connotation of being an on-going process rather than an instantaneous event. Thus, it may be more precise to say that the way of knowing a person shifts towards when he/she experiences a Head-to-Heart Shift (i.e. that of seeing through the “heart” and integrating its perception with the knowledge of the “head”) is both a requisite and result of engaging in a process of authentic communication. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the Head-to-Heart Shift and authentic communication outwardly appear to occur simultaneously, the two phrases may to some degree be used interchangeably.

In my observations of the We Are One Family workshops, a salient indicator that authentic communication and Head-to-Heart Shifts were occurring could be seen in some learners’ powerful expressions of sympathetic (as opposed to aggressive or defensive) emotions when they “shared” in the workshop. The tears that accompanied the sharing of Jordan, Mary, Alejandra, Valerie, Lakshmi, Ruth and others, for example, and their expressions of distress at the situation of oppressive estrangement and injustice they learned about and came to bear witness to in the workshops, not only seem to strongly indicate that their moral concerns had been amplified (as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter), but that this amplification occurred in the context of, and as a result of, their experiences of authentic communication. Their emotions while sharing with each other showed that not only the rational capacity of their minds but also the affective perception of their hearts were engaged in their morally-motivated conversation with each other. Similarly, their expressed desires to be part of a solution to the problem show their wills were also engaged.

The honesty, trust and comfort with which learners disclosed aspects of themselves that they would likely tend to keep hidden under normal circumstances is another noticeable
indication that authentic communication is occurring in the workshops. An example of this can be seen in the apparent safety many minority students seemed to feel to share their feelings of disappointment, pain and anger at their experiences with discrimination. Other noticeable and significant evidences of the occurrence of authentic communication during the workshops can be seen in the quality of participants’ listening to each other, and their growing willingness throughout the course of a workshop to express affirmation of and care for each other. Those listening often communicated such affirmation of a person who was sharing by the respectful attention they gave that person, by smiles and sympathetic eye contact, by nods of agreement, and even by the simple gesture (which in some ways became a ritualized part of the new culture established in the workshops) of passing a tissue box to the person when he/she was crying. It was also not unusual for a listener to be visibly moved by another’s sharing. Furthermore, the fact that this communication apparently transcended normal social expectations and barriers, for example, by occurring between students who, by their own admission, would probably never have spoken or reached out to each other under normal circumstances at school (if it had not been for the Community-building Institute), is another powerful indication of authentic communication occurring.

This experience of authentic communication and relationship, so central to the learning that occurs in the Community-building Institute, may be well-summarized by revisiting Kessler’s (2000) description of how to recognize “when soul is present in education.”

[T]he quality of attention shifts, we listen with great care not only to what people say but to the messages between the words – tones, gestures, the flicker of feeling across the face…. When soul enters the classroom, masks drop away. Students… risk exposing the pain or shame that peers might judge as weakness. Seeing deeply into the perspective of others, accepting what has felt unworthy in themselves, students discover compassion and begin to learn about forgiveness. (p. x)
Specific Pedagogical Principles and Strategies Reflected in the Institute’s Curriculum that Foster an Authentic Moral Environment

Perhaps most critical to the Community-building Institute’s ability to foster Head-to-Heart Shifts and authentic communication, and thus also an authentic moral environment, is the manner in which Jeremiah presents and “presences,” on the one hand, examples of the moral problems of estrangement and injustice, and, on the other hand, the compelling possibility that the learners can help solve these problems by coming to authentically care for and relate to each other as diverse members of “one family.” The way Jeremiah “presences” the moral problem of estrangement and injustice in fact allows learners to perceive this problem as a “felt difficulty” (Crosby, 1995, p. 11), i.e. as a problem that is directly and profoundly relevant to their lives. One of the ways Jeremiah accomplishes this is by emphasizing in every workshop he gives how rare it is “to see a person and experience being seen, or…meet a person and experience being met” and by eliciting examples from the learners’ everyday experiences in the high school of how students there are estranged from each other (e.g. how different racial groups sit separately in the cafeteria etc.). In this way, he points to and amplifies a thirst (or “moral yearning”) that it seems most every learner possesses to some degree for having his/her authentic self affirmed and to be able to authentically relate to others. He then goes on to compellingly relate this “felt difficulty” to more global problems (e.g. by observing that roughly half the world’s population are living on less than two dollars a day) that are arguably caused and/or perpetuated by people’s separation from, ignorance of, and/or lack of care for each other. In this way, he heightens learners’ concern for distant people’s suffering. The video clip he shows from The Color of
*Fear* documentary also powerfully focuses learners’ attention on the same moral problem of people’s estrangement from each other due to racism.

At the same time that Jeremiah presents this problem to learners, he also presents, in characteristically passionate and “enrolling” language, possibilities perceived by most of his learners as beautiful and good. For example, the profound possibility of being truly “seen,” “met,” and “held well,” and of doing the same for others, pointing as it does to a normally disregarded value and depth in both the self and the other, seems to inspire most learners. Likewise, Jeremiah’s offering of the possibilities of being part of “one family” in which diversity of background and perspective is valued, and of making a difference in their community and world seems to further stimulate learners’ attraction to beauty and goodness.

One specific and outstanding example of this “presencing” of a beautiful possibility is Jeremiah’s impassioned observation, noted earlier, that “This should be normal!” when affirming the tears Ruth shed out of her concern over people’s separation from and abuse of each other and when noting the kind of environment that made it possible for her to share in this way.

A related strategy that Jeremiah uses to promote Head-to-Heart Shifts, and thus also authentic communication and an authentic moral environment, is arguably the way he and his curriculum prepares learners to experience the Shift by guiding them to focus their attention on their hearts’ experiences. This is accomplished, in part, through the use of stories and what Freire refers to as a code (i.e. the video clip from *The Color of Fear* documentary) that seem to have been specifically chosen for their ability to powerfully engage learners’ emotions. Jeremiah also repeatedly offers verbal guidance and reminders to learners to focus on what they feel in their “hearts” rather than on the thoughts, opinions and judgments they
carry in their “heads.” An example of this can be seen in Jeremiah’s response to Mary’s emotional sharing described in Chapter 4, when Jeremiah told Mary “You have a beautiful heart”, and then asked the other participants, “Can you all feel that?” (a question to which most responded affirmatively). Asking questions like this of the group seems to help train them to listen and refer to each other in a way that is likely very different from what they are accustomed to. Similarly, when he opens up the “sharing” segment of the workshop, Jeremiah explains to learners that “we’re going to share our hearts, not our heads” and directs them to focus on “what feelings came up for you.”

Jeremiah also helps learners to become aware of and focus on their hearts’ experiences by exercising a considerable skill he possesses, a skill which may be characterized as his ability to “lead out” learners’ authentic selves (i.e. to promote *educare*) especially during the “sharing” portion of the workshop. He seems to accomplish this first by perceiving and acknowledging what a learner seems to be feeling, and then by asking questions that encourage that learner to identify and express the source of those feelings. This skill seems related to what Boyd and Myers (1988) call “seasoned guidance.”

Observing Jeremiah’s interactions with learners, one can see that this skill can make a significant contribution to the art of morally transformative teaching, just as it is invaluable to a psychotherapist’s craft. This observation underscores the artistry (as distinct from formulaic technique) of what Jeremiah does in his workshops. For in his interactions with learners, one senses the spontaneous creativity involved (particularly in what appear to be some of the most effective teaching moments). Jeremiah alluded to this creativity in a conversation with me when he described his interaction with participants in his workshops as “a dance” in which he is “not thinking about what [he’s] going to say.” Thus, he seems to
rely on inspiration similar to that which artists sometimes describe as moving them when they create their art, inspiration that, in subjective and psychological terms, they experience as coming from outside of their egos. This inspiration, in Jeremiah’s case, seems to be attracted by the attitude he describes as being “fully present” when encountering his learners.

Another pedagogical principle that is arguably essential to creating an authentic moral environment, one that is especially emphasized by experiential educators (e.g. Bialeschki, 2006; Cranton, 2002; Fox, 1995), is that, in order to create a context in which learners feel able and willing to authentically share and have dialogue with each other, it is necessary that learners experience their learning environment as “safe and nourishing and supportive” (Fox, 1995, p. 158). Such an environment seems to be established in the Community-building Institute primarily by means of the affirmation, recognition and care exhibited by the facilitator, examples of which have previously been given. This not only causes learners to feel safe with Jeremiah, but also encourages the establishment of the habit of affirming one another as a social norm within the group. The “Guidelines for Sharing” read at the outset of the sharing segment of each workshop also seem to help to create a safe environment for sharing. This safety is further reinforced by the way that Jeremiah, as already described, continually evokes ideals and possibilities of beauty and goodness with an earnestness and authenticity that tends to “enroll” his learners.

The sense of safety that characterizes the Institute’s learning environment also corresponds to one of two components that Fox (1995) suggests are needed to create ideal environments for experiential learning. As may be recalled from Chapter 2, these two components are the provision of “unfailing acceptance” and “uncompromising discipline,” what Fox additionally refers to as “the mothering and fathering sides of life” (p. 158). Of
these two components, “unfailing acceptance,” which is clearly exemplified in the previously
described ways Jeremiah affirms workshop participants, seems most closely connected to the
promotion of a safe learning environment. On the other hand, the “uncompromising
discipline” Fox recommends points to a different characteristic of the Community-building
Institute that also can be seen to help promote authentic communication and an authentic
moral environment. Uncompromising discipline can be observed in the Institute in the way
that Jeremiah does not allow learners to make light of or distract each other from the serious
issues the Institute focuses on. This atmosphere of seriousness seems to be promoted
amongst workshop participants primarily by the earnestness and moral passion that Jeremiah
conveys. However, occasionally sustaining such an atmosphere requires Jeremiah to use
additional disciplinary measures such as not allowing learners who are being disruptive by
talking to continue sitting next to each other. Jeremiah further promotes such discipline, in
instances when he senses a learner’s sharing was inauthentic, by drawing attention to this and
not letting the person “off the hook.” One such instance was when Jeremiah asked one
participant in a workshop, who appeared withdrawn and depressed, if he was happy to be in
the workshop. When the young man said “yes,” Jeremiah told him to, “Inform your face.
You don’t look happy.” (By the end of the workshop, however, this young man shared, and
his face showed, that he was happy to have come to the workshop and felt he had gained
something from being there.)

Like Fox, Boyd and Myers (1988) also suggest that facilitators of transformative
learning should possess two virtues that can also be seen to encourage authentic
communication and to help create an authentic moral environment in the Community-
building Institute. These two virtues are “seasoned guidance and compassionate criticism”
The second of these seems to correspond in some ways to Fox’s “uncompromising discipline,” but also further denotes an educator’s ability to encourage learners “to question their present mode of operation and way of viewing reality” (p. 283). Jeremiah seems to provide such encouragement mainly by teaching learners that “the way we see the problem is the problem,” by suggesting new ways of relating to each other (i.e. with authenticity and compassion). The opportunity and encouragement to question their ways of viewing reality is provided to learners by their experience with authentic communication and the cognitive dissonance that may result when what they hear others share contradicts their own previous assumptions about the other.

The other virtue that Boyd and Myers suggest a facilitator of transformative learning should have, i.e. “seasoned guidance,” is defined by them as the “educator’s ability to help individuals carry on the journey’s inner dialogue…to accurately name…and trace…[emotions] to their source” (p. 282). This virtue seems closely connected with his previously described skill at “leading out” learners’ authentic selves. The word “seasoned” further connotes that a facilitator of transformative learning should be “actively involved in the inner dialogue” of his/her own “personal journey” and should “have traveled a similar road” to that which he/she is guiding his/her learners along (p. 282). It thus implies an authenticity on the part of the teacher that, as mentioned earlier, Jeremiah gives the impression of possessing. The application of the virtues of seasoned guidance and compassionate criticism therefore seem to be additional pedagogical principles the Institute applies to foster Head-to-Heart Shifts and authentic communication.

Another characteristic of the Community-building Institute that seems useful for inducing Head-to-Heart Shifts and authentic communication, and thus also for contributing to
an authentic moral environment, is the intensity and liminality of the *We Are One Family* workshops, apparent in the way the workshops appear to simulate the experience of a *rite of passage*. In Chapter 2, I noted how the powerful effect of this kind of experience is intentionally elicited in many models of experiential learning. For example, “adventure and challenge,” it may be recalled, constitute one of the “core values” of Outward Bound and similarly characterizes other approaches to experiential education. Like Outward Bound, the experience of learners in the *We Are One Family* workshops is one of “separation from the existing human world, into the intensity of the journey-quest, confronting challenges and transforming opportunities for service” (James, 1995, p. 39).

Victor Turner’s ideas regarding liminality in rites of passage may be particularly helpful in recognizing and considering the effects of the workshops’ liminality and intensity. As explained in Chapter 2, Turner noted that the liminal stage of a rite of passage provides unique opportunities for transformative experience and for the spontaneous development of authentic community (i.e. *communitas*). A liminal space for the *We Are One Family* workshops is created firstly by meeting outside of school facilities, and furthermore by focusing attention and authentic dialogue on a risky, emotion-laden, and usually ignored topic. Thus, from the outset, it is clear to participants that the workshop they are participating in is not an experience of ordinary schooling.

The structure of the entire workshop itself can further be seen to resemble that of a rite of passage. It begins with a number of introductory activities that serve to separate learners from their normal world. These introductory activities also prepare learners for the intensely liminal experience of “sharing” that is to come. It does this by “presencing” a very relevant, “felt” problem as well as a beautiful possibility and by sharing ideas with them (i.e.
a conceptual “lens”) that help to further prepare them for and open them up to the possibility of experiencing a Head-to-Heart Shift. This is followed by the climactic and liminal experience of sharing between learners that serves to evoke the transformative experiences of “chaos” and “community” that Peck (1987) spoke of (see Chapter 2). The liminality of this experience lies in its unfamiliarity, its abandonment of social categories and conventions that characterize their normal school experiences, separate them from each other, and inhibit authenticity. This is followed by an opportunity for reflection on the experience and for celebration and “closure,” that may be seen to correspond to the re-incorporation phase of rites of passage. In this portion of the workshops, learners share a meal together, are offered an avenue for maintaining the new relationships they have forged and for being of service, and finally are given an opportunity to share about what they feel they gained from the workshop. In this way, the We Are One Family workshops can also be seen to make special use of two of the “seven gateways to the soul in education” identified by Kessler (2000), namely “the yearning for deep connection,” and “the need for initiation” (p. 17).

Analyzing the Curriculum’s Possible Impact on the Development of Moral Motivation in Relation to Mustakova-Possardt’s Four Motivational Dimensions

Thus far, my analysis of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum has focused on the curriculum’s ability to amplify learners’ “moral yearning” (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004, p. 248) primarily in relation to Mustakova-Possardt’s third dimension of motivational development, i.e. the dimension of “relationships” (2003, p. 68) or “empathic concerns with others, with justice and caring” (2004, p. 253). This amplification, as has been noted, is evident from observing changes in the quality of learners’ relationships with one another.
over the course of the *We Are One Family* workshops. However, unlike the changes in the ways learners related to each other, which could be easily observed, changes in learners’ senses of identity, in their relations to authority, responsibility and agency, and in their questioning of life’s meaning (i.e. the first, second and fourth of Mustakova-Possardt’s motivational dimensions) are harder to assess based solely on observations of the *We Are One Family* workshops. Therefore, an adequate assessment of the changes learners experienced in relation to these three other motivational dimensions identified by Mustakova-Possardt will depend mainly on analyzing individual learners’ accounts presented in the next two chapters. Nevertheless, it may be noted at this point that the content of the Institute’s curriculum does directly address the first and second of Mustakova-Possardt’s motivational dimensions, and may also indirectly stimulate some increased and conscious questioning of life’s meaning (i.e. the fourth motivational dimension) by learners in the workshops.

In relation to the first motivational dimension of “identity,” the Institute’s curriculum suggests to learners that they consider the possibility that they have a deeper, spiritual identity, i.e. that they are “spiritual beings having a human experience” and that within them, metaphorically speaking, are potential “lions,” even if learners perceive themselves to be more like “cats.” This deeper identity, as may be recalled, is further distinguished, in the Institute’s curriculum, from learners’ social, racial and ethnic identities, since their “spiritual” identity is said to transcend these distinctions and to connect them with all human beings.

As for Mustakova-Possardt’s second motivational dimension (i.e. authority, responsibility and agency), the critical role played by authentic moral authority in the Institute’s curriculum has already been suggested, as has Mustakova-Possardt’s point that
exposure to such authority is crucial to the development of moral responsibility and agency. Likewise, I have already suggested the likely possibility that learners’ sense of responsibility was amplified and their understanding of their responsibility was reconstructed/transformed through their experiences of authentic communication with diverse others in the Institute.\textsuperscript{23}

It should also be noted, regarding the second motivational dimension, that the content of the Institute’s curriculum places considerable emphasis on the concept of agency. It does so by suggesting that people have the power to choose how they see themselves and others, e.g. they may choose to see themselves as lions rather than cats, as “spiritual beings having a human experience” rather than as “human beings having a spiritual experience,” as “powerful” rather than “puny,” and as members of one family rather than as separate etc.

Similarly, the curriculum suggests that people have the agency to choose different ways of viewing and approaching problems, and to perceive with their “hearts” rather than solely with their “heads.”

The fourth motivational dimension, i.e. the meaning of life, is the least directly dealt with by the Institute’s curriculum. Nevertheless, we may surmise that concern about life’s meaning might be amplified to some extent by learners’ experience in the \textit{We Are One Family} workshops. This may be the case inasmuch as the Institute’s curriculum suggests that one’s responsibility to others and people’s capacity to enrich each others’ lives and relieve each other’s suffering could be viewed as an important part of life’s meaning and purpose. Furthermore, some allusion to the possible existence of ultimate meaning for life is made in some of the quotes presented in the workshops, particularly those attributed to Teilhard de Chardin and Nelson Mandela, which make reference to “God” and/or a spiritual dimension of life.

\textsuperscript{23} These suggestions are confirmed by the learners’ accounts in Chapter 6.
In addition to analyzing the Community-building Institute’s curriculum in terms of Mustakova-Possardt’s concepts of authentic moral authority and authentic moral environment, it may also be fruitful to consider how this curriculum reflects other pedagogical principles, strategies and methods that characterize some of the “morally transformative” approaches to education reviewed in Chapter 2. A useful starting point for such an analysis would be to consider the Institute’s perspective on social transformation in relation to the perspectives of Freire and other transformative educators.

Social transformation is an explicit goal of a number of the educational approaches reviewed in Chapter 2 including Freire’s liberatory education, some versions of experiential education and Transformative Learning Theory, and FUNDAEC. Although the scope of the immediate transformation the Community-building Institute seeks to promote is confined to the high school that hosts it, this transformation is also clearly social as well as personal (i.e. its promotion of authentic community transcending the normal social barriers that exist in the high school is an example of social change). Furthermore, the frequent suggestions made in its workshops as to how experiencing a Head-to-Heart Shift may help learners to promote change in broader social arenas in the future shows that the Institute is concerned with more macroscopic social change even if it does not aim for it in the short-term.

The link that the Institute’s founder seems to envision between microscopic transformations in learners’ perspectives and relationships (which his curriculum seems to successfully and immediately induce) and the macroscopic change that he ultimately aims for can be seen to be based on a distinct understanding he appears to have of the nature of
oppression and the dynamics of social transformation. I will discuss this understanding of oppression in further in the concluding chapter. For now, may it suffice to observe that Jeremiah’s view of oppression is one that does not locate the *ultimate* source of oppression in the actions of a particular group of people who overtly oppress others to promote what they perceive to be their own interests. While he does not deny the overt dynamics of oppression that occur when one person or group exploits another, according to which one party in this relationship becomes an oppressor and the other is oppressed, he nevertheless sees the source of this problem as ultimately lying not in a only one person or group in any given situation, but rather in a mode of perception and behavior that all people are susceptible to and tend to participate in whether they are overtly oppressors or victims. This mode of perception may be described as ego-centric consciousness that is unable to perceive the intrinsic value of, and one’s inherent connection with, the other.

Thus, to an extent, Jeremiah would probably agree with Freire’s definition of oppression as the “dehumanization” of a person or group by an oppressor, an act which has the further effect of dehumanizing the oppressor as well. Translated into Jeremiah’s terms, such dehumanization occurs in circumstances when a person’s “humanity” is not “affirmed.” And yet, Jeremiah would go further than Freire in locating the cause of this dehumanization in a morally and spiritually diseased condition with psychological and social manifestations (a condition which Mustakova-Possardt further concludes has its psychologically origins in a combination of environmental influences and personal choices that favor the dominance of self-centered orientation and fear over attraction to truth, beauty and goodness). The solution then, for Jeremiah -- or at least one contribution to the solution -- lies in transforming the consciousness of learners from diverse backgrounds mainly by guiding them to authentically
communicate with and relate to each other (and thus to experience their oneness with, and perceive their responsibility to, each other). I.e. his solution acknowledges and relies on the oneness of human beings and seeks to simultaneously influence people from both privileged and oppressed segments of society. The relationship between personal and social transformation implicit in this solution further seems to conform in some ways to one of FUNDAEC’s basic premises that the processes of personal and social transformation are reciprocally related and fundamentally inseparable.

In fairness to Freire (2005b), it must be noted that he also sees social transformation as depending on a transformation of people’s consciousness, beginning with the consciousness of “the oppressed” (and the consciousness of a few allies from more privileged classes of society who choose to join with them). Thus, the central aim of his pedagogy is to develop learners’ “critical consciousness,” which he notes is developed in the praxis of action and reflection. He further alludes to the moral nature of the problem of oppression by pointing out the lack of “love” and “necrophilia” (p. 65) evident in the oppressor’s acts and by noting that there are moral prerequisites for the authentic dialogue that is critical to stimulating critical consciousness. These prerequisites are “love,” “humility,” “faith in man,” mutual “trust,” and “hope” (pp. 89-92). Yet, while acknowledging these moral qualities as requisites for the kind of dialogue that fosters critical consciousness, Freire’s pedagogy does not suggest how these qualities may be developed. This is one of the areas in which Mustakova-Possardt’s theory significantly contributes to and expands upon Freire’s pedagogy, since she explicitly points out how critical consciousness must be profoundly morally motivated (i.e. motivated by a deep attraction to truth, beauty and goodness) and how such consciousness develops. This is also where the Community-building Institute, to
the degree that it is able to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness, may be
seen to significantly contribute to and advance Freire’s project.

Turning now to re-examining the transformative approaches to education reviewed in
Chapter 2, it should be noted that the transformations in consciousness that these approaches
aim for are characterized in different, though related, ways. For example, Freire (2005a,
2005b), as already noted, aims to awaken “critical consciousness,” i.e. consciousness capable
of de-reifying social conventions, that recognizes how human beings create culture, that
perceives the causes of oppression and is able to engage in a praxis to transform social
reality. Alternatively, Mezirow (1997) seeks to transform people’s “frames of reference,” by
which he means the “structures of assumptions through which we understand our
experiences”, which “selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and
feelings” and “set our ‘line of action’” (p. 5). His goal in doing so is to help the learner
“move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and
integrative of experience” (p. 5) and to “become a more autonomous thinker by learning to
negotiate his or her values, meanings, and purposes rather than to uncritically act on those of
others” (p. 11). Boyd and Myers (1988), alternatively, characterize the goal of
transformative learning as “the expansion of consciousness and the working toward a
meaningful integrated life as evidenced in authentic relationships with self and others” (p.
261). Landmark Education, in turn, aims to transform people’s consciousness and ways of
being such that they can experience the authenticity and integrity that derive, according to
this organization, from recognizing how we are the authors of our lives’ stories and, as such,
how we have the power to transform our lives. Similarly, the Community building Institute
aims to engender a transformation in consciousness that it calls a Head-to-Heart Shift, which
has been amply described. Despite minor differences, all of these characterizations clearly point to profound changes in perspectives and ways of perceiving that allow for authentic, responsible and integrated relationships with one’s self, others, and one’s world.

How then do these approaches to transformative education suggest that such changes in consciousness are to be achieved, and how are these suggestions related to the Community-building Institute’s curriculum? One of the pedagogical principles that Freire (2005b) suggests is crucial for helping to develop critical consciousness is that a dialogical relationship should exist between teacher and student. This principle is based a recognition that, within the teacher-student relationship, students can/should teach and teachers can/should learn, and that responsibility for learning/teaching should rest on both students and teacher in partnership with each other. Such a teacher-student relationship also seems to be suggested in Transformative Learning Theory, in Landmark Education, in models of experiential education, and in FUNDAEC. Likewise, such a relationship between teacher and learners seems to exist in the Community-building Institute. This is seen in the facilitator’s dialogical interaction with learners, in which he usually presents them with questions and possibilities to consider and guides them to teach each other (and to teach him) through their authentic “sharing.” It should be noted, however, that the teacher-learner relationship in the Institute does occasionally fall short of being dialogical, for example in instances when the facilitator poses a question in what seems to be a rhetorical fashion, i.e. without waiting for and discussing learners’ genuine responses to the question at that moment. However, this may, in some cases, have an intention that is not necessarily inconsistent with the notion of a dialogical relationship between teacher and student, i.e. Jeremiah’s aim seems to be for learners to quietly reflect on a possibility rather than to
engage in discussion or debate (which risks centering learners’ psychological activity in their “heads” rather than their “hearts”).

The notion that a dialogical relationship should exist between teacher and learners further points to the importance and centrality of the use of critical dialogue as a method of learning in all of these educational approaches. For example, Freire (2005b) notes that it is through dialogue that “the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized” (pp. 88-89). For Freire, such dialogue requires that dialoguers, in addition to possessing the moral qualities listed earlier, engage in “critical thinking,” i.e. “thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and men…which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity…which does not separate itself from action” and which leads to “the continuing transformation of reality” (p. 92). Similarly, Mezirow (1997) suggests that the transformation of people’s “frames of reference” is achieved through the “communicative learning” that occurs in “discourse” (p. 6). As may be recalled from Chapter 2, communicative learning, for Mezirow, requires a group of people to engage in a dialogue for the purpose of achieving mutual understanding, and ideally consensus, regarding “the meaning of an interpretation or the justification of a belief” by being “critically reflective of the assumptions underlying intentions, values, beliefs, and feelings” that underlie one’s own and others’ beliefs (p. 6). Likewise, discourse, as Mezirow uses the term, refers to “a dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically examining evidence, arguments and alternative points of view” whereby “we learn together by analyzing the related experiences of others to arrive at a common understanding that holds until new evidence or arguments present themselves” (pp. 6-7). Mezirow further
suggests that learners engaged in discourse should “have equal opportunity to assume the various roles of discourse (to advance beliefs, challenge, defend, explain, assess evidence, and judge arguments)” (p. 10). This is reminiscent of Crosby’s (1995) interpretation of Dewey’s experiential approach to education, which suggests that dialogue should inquire into problematic experience, by first articulating the problem, then hypothesizing possible solutions, testing these, and refining hypothesized solutions in the light of additional experience until a sense of “consummation” and “closure” is achieved with regard to the original problem (p. 11).

Dialogue is also central to the Community-building Institute’s curriculum, but it takes on a slightly different quality and form in the Institute than dialogue as described by Freire and Mezirow. The kind of dialogue proposed in Freire’s liberatory pedagogy and Transformative Learning Theory seems primarily designed to involve learners in reasoned argumentation for the purpose of critically reflecting on social and personal problematic situations and to arrive at a common understanding and ideally a unified course of action to address the problem (the goal of reaching a common understanding is explicit in Mezirow’s theory and clearly implied in Freire’s emphasis on “unity” as a prerequisite to achieving liberation). Alternatively, while the “sharing” that is promoted in the Institute can certainly be regarded as dialogical, it is not dialogue that makes primary use of collective argumentation to arrive at truth.

This does not mean that learners in the Institute do not engage in critical reflection on their experiences, perceptions and social circumstances. Indeed, critically reflecting on assumptions that underlie one’s perceptions is explicitly encouraged by the quotes from Steven Covey and Albert Einstein that are part of the curriculum (i.e. quotes that make the
point that the way we see a problem is the problem) and by questions that Jeremiah poses to learners while he facilitates their “sharing.” But the critical reflection that occurs in the We Are One Family workshops generally does not rely on the medium of the kind of conversation that involves the whole group of learners in comparing competing hypotheses and interpretations in order to arrive through reasoning and argument at the best explanation of experience. Rather, in the Institute, the experience of authentic communication (i.e. “sharing”) seems to naturally cause learners to privately question and often discard previous assumptions, as dramatically demonstrated in the story of Jordan and Steve as well as many other instances of transformation in the Institute. In other words, while learners do critically reflect on their perspectives on others (and themselves) and often share with each other how their perspectives have changed as a result of their Head-to-Heart Shifts, their new (and old) perspectives are generally not “subjected to critical scrutiny” by the group (Tennet, 1991, p. 197), except to the extent that Jeremiah may discuss with learners something one of them has shared and/or make an observation about certain group dynamics he sees. Thus, learners’ old worldviews are disrupted by listening with open hearts to each other’s authentic sharing of his/her experiences, not by abstractly discussing the merits and shortcomings of competing ideas as Mezirow seems to suggest. This mode of authentic communication has the further effect of fostering a common understanding, but again not a common understanding reached through argumentation but rather through sharing a common experience that occurs within and appears to confirm a certain conceptual framework.

If the observations and possibilities that Jeremiah presents in his workshops were more often presented in the form of open-ended questions, and if he gave opposing views equal time, this might stimulate more of the kind of dialogue suggested by Freire and
Mezirow, but, again, the danger in such an approach (and perhaps the reason he doesn’t do it) could be that such discussion, especially when focused on each others’ assumptions and values, could very well decrease at the outset the sense of safety that is so critical to stimulating the Head-to-Heart Shift. Perhaps even more critically, such discussion, as already suggested, could easily shift learners focus away from their “heart’s” perception of the other to using their “heads” to analyze and judge the others’ thoughts and perspectives (and thus to view the other in a detached, disconnected manner). Rather, the dialogue that Jeremiah aims for may be thought of as a dialogue between hearts. What is communicated between people when they listen with their hearts are not abstract ideas so much as intimations of what others are feeling and what they have experienced in their lives, as well as intuitive perceptions of the value of, and one’s connection with, the other. Such a dialogue may thus be called authentic, inasmuch as it involves the head and heart working together, and further evokes the will to respond and to care.

Instead of asking his learners to critically examine opposing hypotheses, Jeremiah presents one specific hypothesis or interpretation regarding a moral problem (i.e. the view that unhealthy social norms are estranging people from one another, and more subtly from their own selves, and that, through the Head-to-Heart Shift, they can come to recognize that they are really members of one family and that each member of that family is a valuable, “spiritual” being). Yet, this single hypothesis is not presented as dogmatic truth. Rather, Jeremiah both implicitly and explicitly asks learners to consider the hypothesis he presents as a possibility and to test it in light of their own experiences in and out of the We Are One Family workshop. His purpose in doing so seems to be to make it possible for learners to have a particular kind of experience (i.e. an experience of authentic communication and care)
which tentative acceptance of the hypothesis he presents makes possible. In so doing, Jeremiah gives greater priority to the affective perceptions and experiences of the heart than to the development of skill in argumentation.

This approach appears in accord with Landmark Education’s approach of presenting a particular paradigm that it asks its learners to try out to see for themselves if it helps them to better understand their experience and transform their lives. It also seems consistent with Boyd and Myers’s (1988) alternative approach to transformative learning, which, as noted in Chapter 2, gives as much or more importance to the affective perception of “extra-rational” sources of knowledge and meaning as it does to rationality, and which aims to develop not only the ability to critically reflect but also what Boyd and Myers (1998) call “discernment,” i.e. an intuitive perception of “meaning” that allows people to see things “in their relational wholeness” and “leads people…to a tacit knowledge of the mystery held within their own beings” (pp. 274-275).

This is not to say that dialogue between hearts, i.e. authentic communication, precludes the more reasoned, critical dialogue to which Freire and Mezirow allude. Indeed, as previously suggested, when the bonds of community that derive from the Head-to-Heart Shift are well-established, this would seem to create a strong foundation for a potentially very fruitful, critical dialogue regarding any problem as well as consultation aimed at discovering and implementing solutions. Such critical dialogue would then have the advantage of being free of many of the suspicions and psychological projections that often hamper rational dialogue between people who have not learned to authentically communicate with and relate to each other. Even within the parameters of the Institute’s current

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24 As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, it is worth recalling that the particular paradigm Jeremiah presents to his learners is also substantially influenced by his experience with and investment in Landmark Education as well as the Bahá’í Faith.
curriculum, one could imagine that an individual learner, in his/her sharing, might voluntarily ask for help from others in re-constructing his/her worldview and sense of identity, or might feel free to offer advice to another to help him/her with a similar struggle. As an example, there was at least one instance in the *We Are One Family* workshops I observed in which a learner challenged another learner’s belief about himself. This occurred when one participant shared that he doesn’t really “have much emotion,” which prompted a young woman participant to observe that he actually does have emotions but “they’re locked up.” Within the atmosphere of authenticity and care that had been established up to that point, it was clear that the motive for the comment was care and not judgment, and it seemed to be accepted as such.

Another similarity between the Community-building Institute and the other educational approaches mentioned above can be seen in their ideas regarding the appropriate starting point and focus for critical reflection and dialogue. Freire (2005b) proposes that critical dialogue in liberatory education should focus on a problematic “theme” or “limit situation” apparent in the learners’ social environment that is hindering the learners’ “humanization” (pp. 99-102). He sees these themes and situations as being concrete manifestations of “contradictions” in people’s historical-social realities (which are therefore also reflected in their consciousness), i.e. contradictions between emerging “aspirations, concerns, and values in search of fulfillment” and “the obstacles to their fulfillment” that are often connected with “earlier values seeking self-preservation” (2005a, pp. 4-6). In Freire’s pedagogy, the learners’ concrete “limit situations” are posed to them as problems, “as concrete historical dimensions of a given reality” and “obstacles to their liberation” that people have created and that people can transform, rather than as the “insurmountable
barriers” that learners first tend to accept as “given” (2005b, p. 99). Thus, “students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge” (p. 81) and so will undertake “limit acts” (i.e. actions directed at over-coming their “limit situations”) within a praxis of action and reflection (p. 99).

Similarly, but with perhaps more of an internal focus, Mezirow (1991) suggests that “discourse” should focus on apparent contradictions in people’s worldviews “when we have reason to question the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness (in relation to norms), or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what is being asserted or to question the credibility of the person making the statement” (p. 77). Taylor (1998), an associate of Mezirow’s and another proponent of Transformative Learning Theory, similarly suggests that “discourse” and “communicative learning” should occur,

in response to an awareness of a contradiction among our thought, feelings, and actions. These contradictions are generally the result of distorted epistemic (nature and use of knowledge), psychological (acting inconsistently from our self-image), and sociolinguistic (mechanisms by which society and language limit our perceptions) assumptions. In essence, we realize something is not consistent with what we hold to be true. (p. 9)

This is further reminiscent of the “felt difficulty” which, according to Crosby (1995), provides the condition and starting point for subsequent collective inquiry and critical reflection in Deweyian education (p. 11). Other experiential educators, similarly, propose that learning should be centered on a problematic and challenging experience that is then critically reflected on. Likewise, FUNDAEC’s curriculum guides learners to critically reflect on relevant, social challenges, and Landmark Education assists learners to recognize and critically reflect on problems stemming from their own inauthenticity. In all of these cases, a “problem” is the starting point and focus of critical reflection and dialogue. Furthermore,
this problem is in some way related to an anomaly or contradiction in people’s social context and/or consciousness (i.e. their ways of viewing and relating to themselves and the world etc.). Each approach also appears to recognize that the presentation of this problem will be most effective in generating critical reflection and dialogue when it is perceived by the learners themselves as being very relevant to their lives (i.e. when it is a “felt” problem).

In this regard, we can see that the Community-building Institute evokes perception of and critical reflection on a moral problem. As Freire suggests is usually the case with peoples’ “limit situations,” learners in the We Are One Family workshops often have not yet clearly perceived and named this moral problem prior to their participation in the workshop, but, when they come to recognize it, they tend to strongly feel that it is very relevant to their lives. By problematizing learners’ and other people’s experiences of estrangement, and at the same time suggesting alternative, moral possibilities (i.e. that things don’t have to be this way), and especially by providing the opportunity to begin to experience those possibilities in authentic dialogue, the Institute’s curriculum evokes learners’ critical reflection on their previous assumptions and thus stimulates the construction of new moral understandings and values. The distinctiveness of the Institute, in this regard, which it shares to some degree with Landmark Education and some versions of experiential education, lies in the manner in which the problem it presents focuses learners’ attention on the need for authenticity and personal responsibility in their immediate relationships with others. In other words, the problem the Institute focuses on is a distinctly moral problem of immediate relevance in that it directly involves and affects learners’ relationships with others in their immediate social environment. It is also worth noting again how the “sharing” that occurs in response to this problem appears to be a powerful example of what Mustakova-Possardt calls “critical moral
discourse” (i.e. a chief characteristic of authentic moral environments) inasmuch as it encourages learners to reflect on their own and others’ perspectives and feelings and to consider, from a moral as opposed to an expedient perspective, how they should and should not relate to and treat others.

Freire (2005b) additionally suggests that the problems that are posed to learners be presented to them in the form of “codes.” He explains that, “the coding of an existential situation is the representation of that situation, showing some of its constituent elements in interaction. Decoding is the critical analysis of the coded situation” (p. 105). For a code to be effective in stimulating critical reflection, a learner should be able to “recognize himself in the object (the coded concrete existential situation) and recognize the object as a situation in which he finds himself, together with other Subjects” (p. 105).

When an individual is presented with a coded existential situation (a sketch or photograph which leads by abstraction to the concreteness of existential reality)…. this whole (the coded situation), which previously had been only diffusely apprehended, begins to acquire meaning…. individuals begin to behave differently with regard to objective reality, once that reality has ceased to look like a blind alley and has taken on its true aspect: a challenge which human beings must meet. (pp. 105-106)

In the case of the Community-building Institute, the video clip from The Color of Fear documentary seems to serve as what Freire referred to as a code. This code appears to be highly effective is “presencing” a “felt” moral problem and stimulating critical reflection, perspective-taking and morally-motivated “sharing” with regard to this problem and its possible solution. As Freire suggests, it is a code that learners generally seem to be able to either recognize themselves in, or somehow to relate to their experience. The very emotionally evocative character of this particular code seems to further enhance this effect.
It is also noteworthy that most of the educational approaches mentioned thus far seem to accept that people’s perceptions of reality are social (as well as personal) constructions, and view the educational aim of helping learners learn how this construction occurs as essential to facilitating personal and social transformation. Freire (2005b), for instance, claims that, “all authentic education investigates thinking” (p. 109).

In the process of decoding, the participants externalize their thematics and thereby make explicit their ‘real consciousness’ of the world. As they do this, they begin to see how they themselves acted while actually experiencing the situation they are now analyzing, and thus reach a ‘perception of their previous perception.’ By achieving this awareness, they come to perceive reality differently; by broadening the horizon of their perception, they discover more easily in their ‘background awareness’ the dialectical relations between the two dimensions of reality [i.e. the dehumanizing/oppressive and the humanizing/liberating dimensions]. By stimulating ‘perception of the previous perception’ and ‘knowledge of the previous knowledge,’ decoding stimulates the appearance of a new perception and the development of new knowledge. (p. 115).

Freire notes that as learners do this, their “real consciousness” (i.e. their taken-for-granted and uncritical view of “the way things are”) is superceded by “potential consciousness” that sees what could be. This leads to “testing action” that attempts to realize the “‘untested feasibility’ that lies beyond the limit situations” (p. 113).

Similarly, Transformative Learning Theory, in both Mezirow’s and Boyd and Myers’ versions, proposes that transformative education should help learners examine the often subconscious assumptions, perceptions and associations that underlie their conscious attitudes, perspectives and beliefs. Of particular interest in this regard, given their connection to the Community-building Institute’s curriculum, are the three processes that Boyd and Myers (1988) identify are involved in the transformation of consciousness, i.e. receptivity which involves opening up to and “staying with” feelings, recognition which involves gaining a clearer view of the origins and meanings of feelings, images, and symbols arising
from the unconscious, and *grieving* which Boyd and Myers characterize as a natural response to “the loss of prior ways of seeing reality” and as “an involuntary disruption of order” that causes “previous assurances and predictable ways of interpreting reality and making meaning [to] collapse” (pp. 277-278). Likewise, Landmark Education also especially aims to help learners gain awareness of how they construct their realities. Specifically, this educational approach guides learners to see how they in fact help to create the problematic, limiting situations they face by the way they usually subconsciously interpret their experience in fearful, inauthentic, ego-centric ways. By helping learners become conscious of these self-defeating habits and of the transformative power of authentically relating to experience and consciously bringing new possibilities into being, Landmark seeks to transform people’s ways of being.

Similar principles and strategies are evident in the Community-building Institute’s curriculum. For example, the ideas presented by the curriculum in what I called the “conceptual framework for the Head-to-Heart Shift” in the previous chapter all seem meant to help learners consider how the normally subconscious and limiting ways they perceive themselves and their problems in fact create and sustain their problems (i.e. the way we see the problem is the problem) and how they have the power to change the way they perceive (as suggested by the image of the cat looking in the mirror and seeing itself as a lion). These ideas are further related to the Head-to-Heart Shift, thus further underscoring the notion that learners possess agency to transform their ways of perceiving. Unlike Landmark Education and Transformative Learning Theory, however, the Institute does not directly ask its learners to publicly reflect on and share about the specific ways they recognize that they are living inauthentically. Yet, it seems to indirectly foster a related
awareness by problematizing the absence of authentic relationships, by amplifying people’s innate thirst for such relationships, and by creating a space that encourages authentic communication and relationship.

Furthermore, what Boyd and Myers (1988) call “receptivity” (see Chapter 2) is encouraged in the Institute’s learners by the many ways already mentioned in which the curriculum guides learners to perceive with their hearts. What they call “recognition” may also be fostered in a limited sense in those instances when Jeremiah helps individual learners during the “sharing” portion of the We Are One Family workshop to identify what they are feeling and why they may be feeling this way. Examples of “grieving…the loss of prior ways of seeing reality” appear to be very evident in the workshops in the tears shed by certain learners (p. 277). In these cases, we may surmise that the loss learners are grieved is the loss of opportunities for fellowship/growth/service and pain caused by this loss. At the same time, we can see how this “grieving becomes a transporting process through which the person may eventually arrive at a fuller, more transformed life” (p. 278).

Summary

In reference to this study’s central research questions, it should again be noted that at this point it is too early to claim that the Institute’s curriculum does stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness. Such a claim, as already pointed out, needs to be further substantiated by analysis of interviews with participants in the Institute (as well as interviews with a few of their parents or guardians). However, based on the observations of changes in the quality of learners’ relationships with each other already described in this and
the preceding chapter as well as on the learners’ verbal testimonies observed during the workshops, there seems to be reason to tentatively accept such a claim. Assuming this, I have attempted in this chapter to identify pedagogical principles, strategies and methods reflected in the Community-building Institute’s curriculum that may account for its apparent ability to amplify learners’ moral motivation and to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness (an ability that my interviews with learners presented in the next will attest to). In particular, my analysis of the curriculum suggests that the reasons for the transformative effect the Institute seems to have on its learners include the authentic moral authority that is projected by Jeremiah and the Institute’s provision of an authentic moral environment that seems effective in amplifying learners moral motivation, especially in relation to the third motivational dimension identified by Mustakova-Possardt (i.e. the dimension of “relationships”). Furthermore, I have noted a number of more specific pedagogical principles and strategies, some of which it shares with Freire’s liberatory pedagogy, experiential education, Transformative Learning Theory, FUNDAEC and Landmark Education (such as critical reflection and dialogue, problematization and codification of problems related to social as well as personal dilemmas etc.), that may also help to account for its seemingly transformative effect.

Perhaps the most salient conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis of the Institute’s curriculum (and specifically of the We Are One Family workshop) is that the experience of authentic communication with others regarding personally and profoundly relevant and shared moral concerns, and the experience of authentic relationship that results (i.e. relationships in which the intrinsic value of and connection between all parties is implicitly and explicitly affirmed at the same time that each person’s otherness is respected, a
relationship characterized by mutual responsibility and commitment to the well-being and
growth of the other) can have a powerful, transformative impact on learners and play a key
role in creating an authentic moral environment. In other words, such communication and
relationship seem in themselves to constitute a highly effective means for stimulating the
development of critical moral consciousness. That the development of critical moral
consciousness could be stimulated by engaging in such authentic communication and
relationships is also consistent with Mustakova-Possardt’s (2003) description of a critically
conscious person as one who “engages in an intuitive and progressively more conscious
critical moral dialogue with the world” (i.e. with people, with ideas, with life itself)
motivated by a commitment to seeking and realizing truth, beauty and goodness (p. 3). I
believe my conclusion regarding the power of authentic communication and relationship may
thus constitute a significant addition to and clarification of Mustakova-Possardt’s concept of
authentic moral environments in general, and of moral discourse in particular.
CHAPTER VI

ANALYZING LEARNERS’ ACCOUNTS OF THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE INSTITUTE (Part 1)

The next two chapters will focus on the accounts given by the learners I interviewed of their experiences in the Community-building Institute. In the cases of four of these learners, I was also able to interview a parent or guardian and so benefit from their impressions of how their children seemed to have been affected by participating in the Institute. These accounts on the whole serve to confirm the claim tentatively made in the previous chapter that the Community-building Institute does stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness in many cases. In addition, these learners’ stories offer further insight into the dynamics of how critical moral consciousness develops and what factors in the Institute’s curriculum and in the learners themselves seem most responsible for fostering this development. Furthermore, while generally confirming the validity and usefulness of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of critical moral consciousness, my analysis of these accounts also raises a few questions about certain aspects of the theory and suggests ways in which the theory might benefit from further clarification and development. These questions and related suggestions are interspersed throughout this chapter and will be summarized and further considered in my concluding chapter.

As noted in Chapter 3, I interviewed a total of 14 high school students for this study, who, at the time of their interviews, were current and former participants in the Community-
building Institute. Half of these students were female and half male. In terms of their ethnic backgrounds, eight can be categorized as white (or European) American, two as African-American, two as Asian immigrants to the US, one as of Middle-eastern descent but born in the US, and one as a Hispanic American adopted by a white family. All of them, in addition to having attended a *We Are One Family* workshop, had also participated in a tutoring pair. In these pairs, eight had played the role of “Facilitator,” five had been “Believers,” and one had played both roles.

It should be noted that this sample of participants in the Institute includes fewer minority students and fewer “Believers” than I had hoped and intended. Nevertheless, while this imbalance in my sample does to some extent limit this study’s ability to explain whether and how other more socio-economically disadvantaged participants in the Institute may tend to have their development of critical moral consciousness stimulated (or not) as a result of their participating in the Institute, this limitation does not seem to be significantly different than this study’s similarly limited ability to do the same for all of the other white, upper-middle class participants I didn’t get to interview. In fact, the admittedly smaller number of minority students and “Believers” in my sample were proportionally slightly more likely to show signs that their experiences in the Institute stimulated their development of critical moral consciousness than were their more socially and academically advantaged, white counter-parts, arguably suggesting that socio-economically disadvantaged learners

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25 This was not due to a lack of attempts on my part to arrange interviews with Institute participants from this demographic whom Jeremiah suggested. For example, in one case, a female African-American female student who could be considered socio-economically disadvantaged, and who was also a dedicated participant in the Institute, told Jeremiah and me of her profound fear of the idea of being interviewed. Despite re-assurances, this fear apparently prevented her from showing up to two appointments for interviews we had scheduled. Another Hispanic female didn’t show up at a previously agreed upon time, and subsequent attempts to reach her failed. Also, a couple more telephone messages I left on the answering machines of some other participants from similarly disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds were also never answered.
participants in the Institute tend to benefit in terms of their moral development at least as much as their more socio-economically advantaged counter-parts do.

Before relating the stories of the learners I interviewed, I will explain out the set of this chapter how I operationalized the notion of progress or transformation in terms of the learners’ development of critical moral consciousness. This will require reviewing some relevant aspects of Mustakova-Possardt’s (2004) theory. It will also require giving an explanation of one aspect of the theory that I have not yet presented in detail, i.e. an explanation of the eight “ascending psychosocial tasks or themes” that, according to Mustakova-Possardt, morally motivated people negotiate across a life-span (p. 259).

After this explanation, I will present in some detail the stories of five of the fourteen Institute participants I interviewed, i.e. the stories of Jordan, CJ, Ruth, Daryl and Nancy. I have selected these five cases to present in more detail than the other nine because I believe they constitute particularly outstanding and diverse examples (though by no means the only examples) of how critical moral consciousness can develop in individuals and how the Institute’s curriculum can stimulate such development. Thus, to a certain extent, I have chosen these particular cases because they seem to represent some, though again not the only, noteworthy success stories of the Institute. I believe this is appropriate since it is precisely the phenomenon of how Institute’s curriculum may successfully stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness that I am interested in. In other words, I give these five special attention in my narrative of the learners’ accounts, because they are representative of the phenomenon that is of interest to me, and not necessarily because I thought they were representative of the entire population of past and present participants in the Institute. At the same time, it is again worth noting that the fact that I selected five learners as outstanding
examples of participants in the Institute who are developing critical moral consciousness should not be taken as an indication that I view these cases as extreme outliers within my total sample. In fact, evidence that learners’ experiences in the Institute tended to amplify learners’ moral concern and motivation is apparent in all of my interviews, though not all of the cases were necessarily as dramatic in terms of their stories of transformation and not every participant interviewed could be said to shifted to a CC path of development after participating in the Institute (though I did categorize a majority in this way). Finally, another reason I selected these five accounts to present in greater detail is a very practical one. If I were to tell all of the stories of the fourteen learners I interviewed in the same amount of detail, my dissertation would unnecessary long and cumbersome to read. In fact, due to concerns the length of this chapter, I will conclude the chapter when I finish telling these five stories. I will then continue my presentation of the stories of the Institute participants I interviewed with the more abbreviated accounts of each of the nine remaining learners in my sample in the following chapter (Chapter 7).

*Operationalizing Progress in the Learners’ Development of Critical Moral Consciousness*

To explain how I operationalized and recognized signs of significant progress in Institute participants’ development of critical moral consciousness, it would be useful to review again certain relevant aspects of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory. To begin with, it should be noted that, in the terms of Mustakova-Possardt’s (2004) theory, to characterize an instance of psychological change as an example of a person’s progress in regard to his/her development of critical moral consciousness may mean one of three things: 1) that a person’s
level of moral motivation has increased to such an extent that he/she has shifted from a “non-
CC pathway” to a “CC pathway” of development (i.e. that he/she has shifted from being
primarily motivated by expediency to being primarily morally motivated) (2003, pp. 6-8); 
2) that a person already developing within the “CC pathway” prior to participating in the
Institute has shifted from a lower to a higher level of moral motivation as a result of his/her
participation (i.e. with reference to Figure 1 on p. 12, that he/she has shifted from the lower
level of moral concern labeled “Moral concerns dominant over self-interest” to a higher level
of moral motivation approaching “Unity of self and morality”); or 3) that a person already
growing along a “CC pathway” of development has shifted the focus of his/her construction
of moral understanding one of the Mustakova-Possardt’s eight “ascending psychosocial tasks
or themes”26 to the next task or theme (2004, p. 259). It should be further born in mind that,
according to Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, attraction to truth, beauty and goodness (i.e. a
“moral motivation”) is innate in human beings and so will appear to some degree in most
every human being (barring extreme cases of what is conventionally called evil, in which
case the person’s innate moral predisposition has apparently atrophied almost completely).
However, it is only when a moral motivation has become a person’s dominant motivation in
all four of the motivational dimensions Mustakova-Possardt identifies that the person can,
according to Mustakova-Possardt, be said to be developing along a “CC pathway” of
development, i.e. to be at some stage or level on the path of developing critical moral
consciousness.

As suggested in previous chapters, while analyzing these interviews, I have
operationalized the notions of attraction to truth, beauty and goodness as follows. An

26 I.e. the eight tasks or themes that, according to Mustakova-Possardt, morally motivated people progressively
negotiate in a life-time.
attraction to truth can be seen in a person’s concern with honesty and authenticity, in a strong commitment to seeking answers to profound questions (e.g. questions regarding identity, the purpose of life, the nature of reality etc.), in his/her refusal to accept conventional beliefs uncritically, and in a strong drive to resolve contradictions in his/her belief system.

Attraction to beauty, for the purpose of analyzing these interviews, may be seen in a person’s concern with and attraction to a felt sense that there is an inherent value in all people as well as in nature, in attraction to a sense of that life is inherently meaningful and to a sense of its deeper sacredness and mystery, and in attraction to harmony, integrity and resolution of discord. Attraction to goodness, in this context, may be understood as an attraction to a specific form of beauty, i.e. to beauty as expressed in human relationships (thus, attraction to goodness may be seen as a sub-set of attraction to beauty). It is visible in a person’s concern about the suffering of others, in a desire and willingness to help others, in attraction to and passion for justice both in relation to how one’s self and how others are treated, in a desire to have one’s own intrinsic value or dignity as a human being appreciated and to affirm, honor and protect the same in others, in a desire for the resolution of conflicts and disunity between people, in attraction to authentic communication and relationship with others (i.e. attraction to unity), and in a desire to live a life that “makes a difference.”

For the purposes of this study then, when such attraction to truth, beauty and goodness appears to constitute a person’s dominant motivation (as opposed to their being motivated more strongly to pursue self-centered and expedient aims), this indicates that this person is primarily “morally motivated.” A learner’s indications that he/she believed his/her experiences in the Institute significantly changed his/her outlooks, understandings and

27 A more detailed, philosophical account of the understandings of categories of truth, beauty and goodness and their inter-relationship that underlie this study is presented in Appendix A.
behavior such that he/she had become more concerned about truth, beauty and goodness (as operationalized above) than about more self-centered, expedient and conventional concerns were taken as signs that the Institute had “amplified” that person’s moral motivation and thus stimulated his/her development of critical moral consciousness.

Finally, it should also be noted that the interview questions I used with these learners and with a few of their parents/guardians were developed before I was familiar with Mustakova-Possardt’s theory. In some cases, this fact may have limited my ability to assess these learners’ degrees of CC development (or the absence of such development). Nevertheless, the data I did collect from my interviews generally proved to be quite illuminating and, in most cases, was sufficient to make justifiable inferences regarding the degrees to which these learners could be said to be developing critical moral consciousness and how and to what degree their experiences in the Community-building Institute affected this development.

**Mustakova-Possardt’s Eight “Ascending Psychosocial Tasks or Themes”**

For those learners I interviewed who appeared to be developing critical moral consciousness (i.e. to be more morally motivated than expediently motivated in relation to all four of Mustakova-Possardt’s motivational dimensions) subsequent to their participation in the Institute, I was further interested in identifying which of Mustakova-Possardt’s (2004) eight “ascending psychosocial tasks or themes” they seemed to be primarily focused on (p. 259). The descriptions below of these tasks or themes were used to operationalize these ideas. According to Mustakova-Possardt (2003), a person on a CC pathway of development
negotiates eight ascending tasks or themes across a life span. Mustakova-Possardt identifies these as 1) moral interest, 2) moral authority, 3) moral responsibility, 4) expanded moral and social responsibility, 5) sociopolitical consciousness, 6) principled vision, 7) philosophical expansion, and 8) historical and global vision. As I have not yet offered an explanation of these tasks/themes, I will do so here before turning to the stories of the learners.

The first task or theme that a person developing critical moral consciousness negotiates, usually in childhood, is that of moral interest. This task or theme is confronted when a person first becomes aware of and concerned with his or her feelings of conscience. In this way, the person becomes aware of and concerned with the existence of right/good and wrong/bad. He/she intuitively recognizes and is fascinated with authentic moral authority when he/she encounters it, but is not yet consciously engaged with questions of how to distinguish such authority (which is the focus of the subsequent task). This person feels strongly about doing what is “right” and is very concerned with being “good,” but is not yet critically questioning how he/she can tell what is right and good. While this task corresponds roughly to Kohlberg’s pre-conventional level (and his first two stages) of moral reasoning, contrary to Kohlberg’s theory, the interest in morality of a person developing pre-CC is not solely motivated by expediency as Kohlberg suggests (i.e. by the desire to gain rewards and avoid punishment) but is additionally and predominantly motivated by genuine concern for not harming others (though, at this stage in the person’s cognitive development, this concern is only intuitively felt). The person negotiating this task develops the habit of subjecting every experience to careful moral examination (i.e. He/she earnestly seeks answers to such questions as “Was that the right or the wrong thing to do in this circumstance?” “How did
that action of mine make me/him/her feel?” etc.). What Hoffman calls “empathic arousal” is also characteristic of this theme/task.

The next task which the morally motivated person engages in involves distinguishing “moral authority.” As already suggested, this task involves this person in questioning how he/she can determine what is right and good (and conversely, what is wrong and bad). This stage corresponds with the beginning of Kohlberg’s conventional level of moral reasoning, but again, the person on a CC developmental pathway at this stage is not solely motivated by social expediency (i.e. by the desire to fit in to a social group and be liked by others) but is also motivated by a genuine attraction to truth, beauty and goodness for their own sakes. Thus, a critically conscious person’s engagement with this theme is noticeable by the existence of tension within that person between the competing pulls of social convention and authentic moral authority, a tension which he/she refuses to ignore (as people on a non-CC path of development would tend to) but rather earnestly grapples with. By being attracted to and seeking an authentic (i.e. reliable/trustworthy) source of authority to guide him/her in deciding what the good or right thing to do is in given situations, this person gradually comes to develop an internal sense of moral authority. As is developmentally appropriate, a person at this stage is very concerned with being seen, and seeing his/her self, as a “good” person (but, again, not only due to a motive that is only expedient, but rather primarily out of an authentic attraction to goodness). At the same time that this person seeks to live up to social mores, he/she also develops his/her “own standards through lonely endeavors” and so tends to develop “a strong sense of the authority of personal decision” (p. 132). A person who remains on a CC pathway through childhood begins to engage with this task at puberty when
he/she develops the cognitive capacity to comprehend the relativity of moral standards and move beyond “black and white” (i.e. concrete operational) thinking.

As for the next task, Mustakova-Possardt explains that, “while early adolescence negotiates the central theme of moral authority, in late adolescence and young adulthood the question of personal moral responsibility becomes central. This stage negotiates the tension between responsibility to community standards and responsibility to personal self-definition” (p. 133). This is the same tension that characterized the previous task, with one significant exception. The person concerned with the theme of moral responsibility feels an imperative to act upon his/her conclusions regarding what is right and wrong, a concern he/she did not have before. In other words, whereas the previous task involves determining how to distinguish right from wrong, the task of moral responsibility involves developing moral agency. The power of this person’s will becomes engaged when confronting this task as it was not before. In terms of cognitive development, the person who engages in this task has fully developed the capacities for moral reasoning characteristic of stage 3 within Kohlberg’s conventional level, i.e. a stage in which one is primarily concerned with reciprocity and fairness in inter-personal relationships (again with the caveat that the person who is developing critical moral consciousness is concerned with such reciprocity and fairness within the sphere of his or her inter-personal relationships not solely in order to fit in and be considered good by others, but more because he/she wants to be good for the sake of promoting goodness).

Engaging the subsequent task of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility,” according to Mustakova-Possardt, marks the shift from “pre-CC” to “transitional-CC” in the development of critical moral consciousness. This task is distinguished from the previous
task in that the person’s concern with acting responsibly now expands beyond the sphere of immediate inter-personal relationships to a concern for and sense of responsibility relative to the larger community and society he/she sees him/her self as a member of. This shift in tasks also mirrors the shift between the 3rd and the 4th stages within Kohlberg’s conventional level of moral reasoning. However, it should be noted that, according to Mustakova-Possardt, the moral reasoning capacity characteristic of Kohlberg’s stage four is not fully realized until one becomes primarily engaged with the subsequent task (i.e. Sociopolitical Consciousness). As with the previous stage, the concern of a person engaged in this task is not solely to be able to distinguish right from wrong. Rather, one is concerned with the question of “What should I DO (and/or what should I NOT DO) in order to respond to the needs and promote the well-being of my community/society?”

The subsequent task that a person on a CC path of development encounters involves his/her developing morally-oriented “sociopolitical consciousness.” At this stage, one is fully able to discern the connection between particular instances of immorality and socio-cultural beliefs and institutions that foster these immoral acts (for example, between a particular act of discrimination and the institutionalized social ill of racism). One thus becomes concerned with addressing underlying social diseases and ceases to view particular instances of oppression solely as signs of the personal moral failings of perpetrators. One engaged in this task is not only concerned with inter-personal morality and with upholding social values he/she sees as authentically good, but also becomes concerned with promoting social change when he/she deems this to be necessary. Yet, it is important to note that, at this stage, one has not yet developed the ability to de-reify his/her social reality, i.e. to discern how this reality is not a concrete and unalterable (e.g. a reflection of human nature or of the
nature of some groups of people) but rather is a product of human choices and cultural assumptions that are changeable. Thus, when engaging with this task, one feels a moral imperative to identify with a particular society and ideology that one perceives as embodying goodness (which may be the dominant ideology of his/her society or the counter-ideology of a sub-culture). As a result, one also tends to perceive the promotion of his/her society and/or ideology as necessarily involving opposition to other societies or ideologies.28

The next task of developing “Principled Vision” marks the beginning of what Mustakova-Possardt considers to be mature critical moral consciousness. A person’s engagement with this task becomes possible and necessary as he/she develops what Kohlberg called a post-conventional level of moral reasoning, and, more specifically, what Commons (2007) refers to as “systemic thinking.” Engagement with this task marks the beginning of the development of a capacity for “dereification, that is, an ability to see through the hegemonic sociopolitical dynamic between power and knowledge and to overcome its grip on consciousness” (p. 136). This theme may be distinguished from the previous one in that the person’s moral concern when engaged with this task is no longer conflated with the fighting specific social ills, promoting the interests of specific social groups or defending a particular ideology. Rather, one seeks at this point to address “issues of equality, loyalty, 

28 Note that “ideology” in this context is considered as distinct from what might be called authentic religion. I suggest the distinction may be understood as follows. Authentic religion includes reference to a transcendent or sacred dimension of reality, and also, importantly, includes prescriptions designed to help facilitate the direct experience of this dimension. Thus, authentic religion, while including a system of beliefs, values and doctrines, does not view belief in, attachment to and maintenance of these beliefs, values, and doctrines as an end in itself, but rather as a means to transformative experience. Ideology, on the other hand, promotes belief in, attachment to and maintenance of these certain propositions and values (which may or may not include reference to a transcendent or sacred dimension of reality) both as an end in itself and as a means for distinguishing and separating oneself and one’s group from others. (According to these definitions, it can be seen that religion often becomes ideological, and so ceases to be authentic.) In other words, authentic religion facilitates the experience of oneness with all human beings and perception of inherent value in every human being, whereas ideology divides human beings and gives greater value to believing in the ideology itself than to participating in authentic human relationships.
trust, and unity” anywhere and everywhere as a matter of principle regardless of the particular groups being affected by these issues.

Engagement with the task of developing principled vision gives way to a subsequent task that Mustakova-Possardt refers to as “Philosophical Expansion.” This task involves a person in a rigorous “re-examination and reformulation of the basic truths that guide him” (p. 136). At this point, one becomes concerned with distilling and integrating the deeper truths he/she has learned into a coherent system of thought. Thus, one works to develop one’s own consistent philosophy of life motivated (as was the case with all of the previous tasks) by an attraction to truth, beauty and goodness, which by now has become even further amplified through over-coming the tests and difficulties associated with the previous tasks. When engaging with this task, one’s moral imperative tends to shift “from an emphasis on freedom of choice guided by moral imperative to freedom from self” (p. 137). In other words, the person comes to see the roots of cruelty and oppression as lying within his/her self and therefore strives for mastery over his/her own ego (an endeavor that can assist and empower his/her efforts for social change, rather than, as might be thought, divert his/her attention away from the struggle of social change).

Finally, spurred by his/her on-going, morally motivated dialogue with diverse others and with life itself, a critically conscious person’s philosophical expansion broadens further into “Historical and Global Vision.” As one engages with this task, one gains an increasing appreciation for the interconnectedness of all human beings and human experiences. One perceives more profoundly and realistically the dynamics of historical, psychosocial, and spiritual forces that gradually, yet sometimes also suddenly, promote change in human consciousness and behavior (on both individual and collective levels). With this expansive
and penetrating understanding, he/she is increasingly able to clearly identify and patiently work to accomplish whatever most critically needs to be done at the particular time and place in which he/she finds him/her self.

In concluding this description of Mustakova-Possardt’s eight ascending psychosocial tasks that people developing critical moral consciousness negotiate over a life-span, it should be clarified that to shift from being predominantly concerned with one task to being primarily engaged with a subsequent task does not require that earlier task was completely, perfectly or finally accomplished. For example, the task of determining authentic moral authority can continue to be re-negotiated into adulthood during and after the times when the themes of moral responsibility or expanded social and moral responsibility have become dominant. Similarly, Mustakova-Possardt (2003) also points out the need “to differentiate between developed moral consciousness and the idea of a perfect moral being” (p. 138). In other words, while a moral motivation dominates in a critically conscious person, this does not imply that he/she becomes morally perfect at any stage.

Five Stories of Personal Transformation

I turn now to presenting in detail the stories of five out of the 14 learners I interviewed. These learners shared particularly remarkable stories of personal transformation with me, transformations that they believe resulted from their participation in the Community-building Institute. These stories were selected because they seem to dramatically exemplify, in diverse ways and from diverse perspectives, the phenomenon with which this study is primarily concerned (i.e. how critical moral consciousness develops and
how education can stimulate such development). Following these accounts, summaries of and significant highlights taken from the accounts of the other nine learners I interviewed will also be presented. These will include the cases of some learners whose development of critical moral consciousness was not as clearly evident (some of whom I concluded were not developing such consciousness). It also includes the cases of two learners who, in contrast to the other 12, expressed some concerns about their experiences in the Institute.

Jordan’s story

I had the good fortune to be able to interview Jordan, the one-time president of the high school’s yacht club whose transformative experience in a We Are One Family workshop and meaningful relationship with a young African-American man, Steve, I referred to briefly in Chapter 4. At the time of my interview with him, he was attending a college in Maryland, but had returned to his family’s home for his summer vacation. My interview with him further confirmed the obvious and profound personal transformation that his experiences in the Community-building Institute had engendered. Indeed, his story constitutes one of the most remarkable accounts of a transformation in consciousness I examined for this case study, a transformation that had clearly been sustained and continued to develop in the two and a half years since he had participated in the Institute.

In our interview, Jordan describes a major transformation in perspective and values that can be characterized as a shift from an expediency to a moral motivation (or from a non-CC to a CC path of development), which he says was caused by his experiences in the Community-building Institute. As previously indicated, Jordan came from a privileged
background. By his account, prior to his experiences in the Community-building Institute, and specifically in the workshop, he had been living a life that was insulated from the suffering and oppression experienced by many people in his own community. Jordan attests that, if it had not been for his experience in the Institute, “I would have gone down a completely different path and you’d be looking at a different person right now. I’d be perfectly-parted short hair, polo shirt, and nice, clean-cut and, you know, sailing somewhere and a bio major.” Instead, the young man I conversed with had long hair and a beard, was pursuing interests in art, music and Buddhism, didn’t “really care about making money” but rather cared about “bringing happiness to people” and had decided his primary goal in life was “to make lives better somewhere,” “to make a difference whether it’s for one person or for hundreds of people.”

This transformation in Jordan’s identity and values, he says, began with the Head-to-Heart Shift he experienced in the first We Are One Family workshop he attended. When asked to explain this shift, he described it in these words.

In my own terms, I would say that the Head-to-Heart Shift is going from just working off my perceptions of the world and what I think about these perceptions in my head to the way that I feel about them, and then understanding with my heart, and feeling with my heart the way that these, the social constructs and all sorts of different things in people’s actual lives have affected [them]…. It’s so hard to put in words….. When I say social constructs and cultural constructs, I mean things that are in our head but come from our society, come from our culture, mostly from our parents. Like, you know, for an upper class child, it would be the understanding that…we are privileged, that there is a difference between an upper class child and everyone else…. So you don’t think to connect to other people. And then I also mean by social construct…like the will to succeed monetarily, financially, and the quest for financial gain in society – all that kind of stuff…. And then when you make the Head-to-Heart Shift, you sort of…leave all those behind, leave all the silly, stupid concepts about the world, about good in this world is to make money and to be successful. And you realize that, or at least I did, that good in this world is to bring happiness and show compassion for others and for people around you, no matter the race, to look beyond culture, creed and race.
Here, we can see evidence of Jordan’s strong moral motivation. This and other aspects of my conversation showed me that this motivation extended to all four of the motivational dimensions Mustakova-Possardt identifies. Relative to the first dimension of identity, it is clear that Jordan’s sense of identity is no longer defined by membership in a certain social group or by a conventionally assigned social status. Rather, he possesses a morally and spiritually defined sense of identity related not only to his experiences in the Institute, but also to the subsequent influence that his study of the teachings of Buddhism had on him. His transformed sense of identity is even apparent in the stark contrast between the physical appearance of this young man prior to and during the first workshop he attended (in a video taped segment of that workshop, I saw the short-haired, clean-shaven, young man wearing name brand clothes that Jordan describes himself as having been) and his appearance when I interviewed him. \(^{29}\) Jordan notes that his understanding of himself as a human being, and of what all human beings essentially are, stems again from his experience of the Head-to-Shift. As he explains it, when we,

> come to that understanding and start looking at things with our heart instead of looking at things with our heads, [we] start going into situations with compassion instead of with an attempt to discriminate…. We realize that, with that change, we can make a change, if that makes any sense…. The capacity to choose, capacity to understand our choices, is what was, at least, given to me in the Community-building Institute. The capacity to distinguish between working within the social structures of this Western, my own, society, and between that and choosing to help, to at least try and make a difference. And once you’re trying to make a difference, then you have the capacity to make at least a small difference.

Here, Jordan speaks not only to a transformed sense of identity, but also directly to Mustakova-Possardt’s second motivational dimension, i.e. authority, responsibility and agency. In other words, Jordan reveals a greatly developed sense of moral responsibility and

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\(^{29}\) By no means do I mean to imply that a change in the style of one’s physical appearance always indicates a profound change in identity, but in this case, the outer change did seem symbolic of the inner change.
moral agency deriving from a strong desire to do good (i.e. an attraction to goodness manifested in a desire to help others in need). He also notes how his Head-to-Heart Shift helped him to realize “the power of choice” and that “even the smallest decisions that you choose…it’s going to affect not only you but your brothers and sisters, in positive and negative ways depending on what you choose. Every choice has a repercussion.” Jordan’s Buddhist beliefs, which he discovered after participating in the institute, and specifically his belief in karma, has further reinforced this sense of responsibility and agency. Explaining his understanding of karma (i.e. the Buddhist principle of cause and effect), Jordan notes that, if we make bad decisions or decisions that make the world a worse place, or make people unhappy, then we are going to affect our spiritual being negatively during this human experience [of life on earth]…. So it…gives me an ultimate responsibility for my actions…. For all the bad things I’ve done in this life, I know that bad things are going to happen to me later.

He further explains his developing sense of agency in relation to Jeremiah’s cat-lion image, which he describes as “very powerful imagery” that conveyed to him, a message of about our internal strength, about our internal power…. to me, that’s just saying, sending me a message to think positively. If you think that you can’t do something, then you most certainly can’t do it, and if you think you can do something, then at least you’re going to try. Whether or not it ends up working out in the end, at least you tried it and you went into it with a positive attitude.

A connection between his new senses of identity, and of responsibility and agency, also led to transformation in the quality and scope of his relationships with others. This is illustrated by Jordan’s description of both the causes and the outcomes of the Head-to-Heart Shift he experienced in his first We Are One Family workshop. Jordan recalls that the shift he experienced was caused most especially by two things that were shared during the portion of the workshop devoted to sharing. He remembers being deeply impressed by a “female classmate” who “explained to us that…in North Carolina, in the South, there are towns that
are separated by a main road, (with the) black town which is just dilapidated and falling apart, and then you’ve got the white part of town…” The other thing that powerfully impressed and moved him was, as noted in Chapter 4, Steve’s sharing, indicative of the difficult circumstances of his life, that his parents were taking his lunch money to support their cocaine habit. Jordan says that it was hearing these two things that “brought tears to my eyes and made me say I was angry with myself for wasting the first 17 years of my life and not knowing that these things were happening and not trying to change things and not trying to stop it.” Jordan then recalls that,

from the moment that he [Steve] heard me say that and the moment that he saw my tears for him he accepted me as his brother, and when I heard that it brought such light and happiness in my heart that I accepted him as my brother. And from that moment on, if either one of us ever needed anything…I would do anything within my power to help him….and the same thing if I needed him. We could sit down and talk, whereas before, and this is something that everyone can notice at their school: If you just walk into the cafeteria during lunch, you see that there is the D and F students and the black people, the Hispanic people, and the Asian people and the white people, and it’s all separated. They are self-segregated. No one tells us to do that. Every school, yeah, and no one tells us to do that except for like our culture. Those cultural constructs that get put into us.

In this story, we can see a new-found moral motivation that Jordan feels in his relationships to others. This motive is apparent in his desire to relate to people as human beings and spiritual beings across barriers of class and ethnicity and his orientation to being of service to others. This new way of relating to others is further reinforced by the understanding of the “oneness of humanity” that he gained first from the Institute and which was further clarified by his reflections on science and on Buddhism. Jordan has come to understand that all human beings, and in fact all beings in the universe, are interconnected.

We’re ultimately responsible for our decisions, and if it’s a negative decision, it’ll come back to us and it affects other people…. we are all out of the same race, and everything on this planet is of the same life force. We’re all carbon-based beings. We’re all made from the same elements that came from… OK, even in the entire
universe, we’re all made from the same stuff. So…we are all the same everything. Just by being humans -- of course the obvious thing to say is we’re all humans -- it’s just so petty when people look at color, and it’s even more petty when people look at, like, nationality or cultural backgrounds. And part of the Head-to-Heart Shift is getting past that and getting past looking at the color and nationality and cultural backgrounds and religious backgrounds and all that stuff, (which is) part of the cultural constructs that get put into us when we are raised.

The foregoing accounts of the changes in Jordan’s understandings and beliefs point to a corresponding shift in his motives with regard to Mustakova-Possardt’s fourth motivation dimension, i.e. the meaning of life. Indeed, the change in his values, his not caring as he once did about making money and his commitment to not harming and to helping others suggest a morally motivated change in his view of life’s meaning. Jordan attests that, if it had not been for his Head-to-Heart Shift in the Community-building Institute,

I actually would’ve stayed away from religion and spirituality in general, because, while I may have been baptized Catholic, I had never gone to church. Never. I was pretty much an atheist through high school. And so there would have been no spiritual quest, no search for the answers or for what everything could be if I hadn’t made that Head-to-Heart Shift in the first place, if it hadn’t been for (Jeremiah).

Commenting on one of the quotes that Jeremiah uses in the workshop (i.e. Teilhard de Chardin’s quote that “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. Rather, we are spiritual beings having a human experience.”), Jordan observes, consistent with his newly-found Buddhist beliefs, that,

from my religious perspectives, that’s utterly true. But it’s less of a connection between a spiritual being and a human being. Who I am now and every thought I think and all that stuff is going to end when this physical being ends, but the decisions I make and the choices for good or for bad that I make are what will carry on. That’s what’s, you know, going to influence my next lives or whatever, whatever it actually may be, that’s what gets carried on.

When asked about his future plans, Jordan first mentions wanting “to be able to make a difference and make lives better somewhere,” but beyond this general goal, he feels the
need to be open at this point in his life. He takes the approach of a seeker and doesn’t wish his future to be predetermined. Regarding how he might make a difference, he observes that,

I don’t know how I’m going to do it, or how it’s going to happen. But I know that’s what I would like, what I want to do. And since I know that there’s that strong want to make things better, eventually something, if it’s meant to happen, things will work out and some opportunities will come along, and I’ll be able to jump on it and change things.

The only immediate goal he had was, after graduating from college in 2008, he planned “to be a bus driver for Tibetan monks, driving them all over the United States to do sand paints and ritual dance ceremonies.”

For Jordan, what he experienced and learned through the Community-building Institute was the beginning of a transformative process he feels he was continuing to go through at the time of our interview. It was not the only factor in the change and growth he was experiencing, but he does regard his experience in the Institute as having been pivotal, and as having clearly and unalterably changed the trajectory of his life. Thus, he notes that, making that shift, realizing that need to look at things from the point of view of my heart and leaving behind all that culture crap, just that little realization is what happened in the (Community-building Institute). I mean, after that and the two years since then, you know. I’ve had -- because once you’ve had that shift, you have to come up with new ways for your mind to think, because the cultural stuff is so pounded into us from the moment we are brought into this world by our parents. And it’s not our parents’ faults. It’s just the way it ends up happening…. So, once you’ve made that shift to your heart, you have to come up with new ways to think about the world, and it’s taken me two years to get good solid ways, and I still haven’t come, you know, to erase all of my cultural constructs from my brain yet. But, I’m coming into it….

There have been many things that have assisted in the change that I’ve gone through, but it started with the (Community-building Institute). The (Institute) and that Head-to-Heart Shift definitely pushed me down a different path…. I can’t by no means see where that path is going to go…. But…without the (Institute), I would have gone down a completely different path and you’d be looking at a different person right now.
Interestingly, Jordan’s account of his continuing growth and search after his participated in Community-building Institute not only shows that the transformation he believes began in the Institute has been sustained over two and a half years, but it also reflects what seems to be a shift along a CC path of development from one of Mustakova-Possardt’s ascending tasks to the next. This is evident when Jordan notes, regarding his earlier interest in evolutionary genetics, that “pretty much my entire freshman year, I was still pretty much the same…I wanted to be the evolutionary geneticist.” After his Head-to-Heart Shift in the Institute, he still kept this goal, but “it was for a different reason. Whereas before the (Community-building Institute), I wanted to go into the field of biology…to make money, and once I had money I could do things…. after the (Community-building Institute), I wanted to be an evolutionary geneticist to cure disease, to make the world better, to make the world safe.” But then, after some time, he further realized that he needed “to figure out what ‘better’ was -- what I would be making -- what everything actually is.” So, he “started asking the questions…. And then that’s when I was like, well, maybe I should take a couple philosophy courses. That would be interesting.” He went on from that point to become very interested in Buddhism. In this transition, we can see a shift from an initial focus on the task of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility” to what seems to be a dominant concern with might at least be characterized as the task of “Principled Vision” or perhaps even “Philosophical Expansion.” In other words, his moral concern evolved from an interest in immediately helping his society by helping to combat physical diseases, to a strong concern and desire to understand the nature of reality itself, so that, with this understanding, he may more clearly perceive what human beings need most and how he can most effectively help.
This seems to confirm the logical sequence of Mustakova-Possardt’s ascending tasks and themes, i.e. that the task of “Principled Vision” logically come after the task of “Expanded Social and Moral Consciousness” in the development of critical moral consciousness. But, it is also interesting that the task of developing a morally motivated “Sociopolitical Consciousness,” which according to Mustakova-Possardt needs to be undertaken after the task of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility” but before that of “Principled Vision,” appears to be missing from the progression Jordan describes here.  

This may be because Jordan simply neglected to talk about this phase in his development, but it also raises the question of whether the sequence of Mustakova-Possardt’s ascending psychosocial tasks is necessarily invariant (as she seems to imply) and whether some of the tasks might be specific to certain social-historical contexts and in other contexts could be skipped over. Is it perhaps conceivable that Jordan could have jumped from a primary concern with what he should do to address specific social ills (i.e. Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility) directly to concern with understanding how social reality is constructed and what the nature of reality and the meaning of life are? Does a person concerned with his/her responsibility with regard to combating societal ills necessarily have to seek an ideology with which to identify him/her self before he/she becomes concerned with dereifying his social reality and worldview? Or, alternatively, could it be that Jordan’s above account conflates “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility” with “Sociopolitical Consciousness?” I will return to these questions in the concluding section of this chapter.  

In sum, by his own account, Jordan experienced a profound transformation in his sense of identity and of moral authority, responsibility and agency, as well as in his way of

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30 In making this observation, I am suggesting that Jordan seems to approach Buddhism as an authentic religion rather than as an ideology, consistent with the distinction between ideology (or religion as ideology) and authentic religion I made in my footnote on p. 275.
relating to others and his passionate concern with questions related to life’s meaning. This transformation with respect to each of these four motivational dimensions may be characterized as a shift from an expediency motivation to a moral motivation. Related to this shift, we can also see signs in Jordan of a synergistic interaction of mind, heart and will, evident in the development of his mind, which he uses in service to heart’s strong attraction to truth (evident in his desire for deeper understanding), beauty (evident in his love for art and music and meaning) and goodness (evident in his strong desire to make a difference in society), and evident in the morally-motivated choices and actions he has been willing to take thus far in his life. Jordan is certain that the on-going transformation he is experiencing was started/triggered by his experience as a learner in the Community-building Institute. Indeed, what Jordan shared about who he feels he was and how he viewed and approached life prior to his participation in the Institute suggests that his present moral motivation (i.e. his concern for and attraction to truth, beauty and goodness) was a far less pronounced and dominating feature of his character before his experience in the workshop. From his account, we may surmise that Jordan, prior to his experience in the Institute, seems to have been living a life determined largely by conventional, uncritically accepted assumptions and was pursuing goals primarily oriented towards his personal, expected success in and enjoyment of life. We might also surmise that perhaps he was nevertheless predisposed to care, once he became aware of injustice and profound suffering, but his life’s experiences up to that point had not presented him with strong reasons for moral concern. His continuing development along a CC pathway could further be described as having begun with engagement in at least the task of “moral responsibility” if not “expanded moral responsibility” and having, by the time of
When asked what it was about the Community-building Institute and his experience in it that he thinks was most responsible for this transformation he experienced there, Jordan mentioned being impressed by the powerful video clip from *The Color of Fear* (the code, in the Freirian sense, that Jeremiah uses in his curriculum) and then even more so by the authentic communication that followed between fellow learners regarding an issue of moral concern. As already noted, there were two things shared by two people as part of this authentic communication that most impressed him and that he says caused him to experience a Head-to-Heart Shift. As a result of the profound impact this experience had on him and his recognition of its value in promoting positive personal and social change, Jordan suggested, when asked if he had any final thoughts he wanted to share regarding the Institute, that,

*It needs to be EVERYWHERE! Everyone, everyone -- you don’t want to force anything upon someone, but the (Community-building Institute) is the kind of thing when, once you understand what it is, you don’t ever have to try to force it upon someone, when someone realizes what’s going on at these seminars and what we’re doing, and how people’s minds and hearts are being changed.*

*CJ’s story*

Unlike Jordan, who is one of the more advantaged learners in the sample of Institute participants I studied, CJ is arguably the most disadvantaged. CJ is an African-American young man who, at the time of our interview, was getting mostly F’s for his end-of-semester grades. For this reason, and because he was at that time a freshman in the high school, this was also his first year participating in the Community-building Institute. I interviewed him
in his aunt's trailer home, where he was living, which did not have running water at the time (the water had apparently been shut off by the town). During the same visit, I also fortunately able to interview his aunt.

CJ’s aunt explains some of the difficulties CJ faced in his childhood in these words.

He comes from a home where the daddy [her brother] was incarcerated a lot, and the mom was very active sexually. He disagreed with her life style, in a big way. It kept conflict going. It depressed him, and built up a lot of anger within him. This has been going on since he was a small child. So, by the time he came to us, he was very withdrawn, very depressed, because he wanted his home to be different. The more he fussed about it, the worse it got.

However, in that freshman year\textsuperscript{31} two things happened to CJ that had significant, positive impacts on his life. The first was his moving in with his aunt, who struck me as being a source of authentic moral authority in his life, given her obvious care for CJ, her concern about injustice and suffering in her community in general, her commitment to serving others in her community (which included her strong support of and advocacy for the Community-building Institute as well as several other instances in which she was involved in community activism), and the values she derived from her strong Christian faith. CJ’s aunt describes the influence that coming to live with her and her husband had on CJ.

When he came here, he had to get used to nobody arguing at him, nobody cursing at him, nobody tearing his clothes, nobody pushing him against the wall, nobody treating him different -- because the daughter was treated better than him. He didn’t have to worry about that here. We treated him as part of the family. So, he had to get used to that. He had to grow into it…. So, now, he’s a part of the family. I feel like that he feels he is somewhere where people truly, really care about what happens to him.

The other major, positive event in his life was his joining of the Community-building Institute. The combination of these two events, occurring at nearly the same time in his life, seems to have had the effect of amplifying CJ’s moral concerns to an extent that he may be

\textsuperscript{31} I interviewed him close to the end of that year.
said to have shifted from a non-CC to a CC path of development, albeit to the earliest stage in this path (i.e. focused on the task of “moral interest”), and to a level that arguably still places him close to the borderline between these two developmental pathways.

CJ’s experiences in the Community-building Institute appear to have amplified his moral motivation in relationship to all four of the motivational dimensions identified by Mustakova-Possardt. However, this effect is most pronounced in relation to the second and third motivational dimensions (i.e. “authority, responsibility and agency” and “relationships”) and more limited, but still evident, in relation to the other two dimensions. Yet, given his background, this shift may be seen to constitute as major a transformation as Jordan underwent.

Perhaps the dominant theme that comes across in CJ’s account of his experience in the Institute is his strong admiration for and attraction to Jeremiah, who clearly had become a role model for CJ as well as a second source of authentic moral authority in his life (i.e. in addition to his aunt). Indeed, for CJ, the transformative effect that participating in the Community-building Institute had on him seems to have been more the result of Jeremiah’s mentorship and coaching of him than it was of his experience in the We Are One Family workshops. This is evident from the way CJ shared, in our interview, how impressed he has been by his observations of and interactions with Jeremiah. He didn’t show signs of having been impressed in the same way and to the same extent by his interactions with other participants in the workshop, though these were also generally positive and did seem to reinforce the lessons he was learning from Jeremiah. One of the signs of CJ’s fascination with and attraction to Jeremiah as a source of moral authority is the following explanation
from CJ of how and why Jeremiah influences him (and other students from similar backgrounds to his own).

Basically, when I go see Mr. Jeremiah, and I see him (going from) being like this (i.e. being oppressed) to someone who has been successful. This has helped me…. We are looking at him and seeing him with positive outcome, which makes us strive.

Another sign of his regard for Jeremiah as a source of authentic moral authority can be seen in his response when asked to explain why he felt Jeremiah’s approach to anti-racism or diversity training was, in his view, so much more successful than other similar workshops he had participated in the past. CJ’s answer was that Jeremiah’s workshops were more successful “because of his commitment to it.”

He really sticks behind it…. At all times, he somehow or in some way is doing something to improve and expand the (Institute)…. The way he feels about it and by the way he talks about it, you can tell if somebody is committed to it or not committed by the way they act about what they are doing.

This exposure to authentic moral authority, consistent with Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, has also impacted CJ’s sense of responsibility and agency. For example, the impact it had on his sense of agency can be seen in CJ’s story of an important lesson Jeremiah taught him using the “cat and lion image.” CJ recalls that, one time in Jeremiah’s office, Jeremiah asked him, “How do you see yourself?” Then,

he showed me the picture (of the cat and lion), and he told me, “It’s not what other people see in you. It’s what you see yourself as.” Which basically is, when the cat looked in the mirror, it’s not looking at itself as a cat; it’s looking at itself as what it wants to be…. It affected myself good [i.e. this lesson affected him in a good way], basically by showing what (Jeremiah) has told me, “Don’t look at how far you have to go. Look out how far you’ve come.” Which has helped me a lot, because now, when I look at myself, I don’t look at myself as, you know, “hmmm hmmm” [CJ shakes his head with an expression of resignation]. (Instead) I see, “Well, this is where I am now, but this is what I am going to be. That is how I think of myself.”

This account also points to what seems to be a transformation in CJ’s way of relating to himself and indicates the close relationship that exists between transformations in one’s sense
of identity and one’s sense of agency, i.e. one’s sense of identity always includes one’s sense of what one is or is not capable of, and thus gaining a more accurate and expansive view of what one is capable of and responsible for necessarily implies a shift towards a more authentic sense of identity.

Attesting to how Jeremiah’s affirmation and encouragement affected CJ’s sense of how much agency he possesses, his aunt notes that CJ is “more self-confident now,” and that she gets “the feeling from him that he learned it through the (Community-building Institute).” To explain this, she shares a story of how, in the fifth grade, CJ had been “labeled” as “an IEP student” and how “no one took the time to find out what the problem was, and to try to work on the actual problem.” She then shares a contrasting story of the day that CJ met Jeremiah (a story which, she explains, is based on accounts shared with her by both Jeremiah and CJ).

Jeremiah saw CJ walking down the hall one day. And he said he had never spoke to him, but he looked into his eyes, and he knew this is a good kid. So, he said he wanted to get him in the Institute. So, he got him in the Institute. In talking with CJ, he said he knew he was a good kid, an intelligent, kind child. But, he knew there were a lot of problems there. So, we worked with the problems, and CJ has a better outlook towards his future than he did…. And that little picture of the lion…I think that opened his eyes a lot to see that he felt like he was a cat, but the Institute sees him as the lion. So, I think it’s really made a difference. And he’s met a lot of different students than he did when he first came here. He was sort of withdrawn and depressed. But, now, he’s more opened. He’s more focused. He’s more free. So, the Institute has helped him a lot.

CJ further clarifies the new sense of responsibility he gained from participating in the Institute, which his aunt alludes to above, by observing that he now feels his responsibility is “making it for the people who is coming up behind me. I guess that is my commitment to it.” In other words, he believes he has a responsibility to succeed in life because other younger, economically disadvantaged African-American children will be,
thinking that if you can do it, then I can do it. So, basically giving the people behind me, showing them a positive outcome, because I think that a lot of people don’t have positive influences. So, if they see positive people around them, (they will be encouraged to do the same).

He further explains that he now believes he can “make it” because of the Community-building Institute.

(The Community-building Institute) showed me that you have to strive, to pull through…. Basically like, by knowing like, looking at the obstacles -- how I used to look at them was, “Oh. They are going to be hard and everything, and I don’t know if I am going to do it and everything.” Then, the (Institute’s) saying that there is going to be obstacles, but you just have to pull through and keep going. Which, (Jeremiah) once told me one time that obstacles are things that come up when a person takes their mind off their goal…. It means to me basically, when you focus on your goal and you really want to get there, … no matter what you have to do, you’re going to pull through. But then when your mind gets off your goal, you kind of start, “Well, I don’t even know if I’m gonna get there, because I have to do this and I have to do that.”

CJ reveals another significant way in which his experience in the Institute seems to have affected his sense of responsibility and agency when he observes that,

knowing that there is gaps in the ethnic background [i.e. estrangement, prejudice and misunderstanding between people from different ethnic backgrounds], I know now that I just can’t wait around, waiting for it to close in. I actually have to do it myself. I can’t just wait around, thinking that it is going to happen…. [I have to] go up to talk to different people -- you know normally you love the people that you love, and you really don’t go out and say “Hey” to people you don’t know, especially people from a different race, because school is divided into Blacks, Latinos and Caucasians.

CJ alludes again to this same sense of personal responsibility when he suggests that the way he can help to solve the problem of estrangement between people from different ethnic backgrounds in his community is “basically…understanding that people are different and that we just have to work together, to be together” and “basically by reaching out a hand, you know, going up to someone and introducing yourself to new people.” When asked if he has become more confident in “reaching out,” CJ indicated that he has, an observation confirmed by his aunt.
In these comments regarding his sense of responsibility and agency, we again see CJ expressing a clearly moral concern about the “gaps in the ethnic background,” i.e. his concern about the existence of misunderstanding, estrangement, conflict and a lack of authentic relationships between people in different ethnic groups. We also see the amplified sense of responsibility he now feels to take the initiative to do something about this problem, i.e. he now realizes that he cannot just “wait around” for the problem of estrangement between ethnic groups to solve itself. That this sense of responsibility has been translated into a new sense of agency is also suggested by CJ’s indication that he now feels more confident in making friends from different backgrounds.

His transformed agency is further confirmed by the following accounts shared by both CJ and his aunt. Perhaps the most noticeable change in the degree of agency CJ now exhibits can be seen in the major change CJ has undergone in the way he relates to others (i.e. a change that relates to both the second and the third motivational dimensions). This change has two aspects, or can be seen in two ways, i.e. the change in his ability to befriend people from different backgrounds, already mentioned above, and a newfound ability to control his “temper.” CJ’s aunt again describes the first of these aspects in the following words.

Before, he was withdrawn. Now, Mr. (Jeremiah) says he comes in (into his office) and feels ownership of the room. He meets other kids. He can sit down and talk to them. Before, he probably wouldn’t have said a word. Now, he comes in laughing and talking with the other students, which is good. I’ve noticed that he gets more calls from different students, more than he used to. Then he talks with his friends. That makes me feel good.

The second aspect of this change in his sense of agency and, at the same time, his way of relating to others can be seen in a greatly increased capacity to control his anger.
According to CJ’s aunt, “he’s done a total one hundred percent turn-around from last year with his anger management.”

It’s gotten so much better. In the first week of school, into the first month of school, he was having a real bad time controlling his anger, and now, it’s nonexistent…. He and (Jeremiah) talked about when he gets angry, some options he could choose to do. To better control his anger will help him get where he wants to go…. I was in one session with (Jeremiah) where he (CJ) got angry and refused to do any work. (Jeremiah) was explaining that such an attitude is unacceptable because everybody has to do something they don’t want to do at some point. I’d talked to him (him) about the same thing…. He’s definitely changed his attitude as a result of the help and counseling he has received from (Jeremiah).

CJ also remarked on this change in my interview with him. When asked if being in the Institute has helped him to overcome any problems in his life, the first thing he mentioned was, “It has helped me overcome, basically my temper, and how to control things more, and how to look at different things.” When asked to say more about how it helped him control his temper, CJ shared about the sometimes-difficult relationships he has had with his schoolteachers.

When I was in certain classes I felt kind of targeted…kind of targeted out, so then I would say something to the teacher…and then they would say something back and then I like basically I would just go off…to the point that I had to be removed from the class.

But then,

Jeremiah and I, we worked a lot on my temper and how to control it, and how to keep it under control…. Basically he told me that at the end of the day you are going to be a student and the teacher is going to be a teacher. And no matter what you do, they have their education and you have to get yours. So, just learn how to take yourself out of the situation.

CJ says that, as result of this coaching, his relationships with his teachers have gotten better.

That these changes in his sense of agency and his ways of relating to others are largely morally motivated rather than expediently motivated becomes clearer when we
consider CJ’s description of the Head-to-Heart Shift he says he experienced. CJ explains that,

A lot of times people think and say things straight from their heads not caring for the meanings of the heart and how it’s going to feel to other people. So, basically, from the Head-to-Heart Shift, now [you’re] thinking and saying stuff from your heart and thinking about how it is going to feel for other people…. By now thinking, like -- instead of just coming off and saying something, or just saying something because I’m mad or something, coming off the top of my head, I now think, “How would it feel to me if I came off this way?”

Thus, CJ indicates how his experience in the Institute has helped him to take into consideration and appreciate the perspectives of others (which, as may be recalled, is one of the characteristics of an “authentic moral environment” as mentioned in Chapter 5) and has amplified his desire to not hurt others.

Also related to Mustakova-Possardt’s third motivational dimension (i.e. relationships), CJ exhibits an attraction to authentic community and to the principle of humanity’s oneness. For example, in his explanation referred to earlier of why he feels other efforts he had previously participated in to bring students from different ethnic backgrounds together were not as successful as Jeremiah’s approach, CJ observes that,

I have been involved in a lot of things like, people were trying to get…you know different ethnic backgrounds to come together. Well, I think it didn’t really work out that good because every time we got together, it was kind of a conflict going on, because it was more like “Your race does this” or “Your race does that” instead of more, basically “How can we come together?” like Mr. Jeremiah does.

Furthermore, in reference to the concept of the “oneness of humanity,” CJ shared his understanding and belief, derived from, or at least amplified by, his experience in the Institute, that “even though we are all from different ethnic backgrounds and different places and stuff, we are still one, because we still are human and we are still all working towards the
same goal,” which is “to succeed in life.” In the appreciation for human solidarity suggested by this statement, CJ again reveals an attraction to goodness.\textsuperscript{32}

Having examined CJ’s moral motivation in relation to the second and third motivational dimensions, we may now turn to the seemingly more complicated questions of how morally motivated CJ is in relation to the first and fourth dimensions. To begin with, it may noted that, in the above examples of CJ’s moral motivation vis-à-vis the second and third motivational dimensions, we can see how closely related CJ’s senses of identity and of authority, responsibility and agency are. We can see or surmise that CJ’s sense of identity (i.e. his identity in terms of what he believed himself capable of) changed under the influence of Jeremiah’s affirmation of his potential, a potential seemingly unrecognized by nearly everyone including himself (with the seeming exception of aunt). This new sense of identity, inspired by the authentic moral authority he perceives in Jeremiah, also lead directly to a growing change in his sense of responsibility and agency. Following the example of Jeremiah (who CJ seems to intuitively regard as a source of authentic moral authority and to whom he is therefore attracted), CJ recognizes his own responsibility for being an example to others in circumstances similar to his own circumstances. He further experiences a newfound agency to reach across social divides and relate to people from different backgrounds, and is beginning to understand and believe in the possibility of having agency to overcome his socio-economic and academic limitations.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{32} Again, for the purposes of this study I am treating the word “goodness” as synonymous with morality, which, in turn, I am defining as the quality of authenticity, integration and synergy in human relationships. In the case of this particular statement made by CJ, I am thus interpreting his affirmation of his sense that he is “one” with other human beings (i.e. a sense that promotes integration and synergistic relationship with others) as an example of his attraction to goodness.

\textsuperscript{33} With regard to the latter change in his sense of agency, it should be noted that by the end of his freshman year his expressed belief in his capacities to succeed in school had not yet translated itself into a change in his GPA,
It is worth noting that the direct, causal connection that can thus be seen between CJ’s transformed senses of identity and of responsibility and agency is a connection that Mustakova-Possardt does not seem to clearly describe, though neither is it inconsistent with her theory. While, in her characterization of the second motivational dimension (i.e. authority, responsibility and agency), she underscores the link between attraction to authentic moral authority and the development of a sense of moral responsibility and agency, CJ’s experience suggests that a missing link in this causal sequence may be seen in the transformation of identity caused by exposure to a source of authentic moral authority (an exposure that directly affirms the person’s nobility or higher potential). This transformation in identity then in turn leads to, or is simultaneous and perhaps even synonymous with, a transformation in a person’s sense of responsibility and agency.

Thus, it appears CJ’s view of his identity can be said to be morally motivated inasmuch as he sees himself as a good person capable of succeeding and so also capable of helping his community. Yet he does not yet demonstrate critical questioning of his conventionally defined identity as an African-American male. This is apparent from the fact that, when asked what group of people he considers to be his community, he identified himself first and foremost as an African-American. At the same time, he also noted that he sees himself as “a spirit holding a body” rather than a body holding a spirit, but still did not offer an explanation of this idea that he had arrived at this conclusion through a process of critical questioning. Thus, a strong attraction to and concern with truth (which would be manifested, for example, in earnest seeking and critical questioning regarding his identity) is not yet evident in CJ. Yet, an attraction to beauty and goodness, manifested in a desire to be

which remained in the F range despite his receiving some tutoring help from his partner in the Institute’s Caring Pairs Tutoring Program.
and to do good is, a desire that seems to be inspired mainly by his attraction to Jeremiah’s, and perhaps also his aunt’s, moral authority. Thus, we may conclude that CJ could be said to possess early signs of moral motivation in regard to the first motivational dimension, especially since a capacity for critical reflection does not seem to be highly developed in the earliest “psychosocial task” identified by Mustakova-Possardt.

Although CJ had the least to say about the fourth motivational dimension identified by Mustakova-Possardt, i.e. concerns about the meaning of life, one thing he said in his interview indicates that he has given some thought to the question of life’s meaning and has arrived at a thoughtful, morally-motivated answer. When asked what he thinks the purpose of life is, his answer was,

The purpose of life is -- I guess the purpose the life is, not when you are here but when you are gone, how people think about you. When you’re gone, how are people going to remember you? Are they going to remember you as a mean person, or whatever, or are they going to remember you as, “Well, he was a nice guy. He really helped out.”…. I think that’s the purpose of life, getting through it and finishing it on a good note.

In light of the above account, we may conclude that CJ possesses a sufficiently strong moral motivation relative to all four of the motivational dimensions for us to be able to categorize him as being on a path to developing critical moral consciousness. Whether his participation in the Community-building Institute caused him to shift from a predominantly expedient to a predominantly moral motivation or whether he had already been predominantly morally motivated prior to participating in the Institute is less clear. Given the likely absence of authentic moral authority and an authentic moral environment in his life prior to his moving in with his aunt (which was followed closely by his becoming involved with the Institute), it may be surmised that the shift he experienced was likely from an expediency to a moral motivation, yet this is by no means clear given Mustakova-Possardt’s
suggestion that moral motivation is innate and that, in addition to a person’s environment, a person’s own agency plays an indispensible role in determining that person’s motivation. In either case, it seems fair to say that CJ’s involvement in the Institute certainly amplified his moral concern. It also seems fair to conclude that on the CC path of development, CJ is focused on the first of the ascending psychosocial tasks, i.e. the task of “Moral Interest.” As may be recalled, this task involves an intuitive recognition of and attraction to authentic moral authority, but not yet a critical questioning of how such authority can be distinguished (which characterizes the next task). It also involves the strong desire to do and to be good, but not yet the critical questioning of how one can determine what good is for one’s self (which, in CJ’s case, would have been evident if he had indicated in his interview that his sense of what is right or good derives not only from what an authority figure or role model taught him, but from his own reflection on his own experience). As for the synergy between mind, heart and will that characterizes critical moral consciousness, in CJ’s case, his heart is clearly leading the way, while the capacities of his mind and will remain relatively less developed (but are nevertheless clearly developing as a result of his heart’s strength).

I conclude that CJ is involved with the first psychosocial task because his understanding of what is good and his sense of moral responsibility and agency seem inextricably tied to the relatively unquestioned authority he sees in Jeremiah. Indeed, when asked in their interviews to identify what it was about the Community-building Institute that they felt was most responsible for the positive effect it had on CJ, both CJ and his aunt emphasized Jeremiah’s example, and the counsel and affirmation he gives to CJ, above all other factors. Thus, the effect on CJ of what I have called Jeremiah’s “informal curriculum” seemed greater than the impact of experiencing authentic communication and relationship in
the workshops (though CJ does mention the video clip from *The Color of Fear* and how it taught him to think more about how his words or actions may hurt others). To support this claim, I have already frequently noted the influence that CJ attributes to the role Jeremiah has played in his life. Nevertheless, some of his aunt comments in regarding Jeremiah’s influence on CJ and other students are also worth noting in concluding CJ’s story. His aunt noted how critical she feels the “support” that CJ has received from Jeremiah has been for him and how she believes that when Jeremiah “looks at them [i.e. his learners],” unlike most teachers in schools, “he sees the whole child. He lets them know that he’s not there to judge them. He’s just there to be there for them in any capacity they need.” As a result, she observes that Jeremiah’s learners know that “they can go in there [into Jeremiah’s office] and talk to Mr. Jeremiah about anything. Kids need that.”

*Ruth’s story*

Of all the Institute participants I interviewed, Ruth stands out, with Jordan, for the dramatic and sustained transformation she experienced in a *We Are One Family* workshop, and especially for the unusually high level of moral motivation she seems to have developed as a result, as attested to by the profound insights and strong moral commitment she gained through her Head-to-Heart Shift. Ruth is a white female from a relatively privileged background (as evidenced by her family’s large, suburban home, where I interviewed Ruth’s mother), but who, nevertheless, was a “Believer” in her tutoring pair, since, as she herself observes, she has been diagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and is “very bad” at math. Ruth’s participation in the Institute began in the fall of her sophomore year in high
school, a year and a half prior to our interview at the end of her junior year. Since joining the Institute, her commitment to the Institute became so strong that she voluntarily took on a leadership role in promoting the Institute among her peers and was one of the two co-facilitators of the Institute’s end-of-year banquet, which I observed for this study.

At the time of our interview, Ruth’s passionate moral concern and motivation was clear and well-developed with regard to all four of the Mustakova-Possardt’s motivational dimensions. To demonstrate this, perhaps the best place to begin is with her profound insights into the hidden crisis of, and suffering caused by, human estrangement in her school community and society (estrangement of people not only for each other, but from their own deeper selves), and her account and explanation of the Head-to-Heart Shift she experienced in the first workshop she attended as well as subsequent workshops. Ruth observes that most of her peers (including herself prior to the Community-building Institute) live relatively out of touch with their own hearts. To describe this condition, she offers the following story as an illustration.

My friend has never had a girlfriend. Every time he asks out a girl, they always turn him down. And so eventually, he just stopped asking. And so it’s kind of like that, you go for it and you open yourself and you’re so nervous and you’re worried what’s gonna happen and so you show a little bit of yourself and either somebody shuns you or dislikes what they see and judges you immediately on just that. Or it’s like they turn you away and you think about it and you’re like, why should I do that if I’m just gonna get turned away? And so eventually, say you go to your counselor once, maybe you’ll go again in a month or a year, and then you’ll just stop going because there’s no point in opening yourself like that if no one’s going to pay attention.

By her reference to the “counselor” in this statement, Ruth is alluding to her own experience with her assigned guidance counselor at the high school (prior to meeting Jeremiah), who she describes as having interacted with her in a very mechanical and essentially uncaring fashion. Ruth then goes on to describe the oppressive, numbing effects of not having one’s inner self...
and inherent value regarded and affirmed (in Jeremiah’s terms, of not being truly “seen” and “met”) by sharing about the “Emo kids” at her school. Ruth explains what she means by “Emo.”

It’s kind of like feeling sorry for yourself, and a lot of kids who cut themselves would be called “Emo.” A couple years ago, I got into cutting a little bit, but I’ve always been scared of sharp objects, so it was kind of hard for me to navigate that. I think it was because kids get to a stage in their life where it’s time for them to open up and if they can’t, they just kind of shut down…and what they do is -- It’s like they’re a tree and it’s fall, but the winter time comes and they freeze over and you know they can’t feel anything anymore and that’s why a lot of kids cut themselves -- I understand this a lot better than some of my friends do -- because they can’t feel any emotion and that frightens them, because they’ve been shut down so many times that they just stop feeling. And then what happens if they don’t get revived, if spring doesn’t come? It’ll be winter forever.

Ruth contrasts this condition, which she sees as pervading her school community, with the atmosphere in the Community-building Institute, which she describes as a place “where people don’t have to worry about being shut down,…where there’s a communal warmth and you can come and bathe in it, and let it envelope you and its like reviving. It’s like the spring that people need.”

Ruth’s profound appreciation for the suffering of her peers and the vital importance of authentic relationship and caring stems largely from her experience of what she regards as a “Head-to-Heart Shift.” In the following account, Ruth describes what led to this shift.

We watched the video [i.e. the video segment from The Color of Fear]…. Then the crying started. I was just really moved by the video…. In the video, I remember that the black man was turning to the white man and what he was saying was, “Why are you asking me, why should I be like you?”…. It’s kind of hard to explain, but what I really got from it was, I realized that I had thought like that…. My perspective was, “Why can’t we all just be the same?” Then, I thought about it, because I really heard what he [the black man] was trying to say. And I thought, instead of asking other people “Why can’t they be more like me,” can I ask other people…“How can I be like you?”
When asked to further explain why the video had such a strong emotional impact on her (which is also quite apparent from viewing the video recording of that workshop, as described in Chapter 4), Ruth further reveals her profound attraction to goodness (especially “goodness” as reflected in the experience of being in authentic relationship with, and of being responsible towards/with, others) in these words.

Why I was crying was that I really felt sorrow, because I realized how much I missed all my life, you know, how many other people I could have known and how many experiences I could’ve had. And I was so upset that I didn’t have that…. I realized in the workshop that I hadn’t thought about other people, and especially the video, it just made me realize.

Ruth then eloquently describes her subjective experience of the Shift itself.

During the workshop, after we’d watched the video, and in the midst of crying, people were sharing what they felt, and I was certainly listening to their words, but, to me they were kind of washing over me, and I think that’s what made me cry harder. I hadn’t realized there was more under the words! I felt like I was kind of swimming under the words and that I was headed to a place that I couldn’t even imagine. I just felt like I was really hearing that person, not the words, but hearing the person. I was hearing that human.

Ruth further describes that “place” she “headed to” as “a state of mind or state of heart…with other people where you feel like there is no me or you; there is us. It’s just this higher state of being.” In another instance, she again describes this experience of oneness with characteristic eloquence. “It’s kind of like letting your outer shell go. And it’s not connecting and it’s not coming together, but it’s like letting your outer shell go so you can see the connection that was already there.”

Ruth highlights the difference she notices between her way of perceiving and relating to others before the Shift and after the Shift.

It’s like when I used to meet people, I’d know their favorite colors or you know what food they liked, but I didn’t really know them. And the (Community-building Institute), it just opened up a doorway for me to reach in and know someone better than, you know, the color stuff -- it matters, but it’s not -- it’s nothing compared to
really knowing someone…. People’s favorite colors and, you know, what kind of grades they get -- just foolish things like that, that you think you need to know, but you really don’t -- they’re just small talk. That’s kind of like the ‘head’ position. So, when you’re knowing somebody, you are knowing the facts of them, in that sense. But when you really know someone with the “heart,” you get -- what you know is not facts; it’s emotion. You know their spirit. You know them, instead of knowing about them.

When I’m meeting someone, I used to hate eye contact. I wouldn’t make eye contact. And now I can sit for an hour. And when I’m meeting someone, instead of looking at their hand, I can look at their eyes. It’s like the eyes are windows to the souls. You know that’s true in a lot of cases. It really tells you how people are feeling. So, I’m paying attention to their emotions, instead of what they’re wearing, what rings they have on.

Ruth, again, reveals her profound concern for what might be characterized as the human condition when she makes the following poignant observation.

What we feel in [the Community-building Institute]…so often, you know, people can’t get to this point or…aren’t able to feel this with other people…. It’s so wanted, it’s so looked after…people want it so bad, but they rarely get it. So, in that sense, it’s kind of like a miracle, but what it really should be is a human experience, because, you know, that’s what (being) human should be like.

In terms of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of critical moral consciousness, the impact of Ruth’s Head-to-Heart Shift may be said to have resulted in her developing such a strong moral motivation (and such profound insights) relative to the dimension of “relationships” that this motivation in turn affects, and indeed translates into, a similar moral motivation vis-à-vis all of the other dimensions. In other words, while it was her way of relating to others that was most obviously transformed by her experiences in the Institute, the transformation was so profound that it affected her motivation in relation to the other three dimensions as well. Indeed, I would characterize Ruth calls her Head-to-Heart Shift as an authentic spiritual experience34 that simultaneously defines her senses of her identity, of authority,

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34 For the purposes of this study, I define “authentic spiritual experience” as any experience that causes one to intuitively and affectively perceive a deeper, norm-ally hidden, value or beauty in people (and other beings),
responsibility and agency, of her relationships with others and of life’s meaning. This possible interpretation further suggests that, on the deepest level, Mustakova-Possardt’s four motivational dimensions can be seen as so intertwined that they become one.

Examining Ruth’s experience first in terms of the dimension of relationships, it is clear that Ruth has a heightened concern for others’ suffering. Yet, it is not just the overt, outwardly obvious suffering of certain people that she sees, but also the more subtle, and perhaps more profound and consequential, suffering caused by the estrangement or alienation of human beings from themselves and each other. Together with this perception, we also see a quintessentially moral attraction to a certain possible way of relating to/with diverse others that she suggests most people can’t imagine (and that she also, by her own account, “couldn’t even imagine” prior to her experience in the Institute). We also see, in her concern for the black man in the video clip, an amplified ability to be concerned about and take on the perspectives of others from different backgrounds and with experiences than her own, and especially to further consider how her own attitudes and actions might possibly affect these others. Out of this concern comes a simultaneous respect for otherness and appreciation for oneness that I will argue in my concluding chapter is one hallmark of authentic relationships between people. Her ability to now perceive and affirm the intrinsic value/beauty she sees in others, and in affirming this value so to help and serve these others, is beautifully captured by Ruth in the following story she offers as an illustration of how her experience in the Institute had changed her.

I was meeting someone a little while ago, and when I was looking at them when they were talking, it was odd in a way, because they were kind of shy for eye contact, and during that conversation, they made it [i.e. eye contact] much more often, and at the end we were talking with eye contact, and I just remember thinking, -- it just came to

and/or to sense the existence of inherent meaning in life and of an underlying dimension of reality/experience that connects superficially separate things/beings and can be described as sacred.
my head -- “This person is beautiful.” And I don’t even know them, you know? And I was just like, “This is such a beautiful person.” And I think I kind of got that from just them smiling, nodding. They just seemed to brighten up. They wanted to talk more; they wanted to share more.

Her strong desire to bear witness to and affirm the beauty she now sees in others’ depths and to encourage them to bring that beauty out and so to authentically share of themselves, is further evident in her relationships with her peers, family-members and school teachers. For example, Ruth’s mother notes that she often overhears Ruth on the telephone obviously giving counsel and support to many friends who apparently call her when they need counsel and advice. She also observes that Ruth’s circle of friends has expanded to include much more diversity since her participation in the Institute.

Certainly she’s expanded her group of people that she knows and that she spends a little more time with, and that certainly has included more diversity than ever in her life. And, although she’s had a few friends in different cultures occasionally that would be part of her bigger group, if you look at her bigger group, traditionally, it was all Caucasian kids, and middle class, mid to upper class kids. Whereas this last year, I’ve seen some variation in that group. So, it’s kind of nice to see that.

Ruth’s mother further notes that Ruth relationships with herself and her other family members have gotten much closer recently. Finally, Ruth’s desire to affirm and help others is clearly evident in her present orientation towards service and her goals for the future. She notes that, at that time, the mode of service that most interested and attracted her was “to be more involved with the Institute.” Furthermore, in terms of her goals for the future, I had always been thinking of being an artist. So, I was going to be an artist. And I love art, I really do. But I realized, what I’m needed for isn’t art. There’s so much art out there, and we need that, but I feel like I’m -- I don’t really believe in a higher being, so this is kind of weird to say -- but I feel like I’m being called into a job of community service or social worker, or a high school counselor…. I feel like I could achieve that…. It just seems so real. I could see me doing that. I couldn’t see myself as an artist…. I can see myself as a teacher, something to help.
In this instance, we can see how Ruth is now morally motivated in relation to her sense of identity and her view of the meaning of life (the first and fourth motivational dimensions). In other words, she sees herself primarily as a helper of others, whereas before she saw herself as first and foremost an artist. She also implies that she sees the main purpose for her life as being to help and serve others. Her transformed, morally-motivated sense of identity becomes even clearer when considering the following statement she makes regarding how her Head-to-Heart Shift affected her sense of identity.

I’m a really reserved person. You wouldn’t think so, but within me, I feel like there’s a castle, and around the castle there’s a moat, and inside the castle there’s another castle, and it keeps going smaller and smaller and smaller…but it doesn’t (continue becoming smaller), because at the end there’s the swelling of life. Whatever it is. I imagine it to be bright red and shiny, because I like shiny things. And here, I don’t have to worry about keeping my castle doors closed. They’re just kind of open. I can just sit here and you know we can just shine together.

In Ruth’s description of the “swelling of life,” which she senses is at the core of her being, she reveals how her primary sense of self is now grounded in authentic spiritual experience rather than in social convention and more superficial characteristics (i.e. that her view of herself is morally-motivated). A similarly non-conventional, and creative view of herself is further evident in Ruth’s thoughts on how her experience in the Institute affected her current sense of the intrinsic value and potential human beings possess.

Before, I think I just assumed we were all just mammals as far as I was concerned…. Of course, in genes, yes, we are mammals, but now I think there are people and then there are humans. The word “humane” has “human” in it for a reason…. Even though some people don’t experience what we [i.e. she and Jeremiah and others in the Institute] experience, or don’t get the feeling that we get, they still are human. They just haven’t realized it yet. They just haven’t found themselves yet. They haven’t found that human part yet…. I used to think, around the time I was cutting actually, that people were, that there was something missing, in me especially, and I just sort of realized over time that there was nothing missing. There never has been. It just hadn’t been realized yet. It’s already there; you just have to find it.
In addition to having critically examined the question of who she is essentially, as is evident from the instances above, Ruth is at the same time engaged in critically examining the question of what the meaning of life is. This is made clearer by the following instance in our interview, in which Ruth shares her sense of the importance of being open to life’s mystery and her intuition that, if lived properly, life will unfold in a meaningful way (i.e. that it tends towards purposeful resolution).

When you look back you can see your path, you can see…the things that brought you to this spot. And when you look forward, you know, it comes around. But then there’s all those things that you don’t know that you don’t know. But the fact that you acknowledge that there are things that you don’t know that you don’t know makes the rest of the world kind of come around.

It should be noted that the phrase “things that you don’t know that you don’t know” in the above statement refers to an idea taken from Landmark Education that Jeremiah sometimes uses in his workshops. The idea is that there are three categories of knowledge, things you know that you know (e.g. 1+1=2), things you know that you don’t know (e.g. You may not know how to fly a plane, but you are aware that there is such a thing as flying planes), and things you don’t know that you don’t know (e.g. unimagined and as yet unexperienced possibilities), and that the most transformative kind of learning involves being open to the third category of knowledge. Thus, Ruth suggests that openness to the unknown and an acknowledgement of life’s mystery “makes the world…come around,” i.e. makes it come together or make sense. In keeping with this view, she also acknowledges elsewhere in her interview that, while at that moment she was uncertain of whether she believed in “a higher being,” she remains open to the possibility.

As for Ruth’s motivation in relation to the second motivational dimension, i.e. the dimension of “authority, responsibility and agency,” her predominantly moral motivation
relative to this dimension is clear from the accounts already shared of her perceptions of a profound, unalienable value in human beings and of her new-found sense of responsibility and agency to affirm this value and help it to “shine.” Her sense of moral agency is particularly evident in her accounts presented above of the ability she now possesses, which she says she gained through her experience in the Institute, to look into people’s eyes, to see the normally unacknowledged beauty in them, and to encourage and make them happy.

As for Ruth’s relationship to moral authority, she implicitly acknowledges Jeremiah as a source of authentic moral authority in her following words of appreciation for him.

He’s wise…. Some people, when they meet him, they’re overwhelmed, because they don’t understand what he’s talking about. Or they do understand, but they’re just so frightened, and so, they shy away from him, or don’t come to see him again. But other people kind of understand it, and want to hear it…. The nice thing about Jeremiah…is that when you come in here [to his office], you feel like you’re being treated…like the cream of the crop. You feel like you’re just so appreciated, and that’s just so nice to feel.

In addition, she also seems to possess an internal sense moral authority that inheres in her own experience of the Head-to-Heart Shift. Another specific indication of her transformed sense of moral agency is also worth noting. Ruth shares that, because of her experience in the Institute,

I feel like I can now sense other people’s emotions better, because I’m more in tune to it. Otherwise, before I was just kind of blocking it out. But now, I feel like if they’re willing to share that with me, I’m able to sense it.

Thus, Ruth can clearly be said to be developing along a CC pathway, given the unusually strong moral motivation she exhibits relative to all four motivational dimensions. As for which of the ascending psychosocial tasks she seems to be primarily engaged with, it also seems fairly clear that her main concern is with her responsibility vis-à-vis her immediate, interpersonal relationships, i.e. the task of “Moral Responsibility.” The question of how she
can know what the good or the right thing to do is (i.e. the prior task according to Mustakova-Possardt) seems for her to be relatively resolved. Furthermore, the passionate sense of mission she has to positively impact her school community through promoting Institute does suggest that she is beginning to deal with the task of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility.” Yet, she still expresses her views regarding her sense of moral responsibility primarily in immediate, inter-personal terms.

This categorization of Ruth as being focused on the psychosocial task of Moral Responsibility does raise a question for me, however, regarding this aspect of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory (i.e. “ascending psychosocial tasks or themes” that she claims people developing critical moral consciousness must negotiate at different times in their lives). Namely, I wonder how it can account for Gilligan’s observations regarding apparent differences between male and female tendencies in relation to moral understanding and development. Gilligan’s research suggests that women tend more than men to view/experience morality in terms of caring for immediate others, whereas men tend to view/experience it in more abstract terms of justice. In this perspective, Ruth’s focus on “Moral Responsibility,” with its emphasis on caring in inter-personal relationships, seems more feminine and the following task of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility” more masculine. Is it fair then to suggest that engaging in the latter task marks a greater degree of moral development than engaging in the former task? Perhaps, the latter task does require more developed cognitive ability than the former (that is “cognitive ability” as measured according to certain specific criteria), but by some other measures, it maybe that the ability to be responsive and to practice caring in immediate relationships requires a greater degree of some other psychological abilities than does the abstract reasoning regarding social justice.
that “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility” would seem to require. This leads me to question whether the former task always necessarily precedes the latter, and whether Mustakova-Possardt’s account of the ascending tasks needs to be qualified to indicate that, while her sequence of eight ascending tasks does have a logic to it and does seem to describe some people’s developmental pathways, it may describe only one possible path rather than the path for developing critical moral consciousness.\footnote{In the regard, it is possible that what is missing from Mustakova-Possardt’s account here is a more developed description of how the powers of the heart and will may develop in synergy with the mind, and how the sequence of psychosocial tasks one encounters may look different depending on which of these powers leads the way so to speak, and also depending on differences in socio-historical contexts.}

It would also seem important to more explicitly clarify that a person negotiating the latter tasks in the sequence of ascending tasks cannot be said to be somehow more moral than the person negotiating earlier tasks. For example, it would not seem accurate or fair to suggest that a person engaged with the task of negotiating “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility” and whose moral motivation only marginally exceeds his/her expediency motivation is somehow ahead of another person who is negotiating the preceding task of “Moral Responsibility” but whose moral motivation with regard to this task so completely dominates his/her expediency concerns that expediency seems to be playing no part in his/her decisions and actions in relationship to others.

Returning to the task at hand of describing Ruth’s development in terms of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, another important question is whether the transformation Ruth experienced and felt was due to her participating in the Institute should be characterized as a shift from a non-CC to a CC path of development. Or alternatively, was Ruth developing along a CC pathway prior to participating in the Institute, in which case her experience in the Institute might be seen as having fostered a shift from an earlier stage along this pathway to a
subsequent stage (i.e. a shift from an earlier to a later ascending psychosocial task)? Or, as yet another possibility, was she already developing CC prior to her involvement in the Institute, but her experience in the Institute had the effect of greatly amplifying her moral motivation (i.e. her attraction to truth, beauty and goodness) and synergy of mind, heart and will via one psychosocial task without necessarily causing a shift from that task to a subsequent task (but rather causing a shift from a lower to a higher level of moral motivation)? In considering these questions, my interview with Ruth’s mother is a very illuminating due to the window it provides onto what Ruth was like growing up prior to participating in the Institute. Ruth’s mother notes that Ruth has always been “by nature…a compassionate person” and has been “very empathetic and very moral high-grounded…ever since she was a little kid.” She “is always working for, fighting for, the underdog. She belongs to a number of clubs, formal or informal, at school, or groups I would say, that focus on people who have disabilities or people that, for whatever reason, are different from other people.” To illustrate this, her mother offers the following anecdote.

I remember, one of the parents of a child with special needs, years ago, when she [Ruth] was maybe in middle school or certainly elementary school, came up to me one time and said, “Have you noticed that Ruth’s always in her child’s class?” And I said, “I noticed it, but I haven’t really thought very much about it.” And she said, “Well, I always ask for my daughter to be in Ruth’s class, because Ruth is so good and kind to her, and seems to be a buffer against the other kids, and includes her and tries to be sweet to her.” And Ruth did. There was a time when they went back and forth and played together.

These observations strongly suggest that Ruth, prior to her participation in the Community-building Institute, had already been developing along a CC pathway. This conclusion is further corroborated by evidence from my interview with Ruth’s mother that Ruth’s family and some other service-oriented groups she had been involved with (such as
the Girl Scouts) had provided her with what may be described as authentic moral
environments as she grew up. For example, her mother observes that,

Ruth comes from a long line of organizers. All my sisters are teachers or educators,
in some fashion, in different disciplines or in different fields, but all of them are doing
instruction. And since Ruth was a little girl, she’s been sitting all the other kids down
and saying, ‘Okay everybody, here’s your cards, and here’s your papers.’ Girl Scouts
very much the same way; she’s sought after as a camp leader.

After offering these observations regarding the kind of person Ruth was growing up,
her mother shares her impression that Ruth’s experience in the Institute, nevertheless, had a
“huge” and life-changing impact on her and constituted a “watershed” in her moral
development.

It was a real difference for her to go to that very first session, and I think, really for
the first time -- even though she’s very well read and has seen a number of movies
and various things about race over the years -- I think it was the first time she looked
at her very own skin and thought about what kind of perceptions and conceptions and
realities that was for her versus someone else with a different color skin. And I think
she’s always known that and paid attention to that, but I don’t think she’s lived with
realizing what it might be like to have someone else’s color skin and how biased she
was even in things she said or did, without intention. So it was a watershed, a real
awakening, a real eye-opening for her…. She came home very emotional and said
how she had never realized how she operated in this world with one set of
assumptions but didn’t really realize that there were people in this world who
operated on a whole different set of assumptions. So it was huge, and lifelong…. It
was very powerful.

I think the real difference is in that recognizing what opportunities she comes
from….just being white and middle class. I think that was a real shift for her.

It is also very interesting to note that, similar to CJ’s case, the impact of Ruth’s
involvement in the Institute roughly coincided with (or to be more precise, was closely
preceded by) another very significant occurrence in Ruth’s life that also profoundly influence
her moral development. Around the time Ruth started high school, her mother developed a
life-threatening illness with genetic causes, which she fortunately was able to overcome by
receiving a needed organ transplant. Ruth shared in her interview about how, during the time
her mother was sick, she (i.e. Ruth) was extremely distraught and fearful that her mother
might not survive her illness. Ruth herself, as both she and her mother observe, also has a
“50-50 chance” of developing the same disease. As a result, Ruth’s mother notes, “there’s
this future uncertainty for her…. So, there’s been a lot of looking in, figuring out who she is
and what she believes in, what she feels and what she cares about.” Thus, we may surmise
that confronting the issues of her mother’s and her own mortality caused Ruth to develop a
heightened concern with the value and meaning of people and relationships and life. Ruth’s
mother further notes that these “two influences” (i.e. her illness and the Community-building
Institute) were “going on at the same time. So, it’s hard to tell which is which” (i.e. how to
tell which had the greater influence on Ruth’s development),
but overall but I mean her progress, her maturity and development this year has been
wonderful. And in a more personal way, I think all of us in the family have felt closer
to her than we had. There was a period of time when she was younger, of course,
you’re really close to the kids, then there’s this divide and I think for some families
it’s almost insurmountable, and I think we kind of closed that chasm some, which is
really pleasant.

Taking into consideration the above observations regarding the kind of person Ruth
was growing up and the other significant event in her life (i.e. her mother’s illness) that lead
up to her experience in the Community-building Institute, we may conclude that prior to her
experience in the Institute, she had already been developing along a CC pathway. Yet, it also
seems clear, from her own and her mother’s accounts, that her experience of the Head-to-
Heart Shift in the Institute greatly amplified the moral motivation (i.e. her attraction to truth,
beauty and goodness) she already had. Indeed, her mother attests that Ruth seems to have
gained from her experience in the Institute a sense of having “more of a mission” now than
she had prior to being in the Institute. Whether this amplification caused her to shift her
primary focus from one of the ascending psychosocial tasks to the subsequent task is less
clear. While Mustakova-Possardt’s description of the task of “Moral Responsibility” does seem to describe well the primary focus of Ruth’s current attention and endeavors, her mother’s descriptions of how she was prior to the Institute suggest that Ruth was negotiating the same task prior to the Institute, given her dominating concern with helping others within the sphere of her interpersonal relationships. However, it also seems fair to say that, prior to her Head-to-Heart Shift in the Institute’s workshop, Ruth was less certain about how to distinguish what was right and good, as can be seen from her account of how she hadn’t appreciated others’ perspectives, emotions, and inner beauty/value to the same degree prior to her Head-to-Heart Shift. Furthermore, although she was clearly morally concerned prior to the Shift, she seems, by her own account, to have possessed a much more limited sense of moral agency before her experience in the Institute (i.e. as she notes, she didn’t feel comfortable looking in people’s eyes, tended to focus more on people’s superficial attributes and so to be relatively unaware of their deeper feelings and “spirit,” and was therefore less effective at counseling and helping others). Considering these factors, I conclude that the change she experienced as a result of participating in the Institute may be described as a shift from concern with the task of “Moral Authority” to the task of “Moral Responsibility,” since the former task involves figuring out how to determine what right or good is, since her sense of “mission” after experiencing her Head-to-Heart Shift suggests that she had at that time gained a greater sense of certainty about what is good and right, and since her primary concern after her Head-to-Heart Shift was with what she could now DO to help and how she could be most effective in doing so. Furthermore, as suggested earlier, the sense of mission she feels to affect her school community also suggests that she is beginning to become
concerned (though not primarily concerned) with the task of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility.”

Ruth attributes the transformation she experienced to a few keys features of the Institute. Clearly, watching the video clip from The Color of Fear documentary and the subsequent sharing profoundly impressed her most notably by awakening in her an appreciation for perspectives and experiences different from her own and how she may unwittingly hurt other people. Thus, the code that Jeremiah selected and the authentic communication that followed, both of which highlighted and “brought home” a problematic and morally relevant issue that was profoundly affecting each participant’s life, were a key to evoking her Head-to-Heart Shift. Another equally significant key was the safety and affirmation that she suggests characterizes the learning environment the Institute provides when she notes that the Institute “is a place where people don’t have to worry about being shut down… where there’s a communal warmth and you can come and bathe in it.”

Daryl’s story

Another very committed participant in the Community-building Institute is Daryl. Daryl is an African-American young man who comes from what seems to be a very supportive family. His father’s career is in the military (in which he enlisted after high school), and so Daryl grew up on military bases on the west and east coasts of the United States. Daryl attributes his comfort with people of all races and ethnicities to this military background. Like Ruth, Daryl became involved with the Community-building Institute in his sophomore year and was in his junior at the time of our interview. Also like Ruth, while
Daryl was a “Believer” in his tutoring pair, he has taken on a leadership role in supporting and promoting the Institute. In fact, together he and Ruth co-facilitated the end-of-year banquet for the year I observed the Institute.

Daryl notes that the Institute had a major, transformative impact on his life. This impact began in the first We Are One Family workshop he attended and continued with the influence of Jeremiah’s coaching. Daryl’s describes the first workshop as follows.

Well…we watch this movie with different groups of nationalities and races. They’re discussing racism. During this whole time, this one black man is trying to show this white man his struggles and how it is to struggle. I guess the white man didn’t really feel that being black was really that much of a struggle. So, after the white man just not being moved at all, the black man just had to blow up for the white man to react and listen. After that, the issue of racism was central to everybody. People were crying. We all just went around and discussed how we felt about it.

According to Daryl, seeing that video clip made him feel “horrible.”

Because…the white guy told the black guy, “why don’t you just try to fit in.” The black man told him, “That’s an insult to me. Basically, you’re telling me, ‘Don’t be black. Why don’t you try to be white?’” Well, I felt that would be a loss. It’s like saying, O.K., don’t be yourself and be the norm. It’s really senseless to try to do that, because there would be no sense of individuality in the world period if it wasn’t for different races, different colors, and nationalities. The world wouldn’t be like we were all human beings. It would be like we’re all robots walking around…. If you walk around looking the same, I mean, nobody would be different from each other. So….I felt his [the black man in the video] pain, because times do get hard.

In this account, we see Daryl’s heightened moral concern, which manifests particularly as a concern for and attraction to justice and authenticity. In other words, he is very concerned about the rights of the black man, the oppression that results from not having one’s authentic individuality acknowledged, and the importance of acknowledging that individuality not only for that individual but also for society. This concern with authenticity is further central to Daryl’s understanding and experience of the Head-to-Heart Shift, which he describes in these words.
It’s basically when you stop thinking with your head. When you think with your head, it’s more robotic than thinking or acting...on how you feel. So...it’s like basically what your brain does, it breaks everything down, basically, into equations or thoughts, but your heart basically feels what you want to do. You can say something, but your heart will definitely mean something else. So, making that Head-to-Heart Shift is just saying that, “OK, I’m going to...just do how I want to feel and express my opinions on how I feel and not on how others want me to think.

As a result of having made this Shift, Daryl observes that he now feels,

more optimistic about life, because instead of...acting how you’re supposed to act as what people tell you, or how you’re supposed to do something, you just go ahead do how you feel. It shows how we’re individuals by acting by our hearts. Everybody has brains, and you can program your brain to act like somebody. But if you act from your heart, think from your heart, you’re completely different from everybody else.

In this description of the transformation Daryl experienced, we see again an awakened sense of authenticity that relates to his sense of identity, his sense of agency and how he relates to others, i.e. the first, second and third of Mustakova-Possardt’s motivational dimensions. Beginning with the first of these dimensions, i.e. that of identity, we can see how the above statement shows that Daryl, as a result of his Head-to-Heart Shift, now views himself as a unique individual. Daryl’s current perspective on his identity is further emphasized and clarified by considering some other comments he makes.

Everyday I use my heart in interactions with my peers. Instead of trying to sit and act -- like sitting and acting a certain way, or, you know, trying to be like everyone else -- That’s really basically what my main struggle was, trying to be like everyone else. Because I would sit there and try to copy this person and do like that person. -- when you make that Head-to-Heart Shift, you go from a student or teenager, and you basically become a person. You’re more of a statistic until you make that shift, because now [after the shift], it’s like, “O.K., that’s a person. That’s a human being. They have feelings. They have opinions.” Especially, like teenager’s opinions, our opinions, a lot of times, we get fusssed at and looked down upon because they think we’re just trying to have fun, or whatever. But, you know, a lot of people my age, we have so many different opinions and so many different things that, a lot of them could really change this world. The Community-building Institute says they do have the potential to change the world. A lot of people can’t see that because they’re thinking with their heads and not their hearts. That’s the main difficulty....That’s why people need to make that Head-to-Heart Shift.
I think more as an individual [now]. I’ve changed, because I’ve stopped trying to fit into this stereotype. I mean especially with African American males, there’s this stereotype of being tough and everything like that. It’s not to the point of, you know, where I’m kind of soft or anything. I just feel that you are more than what you look like. Basically, by saying that, I mean instead of judging a book by its cover -- that’s what a lot of stereotyping is -- show me you can read the book. When you open that cover, there could be just pages and pages of different things, inspiration, everything!

In these statements, we see how Daryl’s view of himself has definitely transformed from a view motivated by social convention and expediency to a morally motivated sense of identity. In other words, due to his experience of a Head-to-Heart Shift, Daryl now sees himself no longer primarily as a “teenager” or an “African-American male” but as a unique “person.” He has also learned to see others in the same way, and now recognizes authentic identities of people as being defined not by what’s on the “cover,” but rather by their authentic, usually hidden depths, which contain “pages and pages of different things, inspiration, everything!”

All of these observations Daryl makes about authentically relating to himself and others further reveal his transformed sense of agency (and implied responsibility) to live authentically as well as a freedom to act spontaneously guided by his intuition, now that he attests to having overcome his compulsion to behave like others in order to fit in. He speaks to this point again, and further underscores the responsibility it implies, when he also observes that the Institute taught him to,

stop trying to hang out with jocks, stop trying to hang out with cool people. Hang out with the people that you feel you need to have around. I want to be around more positive people, people that actually have something going for them, people with heads on their shoulders, people who are going forward.

Another central theme in my interview with Daryl was the responsibility and commitment he feels to help others and make a difference for his society/world. This sense
of responsibility, alluded to in the previous statement regarding the capacity of teenagers to “change this world,” becomes clearer in the following comments.

The main problem with the world [is] ignorance…. Ignorance is not just being stupid. Ignorance is basically, you don’t know any better. You basically are blind, I guess, to what you are trying to act out on. It’s just that if we knew how each other felt, if we knew all the struggles all of us had to go through, if we knew the good things we went through and the bad things we went through, our ups and downs, everything, we should have a better understanding with each other. But people are just ignorant to the point where they are just like “Who cares how they feel? I’m just here to get mine.”

We should treat each other how we would want to be treated. We sit here, America we go over and shoot people, blow up stuff. We do all of these things, but we’re not realizing that these people are humans. These people have families, feelings. They have so many things that we have. We’re so alike. We’re all the same. But a lot of people can’t see that. So, basically, by saying that we are all one family, it’s showing the seriousness of how we can see each other. We should stop trying to see who’s got the most money, who’s got the most guns, who’s got this, who’s got that. We’re all people. So we should treat each other how we would like to be treated.

The new perspective on his responsibility that these statements imply, which Daryl says derive largely from his experiences in the Institute, translated into a fundamental and defining shift in the primary motivations behind his current decisions and actions (i.e. a shift from an expediency to a moral motivation). He makes this explicit when he observes that since he has been participating in the Institute,

Instead of trying to just live for myself, or live for my family, I think doing good for the world would be better…. So, we have to do the best we can for it, instead of just sitting here and letting it just crumble…. I just hope that I can actually see it through to do good in society.

This new sense of responsibility also shows up in the changed ideas he has regarding his career goals. Daryl tells of how, “before the (Community-building Institute), I just wanted to be a lawyer, really for all of the wrong reasons. I just wanted to have money, money, money.” In contrast, since joining the Institute, he’s decided he now wants to become a teacher, because “if I’m a teacher, I’ll have more effect on my community, because I’ll be
able to influence children and the community, who are the future of America, by teaching.”

This choice was inspired “especially by seeing Jeremiah.”

His sense of the agency he possesses to achieve these and other also seems to derive largely from observing, and being counseled by, Jeremiah, whom Daryl seems to regard as a source of authentic moral authority.

What you need to do is just stop being scared and just go forward. That’s the best you can do…. I remember Jeremiah sat and told me one day, “Only you can determine your future.” By him saying that, it basically told me, “Hey! Get your stuff together. Just try to do your best, so that when you leave high school, you can go on to higher learning, and try to better yourself, and try to change the world from there.

This sense of agency was also conveyed to Daryl by Jeremiah using the “cat and lion” image, which helped Daryl understand that, “It doesn’t matter what you look like. It depends on what’s in your heart, how you see yourself.” Agency for Daryl, comes from making the Head-to-Heart Shift, because “when you start thinking from your heart, your actions come from there.”

Implicit in the sense of responsibility described above is the responsibility that Daryl’s feels to not prejudge other people based on how they look on the outside, a responsibility that directly affects how Daryl now relates to other people (i.e. the third motivational dimension). As Daryl explains this responsibility in light of what his experience in the Community-building Institute taught him,

someone can walk by me and say, “O.K., you have on baggy clothes. You must be one of those thug guys.” But, if you actually sit with me for ten minutes, and we have a full conversation, you’ll be like, “Wow.” Or you could get somebody who has on surfer clothes, sandals, and then they’ll go like, “O.K. One of those beach kids. One of those rich kids.” But when you talk to them, they could be one of the deepest people you ever meet.
Speaking again of how the way he relates to people in general has changed due to his experience in the Community-building Institute, Daryl notes that his participation in the Institute has made him “more patient overall…. I listen more. I respect different opinions. It’s made me into a better person.” Daryl explains that this change in his way of relating to others is a direct result of the opportunity the Institute provides learners to get to know each other authentically.

Basically, when you get to know someone -- he might be just an acquaintance, or you might have talked to that person before -- but when we actually get to know somebody -- that’s just really what we’re [i.e. organizers of and participants in the Institute] trying to do. When you get to know somebody, through knowing them, you also get to know yourself.

From his reference to what “we’re” trying to do, we can see how Daryl again reveals, and has chosen to channel, his moral motivation to help others by identifying himself with the Institute and committing himself to its work and mission. This statement also reveals a profound insight regarding the connection between authentically knowing others and knowing one’s self. This suggests that his experience in the We Are One Family workshop confirmed for him the idea that Jeremiah refers to in the workshop as the “oneness of humanity.” He further alludes to the morally transformative power of experiencing oneness with others, and of sharing with them a unifying vision of a beautiful possibility, when he offered the following answer to the question of how he thinks his experience in the workshop helped him to gain the desire and sense of responsibility he now has to help others.

Seeing someone with different skin-color, different gender, different race, different everything, and…seeing that we [can] have the same opinions and can think of the same things, and that our thoughts can affect the whole planet -- It was like, “You know what? Maybe it’s more than just trying to do what you can [for yourself] before you leave.”
Through this and other statements of Daryl’s, we can further see how he is now also predominantly morally motivated in relation to the fourth motivational dimension (i.e. the meaning of life). In other words, he clearly seems to view life’s meaning/purpose in terms of serving others and helping to “change the world.” This view of life’s meaning is further suggested by another observation Daryl makes when sharing his belief that the purpose of life is “to teach each other [and] to learn from each other” and that his main goal for being a teacher is “teaching somebody something that would help out humanity, basically by teaching each other how to love each other.”

The difference between this view and his views on life’s meaning prior to the Institute (i.e. his previous motives to “just live for myself, or live for my family” and to make “money, money, money”) shows how his exposure to the Institute helped motivate him to think critically thinking about this issue. This impression is further reinforced by the following reflection Daryl shared on life’s meaning and on how human beings learn and develop spiritually by living.

To me, by saying we’re human beings having a spiritual experience … that’s like saying…. we’re higher than we think we are. I guess you learn by going below yourself. You get to go below yourself to be able to learn. So basically, it’s like we’re spirits, but by having this human experience, we become even better spirits.

While this statement may, in part, reflect his Christian up-bringing, it also appears to reveal a degree of thoughtfulness and originality that suggest that he is not simply uncritically accepting conventional understandings of life’s meaning, but is concerned about and critically exploring the question of what life is about.

From the above account of the effect the Community-building Institute had on him, it seems clear that Daryl is now predominantly morally motivated in relation to all four of Mustakova-Possardt’s motivational dimensions (while this motivation seems most
pronounced in relation to the first three of these four dimensions). His attraction to truth, beauty and goodness manifests especially as a concern with authenticity, justice and living a life of service to the world. This attraction further seems to have stimulated synergistic interaction between his mind’s understanding of himself, of people and of life, his heart’s attraction to goodness, and his will’s ability to act with authenticity in service to his understanding of goodness. His description of his motives and views on life prior to the Institute, and his primary concern at that time with fitting in and behaving like others, also indicate that prior to his experience in the Institute, a moral motivation did not seem to dominate in his psyche. Thus, the Institute seems to have caused a shift from a dominant motivation determined by conventionality and expediency to a primarily moral concern and motivation. Of course, it needs to be remembered that, according Mustakova-Possardt, this does not mean that he had no moral motivation prior to his experience with the Institute. To the contrary, Daryl indicates that he always believed in the “value every single life, no matter what differences we have” due to his family’s Christian faith. He further offers several indications that his very supportive and close-knit family provided him with a strong moral foundation and an authentic moral environment as he grew up. Nevertheless, his moral motivation prior to his experience in the Institute does not seem to have dominated his personality, and his view of himself and of life. Rather, this experience amplified this motivation to the point where it became dominant.

As to which of the ascending psychosocial tasks Daryl now seems most concerned with, his speaking from the authority of his own experience as well as his recognition of authentic moral authority in Jeremiah, and his dominating concern with authentic relationship and with helping others, suggest that the task on which he is primarily focused is that of
“Moral Responsibility.” His concern about some global issues and his thinking in societal terms further suggest that he is also beginning to concern himself with the subsequent task of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility.”

In explaining the transformative experience he had in the Institute, Daryl points, as do many of his fellow learners in the Institute, to the experience of authentically communicating with and getting to know others, thereby transcending stereotypes and superficial identities, and gaining a deep appreciate for other’s perspectives and value. He also notes the power of the video clip from *The Color of Fear* documentary in functioning as a code to help stimulate reflection on a moral problem that he saw as personally relevant and of importance to his society. He further refers several times to being influenced by certain ideas offered in the Institute including the ethic of service to the world that it promotes and the “cat and lion” idea. Daryl also frequently mentions the inspiration and one-on-one counseling he receives from Jeremiah as being quite influential.

*Nancy’s story*

Nancy is a young, white woman, who comes from a relatively well-to-do family (judging from the comfortable suburban home in which I interviewed her and her mother). At the time of our interview, she had been away from home for her first year of college, where she is pursuing studies in music and theater, and had just returned home for her summer vacation. Nevertheless, her memories of her experience in the Institute were vivid and her testimony regarding the positive effect it had on her was shared with great enthusiasm.
Nancy first learned about the Institute in her senior year of high school when one day a friend of hers said he wanted her “to meet somebody.” He took her to meet Jeremiah. Nancy recalls being so impressed that she sat and talked with Jeremiah,

for nearly two hours….in his office. He wanted me to tell him all about myself…. School can be like, grades, grades, grades, no time to even take a breath. Sometimes, you feel like nobody cares about you, and Jeremiah really changed that for me.

As a result of this experience, and because during her senior year she was “having a hard time,” over the following two weeks, she “would always go see him, all the time, and I met other people who felt the same way about him.”

Then, she went to her first We Are One Family workshop and heard fellow high students share “moving stories.” These students were people whom she “never ever would have had any reason to talk to in a million years,” because of the social barriers in the high school between students from different racial and socio-economic backgrounds. What impressed Nancy most about this experience was that, upon hearing each others’ stories,

people felt like -- I knew I did -- “Wow! I feel the same way! I never thought we would connect on that level.” In fact, the people you thought you didn’t have anything in common with, you were like “This is their whole life.” You know, like their moms yelled, and …were this way, and you are like, “Yeah, me, too.”

She also observes that, although she felt she was experiencing difficulties at that time, a lot of people there were having tough times for different reasons. Some were having issues deeper and harder than mine. I was having friend issues and school issues, and I remember it was just a great outlet. All the triviality could be left at the door.

The second workshop Nancy attended had an even more powerful impact on her, a fact that both she and her mother (in separate interviews) commented on. Nancy went to this workshop with her older sister, Brenda, who has Downs Syndrome but is relatively “high-functioning.” In Nancy’s words, this workshop “was amazing!”
I mean, everyone was talking about race and socioeconomic differences, and how there shouldn’t be differences. So, everybody was discussing it, and my sister said, “I don’t have many normal friends.” And then we started thinking, “Wow! We’re separated by race, but my sister, she’s in a greater division.” She started crying. It was so moving; everyone started crying. I think everyone realized what she was speaking of. She said something like, “You have the ability to make friends. I have a really hard time.” We were like “Yeah, we do. We are lucky.”…. That was really moving for me I remember.

Nancy’s mother also attests to the impact this particular workshop had on Nancy (as well as on Brenda). She recalls how most of her way through high school, Nancy had “issues” with her sister.

Brenda tended to like some of Nancy’s friends, which was embarrassing for Nancy. You know, Brenda would do somewhat inappropriate things, not terrible, but enough to embarrass Nancy, and she had enough to deal with having a sister with special needs.

Then, when Brenda came with Nancy to a social dinner for participants in the Institute, “Jeremiah asked Brenda, who is really outgoing, to attend (the up-coming workshop).” At that workshop, she understands the participants,

all started talking about being different -- I think it was mostly the Black kids talking about what it was like -- and Brenda stood up and said, “Well, you all have that, but, I’m also different.” She really verbalized -- which she never really does here [at home]. She said, “Everyday is a struggle for me,” and a lot of these kids were in tears. It was very good for Nancy to hear her sister.

In our interview, Nancy attested more than once to the transformative effect she felt these and other experiences in the Institute had on her, by observing how this experience “really did change me,” how it “opened my eyes,” “changed my life,” and, most especially, how she had “grown by hearing other people’s stories” in the workshops. It was this authentic sharing that occurs in the workshops that Nancy suggests enabled her to experience a “Head-to-Heart Shift,” which she describes as a shift from thinking “very literally” and “selfishly” to “really being able to feel other people’s stories, really take them in.”
Nancy’s account of her experiences in the Institute and the effect these had on her reveal that she now clearly seems to possess a predominantly moral motivation. This motivation is most obvious in relation to the second and third of Mustakova-Possardt’s motivational dimensions, i.e. “authority, responsibility and agency” and “relationships”). She describes how her sense of responsibility was transformed as a result of her experience in the Institute in these words. “I was really going on through my life selfishly. Then, when I made that Head-to-Heart Shift, I knew what I want to do is to benefit others, and not just benefit myself.” This commitment to helping others also is seen in her desire to use her talents as a performing artist to “help universally.” Her career goal, at this time, involves going “to inner city schools and doing theater, and stuff like that.” She was also adamant in clarifying that her view of “helping others” did not come out of a paternalistic attitude. In her workshop experience,

It’s not that I felt sorry for anybody. It was that I just felt happy that I had reached a point where my eyes were opened.… It’s [i.e. the desire to help is] not being judgmental. It’s like shaking someone’s hand; it’s being interested in hearing their stories. Not, just, “you are black, so you must be this way?”

She notes that this sense of responsibility stems from her strong sense of having been enriched by, of having,

grown by hearing other people’s stories…. It was so interesting to hear these people stories. So now, I just want to take a road trip and hear as many stories as I can, and draw my own opinions. I hate stereotypes now, because I would like to form my own -- not my own stereotypes, but my own opinions I guess.

In the above statement, we also see the responsibility she now feels to avoid prejudgment and overcome stereotypes. The passionate sense of responsibility and agency she now feels in this regard is further reflected in her observation that participating in the Institute, “really changed my mind. I mean it kind of opened my eyes to non-judgment.…in
viewing differences in lifestyles, other worlds people live in.” Furthermore, when asked what the most important thing is that she learned from the Institute, her answer was,

To accept people and to slash out any preconceived notions. As hard as it is to push those things out of your mind, it was the first step for me, to rid myself of those blinders that keep me from seeing people clearer.

Her sense of responsibility may also be described in terms of how her experiences in the Institute amplified her concerns for justice. “It just showed me that people that come from different backgrounds shouldn’t be void of anything, things that I’ve been privileged to see growing up.” Her mother also observes how, because of Nancy’s participation in the Institute, “she just became, I think, more aware of just how sheltered her life was…. I think she was surprised at some of the things she would come home and say that these kids had verbalized to her. So, it made her aware (of social inequities).” This was not the first time Nancy exhibited a concern for justice. Both Nancy and her mother remember Nancy showing such concern earlier in her life as well. For example, Nancy recalls how,

my mom reminded me that when I was younger, I used to complain about having a big pool and why we didn’t have more grass. It was a moment when I was in the sixth or seventh grade, and I thought back and was ashamed of myself. I was thinking, why would I be so selfish to think that. I think it was things like driving through bad areas, driving through and seeing kids playing when I was little. I wondered. I didn’t understand why things weren’t different.

Nancy also notes how she feels that her growing up with a sister with a disability has sensitized her. Yet, her experience in the Institute clearly amplified this concern and her sense of the way things should be (i.e. her attraction to goodness as manifested in the ideal of unity, appreciation, and respect among diverse people).

Society is so divided. That’s always been really hard for me. It’s just hard to be like, “Why am I able to have this and someone else isn’t?” There is just so much division. That quote [from the workshop, i.e. “we are one family”] sums up what things really should be like.
The expanded sense of responsibility she gained from the Institute has translated into a sense of moral agency to relate to people (i.e. relative to both the second and the third motivational dimension) in ways she didn’t before. For Nancy, the most significant and personally enriching she has had since the Institute that attests to this new agency to relate was her experience of living in Brooklyn the previous summer when she participated in the Fringe Arts Festival.

I was in this play called, “View You,” and it was a musical entirely in gibberish in the Fringe festival…. I had absolutely no money, and my drama teacher from high school was directing it. The only place I could really live was this kind of bad place in Brooklyn. The lessons I learned from the Institute really helped because I was the minority there. I lived with this fifty-year old African-American woman. She called herself my “Brooklyn mom.” It was great, an experience I would never give up. She came to see “View You,” and she cried…. She said she had never been moved like that before…. [Then] I realized then what I wanted in life.

She further alludes to how her time in the Institute “changed, in a weird way, my perceptions of the world” by helping her overcome ingrained stereotypes and prejudices, and how this made her experience in Brooklyn different for her than it may otherwise have been.

When I moved to Brooklyn, the Prospect Park area…the old me would have kind of been -- I mean because of the things that society has put in my mind, about the different races -- not that I was ever racist -- but I couldn’t really help but get [these stereotypes].…. But once I’ve lived in this place, it was one of the most safe areas I’ve ever been in, and the most loved I’ve ever been….I never would have been able to handle, to do, or embrace it if I hadn’t been exposed to Jeremiah’s reading quotes like that [the quotes he reads in the workshops], and Jeremiah’s, you know, persisting and getting it through our heads that this is the way it should be, not divided, not one-sided.

With further regard to the way she now relates to people in general, Nancy notes that, as a result of her experience in the Institute, she “felt more united, not just with (her “Brooklyn mom”), and I know this might sound cheesy, but with people in general.”

I think because of the experience I had with [her “Brooklyn mom”], and seeing, “Wow! Maybe when she was younger, and if her eyes were opened to theater, she
might have gone a different path in life.”…she might not have pursued theater, but at least, had it as something she really enjoyed and treasure like I do.

Due to the combination of this and her experience in the Institute, she now knows that her “passion in life” is “wanting to go to inner city schools and doing theater, and stuff like that. That really changed how I viewed what I want to do with my life.”

Nancy also credits the Institute with having greatly expanded her circle of friends and sense of community.

Honestly, before I did the Institute, I didn’t have friends of other races. It wasn’t something I consciously thought about. It was kind of just how it was. I didn’t think anything of it. I just thought, this is my life, and that’s their life. I’m going to go to college, and I’m going to do this and that.

But, due to her experience in the Institute of “becoming connected…it makes so many other things become so much less important. It’s just different -- high school, things like race, they don’t matter when you find someone that you feel compassion for and you like.” It also has made her greatly value experiences of expanding her worldview through authentically relating with diverse others. She describes this new sense of value by noting that, “It’s enriching. Who wants to live their life in their own little circle.”

Another example of the expansion of her sphere of relationships with others, one that occurred during her time in the Institute, is the tutoring relationships she had. Nancy was a “facilitator,” at different times for three different African-American “believers.” She admits that,

I am not the world’s best tutor. So, I don’t know how much I helped the girls. They came over [to her house] with all their books, and we did a little homework and then we were like chatting and eating popcorn. They had dinner, and then, it turns into like, “Can I spend the night/?” It was just really, really fun.

She also notes how the warm relationship she seemed to have with young women she tutored also affected their parents. She recalls how her parents were moved by how grateful one of
these girls who stayed to have dinner with them and who commented to Nancy, “You have such a nice family. Everyone was eating together.” “And I think they (Nancy’s parent’s) were kind of like, ‘Wait. That’s not what you do?’ It was just a nice experience.” Nancy also noted that she met the mothers and families of two of the girls she tutored and that “They are very nice people…. It was great.”

While perhaps less obvious, it is evident that the strong moral motivation the accounts above reveal (vis-a-vis her senses of her sense of moral “authority,36 responsibility and agency” and her transformed way of relating to others – i.e. in relation to the second and third motivational dimensions) extends further to her senses of identity and her thoughts on the meaning of life. For example, with regard to the first dimension, i.e. that of identity, Nancy’s critical questioning of who she is shows up in the significant change in her interests and aspirations (in terms of which she consistently described her identity in our interview). As Nancy explains this change, theater is something “I wanted to do since forever, but the (Institute) showed me I could do what I wanted to do, and still help out the community.” She further underscores this point when, in answer to the question of how the way she saw herself before the Institute is different than how she now sees herself, when she notes that before the Institute, she “would have said I think school is important, and I want to be an actor, and that would be my life. However, I would still say all of those things (now), but the most important addition to that statement would be that I want to help change, and I want to help unite people.” Thus, she now sees not only herself as a performing artist, but as someone who is dedicated to helping others with her art. Nancy’s mother also alludes to a shift in

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36 Her morally motivated relationship to authority can be seen to have begun with some experiences in her family prior to the Institute, and, in the Institute, were amplified by her recognition of Jeremiah as a source of authentic moral authority, and by the personal sense of authority she derived from her own experiences of “connecting” with people.
Nancy’s sense of self since the Institute when sharing her impression that the Institute made Nancy “aware of that whole high school popularity nonsense. I think it matured her.” Thus, she suggests that Nancy acquired an authentic sense of identity rather than an identity created out concern for “popularity” and fitting in. It may also be observed that, in a subtle way, her sense of self has expanded by hearing and bearing witness to other people’s stories. Similarly, with regard to her relationship to questions regarding life’s meaning, it may be said that she now has a sense that the meaning of her life, and by implication of human life generally, lies in connecting with and serving others. Thus, she views life’s meaning in terms of the moral motivation to unite with and help others rather than the motive of pursuing self-gratification and uncritically following a pre-determined path in life.

As for more a more profound, philosophical questioning of who she is essentially as a human being and what life is, answers to these questions are less clear to Nancy. Yet, she does attest to being consciously and critically engaged with seeking answers to such questions. For example, she describes understanding of “spirituality” as “a monumental thing. I think it’s like, looking at the greater importances, the greater things, thinking less selfishly. It’s more like a universal need I would say.” She further conveys her sense of openness, of excited adventure and search, and of how her life seems to be purposefully unfolding when she notes how she now feels herself to be in “an exciting space…just kind of soaking up different ideas” in order to build a “universal view of the world.”

And that’s how the Institute has changed me, [the idea of being] a spiritual being. It’s made me -- instead of just [saying] ‘Oh, I don’t know who I am,’ it’s made me eager to soak up different things…. Right now, I’m in a searching mode.

Thus, we can conclude that Nancy, like the other four learners whose stories I have thus far related in detail, is currently developing on a path to critical moral consciousness,
and that the Community-building Institute seems to have played a significant role in stimulating this development by amplifying her moral concern and motivation (i.e. her concern with and attraction to truth, beauty and goodness). Whether we may be justified in categorizing her dominant motivation prior to the Institute as having been predominantly expedient is less clear. Clearly, she had developed and expressed moral concerns growing up. Her family environment also seems to have provided some aspects of an authentic moral environment by giving her opportunities to think about the experiences of seemingly less fortunate people in society (including most especially her own sister). Furthermore, her mother tells the story of how “the disaster with the World Trade Center [i.e. 9/11] changed her.” At that time, Nancy was in junior high school, and her mother remembers that she got “very upset.”

First of all, her dad was flying out that night, and she was worried. We have family members in New York who were there in New York when that happened. You know, a lot of kids around here, all they saw were the tall buildings. They didn’t realize how bad it was. Anyway, they [her school] had all of the kids watch the whole thing on the television when it was happening. Nancy went through counseling during that time to help her. She was very upset. It was the other kids reactions to the event that disturbed her. Some of the older boys saw the buildings collapsing, and they were like, “Wow! That’s so cool!” Nancy couldn’t understand their reactions…. That’s what really bothered her. So, that was growth, definite growth.

At the same time, Nancy does seem to consider her experience in the Institute as having caused a clear and permanent shift from “thinking selfishly” to “being able to feel other people’s stories” with compassion and appreciation. Rather, she seems to view her participation in the Institute as one of several factors that has contributed to an on-going process of change in her perspectives and understandings (in relation to Mustakova-Possardt’s four motivational dimensions). Thus, perhaps, instead of trying to determine with certainty whether Nancy shifted from a dominant expediency motivation to a dominant moral
motivation precisely at the time of and because of her involvement in the Institute, it may be more useful simply to note that her moral motivation was progressively amplified over time through the influence of certain key events and environmental factors (one of which was clearly her experience in the Institute).  

Finally, as for the question of which of the ascending psychosocial tasks Nancy seems to be engaged in, it seems fair to say that she is primarily involved with the issue of “Moral Responsibility.” This is evident in her focus on experiencing and promoting goodness (i.e. specifically in the form of authentic relationship, justice and unity) in her expanding inter-personal relationships. While concerns about inequities caused by racism and poverty are implicit in this focus, she still conceives of her responsibility and motives primarily in personal and inter-personal terms. She further seems to have largely resolved the task of “Moral Authority” by having internalized this authority within herself, specifically by seeing the primary authority according to which she distinguishes right from wrong as lying in her own experience of the Head-to-Heart Shift and of authentically “connecting” with other people.

As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, this concludes the current chapter. The accounts of the other nine learners I interviewed will be presented, albeit in a more abbreviated form, in the following chapter. Chapter 7 will also present my analysis of all fourteen accounts of the learners in my sample, including the five presented above in detail.

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37 On the other hand, perhaps it may be possible to point with some precision to a particular time (or particular times) in a persons’ life when his/her motivational center of gravity so to speak clearly shifted from a dominant expedient to a dominant moral motivation due to a specific experience. If the latter is the case, then my limited ability to precisely determine whether Nancy’s participation in the Institute, or the participation of any of the other learners I interviewed for that matter, constituted such a time and experience may be due to paucity in the data I was able to collect (particularly the absence of the longitudinal data that could have been gained if I had interviewed learners before as well as after their participation in the Institute).
As noted in the previous chapter, this chapter begins by continuing to present the accounts of all the learners I interviewed, though in a more abbreviated form than in the previous chapter. Thus, in the next section of this chapter I summarize relevant information and highlights from each of the remaining nine cases (including some information that may not be entirely consistent with the five cases presented in detail in the previous chapter). Following this, I will make a determination of how many cases from my entire sample of fourteen learners can be said to be, and how many seem not (or at least not yet) to be, developing critical moral consciousness subsequent to their participation in the Institute.

Based on this assessment, I will reach my conclusion regarding the answer to my first research question (i.e. Does the Community-building Institute stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness?). I will also draw some further conclusions relevant to answering my second research question from analyzing all the learners’ accounts presented in this and the preceding chapter. This will involve reviewing what the learners I interviewed said about their experiences in the Institute of what I have termed authentic communication and relationship. It will also involve considering the learners’ impressions of the role Jeremiah played in facilitating the Institute and how these impressions may justify
concluding that Jeremiah was for many Institute participants a source of what Mustakova-Possardt calls *authentic moral authority*. I will further examine a couple critical assessments of the Institute made by two of the fourteen learners in my sample. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by considering what these learners’ (and their parent/guardians’) accounts suggest were some factors in the learners themselves that may help explain why some seemed more susceptible than others to having their moral motivation (and thus their development of critical moral consciousness) stimulated by the Institute’s curriculum.

*Summaries of the Accounts of the Other Nine Learners Interviewed*

As noted in the previous chapter, the stories of Jordan, CJ, Ruth, Daryl and Nancy recounted above were selected because their cases constitute particularly noteworthy and diverse examples of how the Institute’s curriculum successfully stimulates the development of critical moral consciousness. To draw conclusions about the degree to all of the fourteen learners in my sample developed (or did not develop) critical moral consciousness, the cases of the other nine learners will now also be considered. I will briefly describe each of these cases, explain why I believe each learner can or cannot be said to be developing critical moral consciousness, and in the cases of those who seemed to be developing such consciousness look for indications of how their experiences of the Institute’s curriculum seems to have been stimulated this development.

Andrew, together with his family, had recently arrived in the United States and North Carolina as a refugee from “Burma” or Myanmar and was learning English. While it was difficult to assess due in part his limited English speaking ability, Andrew appeared to be
developing critical moral consciousness due mainly to the strong attraction to goodness evident in our interview, especially in relation to the second, third and fourth motivational dimensions. This is evident from his concern over the “human rights need…in Burma” and his moral motivation “to get into college, to graduate in University because in my country there was a few people to get in high education or get in school…. So, when I came here my purpose was to get in here and to go back to my country and help them, to teach them.” Evidence that Andrew was engaged in critical questioning his identity was more limited. Indeed, he understandably strongly identified with the Karen minority group in Burma, of which he and his family are members. Nevertheless, he refers to his Head-to-Heart Shift as causing him to “understand my own thinking,” to see that “everybody has a good heart and we can help each other,” and to regard all of the participants in the Institute as “one family no matter you are Asian, African-American or other things…you be one family in the (Community-building Institute).” Thus, he also alludes to the possibility that his sense of self is also grounded in authentic spiritual experience.\(^{38}\) The “psychosocial task” with which he seems to be engaged appears to be that of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility” due to his concern about “human rights” in his country and his commitment to helping his people. His focus on this task may be a factor of his family’s unique experiences as a exiled members of a persecuted minority group.

I surmise that Andrew was developing some degree of critical moral consciousness prior to his involvement in the Institute, given the strong authentically moral environment his family seems to have provided for him growing up and given his moral concern stemming from his experience as a member of a persecuted minority in his home country and as a refugee. His experience in the Institute does not seem to have amplified his moral motivation

\(^{38}\) See Ruth’s story in Chapter 6 for my definition of “authentic spiritual experience.”
to the degree that it caused a dramatic shift in his sense of identity, his worldview and his goals in life. However, it did seem to have amplified this motivation to the extent that it expanded his worldview by putting him in contact with people from different backgrounds and by influencing and attracting him to the idea of the oneness of humanity. He suggests that the latter idea was gained or clarified for him by participating in the Institute when he notes how he learned from the Institute that,

We are all in humanity. We are all in the Institute so we are all one family and also other people in the world are human. We have one power; we have everything like the same, even though, for example, the rich people can have one life [and] the same thing like poor people has one life, everybody has one heart, equal heart.

When sharing about his experiences in the Institute, Andrew also notes his great appreciation and gratitude for Jeremiah’s having helped him, through involving him in the Institute, to make new friends in this new country and school, having arranged for him to receive tutoring help, and having generally encouraged and supported him.

Carmen is of South American descent and is the adopted daughter of wealthy, white American parents who I concluded did not seem to be developing critical moral consciousness at the time of our interview. While she does exhibit some moral motivation, especially in relation to the second motivational dimension, her sense of identity seems to be mostly determined by conventions of her liberal upbringing (which require her to identify herself primarily according to the social group she feels she belongs to) rather than being grounded in her own authentic, spiritual experience\(^{39}\) or a corresponding sense of moral agency. Furthermore, relative to the third dimension, she did not describe having had an experience of a Head-to-Heart Shift as did most of the other learners I interviewed, but rather expressed concern about the “forced intimacy” promoted by the Institute. Also, when asked

\(^{39}\) Again, see Ruth’s story in Chapter 6 for my definition of “authentic spiritual experience.”
to reflect about the meaning of life (i.e. the fourth dimension), she refers to the beliefs she acquired having “been raised Unitarian Universalist,” but does not refer to her own critical questioning and authentic spiritual experience in relation to this issue. However, with regard to the second motivational dimension, Carmen does exhibit clear moral concern about social inequities and a moral motivation to help others (i.e. reflected in her desire to become a teacher so as to help minority students). This moral concern is also evident in both her appreciation of and concerns about the Institute (which will be further described later in this chapter).

At the time of our interview, it was clear that Farzad was developing along a CC pathway. Farzad is a young man of Middle-eastern descent who was born and raised in the US. His sense of identity, however, is grounded in his own experience of spirituality and growing sense of moral agency. Thus, in connection to both the first and second motivational dimensions, he notes that because of his experience in the Institute, he is “not afraid to go start something big. If there is something, I feel is a problem, I know I can try to change it. It’s empowering to watch Jeremiah do something like that,” and to understand that, “we can all….change our environment. It’s like that Gandhi quote he shows us, ‘Be the change you want to see.’” He further reveals a moral motivation in relation to the fourth dimension by describing the Head-to-Heart Shift as,

realizing all of a sudden that life isn’t… that when you go around and you’re doing your daily activities, that’s not reality, that’s not truth…. We have to look beyond our daily lives to find the beauty. That’s what the Head-to-Heart Shift is, when you realize that in the moment you’re there for a reason. Your purpose on this world is something far bigger than cleaning your room or getting good grades

Furthermore, in relation to all of the dimensions mentioned above as well as the third dimension of “relationships,” Farzad notes that, for him, the experience of the workshop,
takes your thoughts away from your self. It opens your heart away from you and shows it to the world…. [It] helps you realize that the world is actually very big. It’s not a small world after all. There’s always people who need help. There’s always somebody you can help, and they can learn from you and you can learn from them. Every relationship can be mutual, and both sides can benefit.

Farzad also emphasizes that the moral concerns and motivations mentioned above did not begin with his experience in the Institute. He thus does not describe the experience as a major transformation for him (because there have been other authentic moral environments and significant sources of authentic moral authority in his life prior to the Institute). Nevertheless, he does regard his experience in the Institute as having been very important in that it gave him opportunities to practice serving others and ideas about how to serve other people that he would not have had otherwise. For example, he notes how being a Facilitator for Andrew has been very “rewarding” and “enriching” experience for him (a sentiment reciprocated by Andrew, who regards Farzad as his “best friend”). Furthermore, he observes that the Institute gave him “a little more strength…to be able to tell people what I want them to hear” and “more of that, ‘what can I do to help out?’ mentality.” Also, he notes that because of the Institute, “I am able to understand and acknowledge more the struggles (of others) and the ability I have to change.” Like Ruth and Daryl, Farzad identifies himself with the Institute and seeks to promote it in their high school, and for this reason, as well as other signs he shows of possessing a strong commitment to making a difference in his community (which he thinks about both in macroscopic, as well as immediate microscopic, terms), he can be said to be beginning to deal with the psychosocial task of “Extended Social and Moral Responsibility.”

James, who is a white young man (though not one from an affluent background as are most of the other white students in my sample) is another example of an Institute participant
who can be said to clearly be developing critical moral consciousness, as is evident from the dominance of a moral motivation in relation to all four of Mustakova-Possardt’s dimensions.

James’ interview stands out for his eloquent articulation of a sense of identity and of life’s meaning that is clearly grounded in authentic spiritual experience (i.e. relevant to the first and fourth motivational dimensions). He first distinguishes between two modes of consciousness and approaches to life by referring to an idea that Jeremiah shared with him.

James recalls how Jeremiah shared with him the idea that, in order living authentically and powerfully involves “not living in personality, but living out of your essence.” As James further explains his understanding of this idea,

> Your essence is like who you really are, your heart. Most people live out of their head. They’re doing what they’re being told. It’s a little harder to get to your heart, to your essence, but it brings you a greater joy.

James then goes on to operationalize this idea in terms of his own experience.

> I think people view like “that’s a book, that’s a tree, that’s just another person.” I think if you live spiritually, there’s a difference in that. It’s hard to explain…. You learn as a spiritual being you can just enjoy life more. I think I’ve started to do that a lot more. I think I’ve always had it in me. I always knew there was more out there than was put in front of me. But I think a spiritual being, people that view themselves as spiritual beings, which is not everybody, … enjoy a beautiful day and they recognize it for the beauty in it. I remember walking with these kids a little while ago, these people I know, we were walking around campus and it was really pretty out. And I liked it and I was trying to just breath in the air and talk to them about really good things, but all they seemed to want to do was to gossip about their friends.

Thus, he distinguishes between two ways of seeing and being. One is a way of experiencing the world that views it primarily through the filter of static concepts (e.g. “that’s a book, that’s a tree, that’s just another person”). Thus, James suggests that this mode of consciousness perceives a world of disconnected objects and thus also views these objects superficially without perceiving beauty or intrinsic value in them (e.g. “that’s just another person”). This observation by James further suggests that this way of perceiving disconnects
the perceiver from the world (by objectifying phenomena in the world). In contrast, the way of being that he refers to as “spiritual” or as “living out of your essence” seems to involve experiencing the world not in terms of predetermined definitions and concepts (i.e. with one’s “head”), but as unique, wondrous moments that reveal beauty and intrinsic value (i.e. with one’s “heart”). His description of this mode of being also suggests that a person experiencing it desires and/or experiences a profound sense of connection with the world (as evidenced by James desire to “just breathe in the air and talk to them about really good things”). He further suggests that this way of being is associated with emotions he perceives as “good” (e.g. an appreciation for/experience of beauty, and the desire to share this with others), in contrast to the kinds of emotions that motivate “gossip.”

James’ account also indicates a strong moral motivation in relation to the second and third motivational dimensions. This is evident in his attraction to justice, a desire to help others and “make a difference,” and an attraction to authentic relationship and unity with diverse others. He notes, for example, that through his experience in the Institute, “I’ve developed sort of a sense for people. There’s so much -- The (Institute) really teaches you to see the greatness of people.” He further observes that the Institute, has changed the way I meet people, the way I interact with people, especially people from other backgrounds. I feel freer just to talk to them, find out where they’re from…. Now I enjoy meeting different people, even if their English isn’t that great. You work it out. You spend more time saying your words. I think it means a lot to them too just to be talked to, just to be talked to.

In his account, we can see that James attributes much of his current moral motivation to his experience in the Institute. At the same time, one can surmise from other parts of his interview that he was also a fundamentally compassionate and caring person before his

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40 It is worth noting how closely the distinction James makes between these two modes of perceiving and being resembles the similar ideas of Parker Palmer described in Chapter 2.
experience in the Institute, with his moral concern seeming to stem from the difficulties he has had in his life (i.e. his relationship with his mother, who tried to raise him as a single parent but had her own emotional problems, presented difficulties, and he spent a significant portion of his high school years living in group and foster homes). It’s also interesting how, like CJ, James suggests that, out of all his experiences associated with the Institute, he was more affected by receiving one-on-one counseling, care and support from Jeremiah, than by his experiences in the workshop (though his experiences in the workshops also significantly impacted him to a seemingly greater degree than CJ’s similar experiences). The psychosocial task that James is most concerned with seems to be that of “Moral Responsibility,” as manifested in his primary concern with caring about and helping people in his interpersonal relationships. But again, like Ruth, Daryl and Farzad, James expresses a strong concern about making a difference in his school community, which he thinks about in macroscopic, as well as immediate inter-personal terms, thus suggesting that while still primarily concerned with the task of “Moral Responsibility,” he seems to be beginning to deal with the psychosocial task of “Extended Social and Moral Responsibility.”

Mary is a young white woman both of whose parents are college-educated. She is also and freshman in high school. In our interview, her moral concern with regard to the second and third motivational dimensions is evident from her statement that, “I want to help people, and that’s pretty much my responsibility I guess, and, get to know people and just enjoy being with them” and her observation that the Institute taught her not to “judge other people on how they look.” However, a relative absence of critical examination and questioning of her identity and of life’s purpose, and her relatively weak sense of moral agency and motivation to make a difference in the world (except to make a difference by
getting to know people), lead me to conclude that she cannot be said to be developing critical
moral consciousness (though her moral motivation seems sufficient to place her close to the
borderline between non-CC and CC developmental pathways). It is interesting that I reach
this conclusion despite the strong emotional response she had to her first *We Are One Family*
workshop (see Chapter 4), and that she herself does not seem to regard her experience as
having had a major impact on her. Rather, she observes that she had already had these moral
concerns prior to participating in the Institute and that her experiences in the Institute only
increased the strength of her concerns “a little bit.”

Lakshmi is a young girl who immigrated with her family to the United States from
India. Similar to Mary, it appears that Lakshmi also cannot be said to developing critical
moral consciousness subsequent to participating in the Institute, though her moral motivation
with regard to the second motivational dimensions was amplified. This amplification can be
seen in her account of how experience in the Institute transformed her sense of social
responsibility.

I used to always be like “I need this and I need that.” But then Jeremiah showed me
this card he sent to everyone for Christmas, and it said like if you get food to eat
every day you are like in the top five percent of the world’s population or something
like that. I mean, that just changed me. I don’t want anything more. I mean I have
everything I need for survival. I don’t need anything extra when there are so many
people who don’t get food even once a day…. After that, I stopped demanding for
stuff from my parents.

Furthermore, relevant to the first motivational dimensions, she shows a strong
concern with and attraction to her own authenticity. In fact, she explains the Head-to-Heart
Shift in terms of authenticity.

I think it’s like you don’t do something because your forced to do it, but you do it
because it comes from your heart. By forcing your self to do it, you’re actually lying
to yourself. If it comes from your heart you’re like, “OK. I did a good thing. Now
I’m not going to fuss over it.”
This relates also to her new sense of how people can and should relate to each other. She notes that “Indian people have a lot of pride in themselves,” which can prevent them from seeking help from others, but the Institute has shown her that,

you can’t have too much pride in yourself. You have to work with everybody, cooperate everybody. I mean people who think that it’s too selfish, but I don’t think so. People usually think that that’s what hippies do, but [now] I think that’s what normal people should do.

Yet, despite these signs of increased moral motivation, Lakshmi does not appear to be developing critical moral consciousness due to a relative lack of strong attraction to authentic communication and relationship with others, a lack of strong moral motivation to help others (accept out of an intellectually reasoned sense of responsibility, indicating her mind’s recognition and acceptance of this responsibility of duty, but not her heart’s strong attraction to goodness), limited moral agency, and lack of critical questioning regarding life’s meaning (i.e. she seems to conceive of life’s purpose primarily in terms of personal achievement). Still, like Mary’s case, the amplified moral concern Lakshmi does possess suggests that her moral concern may be said to be close to the borderline between non CC and CC paths of development.

Nichol’s degree of moral motivation also seems to place her very close to the borderline between CC and non-CC pathways of development. Her experience in the Community-building Institute seems to have enhanced her moral motivation with regard to the second and third motivational dimensions inasmuch as it “changed” her “perception of people” and taught her “to never immediately judge anyone because you never know where they’ve come from and what their background is.” It also enhanced her sense of caring and desire to help by allowing her to experience “all of these diverse backgrounds and…how
much these students wanted to succeed, but how difficult it was for them and how it wasn’t necessary for it to be difficult for them and that they needed people to help.” She further alludes to the appreciation she gained from the We Are One Family workshop for the possibility of authentic relationship and care by noting that “by the time it (the workshop) was over some people are in tears and you really feel a close bond with these people who you’ve been with for such a short amount of time….You feel a connection.” Yet, a hint of paternalism that can be detected in other instances when she refers to her responsibility as a person who is “white and privileged” to help people in need (not because of her sense of their intrinsic beauty or value, but because of their need) suggest that her experience of bonding and “connection,” while sincere and “emotional,” was not as profound, authentic and transformative as the connections some other workshop participants experienced. In Nichol’s case, her experience in the Institute reinforced liberal beliefs she had already gained from her family regarding the importance of not being prejudiced/”racist” and of being willing to help those less fortunate, but did not seem to engender critical questioning of her identity and life’s meaning. Thus, I conclude that she cannot be said to be on a CC path of development.

Tom also comes from a white, well-to-do family. At the time of our interview, he was a senior in high school. While Tom was a relatively responsible “Facilitator” in his tutoring pair (he was paired with CJ), and while he believes his experience in the workshop made him more “socially conscious,” enhanced his “awareness of other cultures,” and a sense of responsibility (which he says he already had prior to participating in the Institute) “being from like an upper middle class family…to try to help people who are not from such a good socioeconomic level,” Tom did not show signs of critically questioning his identity nor
of having had a strong experience of authentic communication or relationship with others in the workshop. Indeed, as was the case with Lakshmi, his expressed sense of responsibility to help others does not seem to stem from his heart’s experience of oneness with and perception of the intrinsic value of others, but rather from an intellectual understanding of duty. Furthermore, he seems to regard being “socially conscious” and helping people in need as things he is supposed to be and do, as what liberal social convention tells him he should be, rather than something he feels passionately or authentically motivated to do. Rather, his motive in this regard seems to have more to do with a concern about himself, a concern with being perceived as good and with conforming to conventional expectations. His tendency during our interview to look to me as if seeking confirmation that he was saying the right things confirms this impression. An example of this is, when asked to explain what the quote by Teilhard de Chardin from the workshop meant to him, he hesitantly and ambivalently answered “we are all connected, I guess…I can’t really remember….But, we are all connected. That’s what most people would say.” And again, when asked about his future goals, he answered, “I guess, I want to grow up and do something important for society, I hear a lot of people say that.” Instances from the interview such as these suggest that his degree of moral development confirms to the classic Kohlbergian description of the “conventional level” of moral reasoning in which a person is primarily motivated to fit in and to be liked by others. Tom further alludes to this expedient, rather than authentically moral, motivation, when he shares in his interview that his main goal to live a life that is as “enjoyable and as fulfilled as possible” and that the most important thing in life is “to enjoy it” (from which he reasons that he should therefore help others since they also have the right
to enjoy their lives). Due to these limitations in his moral motivation, I conclude that Tom also is not developing critical moral consciousness.

Finally, Valerie is also from a white, well-to-do family. One of the strongest concerns she expressed in our interview was her concern about her own authenticity and her freedom to think critically. In several instances, she emphasized her desire to arrive at her own beliefs and revealed a sense of resistance to being unduly influenced by others (from which we could surmise that she possesses a strong attraction to truth). Her concern about authenticity is further reflected in her view of the purpose of life, which according to her consists of “standing for what I believe in and taking action…and not just going with what society believes is right and what your friends say is right…just standing out among everyone.” Yet, this concern seems to have some fear and self-concern associated with it (suggesting that it isn’t solely the result of an attraction to truth, beauty and goodness). She seems to be concerned about injustice and attracted to authentic and caring relationships with others (especially judging from her emotional experience in the We Are One Family Workshop), moral motivations related to the second and third motivational dimensions that she suggests she had before the Institute but which she also suggests were amplified by her experience in the Institute. She further notes that she sees life’s purpose being related to helping others, a notion that seems to have been taught to her in her family but which she credits Jeremiah and the Institute with having reinforced.

I mean I have always been pretty active, but I think that hearing about people’s experiences, and the racism that is going on, it’s just ridiculous that it is still here. So, it made me want to do something about it even more. I mean I always wanted to do something about it, but it fired me up.

Yet, her moral concerns with injustice and with helping still seem over-shadowed by her stronger concern with being authentic (i.e. being true to and finding herself).
On the whole, given the degree of moral concern and motivation Valerie seems to have with regard to all four of Mustakova-Possardt’s motivational dimensions, I conclude that she can be said to be developing critical moral consciousness, albeit close to the borderline between CC and non-CC developmental pathways. Furthermore, the psychosocial task she is primarily focused on seems to be that of “Moral Responsibility,” but her concerns about macroscopic social ills and making a difference so show that she is beginning to deal with “Extended Moral Responsibility” as well.

An Overview of All 14 Learners’ Varying Degrees of Critical Moral Consciousness Development

Having completed my presentation of the accounts (five in greater detail and nine more briefly) of the fourteen learners I interviewed of their experiences with the Community-building Institute (and in four cases, the impressions of a parent or guardian as well), it may now be stated in summary that nine of these learners (i.e. Jordan, CJ, Ruth, Daryl, Nancy, Andrew, Farzad, James and Valerie) appeared at the times of their interviews to be developing critical moral consciousness, while five seemed to be developing along a non-CC path of development. (Carmen, Mary, Lakshmi, Nichol, and Tom). Furthermore, for the nine learners I’ve categorized as developing critical moral consciousness, the most common ascending psychosocial task or theme they appeared engaged with was “Moral Responsibility” with signs of growing concern with the task/theme of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility.” The four exceptions (out of the nine who appeared to be developing critical moral consciousness) were Jordan, who seemed at the time of our interview to be negotiating the later task of “Principled Vision” if not “Philosophical Expansion,” CJ, who
Table 3. Assessments of CC Development for All Learners Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Role in Tutoring Pair</th>
<th>Level of CC Dev.</th>
<th>Stage of CC Dev./ Psychosocial Task</th>
<th>Level of CC Dev./Stage of CC Dev./Task prior to Institute?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>CC pathway</td>
<td>Trans CC&gt;CC / Principled Vision&gt; Philosophical Expansion</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Believer</td>
<td>CC pathway</td>
<td>Pre-CC / Moral Interest</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Believer</td>
<td>CC pathway</td>
<td>Pre-CC&gt;Trans CC / Moral Resp.+</td>
<td>CC pathway (lower level motivation) / Pre-CC/ Moral Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daryl</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Believer</td>
<td>CC pathway</td>
<td>Pre-CC&gt;Trans CC / Moral Resp.+</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>CC pathway</td>
<td>Pre-CC / Moral Resp.</td>
<td>CC pathway (lower level motivation) or Non-CC pathway?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Believer</td>
<td>CC pathway</td>
<td>Trans CC/ Expanded Social &amp; Moral Resp.</td>
<td>CC pathway (lower level motivation) or Non-CC pathway?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farzad</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Middle-Eastern</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>CC pathway</td>
<td>Pre-CC&gt;Trans CC / Moral Resp.+</td>
<td>CC pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Believer &amp; Facilitator</td>
<td>CC pathway</td>
<td>Pre-CC&gt;Trans CC / Moral Resp.+</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakshmi</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Believer</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichol</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Non-CC pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>CC pathway</td>
<td>Pre-CC&gt;Trans CC / Moral Resp.+</td>
<td>CC pathway (lower level motivation) or Non-CC pathway?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

seemed focused on the first task of “Moral Interest,” Nancy who seemed focused more exclusively on the task of “Moral Responsibility” than the others who were also focused on this task (i.e. her concerns with moral responsibility do not seem yet to involve thinking
about what she can systematically do to positively impact her community/society, but rather are always expressed in terms of her own immediate, personal relationships), and Andrew who seemed predominantly focused on “Expanded Social and Moral Concern” due to his strong motivation to help his minority group in Burma. AS can be seen, these findings are summarized in Figure 3.

**Conclusion Regarding My First Research Question**

While not all of the learners I interviewed seemed to be developing critical moral consciousness, nevertheless, in every participant’s account (including the accounts of those who did not seem to be developing such consciousness at the time they were interviewed) we can find indications of some increase in what Mustakova-Possardt refers to as “moral concern” or “moral motivation.” Furthermore, every one of these learners attribute whatever increase in moral concern and motivation they experienced, at least in part, to having participated in the Community-building Institute and often to specific experiences they had in the Institute which they could recall in vivid detail. In at least six of these cases (i.e. in the cases of Jordan, CJ, Ruth, Daryl, Nancy, and James), it seems that participating in the Institute was, according to these learners accounts, the *primary* cause of what they regarded as a major change or transformation in their lives (e.g. in the words of Ruth’s mother, participating in the Institute was a “watershed” in Ruth’s development). All of these transformations can justifiably be described, in the terms of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, either as shifts from non-CC to CC paths of development or as significant amplifications of a moral motivation that was already dominant in the person prior to participating the Institute.
and/or as shifts from one of the eight psychosocial tasks/themes Mustakova-Possardt identifies to the subsequent task/theme. In light of this, and bearing in mind the observation already mentioned that the majority (i.e. nine out of the 14) of the participants interviewed seemed to be developing critical moral consciousness after having participated in the Institute, we may conclude regarding my first research question that the Institute does indeed stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness.

*The Morally Transformative Power of Authentic Communication Regarding Issues of Moral Concern*

The conclusion I have stated above leads naturally back to my second research question, namely, “What factors in the Community-building Institute’s curriculum, and in the students who appear to have been most strongly affected by the Institute, contribute to this effect?” As may be recalled, the part of this question pertaining to the curriculum’s effect was tentatively answered in some depth in my analysis of my own direct observations of the Institute’s curriculum in action in Chapter 5. While I have described my conclusions in Chapter 5 as “tentative,” the accounts of learners presented and analyzed in this and the preceding chapter can be largely said to further substantiate and justify (and in some cases to help further clarify) at least some of these conclusions. All fourteen learner accounts included the learner’s comments on specific aspects of the Institute’s curriculum, on Jeremiah’s role as the facilitator of the curriculum, and on how they felt they were affected by these. Needless to say, considering what has already been presented, these comments were generally positive and appreciative. However, it should be noted that two out of the fourteen participants I interviewed also offered critical observations in addition to positive
comments. While these critical remarks represent minority perspectives within my sample, they are worth noting and will be discussed later in this chapter.

The most frequently commented on aspect of the Institute’s curriculum, and the most impressive to most of the learners I interviewed, was the way it engenders what I have termed the authentic communication and relationships between participants. Most of these learners recalled this occurring most dramatically in the portion of the We Are One Family workshop devoted to “sharing.” For example, this aspect of the curriculum is frequently referred to in the detailed accounts of five learners presented in the previous chapter, i.e. in Jordan’s transformative experience listening to Steve’s share his story, in CJ’s allusion to how listening to people share in the workshops made him more aware of how things he might say or do may “feel to other people,” in Ruth’s experience during the sharing portion of the workshop of “really hearing (a) person, not (just their) words” but “their spirit” and, in so doing, reaching a “state of heart…with other people where you feel like there is no me or you; there is us,” Daryl’s observation of how in the workshop you “really get to know” people and how this taught him the importance of not “judging a book by its cover,” and Nancy’s memories of “connecting” in the workshop with other learners whom she “never ever would have had any reason to talk to in a million years,” and being “enriched” by their “moving stories.” Other eloquent descriptions of the experience and effect of authentic communication were also given by other learners. Of these, two particularly perceptive and vivid accounts were shared by Farzad, and James, which I will now present.

Farzad was present at the workshop in which Jordan and Steve recognized each other as “brothers” and describes that particular workshop, the first of several he has attended, as having been “explosive,” “really successful and amazing.” He shared the following account.
It was unbelievable because you have this guy, Steve (i.e. Jordan’s “brother”), and he was amazing. He just stood up and said could he get a hug from everybody. I’ve never heard anything like that from any kid. Everybody stood up in a heartbeat, because that was what everybody wanted to do. It was kind of like a ‘60’s sort of thing to do. But, at the same time, it was really impressive, because we were as students pulling something off like that…. He never felt that much love before. Everybody, for some reason, in the room that night, was able to understand where everybody was coming from even though they’d never been there. Everybody was able to realize how everybody felt… Then, there was this (other) kid, his name was Tony. I remember Tony was really quiet, and he hadn’t said hardly anything the whole time. Finally, we went around the room talking about something, and Tony busted out and said some profound stuff about how we’re running out of time with all of this. If we’re going to solve this problem, we’ve got to do this quicker. We’ve got to go back to school in two days and tell everybody what we know. I can’t remember what he said exactly, but everybody was blown away by what he said because they hadn’t expected that out of him.

The problem (with this school) is that this is a high school, and all the stereotypes that come with it being a high school are found here. This place isn’t different from any place else. It’s all about conforming, and finding your clique. The Community-building Institute isn’t that way at all. If you go to the workshops, it’s the most diverse thing in every way that you can find, you know as far as race and socio-economics and everything. And that’s the problem that the Community-building Institute eliminates, the problem of cliques, the racial gap…. The Community-building Institute tends to eliminate the groups. When you cut away something, it brings something else back stronger, like clear-cutting a forest. Basically, you cut away and burn all the trees, and then it comes back in a lush green because of the ashes…. When you expose the ugly side of what’s going on, people tend to open up a little more…. And people can rebuild it [i.e. their community], make it stronger, more beautiful over time…. It’s been a process, and it’s still going, but we’re showing people what it is to be friends with all people of other cultures, races, and stuff, showing them what it’s like, that it can actually happen, being genuine.

In a similar vein, James shared the following account of his experience of authentic communication in a workshop.

I really like how it (i.e. the workshop) was just a great gathering of people. I knew people in there. I knew some of them personally, but a lot of them I just didn’t really know. Half of them, I would say, I had never seen before, so that was cool, I really liked that. I remember saying something about your self. I remember one thing at the end really hit me. This girl came up to me, we were in class together, and I had spoken of stuff during the workshop and she gave me a hug and she said, “James, I never knew you were like that. I thought you were just a joker. I didn’t know you were that spiritual about stuff.” That was really nice to be recognized like that from somebody I had never really recognized either…
For me a lot of stuff clicked, how there still are walls and barriers. Even if we don’t want to admit that, there are still barriers between blacks and whites and Asians. How color still separates us in a lot of ways even if we don’t know it. This one girl cried because she was just so mad that this was still going on. I remember walking around during a break. We were eating. I remember looking around looking at people eating, and there were some black guys standing over there. I remember thinking, “Oh, look at those guys my age,” but I didn’t even think about going over and talking to them, and I didn’t even recognize it. Instead, I went over and talked to a white teacher I knew. Later, we were talking about barriers, and I realized that, even for me, there is a personal barrier that can be broken. I could’ve gone over there and talked to them. I had all the capability of starting a conversation with them and I felt mad at myself for not doing that because who said they don’t have anything to offer me? I could’ve learned something from them easily. I remember apologizing to them in front of everybody, not like personally to them, but for anybody who I didn’t acknowledge them just because they’re black or just because of the way they dress. I think they got that.

Everyone (i.e. participants in the Institute) has gotten…to different levels of recognizing and seeing people. If I think about every face I’ve seen there, I can tell people have grown. It makes me pretty happy just to be involved with something like that. Just to know that my input, my speaking may click with somebody else, and I’ve never before been given a chance to do that.

In these instances, James also points to a significant aspect of the experience of authentic communication in the context of a group that I noted in Chapter 5, namely that the impact of such communication is not only felt between people who are directly communicating with each other. A person sharing may affect someone listening to him/her in ways he/she is not aware of. As James expresses it, “my input, my speaking may click with somebody else,” just as he was affected by observing and hearing the “one girl (who) cried because she was just so mad that this (i.e. racism) was still going on.”

Such indirect yet powerful and authentic communication does not even require words, as the following account, again from James, eloquently attests.

I remember he (i.e. Jeremiah) had me filming in one of the workshops and I was zooming in on people and their expressions, and there were all the black guys together in the corner and I was zoomed in on this one guy because he looked like he was really listening, not screwing around. I had known him and we had talked about
basketball and he was really nice. Just seeing him watch as Jeremiah was talking and just concentrate and listen to what Jeremiah was saying, I really liked that.

The “eye-opening” affect of such communication, when it is focused on a relevant issue of moral concern and occurs in a “safe,” affirming environment, was further attested to by Nichol and Valerie. As Nichol noted,

The most moving part (of the workshop) for me was hearing other people’s stories and them sharing their experiences, because it really opened my eyes. I had no idea about certain issues that were in our own community. I mean these were things that I had heard about and seen on TV, but these were things that I didn’t think were in (her town).

She learned from this “to never immediately judge anyone because you never know where they’ve come from and what their background is.” Valerie, it may be recalled, similarly shared how “hearing about people’s experiences, and the racism that is going on” made her feel that “it’s just ridiculous that it is still here” and made her “want to do something about it even more.” Tom also shared that he thought “the best thing about it (i.e. the workshop) was just hearing from different students from different backgrounds, hearing their stories, that kind of thing.” The powerful effect of experiencing authentic communication was also testified to by Mary when she noted in her interview that, “when you [truly and authentically] see a person, you don’t hate them, you just care about them.”

It is also noteworthy that, despite the limited success of the Caring Pairs Tutoring Program in leading to academic improvement among “Believers,” a number of the learners I interviewed pointed to their experience of what might be termed authentic relationship with their tutoring partner as having been a very important part of what made their experience in the Institute transformative for them. The story of Jordan and Steve is an obvious case in point. Also, Farzad notably related how being given “a chance to help people” was one of the most important things he gained from the Institute.
When I was paired up with Andrew. He fled his country, and came over here by a sponsor. That was really exciting for him. You know, to be able to teach him, and help him with his English, and help him in any way I could. I took him out for coffee one time. He was absolutely beside himself to be treated to coffee, because he had never -- I mean, that was out of the question, having a frozen coffee beverage and the same kind of fruit -- that really excited him. So it really gave me that rewarding opportunity, and the fact that I can be exposed personally to different ways of living in the world without leaving (the US).

Andrew, for his part, similarly observed that, “I feel like he (i.e. Farzad) is my best friend. He’s helped me a lot…. I tell him I need help with something and then he say, ‘Okay, I can help you with anything,’ so that’s like a best friend.” Likewise, Nancy suggested that her relationships with the “Believers” she was paired was a very important and influential part of her experience in the Institute. Daryl and Nichol also both reported being very happy with their tutoring relationship (in which Nichol was the “Facilitator” and Daryl was the “Believer”).

Returning to the authentic communication that specifically occurs in the We Are One Family workshops, and which every learners’ account attests was effective in amplifying their moral concern and motivation, it is important to note that this communication was not about any subject whatsoever, but was intentionally focused on a problem of moral concern that all of the learners were able to perceive (with Jeremiah’s help) as being relevant to their lives. It is arguably because of this focus on a relevant, “felt” problem, a problem that Jeremiah, to use his own terminology, was able to skillfully “presence,” that the authenticity of their communication was made possible and was so powerful in its effect. In other words, when communicating about factual information within a given academic discipline, or about procedures (i.e. explaining assignments and criteria for grading etc.), authenticity would seem to not be as much of an issue and the heart’s perception is not as relevant for
understanding (though authenticity and the heart’s perception is no doubt decisively relevant for learners to consider the meaning and implications of these facts and procedures).

With regard to the *We Are One Family* workshop’s focus on a problem of moral concern, the fact that almost every learner I interviewed (Andrew, Carmen and Nancy being the only exceptions) mentioned being very impressed by the video clip from *The Color of Fear* documentary is significant. Indeed, this video segment seemed to function as a dramatic and effective “code” (in the Freirian sense) that stimulated and provided a focus for reflection on the moral problem it exemplified. Attesting to this, Mary noted that it was watching this video clip that stood out most for her from her whole workshop experience. In fact, she commented that “You really couldn’t go through the workshop without that movie.” For Ruth, it was also watching the video clip and realizing that she had thought like the white man in it (i.e. that she had wondered why other people weren’t like her rather trying to understand and appreciate what it would be like to be in their shoes) that was the first thing in the workshop that powerfully moved her and prepared and opened her up to being able to “hear” the “spirits” of the other workshop participants when they shared. Daryl likewise emphasizes how the video segment made him feel “horrible” and, thus, heightened his concern about the importance of respecting and affirming otherness and the injustice of not doing so. Valerie similarly recalled the video segment played in the workshop was “very powerful,” and thought that it was the “combination” of watching it and then “hearing these stories” from other workshop participants that was the most impressive part of her workshop experience. In addition, Lakshmi also attested that after watching the video clip,

Some of my friends, I’ve never seen them that emotional before. Like some of them actually started crying…. That movie did a lot to me. I don’t really know what is discrimination, because I haven’t really faced it, but when I heard him (i.e. the black man in the video) talking, it made me realize that there are these people in the world
who don’t go through the same things I do because of their race, because of the way they look.

The Facilitator’s Role in Creating an Environment Conducive to Authentic Communication

Several learners attested that they felt the way Jeremiah facilitates his workshops is crucial to creating an atmosphere conducive to the kind of authentic communication and connection between participants that tends to occur the workshops. Nichol, for example, noted that Jeremiah,

creates a really good atmosphere where we feel we’re all there for the same reason and there’s nothing to be afraid of in that situation…. He makes it so that everyone feels really comfortable and really open to share. He shares a lot about his background growing up in Jamaica and making it all the way to Harvard and that’s really inspiring to a lot of people.

Similarly, as noted earlier, CJ pointed to Jeremiah’s “commitment,” and to the way he causes participants to think in terms of “how can we come together,” rather than thinking about how “‘your race does this’ or ‘your race does that’,,” as being the main reason the We Are One Family workshops are successful. Andrew similarly observed that Jeremiah, in the workshops, makes everybody comfortable to,

   talk to each other,….because Jeremiah say “We are in one family. We are one big family.” So, we are like brother and sister so we can talk to each other. If we have any opinion or any suggestion, we can tell each other or help each other.

   Nichol and Nancy further point to how Jeremiah effectively conveys the importance and possibility of experiencing “oneness.” They both recall specifically how they were impressed by the quotes Jeremiah selected to share in the workshop prior to the portion devoted to sharing. Nichol, for instance, suggested that, in addition to the “really moving” video clip, “going over quotes from Martin Luther King and Gandhi” helped to create the
atmosphere in which people could “feel a connection” with each other. Nancy similarly observed that she believes she would not have been “able to handle” her submersion in African-American culture when she spent a summer in Brooklyn “if I hadn’t been exposed to Jeremiah’s reading quotes like that, and Jeremiah’s persisting and getting it through our heads that this is the way it should be, not divided, not one-sided.”

When asked to explain how it is that Jeremiah is able to create an environment in which people can “open up” the way they often do in his workshops, Farzad similarly noted that Jeremiah “has a really strong personality. He forces people to think. He showed us different things that were kind of rough, and he impressed them on us.” Farzad further observed that, in the workshop, Jeremiah,

basically exposed us to different quotes and insights that people hadn’t been aware of. He kind of made us aware of our own sickness. We think we’re happy and everything’s fine, but we are all losing out in life somehow, by not getting to know everybody. By only getting to know certain types of people, we are all losing out.

The above accounts point to the effectiveness of the way Jeremiah “presences” a moral problem such that learners feel its relevance and the suffering it is causing themselves and others, and, in Farzad’s words, come to recognize their “own sickness.” At the same time, he presents the beautiful possibility CJ, Andrew, Nancy and other participants refer to of being one family, and being able to help each other (rather than, to borrow from CJ’s words, remaining “one-sided” and judgmental in their perspective and thinking in terms of “‘your race does this’ and ‘Your race does that’,” i.e. ways of thinking that cause the problem).

With further regard to Jeremiah’s use of quotes and stories in his workshops to set the stage for the sharing and the Head-to-Heart Shifts that are to come, it has already been noted that Nancy and Nichol explicitly refer to the efficacy of some of the quotes Jeremiah
selected. Nichol and Farzad, also specifically indicate being impressed by the story of Steven Covey’s experience on the subway that Jeremiah uses to illustrate what he means by the “Head-to-Heart Shift.” At the same time, there some learners such as Andrew, Carmen, Mary and Tom for whom some of the quotes were either difficult to understand or did not seem to make a significant impression, as indicated by the fact that, in their interviews, they indicated they either did not remember a quote or did not understand it or see its relevance (in contrast with the majority of the learners I interviewed who generally spoke with interest, intelligence, and indeed sometimes quite eloquently about what the quotes and stories meant to them and how they were impressed by them).

_Jeremiah’s Counseling and Coaching: The Institute’s Informal Curriculum_

Several of the learners I interviewed emphasized the helpful, profound, often transformative learning that they felt they experienced through what I have previously referred to as the Institute’s “informal curriculum” (i.e. the counseling and “coaching” that Jeremiah provides individual learners usually during visits with him in his office). Indeed, according to CJ and James, the supportive, one-on-one coaching they received from Jeremiah was the most important and transformative aspect of their experience in the Institute. In the case of James, he recounts being very affected by Jeremiah’s counsel and care even from the first day they met.

My mom found Jeremiah. She was looking for help with me and we hadn’t found any help at the school. Someone had mentioned Jeremiah’s name and from there we went to his office and he said he recognized me on the first day. He said he recognized me and that I was different. I cried in his office the first day I met him. James further noted that,
Jeremiah sort of empowered me. Because life’s a struggle and there’s a lot of things out there that you can blame for your problems. You can blame your problems on others pretty easily. It’s easy to say, “Oh, I can’t do that, because I had to do this” or “they made me do this.” But when it comes down to it, no one cares. It’s all on me. I mean, they still care. I have people that care about me, but it’s all on me to get things done. It’s my life. It’s in my control. That’s something I realized (from Jeremiah).

James also learned to value Jeremiah’s “not telling me what I want to hear all the time.”

He definitely does do that, but most of the time it’s not exactly what I want to hear. A lot of the times it’s not what I expected, but it was always what I definitely needed to hear. Even if I don’t think I’m really screwing up, I know I’m off [i.e. off balance]. I come in [to his office] and he recognizes it. If I tell him what’s going on, he knows what’s really going on. And not a lot of people can do that with me. I’m pretty good at covering things up. I think he has skill, or a sense, or some intuition. He knows what’s really behind what I’m saying. What I mean by “empower” is just like letting me take charge…. When I screwed up and I say “sorry,” “sorry” doesn’t work with Jeremiah. He doesn’t like the word “sorry.” It doesn’t mean anything to him. That’s taught me a lot. Its like, “you screwed up, so what are you going to do to change it?” “Sorry” doesn’t change it. He’s pretty straightforward, but he does let me try to figure it out on my own. It’s never easy.

It is also worth noting that, in the case of James, Jeremiah’s care even extended to the point that he became practically a surrogate father to him (his biological father was not a part of his life) when his mother was unresponsive and overwhelmed with her own difficulties and James was living in foster homes or group homes.

Several other learners attested to having been similarly affected by visits with Jeremiah. Nancy, as may be recalled from the earlier detailed account of her experience, like James remembered feeling so recognized and cared for on her first visit to Jeremiah’s office that she also was moved to tears. Further, it has already been noted how Ruth says that when she comes into Jeremiah’s office (the “lavender room”), she feels she is being treated like “the cream of the crop. You feel like you’re just so appreciated.” She also attests in her interview that when she enters the Jeremiah’s office, she can “relax at like a deeper level…. I’m a very stressed person, you know. I’m constantly stressed. I leave (Jeremiah’s office)
feeling rested. I feel like I’ve slept for a week.” In addition to what has already been reported of the lessons Daryl says he learned from Jeremiah’s coaching, he also described what it means to him to visit Jeremiah in his office (on an almost daily basis during his lunch breaks) in these words.

Well, I think it’s a just good place to go [for lunch], besides the cafeteria. I don’t really like eating in the cafeteria because of the madness, self-segregation, nobody wants to sit with each other. So, I just go to Jeremiah. It’s a nice calm environment, and you can sit and talk to Jeremiah about anything and everything. You can sit with Jeremiah and say this and that happened, and he’ll give you advice or he’ll tell you “you need to learn for yourself.” It’s a great atmosphere to go to at the school.

Farzad also attested to what it means to him to be able to regularly visit Jeremiah in the “lavender room,” not only on his own, but, as is often the case, to sit together with a few other students who also happen to be visiting and having meaningful conversation with Jeremiah at the time.

I love seeing people come through [Jeremiah’s office] every day, as a way to escape for a little while from what’s going on outside. That’s because the love in the room takes people to another place that doesn’t feel like it’s a part of this school. It doesn’t feel like an institution, like you are a part of this school. You are in this place where there is this really big Jamaican guy, and he actually cares and wants to know what’s going on…. People feel like it’s really refreshing to step inside here, knowing there is always a little place for them. They come and talk during their lunch hour, and that’s like the prime social hour. They prefer to come in here and hang out with Jeremiah.

The Community-building Institute has had a really big impact on my life mostly because of Jeremiah’s influence. I can go and discuss anything I want during the school day, and he’ll be there to talk about things. It’s made a huge impact on my life, and the same is true for a lot of people. You know, just having someone to talk to, and realizing that he is a person, and not a robot, or not a kid.

*Jeremiah’s Authentic Moral Authority*
In the above accounts of the role Jeremiah plays in facilitating the workshops and of the more informal, one-on-one counseling and support he provides, we can again recognize aspects of what Mustakova-Possardt has referred to as authentic moral authority. In Chapter 5, I suggested, based on my observations of the Institute’s curriculum in action, that such authority seems to be conveyed by Jeremiah through the impression he gives that his words (i.e. the moral ideals he verbalizes) are consistent with his feelings and actions. I further suggested that this impression comes across in the moral passion he manifests (apparent in his voice and in the eye contact he makes with learners in the workshops), in the degree to which he conveys the seriousness of a moral problem, in his ability to “enroll” learners in helping to solve the problem, in his personal testimonies regarding his own experience with overcoming adversity which further reinforce the impression that the ideas he shares reflect his lived experience (i.e. that his words are “true” in the Freirian sense), and in the degree to which he affirms and cares for his learners such that they feel “seen” and “met” by him.

That the learners I interviewed were indeed impressed by Jeremiah’s moral passion is implicit in many of the comments already presented above including CJ’s observation regarding what he saw as Jeremiah’s “commitment,” an observation that further suggests that CJ saw this moral passion expressed not only in words, but in Jeremiah’s actions over time. Jeremiah’s ability to enroll others is further implicit in all of the observations made by learners regarding how Jeremiah is able to make learners believe in the possibility that they are one family and that they therefore can and should really listen to and help each other. Regarding Jeremiah’s personal testimonies during workshops, it may be recalled from CJ’s and Nichol’s accounts above that Jeremiah’s testimony encourages some learners facing obstacles similar to those Jeremiah overcame, and, as Nichol notes, that it tends to elicit trust
and create a sense of safety in the learning environment of the workshops. Furthermore, Valerie explicitly attests to the same effect in her interview. Finally, regarding Jeremiah’s ability to make learners feel affirmed, “seen,” and “met,” numerous examples have already been given, including James’ and Nancy’s descriptions of how they were moved to tears upon first meeting Jeremiah.

In relation to the authentic moral authority learners’ suggest they perceived in Jeremiah, and to how such authority helps create an atmosphere in which “everyone feels really comfortable and really open to share,” it is also worth recalling, from Chapters 2 and 5, experiential educator Fox’s (1995) suggestion that a learning environment conducive to learners’ spiritual growth is characterized by “unfailing acceptance” and “uncompromising discipline.” Similarly, Boyd and Myers’ (1988) observation that facilitators of transformative learning need to possess the “virtues” of “compassionate criticism” and “seasoned guidance” is also noteworthy. In this regard, Jeremiah’s “unfailing acceptance” (not necessarily “unfailing” at all times, but generally unfailing, especially in the moments when he was most effective) can be seen in the instances already referred to when learners felt affirmed and “recognized” by Jeremiah. Jeremiah’s “uncompromising discipline” and the corresponding virtue of “compassionate criticism” is especially evident from James’ account of how Jeremiah tells him things he doesn’t want to hear and doesn’t accept “sorry” as an excuse. The virtue of “seasoned guidance,” also seems to evident in the frequent instances already mentioned in which learners attest to having received important life lessons from Jeremiah (especially through Jeremiah’s one-on-one “coaching”).

Inasmuch as he was able to have the effect on learners to which these accounts attest, which derive not just from their limited experiences with Jeremiah in one workshop, but
from their extended relationships with him over several months and sometimes years, relationships in which Jeremiah revealed a commitment to these learners’ well-being and moral growth, it may be concluded that Jeremiah indeed provided a model and source of what Mustakova-Possardt calls authentic moral authority. It may be further concluded, consistent with Mustakova-Possardt’s theory and with the learners’ accounts, that this was a significant, and probably crucial, factor contributing to the Institute’s ability to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness in learners. As suggested in Chapter 5, this does not mean that he is morally perfect, but that moral motivation seems to dominate his consciousness. Jeremiah surely has moral short-comings and expedient motives (as all humans do), which may even account for the short-comings in the program suggested by the following critical accounts, but these do not indicate that his motives in creating and facilitating the Institute were or are predominantly self-serving. Rather, his demonstrated commitment over-time to the program he created and to many of the students he served and the morally-transformative impact the Community-building Institute had are persuasive evidence that his primary motivation vis-à-vis the Institute was, in Mustakova-Possardt’s terms, a moral motivation.

*Some Critical Observations of the Institute’s Curriculum and the Way It Was Facilitated*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, two of the fourteen learners I interviewed offered some critical observations of the Institute were in addition to positive comments. These two learners were Carmen and Valerie. Their observations point to what might be seen as short-comings in the Institute’s program and in Jeremiah’s facilitation of it. While
they are worth noting, I chose not to emphasize them given the facts that the focus of this study is on discovering what seems to work to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness rather than on assessing the overall effectiveness of the program,\textsuperscript{41} and that these criticisms were offered by a fairly small minority of the learners I interviewed (i.e. two out of fourteen, one of whom, Carmen, furthermore admits that she “never really listened” in the workshop she attended because she is “an insomniac” and because Jeremiah “tends to go on and on”).

Carmen first criticism was of the Institute’s lack of organization, particularly in its tutoring program. Problems with this aspect of the program were noted by other learners as well, but for Carmen, this seemed to be a great source of frustration and some degree of guilt. In her interview, she related her experience of trying to meet with the “Believer” she had been paired with, but finding that her tutoring partner would not show up at pre-arranged times and seemed generally uninterested in being tutored. She further noted that,

This doesn’t mean the people we are tutoring are bad people. I stopped doing the program because I was taking three AP classes, I played sports, and I took piano lessons. It was just a huge strain on my time and it was frustrating seeing it going nowhere. Some of the kids we were tutoring, they were at this astonishingly elementary level in their education. So, no matter how much we worked with them, they weren’t going to pass their classes, because they didn’t have the foundations. They were allowed to slip through our school system from year to year without being required to meet the basic requirements…. They don’t see how education pertains to their life. To be honest, at that point, sometimes it doesn’t. Sometimes, they are simply trying to support their families…. They don’t understand how that pertains to their life. I can’t make them understand. None of us can be so presumptuous to say “We’re trying to get you out of this hell hole.”

In this regard, she significantly notes that, even though she felt the \textit{We Are One Family} workshop was a “positive experience” and “a start,” she also concluded that “you shouldn’t

\textsuperscript{41} Such an assessment, as has already been noted, was undertaken by an earlier program evaluation, which concluded that the program is largely effective in engendering caring relationships and a sense of community across normal social barriers based on race and class and in fostering in participants a desire to help others.
overestimate the transformational qualities of one afternoon [i.e. one workshop] in wiping away an entire lifetime.” Carmen also seemed resistant to what she regarded as the “touchy-feely” quality of the workshop, noting, in her words, that “forced intimacy is never a comfortable thing.”

The other major concern Carmen expressed was that Jeremiah’s “lofty goal” of helping “African-American kids, with the help of White kids….very easily became too Black and White.” By this, she was referring to the fact the nearly all of the “Facilitators” in the program were white and nearly all blacks participating were “Believers.” It therefore appeared to her that,

the “black rose brothers and sisters,” as Jeremiah fondly refers to them, are always viewed as the people who are in need. The tutoring relationship is not seen as one of equity as much as one of helping, one person helping the other.

It was apparent from my interview with Valerie that she too had mixed feelings about her experiences in the Institute. This is evident in the concerns and guilt, similar to Carmen’s, that Valerie expressed regarding her relationship with her “Believer.” Nevertheless, her experience overall seems to have been a more positive than Carmen’s. During her junior year, Valerie formed a fruitful tutoring partnership and close friendship with the Believer with whom she was paired, who was a motivated African-American young woman. However, at the time of our interview, Valerie expressed feeling “horrible” that she and her friend had “grown apart” during Valerie’s senior year, because, as Valerie became very busy “applying to colleges.”

Valerie’s mother was more direct in expressing what she felt were some of Valerie’s, and her own, concerns about the Institute. While she was largely complementary in her
observations about the Institute and described Jeremiah’s influence on his students as generally “very positive,” she also noted that in one workshop she attended,

I would have liked to hear the kids talk more. Jeremiah is a great speaker, but maybe, sometimes, he should speak a little less. That evening, it was a lot of him talking and a little of the kids talking.

She also noted that Jeremiah’s “influence on Valerie was also positive, (but) sometimes, a little too uncomfortable for her and me. This was because he tended to put her on a pedestal that didn’t feel appropriate and didn’t feel comfortable.” In this regard, Valerie also alluded, in my interview with her, to some discomfort at often being referred to by Jeremiah as an “angel.”

Furthermore, Valerie’s mother echoed another concern expressed by Carmen when she commented that,

I think (the Community-building Institute) is a very, very positive program, and it’s clear that without it a lot of kids would fall through the cracks and be lost. It’s commendable. It’s a wonderful opportunity for kids like Valerie to get involved as tutors. But there was a piece of it I was always uncomfortable with, and I know Valerie was as well, and that was the really big emphasis made about the kids being helped versus the kids who were helpers…. There was a really big emphasis on the fact that the kids being helped were black, and the kids helping were mostly white. You know, I was glad in the video (referring to a promotional video for the Community-building Institute produced by some former participants) that one of the black kids that was being tutored said, “Don’t come in here and think that this is only just for me,” which I thought was absolutely right. A lot of times, Jeremiah would give praise to the kids who are tutors, the helpers, and not give the same sort of appreciation and notice as enthusiastically what the other kids, the ones being helped, are bringing to the Community-building Institute. And another thing: There are a very solid number of high achieving black students in this school. They would be great role models for these kids, and I’m guessing…but, maybe that emphasis on whites helping in the program is keeping these black students away from the Institute…. The hierarchical thing that goes on there is very uncomfortable.

At the same time, it is also worth noting that this concern, while not without basis according to my own observations as well, may in fairness be counter-balanced by recalling the undivided praise given to Jeremiah by the two African-American participants I interviewed,
as well as a few other students of color I met and heard speak about their experiences in the Institute but didn’t have an opportunity to interview.

Factors in the Learners Themselves that May Have Made Them More or Less Susceptible to Developing Critical Moral Consciousness

I should begin this final section of the current chapter with the disclaimer that the data I derived from my interviews was limited in terms of the information it provided about these learners’ past moral development and formative experiences prior to their participating in the Community-building Institute. Thus, my ability to draw justifiable conclusions regarding what factors in these learners’ psychological make-up (such as the effects their prior life experiences may have had on them) may have made some learners more and some less susceptible to having their development of critical moral consciousness stimulated by their experiences in the Institute is similarly limited. Nevertheless, I will offer a few general observations and conclusions in this regard based on a review of my interview data, observations and conclusions that appear to be consistent with Mustakova-Possardt’s theory.

Perhaps the most noteworthy observation that can be made is the fact that a majority of the learners I identified as developing critical moral consciousness subsequent to their experiences in the Institute gave indications in their interviews (indications that were further confirmed in some cases by my interviews with a parent) of having grown up exposed to what Mustakova-Poosardt calls authentic moral environments. From among these nine learners, such indications are especially noteworthy in the descriptions Ruth, Daryl, Nancy, Andrew, Farzad, Valerie, and/or some of their mothers, provided me of their family life.

See Chapter 5 for an explanation of this concept.
exceptions, among those learners I concluded are developing critical moral consciousness, are Jordan, CJ and James. Of these three, Jordan did not give enough information in his interview about his formative experiences to make a determination about the degree to which he had been exposed to an authentically moral environment prior to participating in the Institute, with the exception of a few critical comments he made about the general cultural atmosphere he grew up in (though, on a positive note, given his apparent academic achievement prior to his involvement in the Institute and what we know about his family’s socio-economic status, we may at least surmise that his family provided him with a stable environment that was plentiful in terms of material resources and opportunities for intellectual development). In contrast, in the cases of both CJ and James, we can see indications that they were brought up under challenging circumstances that we may surmise limited their exposure to elements of an authentic moral environment (though this still cannot be precisely determined given the limited information available from my interviews with them). Looking in turn at those learners who I concluded were not developing critical moral consciousness, i.e. Carmen, Mary, Lakshmi, Nichol, and Tom, all of these learners appear to have grown up in affluent families (similar to Jordan), but only one, Nichol, shared something about having been taught important moral lessons by her parents.

That prior formative experiences of hardship and/or cognitive dissonance may be a factor making one susceptible to develop critical moral consciousness was also suggested by the accounts of some learners identified as developing critical moral consciousness and/or the comments of their parents or guardian. For example, of the nine learners I concluded were developing critical moral consciousness, six (i.e. CJ, Ruth, Nancy, Andrew, Farzad, and James) according to their own or their parent’s or guardian’s accounts had experienced either
personal hardship or had been strongly impressed by being exposed to the difficulties and suffering of others. As a result, these young people appeared to have become more concerned at young ages about injustice and people’s suffering than their peers generally were. It may be surmised that such experiences also made any inconsistencies these young people saw between the moral ideals they were taught and what they observed in reality more distressing to them than may normally be the case, which in turn could have made them more strongly motivated than most children or youth to critically question and feel a desire to do something about injustices and suffering they witness.

On the other hand, it may also be surmised that growing up within an authentically moral environment may also stimulate a person’s motivations to critically question and to help others without that person necessarily needing to experience personal hardship. Nevertheless, in such a case, some experience of becoming aware of injustice and difficulties suffered by others would still seem to be crucial for the development of moral motivation. In other words, if one grows up taking authentic love and other forms of goodness for granted, any experience that may show such a person that such goodness is not necessarily experienced by all people would presumably create strongly motivating cognitive dissonance and moral concern. Daryl seems to be a good case in point of someone who grew up in a very supportive family and did not recollect any serious hardships growing up, but who still came to be very concerned about injustice in his society when he became aware of it.

The issue of the relationship between cognitive development, moral development and social environment is particularly raised when considering CJ’s case. While CJ’s intellectual capacities are not in question in light of the very thoughtful answers he gave to my questions in our interview, it is apparent that the degree to which he has been able to benefit from the
intellectual resources that formal education might have given him has been very limited. It may be further surmised, in light of decades of research, that this limitation was due to his impoverished background (i.e. his limited access to what some sociologists – e.g. Robert Putnam – have called “social capital”) and to the influences of institutional racism and classism within the schools he attended. With regard to the impoverishment that, according to his aunt, afflicted the family environment CJ grew up in, it should also be emphasized, consistent with Mustakova-Possardt’s theoretical perspective, that the kind of impoverishment that is most relevant when considering the influence of social environment on moral development is not so much material as cognitive and moral. It may, for instance, be observed that CJ’s aunt is relatively materially impoverished. Yet she provides CJ with a morally and cognitively rich environment in her home through her affirmation and encouragement of CJ, through the values she not only espouses but puts into practice in her own life and in her relationship with CJ, and through the support she strives to provide CJ for his schooling. In contrast to this, CJ’s home environment prior to coming to live with his aunt a few months before our interview seems (based on what CJ’s aunt shared about CJ’s father’s frequent imprisonments, his mother’s promiscuity, and the contention this caused between CJ and his mother) to have been very unstable and to have provided few opportunities for the kind of dialogue that would have encouraged CJ’s development of critical thinking, perspective-taking and dialogical skills.

Yet, the cognitively and morally impoverished environment seems to have grown up in prior to coming to live with his aunt did not seem to have hindered the openness of CJ’s heart to first his aunt’s and then Jeremiah’s affirmation of his worth and potential nor to have impeded his attraction to the goodness he perceived in both of these adult role models.
However, this formative environment could perhaps have caused the psychosocial task with which CJ was primarily involved, i.e. that of “Moral Interest,” to be a more basic one than were the psychosocial tasks the other learners developing critical moral consciousness appeared to be engaged in. This observation again points to the usefulness of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of moral development inasmuch as it accounts for two distinct dimensions of such development, i.e. structural/cognitive and motivational development and the interaction between these two dimensions.

Finally, it is also important to note that both Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, and my analysis of my interview data, suggest that it is not possible to make precise and certain predications about who will and who won’t have their moral motivation sufficiently stimulated by a particular pedagogical experience to cause them to shift from a non-CC to a CC path of development. While prior experiences such as exposure of authentic moral authority and authentic moral environments, as well as experiences of personal hardship or exposure to the suffering of others may make one more predisposed to develop moral concern and moral motivation in response to an educational experience, the course any person’s development takes may also be affected by the unpredictable factors of choice (i.e. human agency), and of what, for lack of a more scientific term, may be referred to as “grace.” By grace, I mean psychological experience of gaining a key and liberating insight, often stimulated by some external “sign” or agent, usually in times of great difficulty. In other words, as Mustakova-Possardt also suggests, deterministic models of psychology that suggest that it is possible to precisely predict any person’s choices and behaviors given precise knowledge of their environment and/or their genetic make-up are not viable given the irreducible complexity of human psychology. As with very complex systems studied in other
fields of science, we may be able to talk in terms of probabilities, but should not expect to ever be able to develop models that will allow us to eliminate the fundamental mystery of human consciousness.

Summary

In this chapter, I finished presenting the accounts of the fourteen learners I interviewed of their experiences in the Community-building Institute and they feel they were affected by these experiences. This consisted of a summary presentation of the nine remaining Institute participants I interviewed, whose accounts I did not present in detail in Chapter 6. At the conclusion of the learners’ accounts, it was noted that total of nine of the fourteen learners I interviewed appeared to be developing critical moral consciousness at the times of their interviews after having participated in the Community-building Institute and five appeared not yet to be developing such consciousness. It was also noted that all of the learners interviewed indicated that their moral concerns had been amplified to some degree by their participation in the Institute. I therefore concluded that the answer to my first research question of whether the Community-building Institute stimulates the development of critical moral consciousness in its participants is “yes.”

In reference to my second research question, those aspects of the Institute’s curriculum that the learners I interviewed were most impressed by and that they believed were most responsible for whatever significant impact they felt their experiences in the Institute had on them were also discussed. The aspects of the curriculum they noted included the experiences of authentic communication (i.e. their experiences of Head-to-Heart Shifts)
and authentic relationships that the Institute fostered, the focus of this authentic communication on a moral problem that they recognized and felt was very relevant to their lives, the use of the video clip taken from The Color of Fear documentary as an effective “code” (in Freire’s sense of this word) to stimulate recognition of and concern about the moral problem and to provide a focus for reflection and dialogue, and the vital contribution made by Jeremiah, as a source of authentic moral authority, in his role as the workshop facilitator and as a counselor and “coach” outside of the workshops. Regarding the role that Jeremiah plays, they further noted his impressive ability to amplify learners’ moral motivation by “presencing” the relevant moral problem, by “enrolling” learners in a moral and beautiful possibility, by offering testimony from his own life’s experiences, and by affirming his learners such that they felt recognized, “seen,” and “met” by him. I further analyzed and characterized these ways that Jeremiah seems to amplify learners’ moral concern and motivation in terms of the concepts of “unfailing acceptance,” “uncompromising discipline,” “compassionate criticism,” and “seasoned guidance” articulated by Fox (1995) and Boyd and Myers (1988). I also made note of some critical observations made of the Institute and Jeremiah made by two learners and one parent I interviewed.

Finally, I considered what factors in the learners themselves may have determined or contributed to the effect that they feel their experiences in the Community-building Institute had on them. In this regard, I considered the role of prior exposure to authentic moral environments, of formative experiences of personal hardship and/or experiences that made some learners unusually aware of and concerned at a young age about the injustices and suffering experienced by others, as well as the effect of growing up within a cognitively and morally impoverished social environment. At the same time, I noted the unpredictable roles
that the variables of a person’s choice/agency and of “grace” may play in determining the
course of the person’s psychological development.
CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has focused on answering two related research questions: 1) Does the Community-building Institute stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness? and 2) If so, what factors in the Community-building Institute’s curriculum, and in the students who appear to have been most strongly affected by the Institute, contribute to this effect? At the end of my analysis of the Institute’s curriculum in action in Chapter 5, I suggested some preliminary answers to both questions. Then, subsequent to my analysis of my interviews with a number of participants in the Institute, in which I compared their observations about the curriculum with my own observations, I reached my final conclusions in Chapter 7 regarding the answers to my two research questions.

In sum, I have found that the answer to the first question seems to be “yes.” This study’s findings suggest that the Community-building Institute can justifiably be said to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness in many of its participants. Specifically, the Institute seems to have stimulated, in a number of ethnically diverse adolescent high school students in North Carolina (i.e. in the majority of the cases of the Institute participants I interviewed), the development of later stages of what Mustakova-Possardt terms “pre-CC” and the beginning stages of “transitional CC,” a transitional
developmental period which, as depicted in Table 1, involves negotiating the psychosocial tasks/themes of “Moral Responsibility” and “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility.”

To further assess the significance and implications of this finding (i.e. my answer to the first research question), it would be worthwhile to reflect again on the usefulness of Mustakova-Possardt’s developmental theory of critical moral consciousness. Therefore, in the next two sections of this chapter, I present my reflections on this theory’s usefulness, and on possible ways suggested by this study that the theory may benefit from further clarification and development.

Regarding the second research question, I identified in Chapter 5 a number of factors reflected in the Institute’s curriculum that seem to have contributed to its apparent effect of stimulating the CC development. These factors include specific ways in which the Institute seems to provide learners with what Mustakova-Possardt terms a source of authentic moral authority and an authentic moral environment. Some related, more specific, pedagogical strategies and methods were also examined in that chapter, such as the role played by the conceptual content of the Institute’s curriculum, Jeremiah’s way of both affirming learners and calling on them to engage in serious personal reflection, specific rules Jeremiah sets and norms he promotes among his community of learners which help to create an atmosphere of “safety,” the manner in which he fosters the liminality and intensity characteristic of a rite of passage, and his use of powerful Freirian “code” as a stimulus and focus for the learners’ “sharing” with one another regarding a relevant moral issue.

Upon revisiting the second research question in Chapter 7, I found that the accounts of the learners themselves appeared to largely confirm the efficacy of a number of these

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43 See p. 12 in Chapter 1.
aspects of the curriculum in amplifying moral motivation (and thus also in stimulating the
development of critical moral consciousness). I further noted in Chapter 7, in answer to the
second aspect of my second research question, that there also appear to be certain factors in
the learners themselves that may help to account for the greater susceptibility of some of
them to having their development of critical moral consciousness stimulated by the kinds of
experiences they had in the Institute. These factors include prior exposure to authentic moral
authority and authentic moral environments, and also having had some formative experiences
of personal hardship and/or experiences that in other ways helped them to gain, early in their
lives, an unusually high degree of sensitivity to and concern about the injustices and
suffering experienced by others.

Out of all the findings mentioned above, the primary focus of this concluding chapter
will be to reflect further on what may be considered this study’s central pedagogical finding:
namely that the experience of what I have called *authentic communication*, especially when
focused on an issue of profound moral concern to participants, can powerfully amplify the
moral motivation of learners. Thus, following the next two sections (in which I evaluate the
usefulness of developmental theory in general and Mustoakova-Possardt’s theory in
particular), I will reflect on what seem to be some implications related my finding about the
power of authentic communication. I will then offer some final thoughts on the pedagogical
means the Institute uses to engender the experience of authentic communication and why
these means are effective. I will conclude the chapter, and my dissertation, with
consideration of how indoctrination and manipulation can and should be avoided when
implementing these means as well as what some implications of this study may be for
educational reform and future research in the field of education.
Reflections on the Usefulness and Possible Opportunities for Further Clarification and Development of Mustakova-Possardt’s Developmental Theory

For the purposes this case study, Mustakova-Possardt’s theory critical moral consciousness proved to be very useful for analyzing and understanding the moral development exhibited by the many of the Institute participants I interviewed and the effect the Institute’s curriculum had on this development. In particular, several concepts from the theory proved to be very helpful and illuminating tools for describing and explaining the learners’ accounts and my own observations of the curriculum in action. Among these key concepts are the distinction the theory makes between an “expediency motivation” and a “moral motivation,” its operationalization of moral motivation as an attraction to truth, beauty and goodness that dominates over more self-centered, expedient and conventional concerns, the four “motivational dimensions” the theory identifies and its characterization of critical moral consciousness as consciousness in which one’s relationships to all four of these dimensions are predominantly morally motivated, and the notion that innate capacities for moral concern and motivation that human beings possess are “amplified” by certain kinds of social environments (i.e. by authentic moral environments).

At the same time, my use of these conceptual tools to analyze these learners’ stories also raised some questions regarding Mustakova-Possardt’s theory and suggested opportunities that may exist for further clarifying and developing the theory. References to these questions and some suggestions regarding how the theory might benefit from further clarification and development were interspersed in the accounts of learners’ experiences presented in Chapters 6 and 7 and can be summarized in the following four questions (or sets of questions):
1) Is the sequence of "Ascending Psychosocial Tasks" that Mustakova-Possardt suggests people developing critical moral consciousness must negotiate across a life-span necessarily invariant and universal as Mustakova-Possardt seems to suggest? Specifically, in light of Gilligan’s (1982) research, how might gender differences in moral understanding and development result in alternative developmental paths (i.e. paths characterized by different sequences of psychosocial tasks/themes) that might both still be characterized as CC pathways of development?

With regard to this first question, I noted when considering Ruth’s exceptionally high level of moral motivation relative to the psychosocial task of “Moral Responsibility” that Gilligan’s research into gender differences in moral understanding and development suggests that women tend more than men to understand morality in terms of caring for immediate others, while men tend to understand it abstractly in terms of principles of justice. This raised the question for me of whether the task of “Moral Responsibility,” which seems, in light of Gilligan’s research, to be more “feminine” in its emphasis on caring in immediate, inter-personal relationships, is necessarily, universally prior, and by implication developmentally inferior, to the subsequent task of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility,” which appears to be more “masculine” given the construction of more abstract notions of social justice that this task would seem to involve. I further observed that, while the latter task does apparently require greater development of certain cognitive abilities, as measured according to certain specific criteria, it may be that by some other measures the ability to be immediately responsive and caring in the context of one’s immediate, inter-personal relationships may require more advanced abilities of other kinds.
than does the task of “Expanded Social and Moral Responsibility.” This leads to the question of whether it is possible that Mustakova-Possardt’s model of the ascending psychosocial may describe only one possible path rather than the path for developing critical moral consciousness.

In this regard, I suggested that perhaps Mustakova-Possardt’s theory would benefit from a further developed description of how the powers of the mind, heart and will can work and develop in synergy, a description that might also speak to how the sequence of psychosocial tasks one encounters may look different depending on which of these powers, in Mustakova-Possardt (2003) words, “leads the way” (p. 91). I also suggested that it is very important to make clear and explicit a point that Mustakova-Possardt seems to implicitly suggest, namely that the given psychosocial task a person developing critical moral consciousness is negotiating at any time should not be taken as a measure (or at least not as the only measure) of how highly developed that person’s critical moral consciousness is. In fact, this implication points to one of the greatest strengths of Mustakova-Possardt’s model, namely the fact that it identifies two dimensions to moral development (i.e. structural and motivational development), unlike for example Kohlberg’s model, which measures moral development only in terms of structural development, i.e. in terms of the development of a person’s capacity for moral reasoning. Specifically, as represented in Figure 1 (Chapter 1, p. 12), we see that, in addition to the horizontal dimension of the table that indicates how structural (or cognitive) development interacts with moral motivation and that is defined by a sequence of eight “ascending psychosocial tasks,” Mustakova-Possardt’s model also includes an equally if not more important vertical dimension representing the relative strength of a person’s moral motivation. In fact, it is one’s degree of development along this second
horizontal dimension of moral development that determines, according to Mustakova-
Possardt, whether one is or is not on a path to developing critical moral consciousness at any
given time. Thus, for example, a person negotiating the task of “Expanded Social and Moral
Responsibility” whose moral motivation only marginally exceeds his/her expediency
motivation cannot fairly be said to be ahead of another person who is negotiating the
preceding task of “Moral Responsibility” but whose moral motivation in this regard so
dominates his/her expediency motivation that he/she can be described, according to Figure 1,
as being at the highest level of motivational development, i.e. the level Mustakova-Possardt
names “Unity of self and morality.”

2) How might social-cultural-historical differences complicate determinations of
whether a person is or is not developing critical moral consciousness (a subject that
Mustakova-Possardt deals with in depth in her book, but which I nevertheless have
some further questions regarding)?

This second question I had about Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, regarding how social-
cultural-historical differences might complicate determinations of whether or not a person is
developing critical moral consciousness, occurred to me while analyzing my interviews with
both of the two Asian immigrants in my sample, i.e. Andrew (from Burma) and Lakshmi
(from India). In the case of Andrew, the question occurred when I noticed in his interview a
relative absence of signs that he had critically questioned his identity and his religion’s ideas
about the meaning of life. At the same time, I noticed his concern about human rights, his
moral motivation to help people in his country, and also saw indications that his sense of
identity and of life’s meaning may be influenced not only by tradition, but also by what I have earlier referred to (in my presentation of Ruth’s story) as “authentic spiritual experience.” On this basis, I concluded that he can be said to be morally motivated in relation to Mustakova-Possart’s first and fourth motivational dimensions despite relatively limited signs that he is critically questioning ideas from his culture relative to these dimensions.

It must first be admitted that the relative absence of indications of critical questioning may be due to Andrew’s language limitations (his English speaking ability was rather limited at the time of our interview) and/or due to the possibility that I failed to ask him questions that, if he properly understood them, might have elicited accounts from him of how he may very well have questioned and consciously chosen to accept his culture’s beliefs. However, an alternative explanation may be that in social-historical contexts in which the qualities of social institutions and community life align more closely with the characteristics Mustakova-Possart attributes to authentic moral authority and authentic moral environments, the need to separate oneself from one’s social context may not be as critical as in other social environments. In other words, what we now call “living authentically” in the context of modern and post-modern Western society may, as Ruth eloquently pointed out, simply be viewed as being naturally “human” in healthier social contexts, and thus the need to question social norms in these healthier contexts may not be as pronounced. With regard to this issue, the conclusion I come to (based admittedly on my own suppositions and reasoning, rather than on empirical evidence derived from this study) is that, while the need to take dramatic steps to free one’s self from one’s social environment may be greater in less healthy social
contexts, it is still probably universally the case that a person’s development from relative unconsciousness to relative awareness of the reasons one sees, believes and behaves as one does should be regarded as one of the defining characteristics of mature moral consciousness in any context (i.e. that mature moral consciousness is also necessarily critical consciousness).

An additional question related to how social-cultural particularities might complicate determinations of whether a person is or is not developing critical moral consciousness arose when analyzing my interview with Lakshmi. With regard to the notion of “agency,” which is part of Mustakova-Possardt’s second motivational dimension, I wondered how much of the seeming lack of agency indicated in her following observation was a sign of her personal degree of psychological development, and how much it was a reflection of her cultural and religious beliefs. In response to the question of what her understanding was of the purpose of life, Lakshmi replied,

No idea. I mean I’m a very religious person and I believe that what happens, happens, but there are some things you may be able to change. I mean like in my life, if somebody did something for me and I did something to change it, yeah. But otherwise I cannot foresee the future. I don’t know what is going to happen. I don’t know if I’m going to be a doctor or maybe work in McDonalds.

One way of interpreting this statement would be to view it as an indication of a relatively limited sense of the agency she possesses to determine her future. On the other hand, it may also be viewed as a statement of religious philosophy regarding how much agency human beings possess in a more ultimate sense. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the examination of Gandhi’s autobiography undertaken by Mustakova-Possardt presents an example of someone from a cultural background that we may presume to be similar to

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44 In this regard, I find myself in agreement with psychologist, Erich Fromm, and anthropologist, Ruth Benedict, among others, in that I presume it to be possible to define objective criteria that can be used to determine the relative health or “functionality” of different human communities/societies.
Lakshmi’s, but who nevertheless can be seen to have possessed a high degree of moral agency and to have understood himself as a free agent.

3) How precise can we be in operationalizing the border between CC and non-CC paths of development and people’s transitions from one path to the other? In other words, is a person’s transition from the former to the latter developmental pathway always recognizable as a clear, instantaneous, and permanent shift from one mode of being to another qualitatively distinct mode of being? Or is the transition between the two developmental pathways sometimes one that is made along a smooth continuum with the demarcation line between non-CC and CC pathways being somewhat arbitrary? Or, as a third alternative, is the transition better described as being erratic and perhaps punctuated by alternating moments in which moral motivation sometimes dominates and expediency motivation sometimes dominates?

As for this set of questions regarding the border between non-CC and CC developmental pathways and how the transition from one to the other is to be characterized, I noticed in my analysis of learner interviews that a number of learners possessed degrees of moral motivation relative to the four motivational dimensions that seem to place them close to the border between non-CC and CC developmental pathways. This raised for me the question of how clear the demarcation between the paths is. Is the transition from one path to the other recognizable as a clear, qualitative shift in the person’s motivational “center of gravity?” Or does movement from non-CC and CC pathways proceed along a continuum with the precise border between the two conditions being somewhat arbitrary? I also noted
that, in the cases of some learners I interviewed, it seemed that there were earlier times or
moments in their lives that seemed to have been characterized by heightened moral concern
(e.g. Ruth’s concern with underdogs and Nancy’s concern about some of her peers responses
to the September 11 terrorist attacks, according to their mothers’ accounts) but that may have
been followed by periods of a more subdued focus on these moral concerns and more
dominant self-oriented concerns. If this is the case, then what would this mean in terms of
Mustakova-Possardt’s model? Could it be that moments in which moral motivation
dominate may be interspersed with moments in which expediency motivation dominates?

To answer the last question, a distinction that Ken Wilber (2007) makes between a
“state of consciousness” and a “stage/level of development” may be useful (pp. 28-33). As
Wilber explains the distinction,

Even great peak experiences or altered states, no matter how profound, will come,
stay a bit, then pass. No matter how wonderful their capacities, they are temporary.
Where states of consciousness are temporary, stages of consciousness are permanent.
Stages represent the actual milestones of growth and development. Once you are at a
stage, it is an enduring acquisition. For example, once a child develops through
linguistic stages of development, the child has permanent access to language. (pp. 30-31)

He further suggests that some temporary states of consciousness are, in a sense, previews of
future stages of development.

Wilber’s distinction between “state” and “stage,” if valid, raises another question for
me. Could it be that experiencing over time a number of “states” in which one’s moral
motivation comes to dominate one’s expediency motivation may have a cumulative effect
that would eventually lead to a kind of “tipping point” (or a “watershed” to use Ruth’s
mother’s words), i.e. to a point in time when one additional experience of a heightened state
of consciousness (such as the experience of a “Head-to-Heart Shift” in a We Are One Family
workshop) is enough to “tip the scales” so to speak and thus cause a person to shift from one “stage/level” to a higher “stage/level” (e.g. from a non-CC to a CC path of development)?

The distinction between “states” and “stages” also begs the further question of how to operationalize the distinction. In other words, with regard to the stories of Institute participants presented in this dissertation, how can we determine if the effects of the experiences they recount having had were temporary or sustained over time. An answer to this question may be that the longer after his/her workshop experience a learners’ moral motivation seems to remain dominant in relation to all four of motivational dimensions, the stronger the case that can be made is that their experience in the workshop was not merely a temporarily heightened state of consciousness, but that the experience marked a shift to a new level or stage of moral development. The cases of Jordan, Ruth, Daryl and Nancy seem particularly strong examples of this, since in all of their cases, their first transformative experiences in the Institute had been more than a year prior to my interviews with them. Furthermore, in the cases of all those learners I interviewed, the time between the learner’s first exposure to the Institute and our interview was at least several months, and in the nine cases of the learners I have concluded were developing critical moral consciousness at the time of our interviews, all these learners suggested that the effects of their first transformative experiences in the Institute had stayed with them since those times.

4) While the concept of the four motivational dimensions is a useful aspect of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, how might the theory also more clearly characterize the interconnectedness of these dimensions (and in the process also avoid reifying them)?
With regard to this final question that arose for me about the usefulness of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, I have already pointed to evidence of the close interconnectedness between Mustakova-Possardt’s four motivational dimensions. Perhaps most notably, I observed how closely connected CJ’s morally-motivated sense of identity (i.e. the first motivational dimension) seemed to be with his morally-motivated sense of authority, responsibility and agency (i.e. the second motivational dimension). Specifically, I suggested that, in order to accurately describe CJ’s case, the developmental progression implicit in Mustakova-Possardt’s description of her second motivational dimension (i.e. a progression beginning with a concern about moral authority and leading to the internalization of this authority in a sense of personal responsibility and then further to development of moral agency) seems incomplete. Rather, in CJ’s case, the affirmation, encouragement and care that he receives from Jeremiah, who he perceives as a source of authentic moral authority, seemed to have led first and foremost to a transformation in his sense of identity, which then in turn caused him to develop a new sense of moral responsibility and agency. In other words, his developing senses of responsibility and agency seemed to derive directly from, and are practically synonymous with, the transformation he experience in coming to identify himself as a good, valuable and capable person as a result of the influence of Jeremiah’s authentic moral authority. Because he recognized himself as being a good person, due to Jeremiah’s affirmation of the value and potential in him that had seemingly been previously been unrecognized by himself and nearly everyone else (with the exception of aunt), he now seems to feel a growing responsibility, following Jeremiah’s example, to be an example to others facing difficulties similar to his own. Furthermore, due to this same transformation of identity, he was at the time of our interview beginning to develop a sense
of agency to reach across social divides and relate to people from different backgrounds. Thus, in CJ’s case, it would seem to more useful not to separate Mustakova-Possardt’s first and second motivational dimensions.

Another significant case in point, with regard to the interconnectedness of the four motivational dimensions, is Ruth’s profound experience and awareness of perceiving the deeper “beauty,” oneness, and “swelling of life” in others as well as in her own self. Her authentic spiritual experience of this was so strong and transformative that, while it most obviously colors and motivates her manner of relating to others (i.e. the third motivational dimension), it also simultaneously shapes her sense of identity, her views of authority, responsibility and agency, and her sense of life’s meaning. This suggests that when spiritual experiences are of a certain level or depth (i.e. when they are authentic), they simultaneously impact all four of the motivational dimensions. This seems to further suggest that at a certain level all four of these dimensions intersect, i.e. that they refer or lead to the same single point. This further suggests that the definition of authentic spiritual experience I have proposed earlier⁴⁵ may be useful in further clarifying the nature and development of what Mustakova-Possardt calls “moral motivation.”

The Value of Mustakova-Possardt’s Developmental Theory Considered in the Context of Critiques of Developmentalism

Some of the questions I have raised and suggestions I have made above regarding Mustakova-Possardt’s theory may be taken to call into question some of the assumptions that

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⁴⁵ I.e. In Chapter 6, I defined “authentic spiritual experience” as any experience that causes one to intuitively and affectively perceive a deeper, norm-ally hidden, value or beauty in people (as well as other beings), and/or to sense the existence of inherent meaning in life and of an underlying dimension of reality/experience that connects superficially separate things/beings and can be described as sacred.
characterize developmentalism itself. In this regard, it is worth recalling my review and brief response in Chapter 2 to current critiques of developmentalism. In that chapter, I noted that the valuable contributions to knowledge post-modernists and constructivists have made by pointing out how scientists (including developmental psychologists) do not and cannot possibly construct knowledge in isolation from social, cultural and historical contexts and the values, assumptions, language and power structures that constitute these contexts. I further noted how certain assumptions that have been taken to be intrinsic to the very concept of development are increasingly suspect as a result. Among these assumptions are that the subjects who develop should be viewed as separate individual agents (consistent with Western assumptions of individualism), that these subjects go through “universal stages of psychological growth in what are assumed to be normal childhood environments” (Woodhead, 1999, p. 3), that development is a process that naturally and universally happens in the same way in all contexts, and that this process is linear and progressive. Critics of these assumptions note, for example, that the notion of progress itself is based on values and assumptions that have often proven to be culturally-specific, and that the way people “develop” in different cultural and historical contexts may to a significant extent be the product of the inventive choices of human beings rather than intrinsic to human nature.

My general response to these critiques of developmentalism is that, while I also recognize that some assumptions which have been associated with the concept of development are untenable, and while it is clear from these critiques that the concept should be used cautiously, I nevertheless believe the concept of development (albeit in a revised form) has considerable value. While I agree with post-modernists and post-structuralists that all human knowledge is socially-embedded and socially-constructed, the fact that human
beings are able to communicate at all across cultural divides seems to suggest that there are some core commonalities and reflect what might even be described as archetypal themes/patterns in human experience. Furthermore, making generalizations, which I admit need to be made with much greater caution and awareness of positionality than was traditionally the case in positivistic science, still seems to be necessary for any theorizing about and explanation of phenomena to occur. Indeed, if explanatory knowledge is to have any practical value, it must have at least some applicability beyond the immediate cases the knowledge refers to. At the same time, it is very important that such knowledge always be viewed as inherently tentative and as a social construction.

The problem that often occurs when constructing or applying new (or old) knowledge is that conceptual constructs become reified, i.e. that the concepts come to be treated as if they were the thing itself they seek to explain. To avoid this problem, it must be constantly remembered and acknowledged that the map is never the territory. Yet, having acknowledged this, it must also be acknowledged that this does not mean all maps are equal, and that surely there is a territory to be mapped (though we will never know that territory in an absolute and certain sense). When seeking to map the territory, as Habermas (1985) has suggested, it would seem reasonable to suppose that the more diverse perspectives that are brought to bear on this project through communicative and dialogic action, the more useful the resulting map will be. Furthermore, while I also agree with the post-modern view that it is vitally important to consider what social power arrangements are legitimized by particular forms of knowledge, it is equally important to acknowledge that the assumption that different groups have different interests and that social power consists solely of domination of some groups by others, rather than as the power that results from increasingly expansive and
inclusive cooperation and synergy between people, is itself a social construction that
legitimizes an “us versus them” perspective on all social relations and the perpetual social
conflicts that result from such an assumption.

With specific regard to the notion of development, I would suggest that there is value
and validity in the notion of development as a process of teleological change and maturation,
as long as the concept is stripped of the assumptions that development is necessarily always
describable as a linear and invariant sequence of stages that it is rigidly and universally
consistent in every context and as long as it is always understood that any developmental
model is a tentative, explanatory tool, not an objective reality. The view of development I
have suggested above (i.e. development as process teleological change and maturation) is
supported by my analysis of the changes in consciousness that many of the learners I
interviewed experienced. Indeed, the changes experienced and described by those learners I
identified as developing critical moral consciousness do not seem entirely novel, haphazard
or pointless, but rather can justifiably be characterized as psychological and moral
“progress.” This progress is evident, inasmuch as these learners’ consciousness, by their own
accounts as well as the accounts of some of their parent’s/guardians, can be said to have
shifted from more limited, self-focused awareness to more expansive awareness of the
feelings and perspectives of others and more expansive sense of connection to and
responsibility for/with others. The changes of consciousness they experienced could also,
with the help of Mustakova-Possardt’s insightful model, well be described as movement
towards increased synergy between these learners’ psycho-spiritual faculties of mind, heart
and will, as evidenced by the earnest engagement of all three of these faculties in their
experiences of authentic communication. This implies the existence of an inherent telos for
psychological development, which may be characterized, in terms of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, as the increasing authenticity and integration/synergy of mind, heart and will oriented towards truth, beauty and goodness.46

In light of these observations regarding the limits and the value of the concept of development in general, I return now to considering the value of Mustakova-Possardt’s developmental theory. The valuable contribution this theory makes to developmental theory can be seen when considering the number of ways in which Mustakova-Possardt manages to avoid some of the problematic assumptions about development described above. For instance, Mustakova-Possardt’s theory manages to avoid the problem of conceiving of development in fixed linear terms in several ways. It does this firstly by defining moral development in terms of the interaction of two dimensions of development (i.e. motivational and structural development), as I have noted earlier, rather than in terms of the various single dimensions proposed by Kohlberg, Gilligan and others. Thus, this model allows for multiple, qualitatively different developmental paths to be taken by different individuals (as well as allowing for the possibility of arrested developed). Some of these paths are described as CC pathways and some as non-CC pathways depending on how highly developed the person’s moral motivation is in all four of the motivational dimensions the model identifies. The qualitative difference between developmental CC and non-CC pathways is further accounted for by the increased synergy between mind, heart and will that characterizes the former pathway. This model also, significantly, allows for further complexity and variation in the developmental paths individuals may take by suggesting that a person may shift from one

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46 For a detailed account of my understanding of these three categories and their inter-relationship, see Appendix A.
path to another at any point in his/her life rather than being limited to developing along one path for his/her whole life.

Some linearity and uni-directionality is further avoided by Mustakova-Possardt’s (2003) model due to the fact that it does not define critical moral consciousness itself as a telos for development, but rather as characterizing certain developmental pathways (that is pathways characterized by a sufficiently high degree of moral motivation, and thus also by a high degree of synergy between mind, heart and will). Thus, Mustakova-Possardt’s model allows for considerably greater flexibility and complexity than many other earlier theories of moral development by allowing for the possibility that different people will forge different and unique paths of moral development, albeit within the framework and according to the dynamics defined by her theory. Nevertheless, I would note again that I believe this model might further avoid linearity and enhance its flexibility and explanatory capacity if the implied invariance in the sequence of “eight ascending psycho-social tasks” is reconsidered.

It should also be noted that this model addresses the issue of the relativity of psychological development to social-cultural contexts by pointing out the cross-cultural differences in “contextual supports for CC” she noticed when comparing her US and Bulgarian interviewees (pp. 69-75). She further suggests that the manner in which critical moral consciousness develops can look very different in different social and historical contexts given the differences in the needs and the critical issues different societies and people in different historical time periods deal with, needs and issues people who possess critical moral consciousness are particularly attuned to and morally motivated to creatively address.

47 although this aspect of the model could benefit from further development and additional cross-cultural research of how critical moral consciousness may develop in other contexts
The latter point may lead to what I would suggest is one of the most pregnant contributions of Mustakova-Possardt’s model. This is namely the manner in which it describes a type of consciousness that arguably has characterized numerous agents of social change in different social contexts throughout history (and that further seems to have been described or alluded to in religious terms by humanity’s diverse religious scriptures), and which perhaps more than at any former time in history seems to be called for in order for humanity to adequately respond to the challenges of our current circumstances. Mustakova-Possardt’s theory accomplishes this primarily by successfully operationalizing in psychological terms the valuable philosophical and pedagogical notions of *authenticity* and *critical consciousness*. By describing both authenticity and critical consciousness as being characterized by synergistic interaction between mind, heart and will (i.e. as being morally motivated), and by further operationalizing moral motivation as an attraction to truth, beauty and goodness, she reunites in the single holistic construct of critical moral consciousness concepts that arguably should not have been divorced from each other as they were by the philosophers of the European Enlightenment. Among these concepts are that were dichotomized during the Enlightenment are the ideas of critical thought and intuition/emotion, of reasoning and moral and aesthetic sensibility, of subjectivity and objectivity, of mind, heart and will, and of truth, beauty and goodness. Finally, related to this holistic view is the profound epistemological implication of her theory regarding how one’s degree of moral motivation determines the way one’s constructs knowledge (a notion that echoes Palmer’s thoughts, described in Chapter 5, about how different ways of knowing derive from different motives or “passions”). This implication can be seen to add an even
deeper dimension to the post-modern insight regarding how knowledge inevitably reflects the values and social power structures of particular social contexts.

Reflections on the Power of the Experience of Authentic Communication

There seems to be ample evidence in my own observations of the Institute’s curriculum and in the learners’ accounts of their experiences to suggest that the experience of authentic communication, especially when focused on an issue that the learners recognize as being of great relevance and moral concern to them, can powerfully amplify moral motivation. Indeed, my decision to give central importance in this chapter to this feature of the Institute’s curriculum is supported by the fact that this aspect of the curriculum was most often pointed to by the learners themselves when asked what aspect of their experiences in the Institute most impressed them and what it was about the Institute they considered most responsible for any transformative experiences they feel they had in it.

This begs the questions of why the experience of authentic communication apparently has such morally transformative power, and what some of the philosophical and pedagogical implications of this may be. To account for the transformative power of the experience of authentic communication, I will first examine the importance of authentic experience in general, and why, as experiential educators among others have recognized, such experience generally may provide the most meaningful and intrinsically motivating starting points and context for learning. This examination will involve revisiting some of the ideas of previously presented regarding authenticity, the nature of authentic knowledge and the efficacy of Jeremiah’s Head-to-Heart Shift. After reviewing these ideas and introducing the general

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48 See my discussion of experiential education in Chapter 2.
concept of authentic experience (of which I believe experiences of authentic communication are a sub-set), I will consider how, paradoxically, the experience of authentic communication can be viewed as a simultaneous experience of both oneness and otherness.

Authentic Experience as the Most Effective Foundation for Learning

Considering what has been learned by studying the case of Community-building Institute, it is noteworthy that both Jeremiah and his learners suggest that, in order to be properly understood, the Head-to-Heart Shift must be experienced, rather than merely discussed theoretically. To make this Shift is not the same as only learning facts or concepts. Rather, it seems from learners’ descriptions to be a holistic shift from one way of perceiving, experiencing and being to another way. As the name Jeremiah gave it indicates, the Head-to-Heart Shift is said to involve not just analysis and reasoning but engagement of the affective and intuitive capacities of the “heart.” The faculty of will can also be seen to be involved, since this Shift requires of those who experience it a willingness and choice to face some discomfort and listen to others’ stories without prejudgment, and furthermore seems to engender a willingness to care about, be vulnerable with, and helpful toward the other. Thus, the Head-to-Heart Shift can be seen to constitute an experience that may be characterized as authentic in the terms of Mustakova-Possardt’s theory (i.e. an experience that simultaneously engages and promotes synergistic interaction between mind, heart and will).

My observations of how powerfully motivating and transformative these experiences seemed to be for the learners I observed and interviewed can further be seen to confirm some of the central ideas of Freire, Palmer and proponents of experiential education presented
earlier. For example, as noted in Chapters 2 and 5, Freire’s (2005b) notions of the “true word” and of the importance of “praxis” suggest that knowledge which does not derive from and lead to transformative action is inauthentic, and vice versa that action which does not involve critical reflection and the construction of knowledge is similarly inauthentic. Thus, he suggests that these inauthentic ways of knowing tend inhibit the development of critical consciousness and of personal and social transformation. Similarly, I have described in the same chapters how Palmer (1993) distinguishes between two approaches to knowledge, one of which can be characterized, again in terms of Mustakova-Possardt’s definitions, as inauthentic and the other as authentic. The inauthentic mode of knowing is the one he refers to as “objectivism,” which he describes as fundamentally motivated by a desire to control and manipulate, as tending to objectify what it seeks to know and to examine the resulting “objects of knowledge” in a detached manner that assumes no inherent relationship or responsibility exists between the researcher and the objects of his/her research. As Palmer explains it, this approach to knowledge isolates the knower from the known and discounts the inner, subjective being of both. The alternative approach to knowledge Palmer suggests, which may be described as authentic is motivated by the impulse to “love” rather than to control and manipulate (p. 9). This way of knowing assumes the knower’s connection with and responsibility to/with that which he/she seeks to know. It engages the knower’s whole being (not just his/her capacity for physical sense perception and logical analysis) in an active relationship that “weds the knower and the known” and calls on the knower “to be vulnerable to the challenges and changes any true relationship brings” (p. 31) and may require him/her “to change, even sacrifice” (p. 9).
Similarly, as noted in Chapter 2, experiential education, according to Crosby (1995), takes as its “epistemological starting point…experience as felt, rather than as objective” (p. 12). Proudman (1995) further describes experiential education is “emotionally engaged learning” that “combines direct experience that is meaningful to the student with guided reflection and analysis,” and as “a challenging, active, student-centered process that impels students toward opportunities for taking…responsibility” and that “allows numerous opportunities for the student to connect the head with the body, heart, spirit, and soul” (p. 241). Thus, experiential learning deliberately seeks to integrate “cognitive and affective learning because experience does not come distinguished this way and is not lived this way” (Crosby, pp. 12-13).

The Institute participants’ descriptions of their experiences of their Head-to-Heart Shifts not only appear to confirm these educators’ views on the efficacy of authentic experience, they also seem to confirm Mustakova-Possardt’s assertion that “optimal human development,” which involves developing authentic knowledge and authentic morality, both requires and further engenders synergistic interaction between mind, heart and will oriented towards Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Thus, authentic experience may be seen to provide a powerful context and starting point for learning by engaging learners’ minds, hearts and wills in an integrated manner in the task of understanding and responding to a “felt problem.” Such an authentic experiential context for learning gives a degree of meaning and coherence to learning that appears sadly lacking in most modern systems of education. In this regard, Jeremiah explicitly conceives of the Community-building Institute as having a mission to integrate experiences of the “heart,” i.e. of “oneness” and authentic caring, into systems of education that generally don’t strive to engender such experience. Indeed, he characterizes
the Institute as a response to the oppression and suffering that he and many of his learners recognize as being caused by the institutionalized tendency of schools to overemphasize one kind of knowledge (and the even more superficial means schools adopt to measure how well students are acquiring that knowledge), which they suggest actually discourages authentic affirmation of the inherent value of every learner and inhibits authentic community and a more authentic approach to learning and knowing.49

This situation may further be regarded as related to a general cultural problem with historical roots in the European Enlightenment that both Mustakova-Possardt and Palmer refer to. As Mustakova-Possardt (2003) explains it, the protagonists of the European Enlightenment understandably decided that, in order to limit the influence of subjective preference and prejudice, it was necessary “to separate the attachments of the heart from all pursuits after truth and train the mind to be more rigorous” (p. 48). However,

Freed from the superstitions of the past, we now have to reclaim the heart’s deeper knowing and capacity for love and will, because…we face a collective gridlock as a result of this unsustainable split. The mind, in isolation from the greater spiritual yearnings of the heart, has proven not much more reliable a tool than the heart divorced from the scrutiny of a disciplined mind. (p. 48)

Palmer (1993) offers a similar assessment when he observes that ‘if the problem with [pre-modern] knowledge was the over-identification of the knower and the known” that resulted in “superstition…and gross psychological projection,” the problem with modern knowledge “is the estrangement and alienation of the two [i.e. the knower and the known]” (p. 26). He further suggests that,

Truth requires the knower become interdependent with the known. Both parties have their own integrity and otherness, and one party cannot be collapsed into the other.

49 Ruth was perhaps the most eloquent of the Institute participants I interviewed regarding this generally hidden oppression, as can be seen in her descriptions of how her peers (and herself at one time) become “shut down” in schools, and how, in response, so-called “Emo kids” go so far as to cut themselves in order to feel something.
But truth demands acknowledgement of and response to the fact that knower and the known are implicated in each other’s lives…knowing becomes a reunion of separated beings whose primary bond is not of logic but of love. (p. 32)

The Paradox of Authentic Communication: A Simultaneous Experience of Otherness and Oneness

To help answer the question of why it is that the experience of authentic communication can have the powerful morally transformative effect I observed in this study, an outstanding paradox related in the phenomenology of this experience is worth noting. The paradox, which comes across in my accounts of the curriculum in action presented in Chapter 4 and of the learners’ experiences of the Head-to-Heart Shift related in Chapters 6 and 7, is namely that the experience of authentic communication (or the Head-to-Heart Shift) is described by learners both as an experience of otherness and, to use Jeremiah’s words, as an experience of “oneness” with others. To reflect on why this may be the case and what implications this may have, I will first consider Emmanuel Levinas’ profound philosophical account of what it means to encounter “the Other.”

For Levinas (1969), the ethical possibilities of a person’s face-to-face encounter with the Other (i.e. with another person or being) lie in overcoming the unethical tendency to seek to assimilate the Other into a “totality,” i.e. into one’s pre-existent assumptions and beliefs about the other as well as about one’s own self. Instead of succumbing to this tendency, Levinas proposes that the ethical response is to adopt an attitude of openness to and respect for the “absolute otherness” of the Other, i.e. to acknowledge ones inability to ever truly know what it is to be the other. Through such an encounter with the Other, a person transcends his/her own self image and prejudices about the Other. In this way, he/she
becomes “dissociated from the familiar, the comfortable, and the recognizable,” and is thus necessarily transformed (Benson & O’Neill, 2007, p. 33). As this study has well-documented, such transformative experiences are frequently attested to by We are One Family workshop participants when they describe the effects that hearing what they did not expect to hear from other workshop participants. In such encounters with otherness, the person, according to Levinas, steps out of his/her ‘totality’ and moves towards the ‘exterior’ or ‘face’ of the Other, who is at that moment experienced as an infinite being who one will never encompass or explain. Furthermore, by thus encountering the Other’s uniqueness and vulnerability, the person becomes “infinitely responsible” to the Other. Specifically, as one commentator on Levinas’ philosophy explains, “what is ethical, or non-violent, [in such encounters] becomes an attentiveness to and preservation of this alterity of the Other” (Todd, 2003, p. 3). Such a sense of responsibility again was often to be expressed by Jeremiah and the participants in his workshops as they learned to put aside prejudgments and profoundly listen to others as they shared their stories.

It is worth noting that this movement from a “totalizing” view of the Other towards an authentic encounter with him/her can be seen to closely resemble experiential educator Fox’s (1995) description of the experience of “faith” as well as Jeremiah’s and a number of his learners’ descriptions of the experience of the Head-to-Heart Shift. For all three of these experiences (i.e. Levinas’ encounter with the Other, Fox’s faith, and Jeremiah’s Head-to-Heart Shift) are said to involve relinquishing the impulse to protect the self from, and/or to ignore or control, others. Instead, all three require one to be open to unconditionally acknowledging, listening to, and affirming the other. They further involve a humbling, a letting go of pretense and defensiveness, a willingness to be vulnerable and take
responsibility for how one affects others, and a simultaneous acknowledgement, in Fox’s (1995) words, of our common “dependent, and somewhat broken nature” as well as our precious value as unique beings (pp. 155-156). Furthermore, the result of all three experiences is the transformation of one’s self and the forging of open, respectful, and caring relationships with others.

It is a profound paradox that I am considering here is that this same description may also be applied to the experience of “oneness” with the other. This paradox was eloquently captured in the way Ruth described her Head-to-Heart Shift. As noted in Chapter 6, Ruth describes how her Shift was triggered by watching the segment from *The Color of Fear* video and really listening to the black man’s expression of his anger at not being seen or heard by the white man. She realized, to her profound distress, that she had been guilty of the same kind of thinking the white man in the video exhibited (i.e. of presuming to ask others “Why can’t we all just be the same?”). Due to this realization, she decided to set aside the assumption of sameness and opened herself up to really hearing what others shared in the workshop. As a result, she had the profound experience while listening to people’s sharing and of becoming aware that there was much “more under the words” people were saying.

I felt like I was kind of swimming under the words and that I was headed to a place that I couldn’t even imagine. I just felt like I was really hearing that person, not the words, but hearing the person.

This is in radical contrast to her previously totalizing and superficial regard for and categorization of others, as she explains in these words.

When I used to meet people, I’d know their favorite colors or you know what food they liked, but I didn’t really know them. And the Institute…just opened up a doorway for me to reach in and know someone better than, you know, the color stuff [which is] nothing compared to really knowing someone…. People’s favorite colors and, you know, what kind of grades they get -- just foolish things like that, that you think you need to know, but you really don’t…. That’s kind of like the “head”
position. So, when you’re knowing somebody, you are knowing the facts of them…. But when you really know someone with the “heart,” you get -- what you know is not facts; it’s emotion. You know their spirit. You know them, instead of knowing about them.

Ruth then goes on to describe how her acknowledgement of otherness led her paradoxically to experience a sense of oneness with others. She describes this experience of oneness as “a state of mind or state of heart…with other people where you feel like there is no me or you; there is us. It’s just this higher state of being.” She again describes the process of reaching this state as “kind of like letting your outer shell go…. it’s not connecting and it’s not coming together, but it’s like letting your outer shell go so you can see the connection that was already there.” Ruth thus characterizes her shift away from a sense of alienation from (i.e. of being only superficially and conventionally aware of) others a nearly simultaneous regard for otherness (in Levinas’ terms, as a departure from the “totality” of her predetermined beliefs regarding her own and others’ identities), on the one hand, and an experience of oneness with others, on the other hand.

This paradoxical phenomenological equivalence between the experiences of otherness and of oneness has profound implications. It suggests among other things that the moral impulse in humans resides in our ability to transcend the limits of our egos (or what Mezirow (1991) in his theory of transformative learning refers to as our “meaning schemes” and “meaning perspectives”) (pp. 6-7). This seems consistent with the view that morality is grounded in the experience of empathy with others, an experience that paradoxically requires us to acknowledge that our own and other’s perspectives are not the same, and, at the same time, that there is a profound commonality in the human condition that seems to connect us and that makes authentic communication possible. This commonality, furthermore, seems to be beyond the grasp of our finite, cognitive understanding. Therefore, it requires us to step
outside of the “totality” of the knowledge we have constructed and open ourselves up to the infinite mystery of the other, and in so doing discover that the same infinity resides in ourselves and profoundly connects us with the other. This view may further explain what seems to be the phenomenological equivalence of affirming authenticity in one self and affirming it in others. In other words, in the context of the experience of authentic communication, it can be observed that by becoming more who we uniquely are and by honoring the authenticity we see in others, we actually become more united with others.

This is furthermore consistent with the Baha’i perspective on “unity in diversity” I alluded to in Chapter 3. From the perspective of Baha’i teachings (which, as I noted in Chapter 3, directly influenced Jeremiah’s curriculum), the inherent goal of unity that human beings innately yearn for and are evolving towards simultaneously implies the need to recognize and respect the indispensable value of diversity. Thus, the principle of unity in diversity can be understood by analogy as accounting for health of a biological organism. An organism’s health can be understood as deriving from the synergistic cooperation of all of the organism’s parts, and at the same time from the “respect” of each part for the distinctness of, and unique contributions made by, each of the other parts. In contrast, an example of “disrespect” in this context would be the disease of cancer, since cancer cells grow in a way that does not “respect,” but rather does violence to, the integrity of the other participants in the one organism they are all parts of. Thus, the Baha’i concept of humanity’s oneness is quite distinct from a notion of sameness.

Finally, this discussion suggests that the experience of oneness/otherness that authentic communication affords (i.e. the experience of transcending one’s personal ego to encounter a seemingly infinite and intellectually ungraspable value in, and intrinsic
connection between, human beings) may very well be the primordial ground from which every moral impulse and authentic moral principle stems. For example, the experience of oneness/otherness validates the “Golden Rule,” since, if it is true that I and the other are “one,” it follows that I should treat the other as I would wish to be treated, at the same time that it suggests one should approach the other with the humility, and the non-judgmental openness and respect that derive from realizing that the other forever exceeds my ability to fully explain and categorize. Little wonder then that this paradoxical experience should have the effect of amplifying moral motivation that I observed in most of the learners I interviewed. Indeed, if we understand the amplification of moral motivation, as Mustakova-Possardt suggests, as a shift from being primarily motivated by self-centered expediency concerns to being more motivated by attraction to truth, beauty and goodness, then we can see that the transcendence of ego required and fostered by the experience of oneness/otherness not only should lead to, but itself corresponds to the very definition of moral motivation Mustakova-Possardt has given.

Concluding Thoughts on the Pedagogical Means by which the Institute Amplifies Moral Motivation and Stimulates the Development of Critical Moral Consciousness

This study’s central finding then may summarized as follows: that, in the context of education, the experience of authentic communication in particular, seems to powerfully amplify moral motivation (i.e. attraction to truth, beauty and goodness as defined in Appendix A) and thus to stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness. This would seem to be true not only of authentic communication, but more broadly of authentic experience in general. For such experience, as I have defined it earlier, involves a person’s
holistic engagement with and responsibility to/with the beings he/she is experiencing. In other words, because authentic experience synergistically integrates the minds, hearts and wills of learners through simultaneously stimulating their innate attraction to Truth, Beauty and Goodness, it is, by definition, morally motivating.

This observation leads to a question closely connected to, but more specific than, my second research question. What characteristics of the Community-building Institute’s curriculum enable it to engender authentic communication (or in Jeremiah’s words, the Head-to-Heart Shift)? The question has already been largely answered in my analysis of the Institute’s curriculum, since the answers to this question and my second research question seem to be largely the same. Thus, to conclude my dissertation, I will review and summarize a number of the pedagogical strategies/principles presented in Chapter 5 whose efficacy the accounts of selected Institute participants presented in Chapters 6 and 7 seem to confirm.

To begin, it may be recalled that, consistent with Mustakova-Possardt’s theory, what may be described as the presence of a source of authentic moral authority in the Institute appears to be one of the key factors enabling the Institute to foster authentic communication. In this regard, it was noted in Chapters 5 and 7 that the learners I studied tended to be strongly affected by the way Jeremiah affirmed and encouraged them, as well as the way he offered testimonies from his own experiences regarding some of the ideas he shared. These characteristics, together with the earnest and engaging “moral passion” with which Jeremiah “presences” issues of moral concern, tended to convey to these Institute participants a sense of Jeremiah’s authenticity and sincere moral motivation, qualities that characterize and constitute what Mustakova-Possardt calls authentic moral authority. While I have noted that,

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50 As may be recalled, my second research question was essentially: What factors in the Community-building Institute’s curriculum, and in the Institute’s participants, contribute to the Institute’s capacity to stimulate the development of learners’ critical moral consciousness?
in certain instances, Jeremiah may have fallen short of manifesting such authority, nevertheless, for many of his learners the authentic care and moral motivation they perceived in/from Jeremiah clearly played a crucial role in fostering the sense of safety they felt as participants in the We Are One Family workshops.

This sense of safety Jeremiah manages to create seems to itself be another key factor that makes the experience of authentic communication possible for Institute participants. This factor, it may be recalled from Chapter 2, is especially emphasized in the context of experiential education (e.g. Bialeschki, 2006; Cranton, 2002; Fox, 1995). According to Fox (1995), a “safe and nourishing and supportive” (p. 158) learning environment is essential to experiencing and learning from authentic experience because, among other reasons, it provides learners with the necessary encouragement and support to face the inherent risk involved in authentic experience in general and authentic communication in particular. The nature of this “risk” may become clearer when we consider the implications of describing such experience as engaging not only a person’s mind (i.e. intellect) alone, but mind synergistically integrated with heart and will. In other words, such experience not only stimulates thought, conceptualization and theorizing, but also must necessarily engenders the motives of care, empathy and responsibility (among other emotions/intuitions) and elicits the responsible and committed actions the experience calls for. Risk is thus inherent in such experience, since one’s normal one’s psychological defenses are put aside and one’s active response to the experience cannot be made with certain foreknowledge of the results one’s actions will have. In this way, it is clear that experiencing and communicating authentically

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51 Note that this does not include “negative” emotions such as fear and hatred. Fear, perhaps most especially, when it dominates one’s motivation, cannot have a synergistic effect. Rather, when it motivates one’s choices, fear engenders deception (both self-deception and the deception of others), and thus, as suggested in Chapter 5, it has a disintegrative rather than integrative effect on the interaction of mind, heart and will.
is consistent, even synonymous, with that way of knowing Palmer (1993) describes as springing from “love,” a way of knowing that “may require us to change, even sacrifice, for the sake of what we know” (p. 9).

This necessity of facing and responding to such risk and challenge, albeit in the context, and with the support, of a safe, encouraging learning environment, again characterizes experiential education generally. As noted in my literature review, Crosby (1995), for example, observes that “learning will happen more effectively if the learner is as involved as possible…and…this involvement is maximized if the student has something that matters to him at stake” (p. 5). Horwood likewise describes experiential learning as being characterized by “uncertain outcomes, risk, inescapable consequences” (as cited in Goldenberg, 2001, p. 129). Similarly, Fox (1995) suggests that at the “spiritual core of experiential education” is a process of learning that encourages learners to take a leap of “faith,” which he describes as “openness to experience,” as “learning with the whole of me,” and as encouraging a learner to let down his/her “defensive walls” and choose “to risk the hurt and rejection and disappointment” with the help of an implicit willingness to trust that reality may ultimately be “gracious and friendly despite the hard knocks” it deals us (p. 157).

While this encouragement of risk-taking in a safe and encouraging context is a central aspect of what Mustakova-Possardt calls **authentic moral environments**, there is another aspect of such environments that deserves more emphasis here than I have previously given it. This aspect is “discourse which gives a name and a principled explanation to living life from a moral and a spiritual center” (p. 150), which treats people as “primarily moral beings, struggling to understand more fully morality as a balanced and respectful approach to all life” (p. 156). This characterization points to the importance of what I have called the conceptual
framework for the Head-to-Heart Shift that Jeremiah presents in his workshops. With the help of the concepts he introduces such as the idea that a cat may have the power to see itself as a lion, or Teilhard de Chardin’s notion that “Rather than seeing ourselves as human beings having a spiritual experience, we should see ourselves as spiritual beings having a human experience.” as well as the quote attributed to Nelson Mandala about our “light” and “darkness” and the heuristic distinction he makes between seeing through an “atomic” and a “sub-atomic” lens, Jeremiah gives explicit regard to what might be called the moral or spiritual identity of every person. This identity does not discount the more conventional, socially-constructed identities his learners possess, but nevertheless transcends these more limited/limiting identities. Thus, by explicitly presenting and inviting learners to test these concepts in light of their own experiences, Jeremiah bears witness to each learner’s capacity for transcendence and transformation. Of course, his presentation of these concepts may only be effective inasmuch as he is able to convince his learners of the reality of these possibilities through manner in which he affirms them and through his personal testimonies to their truth (i.e. through the impressions of authenticity and agency he projects). But, at the same time, his explicit presentation of these concepts and reasons to believe that people have the capacity to transcend the limits of who they thought they were nevertheless appears to be as crucial as his non-verbal demonstration of this possibility. In other words, his explicit regard for participants as spiritual beings (i.e. beings with the capacity to transcend their own limits) appears to significantly contribute to fostering the safe learning environment described earlier and prepares learners to experience something they may not before have considered possible.
I further noted in Chapter 5 how risk-taking within encouraging and supportive learning environments is also a characteristic of the experiences of the initiates in the *rites of passage* anthropologist Victor Turner (1969) studied, and noted a number of specific ways in which the *We Are One Family* workshops appear to be structured so as to engender the same qualities of “liminality”\(^\text{52}\) and intensity that Turner describes rites of passage as possessing. The resemblance between the *We Are One Family* workshops and Turner’s rites of passage may further be seen in the spontaneous development of authentic community transcending normal social conventions that occurs in the workshops, a phenomenon Turner noticed occurs mainly in the “liminal” phase of rites of passage and which he named *communitas*. Thus, it follows that the specific means by which the Institute’s workshops fosters the liminality and intensity of a rite of passage may also be responsible for fostering experiences of authentic communication in the Institute’s workshops. Liminality in educational settings may furthermore be understood as characterizing any learning environment deliberately designed to break with, or call into question, the limits of unquestioned, passively accepted convention. In so doing, liminal educational experiences may be understood to encourage learners to step into the freshness and unpredictability of authentic experience with the creative potential this would entail.

Another key factor noted earlier that seems highly effective in encouraging authentic communication is the manner in which Jeremiah, aided by the powerful Freirian “code” he uses (i.e. the emotionally-charged segment he shows from *The Color of Fear* documentary), manages to simultaneously “presence” the moral problem of estrangement and injustice such that it is experienced by learners as a profoundly relevant, “felt difficulty” (Crosby, 1995, p. 52) which, it may be recalled, refers to a socially-controlled or spontaneously occurring social condition in which normal social-cultural categories are suspended or break down, a period of simulated or unanticipated ordeal in which one social identity undergoes transformation.
11), and, at the same time, to “enroll” learners in the attractive “possibility” that they may help to solve these problems by learning to authentically relate to, appreciate, and care for each other as diverse members of “one family.” Jeremiah further helps to engender an authentic moral environment by the way he encourages, during the “sharing” portions of the We Are One Family workshops, what Mustakova-Possardt (2003) describes as “tolerance of ambiguity, respectful and truly open and thoughtful consultation across different worldviews, and a fundamental recognition of our collective journey as a human family” (p. 156). It is significantly worth noting that the authentic communication that occurs during the “sharing” portion of the workshop is coupled with and amplified by Jeremiah’s skillful guidance of his learners to reflect on what they are communicating to each other as well as on the implications this has for transforming learners’ identities, senses of responsibility and agency, ways of relating to each other, and understandings of life’s meaning (i.e. his “seasoned guidance” in relation to all four of Mustkova-Possardt’s motivational dimensions).

Avoiding Manipulation and Indoctrination

It is finally worth considering again (as I began to do in Chapter 5) how some of the emotionally-charged pedagogical methods/techniques described above could possibly be misused for the purposes of indoctrinating and manipulating learners, and how such misuse may be recognized and avoided. An example of such misuse of effective pedagogical principles, as I noted in Chapter 2, is what occurred when the principles upon which experiential educator, Kurt Hahn, based his Outward Bound course were applied with equal effect by the Hitler Youth movement in Nazi Germany. Thus, the danger certainly exists that
some of the pedagogical principles and methods used by the Institute, minus the characteristic of “authentic morality” Mustakova-Possardt emphasizes, could be used by a teacher to “enroll” students in a self-serving and divisive understanding of a social/moral problem and to attract them to the possibility of taking an action that proves ultimately to be immoral (according to the definition of morality or goodness I suggested in Appendix A) in its consequences. The teacher may accomplish this by virtue of the charismatic authority he projects, by subtly appealing to the ego-centric and fearful motives of learners in the name of moral values, and by discouraging students from critically questioning and reflecting on the ideas he/she promotes.

How then can we properly assess whether or not Jeremiah’s teaching style may be characterized as a form of indoctrination or manipulation? This question is especially important when we consider how he might be seen, on first glance, to avoid fostering and encouraging critical questioning of the basic assumptions and concepts upon which the Institute’s curriculum is based. It would be helpful to begin considering this potential criticism of the Institute by noting that, to prevent anti-dialogical and immoral manipulation from occurring within the kind of critical conceptually-oriented dialogue proposed for example by transformative educator Jack Mezirow (1981, 1991, 1997, 2000) (i.e. dialogue that allows people to rationally consider and evaluate diverse and opposing theories and perspectives), it is essential that the participants in the dialogue be morally motivated. In other words, there are arguably moral preconditions for constructive rational discourse. Perhaps most obviously, participants in such discourse must be characterized by truthfulness, and by the “love” that Palmer (1993) notes is implicit in the etymological roots of the word “truth.” As I have already explored Palmer’s ideas about knowledge, I will not do so again
here. However, it is worth noting that the moral quality of truthfulness is not only implicit in the concept of authenticity, as I discussed in Chapter 2, but is also implied in Habermas’ (1985) description of the “ideal speech situation” in which communicative action (i.e. communication whose purpose is neither manipulative nor instrumental, but rather is to reach understanding with others) can best occur. Thus, critical reflection and dialogue, if they are to be productive, can be said to depend on and stem from morally-motivated consciousness of those participating in it.

This important observation about the inherent relationship between authentic critical dialogue and moral motivation begs the question of how moral motivation, as a prerequisite for critical dialogue, can be fostered through education. The answer suggested by this study is, of course, that engendering authentic communication is a powerfully effective means of amplifying the moral motivation of learners. What is worth considering for the purposes of the present discussion is that engendering the experience of authentic communication may sometimes require temporarily suspending or “bracketing” intellectual questioning and debate of certain concepts and assumptions that provide a framework for, and open one up to the possibility of, having the experience. The bracketing of inauthentic intellectual criticism (inauthentic inasmuch as in occurs in lieu of authentic experience) used as a means of avoiding the experience of authentic communication (and the morally committed stance this experience entails) is likely necessary to open a person up to having the experience (in other words, necessary for inducing what Jeremiah refers to as the “Head-to-Heart Shift”). Only once authentic communication is experienced can the mind can authentically reflect on the experience and critically examine the concepts/assumptions that provided a basis for the experience. In other words, a leap of “faith” seems necessary to test a possibility that holds
the promise of creating/promoting truth, beauty and goodness (as I define these terms in Appendix A). Such faith can be seen, in the context of the Institute’s curriculum, in a learner’s willingness to perceive and act, even if only temporarily, in accordance with the conceptual “lens” presented by the curriculum, which presents the absence of affirmation of people’s uniqueness and intrinsic value and the existence of estrangement and injustice between people as a problem, and which suggests the possibility that experiencing a Head-to-Heart Shift may open one to perceive his/her “oneness” with others as well as his/her own “spiritual” nature.

Thus, it may be argued that what the Institute’s curriculum does most effectively is engender an authentic experience of communication about a relevant issue of moral concern. This does not preclude critical intellectual reflection, although it does not seem to emphasize it in the traditional sense of dispassionately examining competing, abstract explanations or theories. What it does do is engage learners in critical reflection on their immediate, “felt” experiences of authentically communicating with diverse others and on the diverse perspectives and experiences they are exposed to. Thus, they are asked and guided to reflect on issues and experiences in which they have a strong “stake.”

This reflection, as any intellectual reflection and dialogue, occurs within a particular conceptual framework or paradigm that makes the reflection and dialogue possible. To avoid manipulation and indoctrination then, it would seem necessary that the ideas and perspective that constitute this paradigm are clearly and explicitly presented and explained by the teacher, and are properly understood and accepted (again even if only temporarily) without coercion or deception by all participants in the learning experience. This was arguably the case in the We Are One Family workshops I observed inasmuch as Jeremiah explicitly
invited his workshop participants to see through a particular “lens,” the elements of which he explicitly suggested constitute *one way of seeing* rather than the only and certain truth.

Another way to distinguish whether or not some of the pedagogical principles and methods mentioned above as keys to engendering authentic communication are being used to manipulate learners into uncritically serving immoral\(^53\) ends is to apply the criteria suggested by Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) for distinguishing between “authentic transformational leadership” and “pseudo-transformative leadership.” It should be recalled in this regard, as I noted in Chapter 5, that Bass and Steidlmeier’s description of “authentic transformational leadership” is quite consistent with Mustakova-Possardt’s notion of authentic moral authority. According to Bass and Steidlmeier, authentic transformational leaders are morally motivated to promote critical reflection and dialogue and to foster the well-being and moral development among those they lead, which are antithetical to manipulation and uncritical indoctrination. This implies that we may distinguish a method of teaching as being manipulative rather than authentically moral or “transformational” when the teacher promotes a perspective on a moral issue, and/or convinces learners to accept and act on a possibility, that in effect views an outside group as the cause of a problem and absolves an inside group of responsibility for a problem (i.e. that divides people rather than bringing them together). Furthermore, Bass and Steidlmeier suggest a second criterion by which a teaching practice may be recognized as manipulative, rather than as constituting authentic moral education. It may be recognized as manipulative when it is noted that the teacher promotes moral values without him/herself putting them into practice and/or when he/she proves to ultimately be more motivated by expedient concerns than by caring and other moral concerns. With regard to the first of the two criteria mentioned above, it is clear in light of

\(^53\) again according the definition of morality or goodness suggested in the previous section
this study’s findings that the Institute promotes a sense of cross-cultural and open-ended solidarity rather than exclusivity, and, with regard to the second, I have already noted in Chapters 5 and 7 a number of indications that Jeremiah’s motivation for creating and facilitating the Institute’s curriculum may justifiably be characterized as predominantly authentically moral.

In sum, to answer my question regarding how we may recognize and ensure that the emotionally-evocative pedagogical principles and methods I have suggested above as keys to engendering authentic communication are used to promote critical moral consciousness rather than to manipulate and indoctrinate learners, I have essentially suggested four criteria. These are: 1) that the conceptual framework learners are asked to accept, if only temporarily, in order to make possible certain perceptions and experiences is clearly and explicitly explained by the teacher, and is understood and voluntarily accepted (again even if only temporarily) without coercion or deception by the participants in a learning experience, 2) that reflection and dialogue within this framework is encouraged and the possibility of critically questioning elements of the framework itself is not precluded, though it may be “bracketed,” 3) that the ideas, perspectives and outcomes a learning activity promote unity/synergy rather than estrangement, and 4) that the psychological motives of the teacher prove to be predominantly moral rather than expedient (i.e. that the teacher proves to be a source of authentic moral authority).
The Significance of this Study and Possible Avenues for Future Research

Considering what I argued in Chapter 1 is the crying need in our world for growing numbers of people to develop critical moral consciousness, the question of how education may help learners to develop such consciousness and the contribution this study may make to answering this question may be seen to have considerable significance. My findings corroborate the oft-repeated observation (made especially by experiential and “holistic” educators) that education must concern itself not only with intellectual development, but with authentic knowing that integrates mind, heart and will. This implies that if education is to approach and help learners construct knowledge in an authentic manner, it should develop in an integrated fashion not only learners’ knowledge of facts, understanding of concepts and study skills, but also habits of critical thought, aesthetic sensibility, creativity, moral awareness and commitment, and those skills associated with effectively addressing society’s most urgent and profound needs. Thus, it may be able to offer a context for meaningful learning that aims not only at the development and transformation of the whole person but that also promotes morally-motivated social action leading to social transformation.

In particular, this study’s findings show that, for the purposes of developing learners’ moral motivation as well as the dialogical skills and appreciation for diverse perspectives essential to an education that meets the needs of the present and future, the experience and frequent practice of authentic communication can be very effective. Furthermore, this experience is made possible by, and can significantly contribute to a learning environment that may be characterized as, an authentic moral environment. It has also been noted that an essential part of such an environment should be the presence of a source of authentic moral
authority. These observations, and the more specific pedagogical principles and methods I have described that seem useful in engendering authentic communication, certainly do not offer the only and complete solution to the problem of building a system of education adequate for promoting the kinds of personal and social transformations required to meet humanity needs at this time. However, they do suggest that an indispensable aspect of such an education should be providing learners with frequent, on-going experiences of authentically communicating with others from diverse backgrounds regarding relevant, “felt” moral concerns and issues.\textsuperscript{54} Such experience it seems could provide an effective and morally motivating foundation for on-going critical reflection and dialogue that address the needs of communities and individuals within particular social-historical contexts.

When considering these possibilities for transforming education, numerous possible avenues for further educational research come to mind. Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of critical moral consciousness could benefit from further research, particularly longitudinal studies. Other case studies of educational projects that aim at moral and social transformation, especially those that appear to make use of authentic experience and authentic communication and to provide authentically moral, non-traditional sources of authority and authentically moral learning environments, could also be useful. Qualitative research methods would seem to be most useful for such purposes. Perhaps most importantly, considering the implications of this study’s findings for how knowledge can and should be approached in order to confer the greatest benefit, I would suggest that further

\textsuperscript{54} It should be noted that, while the moral concern the Community-building Institute especially focused on was the estrangement between people caused by racial and class divisions, this is by no means the only moral concern there is to focus. Although it is certainly a particularly relevant issue and high priority for the context that Jeremiah addressed, there are numerous other issues (fair distribution of resources, gender equality, honesty and rectitude of conduct in collaborative undertakings, our relationship with our environment, addictions, family relationships to name a few).
research on the issue of how education can stimulate the development of critical moral consciousness should primarily take the form of action research that directly involves both educational practitioners and researchers in an on-going praxis of action, reflection and dialogue.
Appendix A:

An Evolutionary Perspective on Truth, Beauty and Goodness

Given the prominent use made of the categories of truth, beauty and goodness in both Mustakova-Possardt’s theory of critical moral consciousness and my findings for this case study, it seems appropriate that I explain in greater detail than I have in the body of my dissertation my current understanding of these terms. It should be noted that the perspective I will describe here has developed over the five year period during which I’ve worked on the case study. I characterize it as “evolutionary” because it includes the notion that human consciousness evolves (both individually and collectively) and that this evolution accounts for the diverse perspectives on and forms of truth, beauty and goodness human beings and human cultures have possessed over time. This perspective has been influenced by the Baha’i concepts of oneness and unity, as well as by General Systems Theory, the classical philosophy of Plato and the integral philosophy of Ken Wilber.

To begin my discussion of my current understanding of the categories of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, it would perhaps be useful to note that human beings’ pursuit, experience and expression of these aims arguably constitute the most deeply significant and motivating type of human experience, and have provided the primary impetus for the development of human cultures and civilizations. In fact, these pursuits, experiences and expressions arguably distinguish us from all other life forms on our planet, considering the

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55 Note that I use the upper case (i.e. Truth, Beauty and Goodness) to refer to an unknowable telos that is unreachable in any absolute sense, but whose existence is nevertheless intuitively recognized and orientation towards which is essential for the development of moral motivation and critical moral consciousness. I use the lower case to refer to specific forms or manifestations of Truth, Beauty and Goodness that appear in specific contexts. Admittedly, often the distinction is a difficult one to make in specific instances.
seeming lack of evidence that other animals produce novel cultural artifacts that might attest to their awareness of and interest in these categories. This observation also seems furthermore consistent with Freire’s observation that the capacity for critical consciousness is what distinguishes humans from other animals, and Mustakova-Possardt’s proposition that to say a person is living an authentically human life necessarily implies and requires that he/she is primarily motivated by the pursuit of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. This link between orientation towards these three categories of experience and the qualities of critical consciousness and authenticity, as I suggested in Chapter 5, may be most obvious when we consider how characterizing a person as critically conscious and as living authentically necessarily implies that the person also possesses the moral quality of truthfulness. At the same time, precise definition of these three terms is elusive due to the relativity of their specific manifestations, i.e. what is regarded as true, beautiful or good is not necessarily the same from culture to culture or from person to person. The question of whether these categories can be said to have any universally-recognizable basis independent of the particular preferences, imaginations and cultural creations of people has furthermore increasingly become a matter of controversy.

I am suggesting that Truth, Beauty and Goodness refer to dimensions of existence that transcend, and yet often profoundly inform, the particular intellectual and cultural constructions of human beings. Furthermore, I hope to show that these three dimensions, as Plato among others suggested, are intrinsically connected with each other. This connection can be seen in the way all three notions connect to the similarly inter-related phenomena of meaning, harmony, integration, synergy, unity, and resolution. I will first focus on beauty, and then will consider the connection between beauty and truth. After this, I will go on to
propose an explanation of goodness (or morality) that I believe is consistent with and may help to further explain the examples of some learners’ moral transformation presented in this study.

As beauty is famously said to be in the eye of the beholder, it makes sense to begin my examination of beauty with a phenomenological account of the perception of beauty. In this sense, it may be said that, on the most basic level, beauty refers to a quality we may perceive in any phenomena which evokes in the human heart emotions of joy, peace, and rapture. On a more profound level, the moment in which one experiences beauty seems to invariably be characterized by a sense of transcending the limits of one’s ego identity. One senses in the embodiment of beauty something that transcends one’s self at the same time that it elicits in the heart a feeling of being connected to and possessed by that beauty. This aspect of the experience of beauty recalls my discussion in Chapter 8 of how authentic communication can paradoxically be described as the simultaneous experience of otherness and oneness in relation to the Other. Beauty is indeed disruptive of our day-to-day, mundane awareness (as Levinas describes our encounters with the Other). It is radically other in the sense of sacredness and mystery it evokes, yet paradoxically is also experienced as a remembrance of something strangely familiar, something we once knew but had forgotten. Thus, we experience ourselves simultaneously as other than the object of beauty and as profoundly connected to it.

Having attempted to describe in phenomenological terms the experience of beauty, I will now move on to attempt to describe the qualities awe may see in the object that makes it beautiful to us, and that elicit the affective and intuitive responses mentioned above. There are a number of words that may be used to describe these qualities, some of which have long
been associated with the idea of beauty. Among these words are harmony, symmetry, grace (which I would characterize in this context as harmony and symmetry in motion), pattern and resolution. Significantly, it should be noted that all of these words describe ways that parts can be related to each other to form whole patterns or systems. It should further be emphasized that all of these qualities are connected to the concept of meaning. This is because, for something to mean something to us, we must first recognize some pattern in it. For example, we call sounds in which we cannot discern a pattern “noise.” Sounds with pattern are experienced as language or music, both of which convey meaning.

Yet, the perception of pattern and meaning are not in themselves enough to elicit a sense of beauty. Some patterns and meanings strike us as more beautiful than others. The perception of harmony in the pattern, or the resolution of perceived discord in the system, is also necessary. This can again be seen clearly in music where dissonance or discord seems to be innately perceived as needing and evoking resolution. If left unresolved, such discord makes a musical pattern feel somehow unfinished and disturbing, at the same time that some dissonance in the pattern is paradoxically necessary in order to allow for the experience of resolution. In this way, harmony, as well as melody and rhythm, gives meaning to a collection of tones and allows us to call that collection music.

The relationship that resolution has to meaning and beauty is perhaps especially visible when we consider beauty in narratives. What makes a story meaningful and beautiful is that the tensions and conflicts it presents reach some believable resolution. If there is no resolution at all, we sense that the story is not finished or, in more extreme cases, it does not appear to us to be a story at all. If the resolution is partial and still leaves unresolved some of the tensions or conflicts it presents, we may consider the story not to be a happy or beautiful
one. In this regard, it is interesting to note that, on one level, we may see that a story has an obvious meaning, which we nonetheless may not regard as beautiful (because it leaves something unresolved for us), and yet, on another level, this lack of beauty also makes the story meaningless. In other words, some meanings are less meaningful than others. This observation may perhaps be better understood when we consider the arguably remarkable consistency that seems to exist between what people generally feel constitutes a meaningful life. As Victor Frankl (1983) paradoxically notes in his preeminent book *Man’s Search for Meaning*, logotherapy (i.e. the meaning-centered approach to therapy he created) recognizes that the meaning of life “differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour” (pp. 130-131), yet, at the same time, those meanings that ultimately satisfy people, while remaining unique in their specifics, can be seen to all share one significant characteristic. That is that the “true meaning of life,” according to Frankl, is always involves “self-transcendence,” i.e. the giving of oneself for the sake of a value perceived to be greater than or other than one’s self. He goes on to explain that this meaning may be achieved “by creating a work or doing a deed” or “by experiencing something or encountering someone” or “by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering” (p. 133). Thus, a beautiful story in literature or in real life is one in which a character or characters achieve resolution (within themselves or between each other) through self-transcendence. This is the same as saying that the tension/conflict presented in the plot of the story must be resolved for it to be experienced as a beautiful story.

To summarize the foregoing account of beauty, it may be said that when we see beauty in some phenomenon, we see in it, and/or in its relationship to other phenomena, a harmonious, meaningful, integrated pattern in which tension and discord are resolved, and in
which the movement from tension towards resolution towards may occur again and again as unique variations on a common theme. It should also be emphasized that ability to see meaningful/beautiful patterns is a quality of human consciousness itself and varies depending on the qualities, and arguably the degrees of development, of that consciousness. Thus, what one person hears as beautiful music may to another person sound like noise. The capacity to perceive meaningful patterns is evoked differently in different cultural contexts. I would also argue that the ability may evolve historically as human consciousness evolves, such that what from a more limited perspective once seemed discordant and ugly, from a more expansive, evolved perspective appear to exhibit a more profound harmony than was previously be appreciated. Such an evolutionary perspective on beauty further suggest that asymmetry, disharmony, discordance are necessary to the unfoldment of new forms of beauty, i.e. new, perhaps more inclusive/expansive resolutions to tension and conflict. It also suggests a reason way objects that once seemed to embody beauty cease to be beautiful as they become worn out clichés, because beauty’s evolution requires a continual movement into novelty.

Now let’s move on to consideration Truth, which I will argue is closely related to Beauty. To see the relationship between truth and beauty famously attested to by the poet Keats, it is helpful to first distinguish truth from facts. Truth, in the view I am taking, does not refer to empirical facts, but to meanings and principles that help to explain these facts. In this sense, to discover truth is to make one’s experience intelligible, meaningful and coherent. Herein lies its clear link to beauty. For just as the perception of beauty integrates what might before have been perceived as discordant elements into a meaningful pattern, so the perception of truth makes experiences that once were inexplicable and unintelligible

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56 The closing verses of Keats’ poem *Ode to a Grecian Urn* are “‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty,’ - that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”
become understandable and meaningful. In other words, truth integrates and illuminates the connections between disparate pieces of experience. It must, furthermore, accomplish this for both personal and collective experience, for “subjective” and “objective” experience, and for the experiences of mind, heart and will. The connection between truth and beauty is also implicitly attested to by scientists’ search for “elegance” in their theories, where elegance may be said to refer to a theory’s capacity to explain the greatest number of observable facts with the simplest explanation. Truth, like beauty, further connotes symmetry in that it becomes visible when correspondence is noticed between an interior, “subjective” thought (which at times may arguably be a priori or archetypal) and external experiences of “objective” reality.

After noting these convergences between beauty and truth, the only distinction that I believe is useful to make between them is that, while beauty refers to meaning/coherence experienced affectively and intuitively through the heart, truth is arrived at through the mind’s active, constructive, systematic and dialogical process of reasoning. Yet, even these different ways that beauty and truth are experienced are closely connected. For truth is arrived at, as some scientists and philosophers admit, when a possibility/explanation at first intuitively perceived is seen to theoretically resolve a prior sense of discord (i.e. a “felt problem” deriving from an inability to adequately explain some anomalous data or some other contradiction in an established theory or paradigm), and is confirmed when acting upon this possibility yields results that are consistent with what would be expected if the possibility were true. Thus, as with beauty, the discovery or construction of truth constitutes a search for harmony and resolution.

57 I place subjective and objective in quotation marks here to indicate that, contrary to the general claims of Enlightenment philosophies, there can be no absolute subjective or objective perspectives or experiences.
It should also be observed regarding the pursuits of beauty and truth that, while they are so closely connected, they also act as correctives to each other. For, on the one hand, not all that appears beautiful turns out to be true. And on the other hand, a truth that is ugly is meaningless, incapable of producing results that can be valued, and therefore in the long-run is untrue. Thus, a morally-motivated and critically conscious person seeks true beauty and beautiful truth.

As with beauty, truth can also be said to evolve relative to the needs, experiences and knowledge associated with particular social and historical contexts. To help clarify this, I will restate and add to the test of truth suggested in the previous paragraph. At any particular time and social context, the test of the truth of any proposition is its ability to resolve the contradictions experienced within a discourse community, namely contradictions within and between community members’ 1) physical perceptions, 2) feelings and intuitions of beauty/value, 3) previously established versions of truth (i.e. theories, conceptual systems, worldviews, norms, traditions, established procedures etc.), and 4) the results of acting with “faith” upon ideas that had earlier been established as true. Also, notable among the contradictions that can and do occur are apparent incommensurability between different versions of truth held by different discourse communities that come in contact with each other. This suggests that, in seeking truth, the widest possible consensus must be sought, which again is suggestive of the urge towards beauty (i.e. towards harmonious integration of separate discordant elements), and underscores Palmer’s (1993) observation that truth is inherently “communal” and dialogical (p. 54). In other words, a concept can be said to be true to the degree that it reflects and reconciles the widest possible range of diverse perspectives and experiences relevant to a given socio-historical context (i.e. the perspectives
and experiences of many different people from different social positions and backgrounds, perspectives not only of people’s intellects, but of their hearts and informed/confirmed by acts of will). But because the collective perspectives and experiences that characterize any social context is continually influx, and the contradictions and needs that characterize one time and place are not entirely the same as those of another time and place, a final and ultimate form of truth can never be arrived at. Yet, in this view, truth clearly progresses, evolving as wider and wider ranges of experience, and increasingly disparate voices are taken into account and more expansive degrees of consciousness are achieved.

Now I will turn to my concept of Goodness, which I treat as synonymous with morality and which most closely related to the subject of this study. Here again, the connection between the understanding of Goodness I will now suggest and my previous descriptions of Beauty and Truth is very close and is again related to the manner in which elements of a system are (or come to be) harmoniously integrated. In fact, goodness (or morality) can be thought of as the active expression of beauty in human relationships.58 Thus, I take the term goodness to describe any human expressions or actions that promote an increase of integration and synergy in human relationships. Goodness resolves discord and estrangement and promotes unity both between people’s and within the psyche of individuals. The presence of goodness in human relationships can therefore be seen as analogous to the presence of health in a biological organism.

58 By “human relationships,” I refer to more than simply one-on-one relationships between individuals, but to all relationships in which humans participate that are essential to human life. For example, Nogouchi et. al. (1992) suggest that moral education at this time should be especially concerned with four “essential relationships,” given the dramatically maladaptive and pathological qualities these relationships are seen to exhibit at present, namely the relationships between “man and nature”, “individuals and groups”, “the individual and social institutions” and within the “family” (pp. 8-13).
Inwardly (i.e. phenomenologically or psychologically), goodness or morality can be seen, as I suggested in Chapter 8, to stem from the simultaneous experience of otherness and oneness with the other. This experience further implies that a person who authentically encounters another is able to perceive an unlimited, intrinsic value in, and inherent connection with, the other. The experience of otherness and oneness can further be translated into the key and complementary moral senses of, and capacities for, justice and love. In this context, I associate the term justice with the felt moral impulse to maintain the essential boundaries that allow distinct participants in an organic system to interact synergistically with each other. This impulse thus resists the contrary, egoic tendency to impose an oppressive sameness on others, a tendency that must result in the disease and possibly the death of the whole system (and thus of all of its members). Justice is therefore an essential condition for organic unity, at the same time that it resists uniformity. In Levinas’ (1969) terms, a sense of justice is a person’s sense of his/her ethical responsibility to preserve the “alterity” of the Other. A sense of justice therefore impels us to avoid any totalizing conception of the Other, but rather to maintain respectful openness to the other’s infinite mystery.

On the other hand, the essential complement of justice, and another corollary of the experience of oneness, is the mysterious impulse to love. Love can be thought of as the energy that binds the participants in an organic system to each other, just as justice maintains the essential boundaries between those participants, and is thus as essential as justice to maintaining synergistic, organic unity in human relationships. Whereas justice connotes respect for otherness, the experience of loving another presupposes some degree of empathy for the other, some appreciation for the other’s feelings and experiences, implying an
experience of oneness with the other. Furthermore, love seems to involve the lover’s intuitive appreciation for the loved one’s intrinsic value (as distinguished from his/her appreciation for how the other pleases him/her, which is often called “love,” but which, in the perspective I am suggesting here, is not love). This experience causes something to resonate in the lover, suggesting the existence of a shared, profound, unconventional identity that binds the lover to/with the beloved. Thus, the lover experiences being one with the beloved at the same time that he/she knows the beloved is other and values the other’s uniqueness. Finally, as a result of the experience of oneness love entails, love, in order to be real or “true” must reveal itself in the lover’s committed actions intended to foster the well-being and authentic growth of the other.

As was the case with beauty and truth, specific forms of goodness (i.e. moral acts) can be seen to be relative to specific contexts and situations. In other words, an action that may in one context have the effect of enhancing synergy in a particular sphere of human relationships may in another context have the opposite effect. This is again due to the particular requirements and problems that characterize each unique context. Thus, goodness, like beauty and truth, can be said to evolve. For example, on an individual level, a young child’s impulse to uncritically obey a parent may be considered a good or moral impulse (which is not to suggest that the parent’s corresponding way of relating to the child is necessarily good or moral). But, the same blind obedience exhibited by an adult capable of critical consciousness towards an authority figure could be considered immoral (whether or not the society in question labels this act as moral).

In concluding my account of beauty, truth and goodness, it is worth explaining further how, in this perspective, absolute Beauty, Truth and Goodness are unattainable for human
beings, and yet may be understood together to constitute an intuitively felt and necessary telos for human life. Mustakova-Possardt’s research and this study indicate the importance for healthy psychological growth of having an orientation/attraction to these dimensions of experience. Not only is this arguably innate orientation and attraction essential, according to Mustakova-Possardt, to the development of critical moral consciousness, it is also I would argue supremely reasonable orientation from a philosophical standpoint. For the notion that the capacities we possess for meaning-making and for taking meaningful action could emerge out of an essentially meaningless universe seems implausible. More plausible and reasonable it would seem, and certainly more productive, is the possibility that this capacity and need in human consciousness arises from a universe that is unconditionally and infinitely meaningful, and whose meaning we are justified in assuming is always more, not less, than we can ever grasp. As Frankl (1984) expresses this idea, “what is demanded of man is not, as some existentialist philosophers teach, to endure the meaninglessness of life, but rather to bear his incapacity to grasp its unconditional meaningfulness in rational terms” (p. 141).

Thus, every creative breakthrough in human consciousness and human society (e.g. moral transformation among other transformations) can be seen to require and develop out of an attraction to that more, to the ultimate mystery underlying experience and reality.

Furthermore, this point is I think well summarized in Albert Einstein’s (1949) observation that,

The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle…. It was the experience of mystery--even if mixed with fear--that engendered religion. A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, of the
manifestations of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which are only accessible to our reason in their most elementary forms. (pp. 1-5)

As a final note, such a realization also underscores the necessity of avoiding the tendency to seek to confine this Mystery within the limits of a totalizing concept, theory or doctrine, i.e. to seek ownership of it. Thus, as the findings of my study strongly suggest, because it is essential to the development of critical moral consciousness that a person strives to reach the unreachable telos of ultimate Beauty, Truth and Goodness, he/she must also always return to authentic experience, which is always new and original. Authentic experience always contains more than one can grasp and thus helps one escape from the trap of intellectual rigidity and reification. Authentic experience, which necessarily engages and integrates mind, heart and will, can thus be understood to be the well-spring of creativity out of which new forms of beauty, truth and goodness suited to the requirements of unique socio-historical contexts may continually emerge.
Appendix B
Guiding Questions for Student Interviews

Personal information:
Name:
Age:
Sex:
Grade in school (i.e. freshman, sophomore, junior or senior):

When did you first get involved in the Community Building Institute? How did you happen to get involved?

If someone asks you, “What is the Community Building Institute?”, how would you explain it?

What was the most important thing you gained/learned from the Community Building Institute (CBI)? What was it specifically about your experience in the CBI that gave/taught you this? Probe – get student to share a specific story of an experience they had in the CBI.

Are you currently in a tutoring (i.e. caring pair) relationship through the CBI? Who is/was your partner? How has your tutoring relationship been going? (OR how did your tutoring relationship go?) Are you satisfied with this relationship? How are you benefiting from it? How do you think your partner is benefiting? What do you give to your partner? What does your partner give to you?

What do you understand the role of a “facilitator” should be in a tutoring relationship? What do you understand the role of a “believer” should be in a tutoring relationship?

How often do you meet? Where do you meet? How long do you meet? What do you do when you meet? What has prevented you from meeting more often? What do you think could make it easier for the two of you to meet more often? How did/has your caring pair relationship effected your achievement as a student in … High School?

Has your experience in the CBI helped change your sense of yourself (i.e. your understanding of who you are)? If yes, how? (i.e. What was it specifically about your experience in the CBI caused this change?) Probe – get student to share a specific story of an experience they had in the CBI.

Tell me a little about your background. Where were you born? How old are you? Where were you born? How long have you lived in … (where did you live before)? Where are your parents from? How would you describe their ethnicity? What do you know about their
experiences with school? How much schooling did they have? What work do/did they do? How involved are they now with supporting your education?

Did your experience in the CBI change how well you understand and how much you care about other people from different backgrounds? Who were your friends before you participated in the CBI? Has your circle of friends expanded since you participated in the CBI? How (OR why not?)? If your circle of friends expanded/changed, what was it specifically about your experience in the CBI that you think may have caused this change? Probe – get student to share a specific story of an experience they had in the CBI.

Has your sense of the value of a human life changed because of what you’ve learned from the CBI? If yes, how? What was it specifically about your experience in the CBI caused this change?

Say more about the quote “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” mean to you? What does this idea say about who you are and how you should treat others?

You’ve heard … talk about the “head-to-heart” shift. What does this mean to you? Do you feel you’ve had a “head-to-heart” shift because of the CBI? Tell me the story of how the “head-to-heart” shift happened for you? Probe – get student to share a specific story of an experience they had in the CBI.

What do you see as the purpose of life? What is the purpose of education? Has your understanding of the purposes of life and education changed because of your involvement in the CBI? If yes, how? What experience(s) have you had in CBI that is/are most responsible for this change? Probe – get student to share a specific story of an experience they had in the CBI.

What is your understanding of the phrase “the oneness of humanity”? What does this idea say about who you are and how you should treat others?

What is your understanding of your responsibility to your community? to the human race as a whole? How has your experience in the CBI affected/changed your understanding of your responsibility? Probe – get student to share a specific story of an experience they had in the CBI.

What do you do now to help your community? to help your human family? Does being involved in the CBI help you serve your community & serve humanity? If yes, how? Probe – get student to share a specific story of an experience they had in the CBI.

What is/are the biggest problem(s) in your school community? What do you think can be done to solve this/these problem(s)? What do you do to help solve this/these problem(s)? What else do you think you could do that you aren’t doing? Why aren’t you doing that? How can or does the CBI help to solve these problems?
What do you see as the biggest problem(s) facing our nation? and the world? What do you think causes this/these problem(s)? Has the CBI affected this understanding of this? If yes, how?

Has your involvement with the CBI affected how you relate to your teachers and/or how they relate to you? If yes, how?

Has your involvement with the CBI affected how you relate to your parents and/or how they relate to you? If yes, how? Have your parents become more involved in school because of the CBI? Give an example.

What do you like most about the CBI? Do you have any ideas you’d like to share about how any aspect of the CBI could be improved?

Has your sense of what things may limit you in life changed since you’ve been involved in the CBI? If yes, how? How much power do you feel you have to change the situations and circumstances of your life? Did your experience in the CBI change your understanding of this? If yes, what is it specifically about the CBI that you think is most responsible for causing this change/these changes? Probe – get student to share a specific story of an experience they had in the CBI.

Has the CBI helped you overcome any problems in your life? If yes, what problems? How did the CBI help you overcome these problems? Probe – get student to share a specific story of an experience they had in the CBI.

Has the CBI changed your understanding of what student achievement is? If yes, how? How has the CBI affected your achievement as a student?

Has your participation in the CBI helped you get clearer about what you want to achieve in your life? If yes, how?

What are your plans for after you graduate from … High School?
REFERENCES


