

1-1-1992

# The Cluster School teachers : a study in adult development.

Brian John Mooney

*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations\\_1](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1)

---

## Recommended Citation

Mooney, Brian John, "The Cluster School teachers : a study in adult development." (1992). *Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014*. 4899.

[https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations\\_1/4899](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/4899)

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@library.umass.edu](mailto:scholarworks@library.umass.edu).

UMASS/AMHERST



312066013576604

THE CLUSTER SCHOOL TEACHERS:  
A STUDY IN ADULT DEVELOPMENT

A Dissertation Presented

by

BRIAN JOHN MOONEY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February 1992

School of Education

© Copyright by Brian John Mooney 1992

All Rights Reserved


THE CLUSTER SCHOOL TEACHERS:  
A STUDY IN ADULT DEVELOPMENT

A Dissertation Presented

by

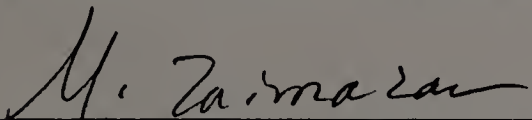
BRIAN JOHN MOONEY

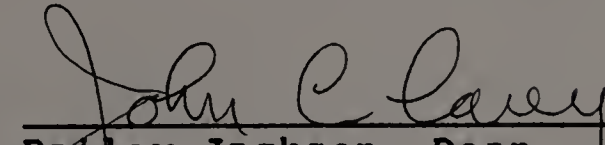
Approved as to style and content by:

  
Robert Wellman, Chair

  
Arnold Clayton, Member

  
Arthur Lipkin, Member

  
Mohammad Zaimaran, Member

  
Bailey Jackson, Dean  
School of Education

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to two groups of people. The first one is the staff of the Cluster School whose keen intelligence, gentle sense of humor, compassion for students and for one another, and unflagging diligence, combined to make the Cluster School experience one of the most remarkable in my life.

It is also dedicated to gay and lesbian teachers, my brothers and sisters in the struggle to insure the dignity of all human beings, in the hope that in reading it they might find a positive and reassuring message.

I would like to express my thanks to the following people for their help with this thesis: Bob Wellman, who provided insight and understanding as an advisor; Arthur Lipkin, whose observations, support and friendship were invaluable; Arnold Clayton, my friend of longest standing in the East, who, along with my teacher, Reza Zaimaran, offered encouragement as readers; and Lynne Meyer Gay, who did such a professional job of transcribing the taped interviews.

I would especially like to thank my dear friend, Geraldine Spagnuolo, without whose love, support, humor and editing skills this would have been a nearly impossible task.

ABSTRACT

THE CLUSTER SCHOOL TEACHERS:  
A STUDY IN ADULT DEVELOPMENT

FEBRUARY, 1992

BRIAN JOHN MOONEY, B.A., UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

ED.M., HARVARD UNIVERSITY

M.P.A., HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ED.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Directed by: Professor Robert Wellman

During the 1960's and 1970's, because of wide-spread dissatisfaction with traditional public schooling, there was a dramatic increase in the number of alternative schools in the United States. One such school, the Cluster School (1974-1980), a democratically-run, high school program in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was the site for the first systematic application of Lawrence Kohlberg's theories of "just community" and "moral reasoning development."

This thesis is a case study of ten teachers (including the author) who worked in the Cluster School. Using information collected through in-depth interviews with the teachers, it examines such matters as the formative moral influences in their lives, and the reasons why they joined the School. It then explores the ways in which being members of Cluster's "adult community," which included Kohlberg, influenced their own development.

The thesis contends that, among other reasons, the teachers were attracted to the School because they had come from backgrounds where moral questions were accorded importance, and that once there, they created a supportive environment which promoted adult growth.

The Introduction defines the thesis and its methodology, and includes a discussion of the author's role as a participant observer in the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the School, defines the School's governance structure and gives an overview of the School's history.

Chapter 3 presents the biographies of the teachers, each of which is followed by a summary of the salient points found in the biography.

Chapter 4 addresses six recurring themes which emerge from the teacher interviews and suggests their inter-relatedness to one another.

Chapter 5 compares the moral atmosphere of Cluster's host school with that of Cluster, and concludes that the teachers, although somewhat inadvertently, created for themselves a supportive community which encouraged their own growth and development. The chapter closes with recommendations for staff development.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	iv
ABSTRACT . . . . .	v
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
The Thesis . . . . .	3
Notes on Methodolgy . . . . .	6
2. BACKGROUND . . . . .	9
Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development . . . . .	17
The Just Community Theory . . . . .	20
The Cluster School . . . . .	21
3. TEACHER BIOGRAPHIES . . . . .	30
Carol . . . . .	31
Muriel . . . . .	47
Charles . . . . .	59
Stuart . . . . .	67
Maureen . . . . .	80
George . . . . .	90
Dorothy . . . . .	98
Howard . . . . .	113
Karen . . . . .	127
Brian . . . . .	137
4. EMERGENT THEMES . . . . .	146
Staff Division . . . . .	147
Race . . . . .	152
The Outsider . . . . .	159
Community . . . . .	164
Kohlberg . . . . .	175
Burnout . . . . .	185
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	191
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	199

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Last spring, at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, I had the good fortune of sitting in on the final lecture of Sara Lawrence Lightfoot's course on the use of written portraiture in social science research. I had read her award-winning book, The Good High School, and had been favorably impressed with the way she was able to draw me into that study and make me feel as though I had visited the schools she had visited, witnessed what she had witnessed, and had the conversations she had had. By referring to the textures, shadings, and colors of ideas or to a teacher's sadness, a student's hope, or an important memory, each page became a subtle, artistic word painting. Her deceptively simple and delicately personal style of inquiry had a smooth, sensual quality about it that made it seem so complete, so alive, and so unlike most academic writing.

Lightfoot's lecture voice sounded a lot like the voice I admired in her book: polished, articulate and poetic. As I listened to her artful images spilling one into another, forming clear points about portraiture: "preparing for the audience," "inquirer as witness," "listening for the deviant voice," my thoughts turned to the time, some ten years earlier, when I was part of a pioneering group of moral education teachers working down

the street from the lecture hall where I sat. Since I had been casting about for a dissertation topic that could truly engage me, I began to think about how interesting it might be to use the dissertation to tell the stories of the teachers with whom I had taught in the Cambridge Cluster School and how others, but especially teachers, might benefit from reading them. Just as my thoughts began to take shape, however, Lightfoot made a striking remark that I had to write down. She said that portraiture is a way of seducing people into thinking about complicated questions.

I thought about the word "seduce," an interesting choice. The usual connotation is a sexual one, an appropriate usage in this case because Lightfoot's portraits enliven the senses and engage the mind. She takes you in and lets you know that in giving close attention to people who are like you, that your experience also has value and importance. She spoke with a wisdom that knows that in the particular resides the general, that in the individual resides the universal.

As a former language student, I remembered the etymology of the verb to seduce. It comes from the Latin words "se" which means "apart" and "ducere" meaning "to lead:" to lead apart. Lightfoot's idea was that through the influence of her very accessible portraits, the readers would be led apart from or away from their usual

way of thinking and be drawn into, what is for some, the surprisingly complicated world of secondary education.

By the end of Professor Lightfoot's lecture, I was convinced of several things. First, the story I wanted to tell was an important one and that I, indeed, ought to tell it. Second, I felt that in order to capture the pain and joy, the successes and failures, the real guts of the story, it needed to be told in the voices of its characters, the teachers, using some of Lightfoot's "seductive" written portraiture techniques.

### The Thesis

The Cluster School (1974-80) was the first attempt to systematically apply the late Lawrence Kohlberg's theories of "moral reasoning development" and "just community" in a public school setting. It was a radical experiment in democratic schooling which, in its often bumbling and sometimes brilliant ways, made substantial contributions to theoretical and practical conversations in education and psychology. Because of its then timely focus on moral education and its association with Kohlberg and Harvard, the Cluster School received wide attention in the press and, even to the present, continues to be the subject of many scholarly works. Some of that scholarship, for example, deals with longitudinal studies of the moral reasoning development of former Cluster School students

and with studies that document efforts to adopt the Cluster School model in other school systems.

But for all of the ink, moral angst and controversy generated by the Cluster School project, little has been written about the teachers who developed and ran the program. Even less attention has been given to our ideas about education, about the just community model, or about the important work of transmitting democratic ideals from one generation to another. But the most surprising and perhaps the most telling fact is that the Harvard developmentalists who collected the data from the project, (whose focus, admittedly, was on the moral development of children), and the many researchers who pored over that data, did not even appear to be curious about the kind of adult development that was taking place among the teachers which had resulted from their interactions with one another, with students and with Kohlberg. In a 1979 article about moral education in Psychology Today, Howard Muson made brief mention of the Cluster faculty. He wrote:

When I came across the biographies of the teachers in the school, I was as dazzled by their qualifications as I was impressed, watching them in action, by their dedication. [February 1979, p. 92]

He then went on to list the academic credentials of several staff members and marveled at their apparent value. Yet, while the Cluster faculty was indeed a

remarkably well-prepared and dedicated group, and while Muson's kind of encomium and attention is rarely given to teachers and is certainly appreciated by them, his comments do not get beyond the trappings of academic degrees and into the more substantive aspects of our lives in the School. That story needs to be told.

The objective of this story/thesis is to explore the lives of the Cluster School teachers with an eye to understanding our individual journeys in adult development and the School's role in that process. As a participant observer in the exploration, I have tried to maintain the seemingly contradictory positions of immersing myself in the subjects' lives while, at the same time, "going to the balcony," keeping above the fray, so as to make assessments of those lives as dispassionately as possible. This is neither an easy task nor one that I take lightly from an ethical point of view. It has forced me to identify the major areas of difference or compatibility between myself and the subjects and to assess the ways in which both of those might influence our responses to one another. In reflecting on possible impediments to objective assessment and analysis, I have come to a clearer understanding of my role in writing this study. The search for an integrative perspective on the project also calls to mind Walt Whitman's poem Song of Myself, that great tribute to democracy and lovely celebration of

human sensuality. In it, he sees himself as a vibrant, sensual "kosmos" whose song gives voice to those whose voices often go unheard.

Through me many long dumb voices,...  
Through me forbidden voices,  
Voices of sexes and lusts...voices veiled,  
and I remove the veil,  
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigured.  
[Whitman, "Song of Myself," 1855]

This story attempts to get the hitherto silent voices of the Cluster staff to speak as we have never spoken before. Through the telling of each individual teacher's story and through the analysis of the themes that emerge from them, I propose to remove the veil from the Cluster experience and, in so doing, possibly to clarify and even transfigure the meaning of our work.

#### Notes on Methodology

Last summer, ten years after the demise of the Cluster School as it was originally conceived (an eviscerated form of the program continued on until 1985), I conducted in-depth interviews with nine former Cluster School staff members. Each interview was tape-recorded in my living room and was approximately an hour and one half in length. After all of the subjects were interviewed, using the same instrument, I had a friend of mine interview me. She is a member of the English Department at the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School and is familiar with the Cluster School and with my thesis topic.

The interviews set out to explore three general areas. The first part looked at the individual's personal and professional histories before joining the Cluster staff. In this section, special attention was given to their early formative moral influences. The second section delved into the individual's experience in the School and asked the subject to talk about School issues, incidents, and individuals who held special importance for him or her. The final section examined the meaning that the individual has derived from the time spent in the School and its relationship, if any, to his/her life after Cluster.

My thesis is that the Cluster teachers were attracted to a project on moral development education because we had come from backgrounds with strong moral and ethical foundations, which included histories of having grappled with important moral questions. I expect to find that our experience of working in the School had profound influences on our pedagogy, our moral reasoning and moral action and that this resulted from our discussions and interactions with one another in staff meetings, from our struggles with difficult moral issues in the School community and through our relationships to Kohlberg. Moreover, I expect to confirm my observation that, while the acknowledged focus of our attention was on the creation of a just community model and on the moral



development of our students, we also created an arena for addressing our own developmental and community membership needs without fully understanding what we were doing.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND

The 1960's and 1970's were chaotic decades for the people of the United States. The tragic death in 1963 of the young President Kennedy, who had inspired the nation with his idealistic appeals for service to the country and to the developing world, seemed to signal the people's loss of innocence and to be a precursor of the violent and unstable years that followed. An unremitting series of crises confronted the country, forcing it to reconsider its understanding of modern economic life, to question the prevailing notion of patriotism, and to struggle to redefine the common good. The Vietnam War sparked unparalleled upheavals on college campuses. Not since the Civil War had the country been so divided over a military action. Racism continued to play its insidious role in the society. African-Americans and other racial minorities became more militant in their demands for social equality and, in the wake of the murder of civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, their pent-up rage, caused by years of discrimination, found expression in the burning of entire sections of the nation's cities. There was a marked erosion in the public's confidence in national political leaders as the Nixon Administration was brought down by the Watergate affair. Organized religions were confused and factionalized over the role that they

ought to play in a society where increasing sexual experimentation, drug and alcohol abuse, and violence had become menacing. The United States, which had entered the 1960's with vigor and confidence and moral certitude, symbolized by its breathtakingly successful space program, by the mid 1970's appeared to be confused and seriously off course, spinning in an uncontrolled political and moral trajectory.

In response to those moral problems, many Americans looked to the schools for solutions. In 1975, a Gallup poll showed that 79 percent of Americans questioned were willing to have the schools assume some of the responsibility for the moral training of the nation's children [Muson, 1979]. Hundreds of schools introduced programs in values clarification and ethics, while university schools of education began to offer or expand existing course offerings in moral development theory. Not surprisingly, the dissatisfaction with the moral training of children led many Americans to question the way schooling was done in the traditional high school. Alternative schools began to spring up across the nation. One educational researcher writing of the causes of the rise of the alternative schools movement explained:

It is the confluence of many factors - a burgeoning student population, an unpopular war, civil rights activism and the establishment of freedom schools, the women's rights movement, a decade of hollow prosperity, and a leadership and knowledge vacuum in

education - rather than any single unprecedented event that appears to underlie the emergence of hundreds of public and nonpublic alternative schools since 1965. [Duke, 1978, p. 152]

In the spring of 1974, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, there was a growing interest in and demand for public alternative education, especially at the high school level. Situated across the Charles River from Boston, Cambridge, a city of 90,000 people, is perhaps best known as home to Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and several smaller colleges. Its dominant ethnic group is Irish-American and its minority population is composed of 10 per cent African-Americans, and 5 per cent Hispanics and other racial minorities. In 1974, there were two public high schools which since have been physically and programatically combined into one comprehensive school, The Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS). One was the Cambridge High and Latin School which had a diverse student population made up of over 15 per cent African-Americans and Hispanics, along with varying-sized groups of Portuguese, Greeks and other linguistic minorities. The other school, the Rindge Technical School, had a disproportionately large minority population which was one of several important reasons for the eventual unification of the two schools. The only public alternative secondary program in Cambridge was the Pilot School which had been founded in 1969 through the combined efforts of a group of progressive Cambridge

teachers and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Housed separately on the top floor of the Rindge Technical School, the Pilot School, like many alternative programs, offered its staff and students a less structured, less authoritarian school environment than the traditional high school. Through its highly personalized, student-centered approach, it stressed the psychological well-being and caring aspects of a student's development. The Pilot School proved to be a very popular program and by 1974 had grown from 60 to 180 students and had had to reject some 50 applicants whom they were not able to accommodate.

The rejected Pilot School applicants were unwilling to enter the Cambridge High and Latin School. They and their parents knew that CHLS was an urban school in a serious state of physical and academic disrepair. It had long been run by an "old boy" network who had gotten their jobs through patronage politics and who viewed outsiders with mistrust and suspicion. Racial hostilities, which had erupted into fighting several years previous, were simmering just below the surface and few efforts were being made to address inter-racial problems. CHLS teachers and students operated without benefit of a shared mission or an educational philosophy. Formal tracking and tight control over the curriculum characterized the educational program, which many teachers supported as the necessary means of retaining "high standards" and the

status quo. Conformity and a standard curriculum was the established norm, and students were perceived as passive receptors of knowledge. Representing a multiplicity of viewpoints, ethnic and racial differences, students, as well as staff were, in effect, factionalized, alienated and isolated. The physical and cultural environments of the school reflected many of the worst aspects of urban education. In many ways, CHLS did not work.

By 1974, I had been teaching in the Foreign Languages Department at CHLS for two years and was deeply dissatisfied with the school. In my first year, some of the city's disgruntled progressive elementary and secondary school teachers and I formed a group called "Cambridge Teachers for Better Schools." We held monthly meetings where we gave one another support for our individual reform efforts and discussed ways to wrest control of the schools from the authoritarian traditionalists. They included developing campaign strategies for electing reform-minded liberals to the school committee.

When my colleague, Howard, and I met with parents and students to discuss the formation of a new alternative school, we were eager to implement some of the concepts we had discussed in the "Cambridge Teachers for Better Schools" meetings. The students, most of whom were on the Pilot School waiting list, and their parents assumed that

the new school would be modeled after Pilot but we teachers were not altogether convinced that that was the exact model we wanted to follow. We had had opportunities to join the Pilot staff and had chosen not to. To us, the Pilot School, while in many ways a welcome departure from the main school, was a typical "do your own thing" setting in which the individual, and especially his sense of well-being, seemed paramount. We were also disturbed, for example, by the way that Pilot had handled some thefts in the school and thought that the "resolutions" had reflected more of a "hassle-free" attitude than a rigorously fair, communitarian one. While some of the Pilot staff were dissatisfied by the way that they had dealt with thefts, one of the Pilot teachers also saw it as raising the issue of whether or not students should have the right to make moral decisions when it involved important concerns like the disbursement of funds to recoup stolen goods (Riordan, 1977, p. 34). Pilot's unclear governance structure and loosely-defined, liberal philosophy often led it to act in unsatisfactory, "wishy-washy," individualistic ways.

Howard and I wanted to build our alternative around a less individualistic philosophy than Pilot's and to develop a more consistently democratic model. We were frustrated by the lack of democracy in schools--both the teaching about it and the practice of it. We would often

wonder, sometimes sarcastically, whether the school authorities did not believe that at the age of 21, young people would somehow magically acquire the necessary skills to act as competent agents in a democracy. Our concern was about how students were going to learn about democracy if they were never given a chance to practice it. We believed that teachers and students together could run a school, sharing power in a fair and democratic way. We hoped that students in such a school, by grappling with the competing points of view that arise from the enterprise of self-governance, would come to reason more inclusively, be less disposed to pursue narrow self-interests and generally become more democratically-minded citizens. Such were our noble hopes.

At the same time that we were meeting to discuss our new school, Lawrence Kohlberg, a professor at the nearby Harvard Graduate School of Education and a leading theorist in the field of moral education, was meeting with William Lannon, the Cambridge Superintendent of Schools, to talk about offering teacher workshops in the coming school year. He had been awarded grants from the Danforth and Kennedy Foundations to train teachers in what he called the "just community approach" and in "developmental moral education." Lannon referred Kohlberg to the emerging new school group and the group agreed to accept him as a consultant [Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg, 1989].



Kohlberg's theory of moral development had immediate appeal to us teachers and his desire to start a just, democratic, small-community school program seemed the perfect complement to our groping, half-formed ideas. Parents were enthusiastic to have Kohlberg lend his prestigious name to their effort and believed that it would make the job of lobbying for the school committee's approval of the proposed program much easier.

During that summer, a school department workshop was held to plan the new school. The school was to be called the Cluster School because the superintendent was considering forming career clusters within the high schools, an idea that was abandoned shortly thereafter. The workshop, coordinated by Muriel, a Pilot School guidance counselor who would become Cluster's guidance counselor, consisted of Kohlberg, teachers, parents and students who met through the summer. All of the participants, especially the students, were intrigued by the idea of running their own school but the planning sessions were not without problems and disagreements. It is worth noting, for example, that several of the parents who had been calling for student participation and democratic decision-making were alarmed when, in their absence, Kohlberg treated their children like co-equal participants in the planning. This and other difficulties were eventually satisfactorily resolved by the group but

it illustrates just how provocative the actual practice of democratic decision-making can be and how seriously Kohlberg and the majority of the group were committed to school democracy.

### Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

By the time Kohlberg began working in the Cluster School, he had already spent nearly twenty years developing his theory of moral reasoning development. Based on the work of Piaget [1932] on the moral reasoning of children, Kohlberg, in his original work to understand moral thought [1959], identified a progression of moral reasoning in the responses to hypothetical moral dilemmas he had given a group of male subjects. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to give a detailed discussion of Kohlberg's theory, a condensed explanation of it follows. Using a stage paradigm, he described six stages in that progression, each of which represents a distinct and qualitatively different way of thinking about or understanding moral questions. The stages are sequential and increasingly complex and Kohlberg held that the higher stages are qualitatively more comprehensive and better than the lower stages. He defined the six stages as follows, grouping them into three sub-categories or levels.

### Preconventional Level

1. Orientation to punishment and reward, and to physical and material power.
2. Hedonistic orientation with an instrumental view of human relations. Beginning notions of reciprocity, but with emphasis on exchange of favors - "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."

### Conventional Level

3. "Good Boy" orientation; seeking to maintain expectations and win approval of one's immediate group; morality defined by individual ties of relationship.
4. Orientation to authority, law and duty, to maintaining a fixed order, whether social or religious, which is assumed as a primary value.

### Post Conventional (Principled) Level

5. Social-contract orientation, with emphasis on quality and mutual obligation within a democratically established order; for example the morality of the American Constitution.
6. Morality of individual principles of conscience that have logical comprehensiveness and universality. Highest value placed on equality and dignity.

Kohlberg was interested in finding ways in which to use his theory to inform educational practice. In 1969, a doctoral student of his, Moshe Blatt, found that, by having children discuss hypothetical moral dilemmas which exposed them to the next higher stage of moral reasoning from the one they currently held, there was a strong likelihood that many would find the reasoning of that higher stage more adequate and would make it their own. In follow-up studies, Blatt and Kohlberg confirmed Blatt's

original findings and determined that the stage movement in the subjects remained unchanged over time.

These findings showed that the use of moral discussion, informed by Kohlberg's developmental theory, could succeed where earlier approaches to moral education had failed. Those failures had been documented in a study by Hartshorne and May [1928-30] where they showed,

...that didactic instruction and preaching about honesty or services (altruism) in 'character education' classes had almost no lasting effect on either student moral judgment, or 'knowledge,' or on student behavior. [Kohlberg, 1980, p. 51]

Blatt's work, then, opened up new possibilities for applying Kohlberg's theory in the classroom and for Kohlberg himself, marked the "beginning" of cognitive-developmental education.

Kohlberg's interest in identifying contexts and conditions that promote moral growth led him to examine the works of various sociologists and educators, as he explored widely differing social settings. He valued the work of Durkheim [1925] for his theory of group life. He agreed with Durkheim that the peer group within a school setting exercised special pressures and moral force upon the group's members. Kohlberg also spent time studying the effects of the group on individual moral development in an Israeli kibbutz and later refined his findings from there in a moral development project in a women's prison in Niantic, Connecticut.

## The Just Community Theory

Kohlberg felt that, while the school community, a microcosm of the larger society, could serve as an important bridge between an individual's moral life as a child and his/her expanded moral life as an adult citizen, most schools that attempted to do moral education were really only preaching a "bag of virtues" and not provoking substantive moral growth in their students. He reasoned that moral development ought to be the central aim of education and envisioned a radically different approach to schooling in which specific conditions for that development would be present. Those conditions include: exposure to cognitive moral conflicts, role-taking, consideration of fairness and morality, exposure to the next higher stage of moral reasoning, and active participation in group decision making [Coddling & Aranello, 1981]. The moral development approach suggests that those conditions are most likely to be present in a small, democratic community where rules and important decisions are made by teachers and students democratically. There a student can test his/her democratic wings while learning trust and responsibility as a member of a community where his/her voice counts.

A critical component of the just community approach is the moral atmosphere of the school. It refers to

how the students see the rules and discipline structure of the school, whether or not he/she thinks they are fair and adequately reflect for him/her a sense of community or belonging. A positive moral atmosphere is one that is not only welcoming, tolerant and encouraging of diversity and fairness, but also one that challenges students to reason at the next higher moral stage.

### The Cluster School

Five teachers and one guidance counselor volunteered to work in the Cluster School. They insisted that the school be situated within CHLS so that they, unlike the Pilot School staff, could remain intimately involved in the life of the host school and could continue to serve as catalysts for change there. Seventy students from grades nine to twelve made up the student body. Some effort was given to insure that the group would reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of Cambridge. Both the students and the staff led "split" lives, spending part of their day in Cluster and the rest in CHLS. All students were required to take a Cluster core course for which they were given English and social studies credit.

The academic program was designed to address issues related to democracy. In the first year, for example, the students read Golding's The Lord of the Flies, giving them

an opportunity to talk about the nature of the individual and his/her role in society. In the School's second year, the curriculum was a field-based course in the study of communities. Students visited, researched and discussed a variety of communities (e.g. religious orders, families, clubs, rest homes) so as to expand their understanding of the word "community" and to inform them about and get them to reflect on the one they were creating at Cluster.

The central focus of the School was on its governance. Once a week the entire School met in a community meeting during which the School's rules, issues and punishments were discussed. The meetings lasted for two hours with a break for lunch. In the first year of the School, they were usually chaired by members of the Democracy Class, a small student group which met regularly to discuss the issues of democratic rule and to learn about the procedures for running meetings. As more students became familiar with meeting procedures, every student was given the chance to serve as chair. On the day prior to the community meeting, the issues that were to be addressed there were discussed in smaller groups, called Advisor Groups, consisting of a teacher and from eight to ten students. (Advisor Groups also served as peer counseling groups). Each Advisor Group would select a spokesperson who would summarize the ideas and feelings of the group at the beginning of the community meeting.

Once all of the summaries had been made, the meeting was open for discussion, with those wanting to talk being recognized by the chair. Each student and faculty member had one vote and decisions were made by majority vote.

From the early days of the School, developing a sense of trust among the group was a serious challenge. In the School's first year, African-American students contended that they felt uncomfortable in the School and that their discomfort would be allayed only if the number of minority students were substantially increased. Since the School's percentage of African-American students at the time was greater than that in the host school population, the staff recognized that the question of numbers was not the real issue. Teachers helped students to focus the community meeting conversations on defining the conditions that make one feel uncomfortable in a group and on what it feels like to be a minority in the classroom. Through those often heated discussions which lasted for many meetings, the Cluster community began to define itself as a democratic forum. The community voted, finally, to increase the minority enrollment. More importantly, however, little by little students and teachers came to trust that Cluster was a place where they could say what they really felt and that it had the makings of becoming their own place, their own turf, their own community. In addition to race relations, the Cluster community did not



avoid other important, controversial topics. Grading, stealing, drug and alcohol use and sexism were major recurring themes. The question of drug use, for instance, became a hot topic in the first months of the first school year. Some students argued that it was their right to get high on their own time as long as their condition did not hurt anybody. Others argued that when one is high, one's ability to judge behavior is impaired. Still others felt that any use of drugs by community members could jeopardize the School's existence. After much debate, a rule was passed prohibiting the use of drugs, in large part because of fears of outside authorities.

As with other rule breaking, violations of the drug rule provided an opportunity for the community to explore the life of the offender (and, by extension, the life of the community) in a critical and supportive way. The punishment for the first offense involved a meeting with parents, teachers and peers and often led to a better understanding of the role that drugs played in the offender's life. Moreover, it allowed students the laboratory experience of working out answers to important problems while being exposed to a wide array of arguments and solutions. In so doing, it provided the students and staff with unique hands-on experience in building community. Writing in the Boston Sunday Globe Magazine after witnessing a meeting in which the drug rule was

discussed, Christina Robb observed:

What I had seen was a group of people coming together as individuals and trying to find a way to form a community honestly. And they had. In the end they were talking freely about a problem they really needed to talk about, without feeling time pressure and without taking power trips. They got to talk as long as they wanted, no matter which of the six stages of Kohlberg's developmental theory they were reasoning on morally. [Robb, 1978, p. 34]

The teachers found the Kohlberg moral discussion techniques to be invaluable instructional tools. It was our job to listen for the stages of reasoning that students were exhibiting and to make sure that they were exposed to the next higher stage from the ones they were using. It was also repeatedly confirmed for us that it was much easier to engage students and sustain their involvement in moral discussions when the dilemmas being discussed were not hypothetical but were generated by the real life work of the community.

From the outset, we purposely tried to avoid some of the pitfalls of school democracy. One of them was the common practice of electing school officers. Since we were concerned with the moral development of the students and staff, we knew that it was essential to have each community member be personally involved in the issues and decisions of the group. It was also critical to their development that they realize that each vote had value and power. The usual school officer elections are simply popularity contests which provide a forum for a few

budding politicians but do little to involve the larger school community in moral discussion.

Another practice that we chose not to follow was to have a permanent program administrator. Instead, we decided to give each faculty member the chance to represent the program on a rotating basis. The person attended school administrative meetings but was there to gather information and to be a spokesperson for the collective decisions of the Cluster community. Although this arrangement was sometimes inconvenient and was the subject of some criticism by the central administration, the practice more adequately served our democratic aims by deferring to the Cluster community for decisions, and by allowing all staff to get administrative experience while becoming familiar with key players in the school. Cluster School made many contributions to school democracy and because of the Harvard-Kohlberg connection, the program was closely observed in educational circles and analyzed in the press. Perhaps the achievements that were the greatest source of pride for the staff were in breaking down the barriers of race and class as they related to the idea of "community" and in helping girls to develop leadership skills. In both of these areas, the discussions that took place in the community meetings and in the classroom were passionate, honest and moving. By systematically addressing these issues and by providing a

place to test out ideas and skills, Cluster differed considerably from CHLS where these and related topics received little or no attention.

Like many of the alternative schools of its era, Cluster School came to an end for a variety of reasons. The time and energy demands that the program placed on the staff began to take their toll on their personal lives. Spouses, lovers and children complained that they were being neglected while the staff's avocational interests, which had helped give them a sense of emotional integration, had often been abandoned. Moreover, it became increasingly difficult to recruit new (particularly young) staff necessary for maintaining enthusiasm for the enterprise. In part this was due to the improved school climate of the new CHLS program (whose chief administrators included two former Cluster teachers) which made alternative education, with its extra demands, seem less attractive to teachers.

There was also a sad chapter in the story of Cluster's demise. Larry Kohlberg's mental and physical health began to decline. He locked horns with several staff members when they criticized the competence of a teacher whom he had recruited. Shortly after that episode, he alleged that two male staff members were having sexual relations with a male student. Without informing most of the staff, he told the tale to the

Superintendent of Schools who conducted an investigation and found the charges to be false. The two staff members were upset but exonerated and Kohlberg's connection to the School was severed. But there were other problems as well.

The Cluster staff had developed a reputation for being able to deal effectively with problem students and, as a consequence, the administrators and guidance counselors of the host school often referred the difficult kids to our program. They never sent us the well-behaved or academically talented ones so it was up to us to recruit them. The staff realized that we needed, what we called, "a critical mass" of reliable citizens who were committed to running a democratic school and that if the School's population were too skewed toward the troubled students, our community was doomed to failure. Each year that balance became more difficult to achieve.

Running the Cluster School left its teachers little time to inform their teaching colleagues and administrators of the value of the Cluster model. Some of these colleagues found its non-hierarchical structure and its sometimes noisy and untidy democratic process threatening and offensive. Through the years, the host school's two principals never really understood or supported Cluster. And, most disappointingly, three Cluster staff who were promoted to assistant headmaster,

neither lent Cluster much support nor showed much interest in implementing democratic reforms in the host school. Meanwhile, Cluster continued to suffer cuts in staff and funding and eventually was unable to attract enough students to justify its continuation.

The Cluster experiment was not conducted in vain, though. Two summers ago, at the first reunion of Cluster staff and students, graduates who came from all parts of the country to attend, spoke of the many ways that democratic schooling had prepared them for their adult lives. Again and again, they cited the things they had learned that held the most importance for them: the conflict resolution and leadership skills they had developed, the satisfaction of coming to know and care about people of different races and classes, and the training to think in terms of fairness. They were all very inspiring. They were also effusive in their thanks to their teachers. It seems that now with their adult eyes, they are able to see just how much effort we put into teaching them. It gives me hope that our graduates are in the world helping to revitalize democracy.

## CHAPTER 3

### TEACHER BIOGRAPHIES

As in most alternative schools where there is a shared vision and a shared purpose, the Cluster School attracted teachers whose educational philosophies were similar in many ways. We believed in the democratic process, the importance of building a sense of community through team teaching and group decision-making and in the centrality of fairness as a guide in all of our interactions. At the same time we were all individuals with our own unique backgrounds, experiences, and needs.

There were ten teachers, including me, who played major roles in the School. Because I wanted them to be as forthright as possible in their interviews, I promised them confidentiality and therefore will be referring to them by pseudonyms throughout this paper. There were five females and five males. Four of the staff were Jews and one was African-American. Five of us were originally from the Boston area and several of us were from other states. Our ages ranged from the late twenties to the early forties. A few of us had taught in alternative programs but the majority had worked only in the traditional setting. Our willingness to commit ourselves to the risky and time-consuming challenge of creating and sustaining an experimental program in democratic moral education, is what brought this varied group together.

## Carol

Far removed from the bustle of big city life, Carol, an avid reader and well-spoken intellectual, grew up in a small town in bucolic, rural Vermont where everybody knew one another. With the support of a familiar community, it was a place in which daily life, at least on the surface, seemed manageable and even serene. Yet although Carol had mixed feelings about the town, her memories of its size and social class composition and of the type of schooling she received there, would later help shape and direct her interest in teaching working-class and disadvantaged students. They would also serve to convince her of the importance of creating and working in small, egalitarian school settings.

It was pretty much a working-class town filled with Russian and Polish immigrants and a variety of.. kind of people involved in the dairy industry and factories and apple orchards, with, as I now realize, a few people one would consider not of the working class, a few lawyers, a few doctors or whatever. And I mention this this way because I did not realize at the time, in a way, what an ethnic kind of experience that was and also what a working-class, labor-like background I actually have. Also, because I went to a public high school where there were few enough



people in the entire school system--this was a town of about 10,000, and I graduated in a class of about 120--but it was a town where many of us went to school with each other from the 1st grade through the 12th grade, and there were not enough of us to track in any particular way. So, even though some of us supposedly were in the college track, as compared to some people who were in the business track or in the vocational education program, there was a great deal of mutual respect. And we were all in the same classes, because there weren't enough of us to sort any other way and also schedule the school. So, the kids who were "vokies" [students in the vocational education program] were out there building a house that someone in the town bought at the end of the year and those of us who were headed off to college were sitting in typing classes, and it was very--As I see now, of course, there were cliques and groups and things like that, but actually, it was a very mixed experience.

The only progeny of a mismatched, working-class, Polish-American couple, who drank too much and quarreled often, Carol, at an early age, in an effort to keep her family from unraveling, took on the role of go-between and peace-maker between her parents. It was a role she came

to adopt almost reflexively and one that she would later play, mostly with success, in the Cluster School.

Carol was always an outstanding student and, upon graduating from high school, was awarded a scholarship to Mt. Holyoke, an Ivy League college. The college's small size and demanding academic environment had immediate appeal for her and she was pleased that she had chosen Mt. Holyoke over other schools to which she had applied.

The other places I had applied to were too big and I was terrified of them. People were kissing on the steps of fraternities and sororities, and I said, "I can't handle this. This is too fast for me."

Anyway, there I was for four years in what we used to happily call "this playground for urbanized milkmaids." I got a good education there. Of those kinds of schools, it was a very egalitarian place. As I've come to know more about its history, it's always had a real commitment to women's education; [and] in its own awkward way, to racial diversity, which now I think has become quite polished and embedded in the social structure of the school. So, that was a good and strong educational background for me, although, I still didn't have very much of a class consciousness. I didn't understand why some people had such an easy time traveling through Europe

because they had uncles, cousins, and friends, right? or your little trust funds and things like that, and why I thought it was so intimidating. What was the matter with me? Or, how come I couldn't go out and get a job on Glamour Magazine or an internship with some little judge.

After taking a degree in English and having decided to try her hand at high school teaching, Carol, in order to earn her teaching certificate, worked as a teacher-intern in a Massachusetts private high school program for the gifted and talented. There she was a member of a team of teachers who introduced her to a variety of creative approaches to writing and to inventive ways of grouping students.

She completed her certification requirements and made up her mind to move to Boston and look for a teaching job. In Winthrop, a town neighboring Boston, she obtained a position teaching high school English. It proved to be a rude introduction to public school teaching.

Winthrop, Massachusetts was a total disaster. I had 175 students, and lost 14 pounds and only made it through the year because some kid named Richie Aiello used to walk around the room with a club and say, "Miss Carol, I'll protect you!" I mean, it was really awful! At the end of a year, I quit, because

I said, "Oh, my god!" I mean, people came in and said, "Don't leave. You're terrific. You're going to be a great teacher." I said, "Right. Where were you when I needed you?"

The following year, Carol entered a graduate program in English at Middlebury College in Vermont. She enjoyed her studies and used the respite from teaching to reflect on her approach to the craft and to discuss her ideas about teaching with other teachers. At the end of the year, she was awarded a masters degree.

When classes resumed the next autumn, Carol returned to high school teaching in a new position in Waltham, Massachusetts. During that year, she began to refine her thinking about traditional schooling and to monitor more closely her feelings about her work, trying to identify the causes for the discomfort that the traditionally-run school was causing her and her students.

It turned out to be a good job for me, a good second job, because it was a very working-class town with working-class kids, who appreciated me a lot, and also--I was successful at it, very successful, and I also could then look back at the sociology of the institution and really see how the school worked, and I decided I did not like it. I didn't like the tracking. I didn't like the institutional

constraints. I didn't like the way my personality was beginning to feel. I was feeling like a "teacher." I didn't like the fact that a person was fired for coming to school on a motorcycle. So, I sort of said, "Hmm, I don't think that this institution is for me. I don't see a future here for me." I didn't feel comfortable anymore. And I began to realize--I don't know how I even had these insights--but, I knew something is wrong with the the way this is working. The kids in the bottom-level classes aren't really learning anything. Even though I'm really trying, their papers aren't any better at the end of the year, really, than they are at the beginning of the year, and it's because they're so unmotivated because they're in this group called "loser," you know, like 4-C-2, or something like that. I really couldn't stand the caste system somehow. So, I left.

Carol felt that she needed to get away from the field of education for awhile, and "do something quite different like be a go-go dancer or a lady detective...." But, she soon found herself working, first as a secretary, and later as a research associate, in a project that was studying achievement motivation at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She was to spend the next three years there doing work that she found to be engaging and

intellectually satisfying.

I had this extraordinary opportunity to really get involved in a whole research effort that was very young and very revealing. I mean, it gave me a lens through which to look at schools--classroom settings, and institutions. Also, that was a crazy time. That was like '66 to '69. Psychomotor therapy was going on and all these different kinds of T-groups and things like this. And a very mind-opening time. You know, logo therapy, Victor Frankel's work was being talked about. Robert Coles was at Harvard at that point. Sidney Gerard, the people who were talking about self-disclosure. It was just a very exciting time, and all these influences were alive on this project. As well, McClelland had written an article called "Toward a Theory of Motive Acquisition," that summarized all of the up-to-then research on learning and behavior change. So, I mean, that's a whole other parentheses I could tell you about. But, I learned about the Rosenthal literature, the halo effect, transfer of training research, all that stuff, the need to create a special setting, the need to affiliate with a positive peer group, the need to deliberately attend to transfer of training. I mean, there were these ten propositions that were so

revealing to me, and also so organized into a kind of gestalt, that it was just a very powerful learning experience.

The Harvard Project work was a pivotal experience for Carol. She began to do teacher training in schools and helped write a book about her work with other members of the project. Most importantly, however, was the effect that the study findings had on Carol's thinking about students. In many ways, they confirmed some of her own long-held convictions about the importance of the teacher's expectations of students and about the value of team teaching.

It showed me that the burden of motivating, constructing the learning setting, and arranging the educational experiences, regardless of who the kid is, regardless of the background, that burden can be assumed in much larger measure than I had ever experienced, by the teacher, by the school, particularly by a group of people who would be willing to work together to create a special kind of setting.

As the project on achievement motivation came to a close, Carol was asked to join another Harvard project which was starting the Pilot School in the Cambridge public high school. She became the project's first woman

member, bringing to it her experience as a classroom teacher and her new sensitivities to educational settings, and groupings and to student motivation. For the next three years, she worked in the Pilot School as an unpaid teacher. As compensation for her work, Harvard gave her a fellowship to do doctoral study at its School of Education.

The Pilot School Project was Carol's intensive, hands-on introduction to such important issues as interracial relations and the practical politics of establishing and running a public alternative school. It also provided her with good training for the difficult challenges, which were to follow, in the Cluster School.

Carol wrote her doctoral dissertation about her work in the Pilot School where she and another teacher had developed a special writing curriculum. The curriculum sought to accommodate racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse groups of students in a language arts setting. It later became an important component in the over-all curriculum of the Cluster School and served as the basis for Carol's immensely popular writing course.

When, in the second year of Cluster's existence, Carol was asked by the staff to consult to the project, she felt that she was especially well-prepared for the task. It also combined her interests in alternative education, in cultural diversity and in moral development



theory.

I was interested in the Cluster School for a number of reasons. One was that, in some ways, it began from an overflow of interest in the Pilot School, which was the first alternative setting in the Cambridge Public Schools. So, I was interested because this was a continuation and like a next step. I was interested, because I was somewhat familiar with Kohlberg's work because he had sent Mosha Blatt to do the trial run of the initial moral dilemma and moral discussion group in some of the advisor groups in the Pilot School, and my group was one of the groups that said, "Please go away. We don't like these discussions. They're boring." But I did see some real value to this approach, and I had actually written a paper while I was at the Pilot School on the potential learning and cognitive and affective development that came from the Pilot School community addressing crisis, which, you know, was certainly a premonition of what was to come later in the Cluster School. So, I was interested in the potential, let's say, of the Kohlberg work. I was looking around for a next job that would be interesting to me. And I wasn't thinking about: Should I be an administrator? Should I be a college professor? I just wasn't

thinking about that. I was exhausted from my work, and I was invited to come and be a consultant on a short-term basis for the Cluster School. So, I came, and here was this really fascinating group of people, having this really fascinating discussion, which did seem to go on forever and not be like a meeting at all, even though it was called a meeting. I said, "God, these people act like they have all the time in the world. They don't even take minutes." But, it was a really fascinating group of people, and the kids were fascinating, and I thought, "I can get into this. This looks like it will really be interesting." So, I just kind of went into it. But, I can see now, looking back, that for reasons of class identification, my prior research interests, my prior teaching interests, my own personality, my own--shall I say--lack of directedness toward upward mobility, but rather directedness toward work which would be personally meaningful to me and meaningful for education, it was a very natural fit. And the people were neat.

Finding the Cluster School to be an exciting place, Carol chose to stay on as a full-time teacher. The School became the locus for the confluence of her most important personal and professional streams of talent and interest.

The first thing I have to say is that it was probably the most growth-inducing, both intellectually and affectively, it was really one of the richest periods of my entire life, for a variety of reasons. I had just finished my doctoral work, I was at a point where I was very sharp and very alert and very engrossed and a very keen observer of what I was doing professionally and I think, in some ways, of life in general. That work made me sharp and attuned to things, so I was very open to an experience that would be intense. It was like I was in shape for it almost. I was geared up. That was one thing. I think, second of all, when I entered in about 1975, I was about 35 years old, and I think I was ready to become an adult and to--how shall I say?--take life by the throat or engage in something in a mature way. I had quite a bit of good positive experience behind me. I think also the time that that experience came--you know, if one wants to talk Eriksonian talk--that was a very rich time politically and socially in this country, given the convergence of thinking about a just community and developing community norms, trying to elevate the peer norm of the group in a setting that was interracial, in a setting that involved people who had been in Vietnam, had already been involved in prior kinds of alternative school work--I

use "alternative" because it was simply an alternative to what was then--but schools that were trying to be more pluralistic, more addressing in terms of the curriculum they chose, the way they worked with kids, the way staff worked with each other. Given that kind of goal, which was a product of the times, it also was the means by which this particular project sought to create a school and create a community. So, I guess I'm saying: personally, I was ready; the people who were there were an extraordinarily rich mix of people and very brilliant in all ways--not just intellectually brilliant, but able to dig into the resources of who they were, able to have fun, able to cook and sing and dance and try to cross racial barriers and get into this theoretical stuff that Larry [Kohlberg] brought. And then, just given the temper of the times, what was happening then. You know, when one thinks about what had happened to the Kennedys, to King, you know, Steve Beiko--I don't have my dates exactly right--but the landscape against which we were working, both locally, there was a real struggle to be waged, and in the country and internationally, many, many things came together. So, it made it both a tempestuous time but a very, very rich time and a time of great growth.

The Cluster School experience -- interacting with students, staff and Kohlberg, in a democratic mode -- was a great learning experience for Carol, and helped to expand her moral and social visions.

It confirmed my belief that kids really do learn from true engagement and from conversation and listening to each other and that it's all right to argue and to confront and that's important, just as it's all right to express affection and love in a school community, I mean, all of that, for me, is part of the professional [part] of it. I think, for the personal [part], that experience really changed who I am as a person profoundly, allowing me to really see beyond class boundaries and to identify -- and beyond artificial, hierarchical boundaries, in terms of what kind of work one chooses to do or how I see myself. I mean, occasionally, I feel exploited and unappreciated, and "Okay, I'm never going to amount to anything professionally. Isn't that too bad? I'll never be famous." And I'm always too tired to really come off very well. But, basically, I feel very satisfied that my life work has meaning, and that is deeply rooted in the orientation and the work that I did in the Cluster School. If I quit work tomorrow, for the rest of my life, I think I would

feel satisfied that I had accomplished something, and that is very significant to me.

### Conclusion

Originally having become involved in the Cluster School as a consultant, Carol quickly found it to be a small community where she could work closely with colleagues and continue to explore her interests in race relations, cultural diversity, moral education and, also, writing, which she had begun to address in the Pilot School and in her doctoral dissertation.

Working for the first time in a democratically-run school setting, where all issues were open for discussion and where both students and staff spoke their minds freely, was at once exhilarating and personally challenging for Carol. She discovered that her frequently adopted role of acting as go-between or peace-maker in situations of conflict, which developed as a result of her family interactions -- a role which usually served her well -- could also be one which kept her from dealing with her own feelings. Her involvement with the Cluster School helped her to get beyond the limitations of that role and to begin to integrate her emotions with her intellectual convictions. Moreover, by participating in the often passionate school discussions about issues of race, and by interacting with black staff and students, she came to

know African-Americans as people -- oppressed people, no doubt -- but as people with short-comings and talents, and not as some needy objects of liberal "good works." She also came to have a clearer understanding of the ramifications of and solutions to racism, as she began to put flesh on her previously abstract understanding of African-Americans. Faculty discussions about the possible dismissal of an allegedly incompetent African-American staff member, a problem that emerged from the real life of the Cluster community and involved real people, led Carol to a developmental juncture where she saw more clearly the moral conflicts between her principled level of reasoning and her seeming unwillingness to act in concert with it. Gilligan might assert the following:

Such a moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities rather than from competing rights and requires for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract. [Gilligan, 1982, p. 19]

Carol also received intellectual and spiritual support and nurturance from the Cluster community, a community whose approach to learning repeatedly confirmed her belief in not isolating teachers from one another and not isolating teachers from learners.

## Muriel

Muriel, the Cluster School guidance counselor, who at 37 was the oldest member of the original staff, grew up in a middle-class, Jewish family in Brookline, a town across the river from Cambridge. She remembered her late father, who worked as a wholesale flower merchant, to have been a gentle and kind man. Her mother, also deceased, was a traditional home maker with whom Muriel had a tempestuous relationship. Throughout her childhood, Muriel thought that although she was from a good family, she had not received proper guidance or support.

I was a person who always felt outside of things, left out. I was the second child of four. My younger sister was killed in an accident, so I became the middle child later in life. I went to the Brookline schools and I went through Brookline High School, and except for when I acted out, nobody knew I was there. I never received any particular attention [or] support until practically the week before graduation, when my mother asked me what my plans were and I told her I would be a buyer for a department store because I had always worked at the old Chestnut Hill Mall. She rushed me to the guidance counselor, who gave me an interest inventory and said I should major in phys. ed. because I like



the outdoors. The next thing I knew, I was visiting Bridgewater State Teachers' College, where I looked around on a beautiful spring day and said, "Oh, yes, this is pretty. I guess I'll go here."

Muriel's stay at Bridgewater State Teachers' was, in her words, a "disaster."

I began to have troubles immediately because, every Sunday, all of those other girls went to church. So, therefore I didn't understand why I had to wear nylon stockings to Sunday dinner, because I didn't go to church. This became the beginning of many issues. In the end, I was asked to leave before my freshmen exams, supposedly because I had broken serious rules and probably had been sexually involved with people. The truth of the matter was, (they really will never know, or didn't know,) I was not pregnant, but a number of other girls were in the dorm. So, I thought it was a gross unfairness, number one. Number two, my dad refused to believe this and threatened to sue the president...if any bad words followed my name.

At the end of the school year, Muriel retreated from her confusing and unsuccessful stint as a college freshman to a day camp that was run by a woman for whom she had

worked in previous summers. There she tried to gather her thoughts and attempt to make plans for the future. Her father visited her at the camp and encouraged her to continue her studies elsewhere.

He came out there one day and he said to me, "Are you going to take this lying down?" And I said, "What do you mean, Dad?" He said, "Not go to school anymore?" And I said I really didn't care about school. I was never a good student. I always got like C's, and nobody ever took me aside and said "You could do better", and all that stuff. (I'm telling you all these particular experiences because I have a definite reason why I did what I did later in life.)

In spite of her negative self-assessment of her abilities as a student, Muriel agreed to go with her father and speak with the Director of Admissions of Boston University about enrolling her in the fall.

...my father pled my case of why I had been unfairly treated and [of] the potential he thought I had. This guy--Dean Wilder--I think was his name, said if I could go to summer school and get a B or better average,...I could be admitted to the College of Liberal Arts at Boston University. I studied every single day of the entire summer and I got two B's and a C. And as soon as I got accepted into BU, I

promptly got C's and D's again.

In the spring of her sophomore year, Muriel's world began to expand. She started dating the man who would become her first husband and the father of her children. He was "the answer to her prayers." Later that spring, the woman in whose day camp she had worked, who had taken a special interest in Muriel, offered her an important summer campership at a place called "The Encampment for Citizenship." Held in New York City, the program was designed to train future leaders in democratic decision-making. There Muriel met people of various races and religions and made her first close friendships with black peers. Through those friendships, she became concerned about the issues of racial equality and integration and in her junior year she helped establish a civil rights organization on campus.

Later in her junior year, Muriel was married and then graduated the following year, pregnant with her first child. Her family grew quickly and by the time she was 25, she was the mother of three small children, living in a middle-class, suburban community feeling isolated and depressed.

I realized I needed to do something else with my life. So, I decided that the reason I was in this terrible state with three children and didn't know

anything was because of my [high school] guidance counselor. If my guidance counselor had paid attention to me during high school,...I wouldn't have been in all this big mess.

As a way of addressing those needs, Muriel enrolled in a master's degree program in guidance and counseling. Among her classmates she found women like herself who were mothers and who wanted to work outside of the home. They inspired her to finish the degree and to apply for and get her first job as a middle school guidance counselor.

Working in a suburban community, Muriel applied herself diligently to her new job while she continued her studies toward certification as a school psychologist. In the two years she spent there, she identified with and took up the causes of marginalized students, trying unsuccessfully, for example, to change the school's practice of academic tracking. Her special interest was in a group of students who were enrolled in a class called "Economic Opportunity."

These were kids really deprived in a variety of ways--economically, socially, culturally, whatever. I tried to do things around helping them feel better about themselves, things like that. I never knew quite what I was doing. I didn't have a theory, but I just thought that that was the right thing to do.

I think [that what] I always tried to provide for all the kids where I worked was the feeling they were important, they were somebody, all that self-image stuff. They are a very cornball thing; they are very bottom-line. But, let me tell you, these people today can turn themselves inside out, write all their fucking papers, whatever, but if they don't help these kids feel good about themselves, it doesn't really matter--the theories and people--you know, sick. A lot of it is sick because the people have forgotten, many of them, trying to do all this fancy stuff. If you don't feel good about yourself, you won't feel good at school, period. And, you won't make friends, period. Or, you'll make the wrong friends.

Muriel's next position was as a school psychologist in another suburban school. It was during her time there that federal legislation (Chapter 766), which addressed the needs of learning disabled students, was enacted. Muriel agreed with much of the intent of the legislation but objected to some of the ways it was implemented. Its form of implementation conflicted with her sense of how kids ought to "fit in" and "feel good about themselves."

Most of those kids need another kind of "TLC." They don't need to be labeled 766. I said to the learning

disabilities teachers, "You should be working in the classroom with the kids. They should be with their friends. You're making kids feel bad not good."

After three years as a school psychologist, Muriel left the suburbs and began working in the Cambridge Pilot School as its first guidance counselor. She quickly adapted to the alternative school environment and said of Pilot, "I finally found a spot where I fit in." Pilot afforded her freedom and independence in her work as well as collegial support.

At the end of the year, Muriel volunteered to chair a summer workshop which led to the formation of the Cluster School. There she met Larry Kohlberg, the man who eventually would become her doctoral dissertation advisor, intellectual mentor and close friend.

I think no one really had much influence on me until I met Larry Kohlberg. When I would do talks on mentoring, he was the only person who would come to my mind. Larry came along and said, "You are smart." And I said, "Oh, I can't write. I could never do that." But he said, "Oh, yes you can!."

Muriel's relationship with Kohlberg was multi-faceted and highlighted the individual needs and interests of both of them. They were both going through divorces when they

met and were in need of reassurance and support. At times their needs would manifest themselves in unusual behaviors such as Muriel's playful and seductive practice, from time to time, of sitting in Kohlberg's lap during faculty meetings. This behavior was also illustrative of another aspect of Muriel's personality. Thinking that she was not an intellectual and that she could not compete with those staff members who she thought were, she would often try to cut short theoretical discussions during faculty meetings by advancing her ideas about making kids "feel good" and "fit in." It seemed as though she was unwilling to challenge herself to participate in the discussions. Yet while she was generally unwilling to do the serious theoretical work that the project required and would impatiently dismiss it as "not being to the point," it was important for her, as it was for several other faculty members, to have her intellectual worth affirmed by Kohlberg. As a consequence, she wanted Kohlberg to take her point of view in staff discussions and felt resentment when he sided with other staff, especially with Howard and Brian.

I would say to him [Kohlberg], "Larry, why do side with Brian and Howard? They are not right. They are doing X or Y or whatever it was." And he would say to me, "I know you're going to move on and they are the foot soldiers of the community."

Kohlberg was Muriel's intellectual father/mentor and when others appeared to get his intellectual approval, in her mind they would become competitors for his attention and call into question his stated belief in Muriel's abilities. This competition, a form of sibling rivalry, colored her perception of the two pedagogical camps and prompted her to try to discredit faculty "rivals."

That day Howard said, "Well, we have two points of view here: the communitarian and the counseling." He, at that moment, created division in the staff that was never mended. I felt that Howard tried to out-Kohlberg Kohlberg. So did you [the author], to some extent. Your way was the way...it was like name-calling: "softies," "counseling," all that.

Most of the faculty thought that Howard's identifying of a division that already existed was not the same as creating one. Muriel's contention, however, conformed to her sibling rival model which tended to personalize what was, in effect, an important pedagogical division. She was a strong advocate for the counseling point of view and appeared to see the community as worthwhile in so far as it supported counseling objectives. She frequently said that, in her opinion, the School ought to be more rehabilitative, while the communitarian teachers, on the



other hand, believed that by adhering to the communitarian model, we were contributing to rehabilitation.

Muriel's need for approval also related to the writing of her doctoral dissertation. Because she had been involved in the School from the outset and was solidly committed to the project, Kohlberg encouraged her to write her dissertation about the founding of the School. Her perceptions of the reactions of the staff to her writing of the thesis revealed the extent of her insecurity.

Larry asked me to do my thesis on it [the School]. I believe that you [Brian] and Howard were resentful of that to some degree. That's what I believe. That's my perception. No one ever read it, no one ever commented, no one ever congratulated me on finishing that doctorate, neither you, [nor] Howard nor, even for a long time, Carol, which might be another whole thing.

### Conclusion

Muriel's developmental issues differed somewhat from those of other staff members. She was nearing early middle age when she began working at Cluster and was forty when she left the School. Having raised three children, she was ready for new challenges. Although she did not want to define herself in terms of the relationships she

had with men, they played an interesting role in her development. Her relationship with her father was a close one; he was her protector who went to bat for her in tough times and she was "Daddy's girl." Daddy was replaced by her first husband, a financially secure lawyer who was older than Muriel. Financial security, however, proved not to be enough and Muriel, who was at once feisty, insecure, impatient and ambitious, needed intellectual affirming, which she received from Kohlberg. Cluster also provided Muriel with a place where she could freely explore and develop her leadership skills while being challenged to defend the positions she took by a staff that was not easily manipulated. That constant challenging, though, was a source of great consternation for her and after three years at Cluster, Muriel left the program feeling, in her own words, angry and frustrated.

I went to [Superintendent] Bill Lannon and said, "I want out of that school! I'm not staying one more time to go home crying, to be upset like that and attacked. I'm not going to do it."

In spite of those ill feelings, she believed that the Cluster experience taught her to think more in terms of fairness in her dealings with students and helped her to have greater confidence in students' abilities to take a more substantive role in the governance of schools. In

addition, the experience gave her a better understanding of the elements of community and helped to improve her community-building activities.

Less certain of Cluster's influence on her personal life, Muriel made the following observations about herself:

I'm probably still relatively self-centered around living my life, doing my things. While I want to have a relationship [with her current husband], I would say, in all honesty, I probably want it when I want it. The other times, I want to just be immersed [in work].

## Charles

I was walking through Harvard Square and this guy says, "You black mother fucker." I said, "Are you talking to me?" I mean, I wasn't black. What is he talking about? I mean, of course, I know I'm black, but god! That was like pow! Where I came from, nobody would dare say that, even if they thought it.

The only African-American teacher on the Cluster staff, Charles was born in Brooklyn and, together with a younger brother, was raised in a strict Methodist home in an all white neighborhood in suburban, Westchester County, New York. In moving to the suburbs, his middle-class, upwardly mobile parents adopted the white suburban way of life, to the point of not socializing with other blacks and, even among their children, rarely discussing racial issues or making mention of the fact that they themselves were black. The resulting sense of isolation from black culture made Charles feel resentful and angry towards his parents, especially towards his silent and unaffectionate father, and became a motivating force in his often painful and confusing quest for his racial identity.

Charles attended private high school in Connecticut where, again, he was one of a very few people of color and where he continued to feel separated from black culture.

His account of his post secondary schooling, however,

is problematic. He claimed that he did his undergraduate work at Harvard College, followed by a master's degree in education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. But during his tenure at Cluster, Charles variously said that he had attended Columbia and the University of Michigan. The Cambridge School Department lists his alma mater as Columbia but the Columbia Alumni Office has no listing for him in its files. Likewise, Harvard College has no record of his having attended there. The Harvard Graduate School of Education, on the other hand, does have a record of him taking a master's degree there in 1978. Since it is sometimes the practice at the Harvard Education School to admit candidates with little or no previous college work, it is likely that he was so admitted.

From the beginning of the School, Kohlberg and the founding faculty had appealed to minority teachers and students to join the new program. While many black students became members, the city's minority teachers, whose numbers were few and who often had a variety of other commitments, chose not to be on the staff. Believing that the project had to have a black staff person who could act as a role model for students and help deal with complex racial issues, Kohlberg recruited Charles who was a student in one of his classes at

Harvard. The move would prove to be unwise both for Charles and for the Cluster community.

Almost everything about life in Cluster was new for Charles. Unlike all of the other teachers who had had years of teaching experience before working in the School, Charles had had none. Developing curriculum, and planning and conducting classes are always challenging, even for the most seasoned teachers, but in the Cluster School, with all of its educational innovations, it was important that teachers be highly skilled. Charles was at a disadvantage in this regard but he received encouragement, help and collegial support from all of the faculty.

Being among large numbers of black people was also new for Charles and it presented personal and professional problems for him. He believed that the black Cluster students (particularly the males), most of whose lives had been spent in poverty and in the inner-city, represented the authentic black cultural life that had been denied him. In an effort to capture some of that authenticity and in order to be accepted by them, Charles befriended black students as if he were one of their peers. His need for acceptance often clouded his professional judgment and caused him to make some serious errors in judgment. An example of such an error is illustrated in the way that he handled a situation in which a black male student was accused of having stolen a teacher's purse.

I was very protective when black kids were being accused of stealing, because I think throughout society, when something is missing, it's a black kid. I could have been better about that, because on one incident, one of my kids stole some teacher's purse. And then when they said that they thought that he'd stole the purse, I said, "No, he didn't." And I went down to the Headmaster's office and the kid's standing there, he's crying, he says, "No, I didn't do it. Mr. Charles, I didn't do it." And I said, "Of course, you didn't do it." And then some other kid came up behind me and said, "Well, I want you to come with me down to the field house." I went down to the field house. I said, "Were you in the field house?" And walking in and there's all this lady's credit cards floating in the top of the toilet stool. And I said, "God, did he fool me." And so, I think that I got used a lot by some of the black kids. But that's OK. I don't mind that. I don't like it that they were stealing. I don't think I want to promote stealing.

But the Cluster stealing rule created other problems for Charles. While he contended that he was committed to developing a trusting community whose rules were made democratically and applied equally to all of its members,

his uncertainty about himself and his role in the School made him feel conflicted about the rule's application. He was at once embarrassed by the stereotype of black people being thieves and at the same time confronted with the fact that black students were involved in a disproportionately higher rate of thefts in the program. Lacking the tools of political analysis which might help him understand the problem, Charles expressed mixed feelings about the stealing rule itself.

It seemed, because of circumstances, an imbalanced kind of rule for the blacks, ...maybe you can divide it and say this [the rule] is here as to create discussion, to create dialogue about why people steal...But since there's a proclivity among blacks to sort of take things that are not theirs--there seemed to be--I think there is. I mean, I didn't know that many white people in that community that stole--in that community. So, I was feeling a little shaky about that rule. But I think that, in retrospect, it was a good rule.

Charles' desire to be liked by students and to be accepted by black community members also eventually led him to neglect his teaching duties. His negligence showed itself in various ways but especially so in the case of the student athletes.



Several of Charles' Cluster students, who were some of the host school's star basketball players, became the object of Charles' intense interest. Over time, some of his other students, who felt that their educational needs were being ignored, became disgruntled and began to tell other community members that Charles was spending much of the class time discussing sports news with the athletes. When asked about the allegations in a staff meeting, Charles angrily denied them. But the allegations persisted and finally, a group of black girls, who risked the ire of some of their black male peers who charged them with betraying racial solidarity, made a public complaint about Charles' negligence in a community meeting.

Charles' behavior in the community became increasingly disruptive. When called to task by other staff, he began to label as racist those who challenged or opposed him. The threat of being labeled a racist effectively silenced the emerging criticisms of many of the female staff and the delicate work of limiting Charles' negative influence on the community fell to a few male staff members. Moreover, in community meetings, Charles refused to take a developmental perspective in discussions and often echoed the arguments of the students at the lowest level of development. Finally, after many distressing staff meetings, at the urgings of staff and

students, Charles chose to leave the program and became the School Department's liaison to the juvenile court.

### Conclusion

When Charles joined the staff, he had been married for several years, had two children, and was going through a painful divorce. During that difficult period, he received support and nurturance from the Cluster teachers in ways that, according to him, he never had gotten from his emotionally cool and distant family.

Although he was 27 when he began working at the School, Charles' overriding developmental issue was that of his need to formulate a more adequate personal racial and cultural identity. Being the only black teacher, a difficult position under most circumstances, required that Charles have a clear sense of himself and of his role in relation to students. Unfortunately, because his identity problems were so serious, the community was limited in its ability to meet his needs.

Charles entered the Cluster School with several strikes against him. First, he had not been trained to be a teacher and lacked basic teaching skills. Second, in his effort to discover his authentic black identity, he was confused about the role that he ought to play as a teacher, particularly in relation to black male students. Third, Charles, whose position could have been construed

as tokenism, was brought to the School by Kohlberg, a man whose own liberal racial views and whose desire to develop an educational model that could be replicated in a multi-racial setting, kept him from acknowledging the destructive force that Charles eventually became in the Cluster community.

## Stuart

Stuart had been teaching for six years in the Science Department at the all male Rindge Technical School when he heard about the summer workshop to form a new alternative school. He was dissatisfied with his job and the way it left him little time for important things like coming to know his students better and having regularly scheduled times for discussion with colleagues. He had originally been hired to teach earth science to 9th graders and had embraced his work with the enthusiasm and energy of a new, young teacher. All during his teacher preparation courses, he had had fantasies of teaching a class to inner-city kids in which he would involve them in nature projects and help them to love the outdoors as much as he did. He was thrilled, therefore, to learn that he would be able to teach his "dream class" at Rindge.

But Stuart was soon to be disappointed. After teaching his "dream class" for several years, he realized that many of his students were not responding to the material as he had hoped and, after much reflection, he finally concluded that, in order to have the impact on them that he wanted, he would have to have a different kind of relationship with them, a more personal and egalitarian one.

I envisioned earth science as being a curriculum that would surround you--you could touch it, you could taste it, [and] it would actually be meaningful stuff for kids. I had always dreamed of going with my students to the sea coast, going to the mountain tops, going to canyons and discovering new vistas, and therefore, this curriculum seemed appropriate. But, when I first did it, there were so many kids with so many problems, that these concepts were just alien to them. And when I tried to take kids outside into the environment, they just weren't into learning what I was trying to teach. They were not bad kids, but they had great difficulty dealing with various environmental, earth science concepts. So then, I guess I kind of drifted away from strict adherence to the curriculum and started really working with kids. [I started] finding out who they were and their backgrounds--not so much really working with earth-shaking problems, but being available, being a good listener. I think that's what I was really, a good listener. And then I think I felt that Rindge Tech was rather limiting. Obviously, it was all boys, and so I did an outreach and I got some girls over [from the Latin School]. We had the first co-ed classes.

Stuart knew that he needed to change things about his job and the thought of the creative potential of a new

alternative school excited him. He wanted to be part of a school community that was more interesting, flexible and challenging than Rindge, and one that would be the antithesis of the his own Catholic school education with its emphasis on rote learning and unquestioning acceptance of authority. He hoped to work in an environment where there was a commitment to intellectual inquiry, the kind that his mother had always encouraged him to pursue.

Stuart, a tall and athletic only child, who was also the high school tennis coach, had grown up in Cambridge in a troubled Catholic, working-class family. His father was an alcoholic whose drinking created serious problems for Stuart and his mother and brought the two of them closer to one another.

Because of [my father's] problem with drink, he would work very hard during every day of the week, even on Saturdays, but then he would drink very hard beginning Thursday nights, then Friday nights and Saturday nights, and had a very caustic and biting tongue--bitter, very bitter. Made life in that house, especially as I grew older, very difficult. I never understood why my mother stayed with him.

While Stuart's father neglected his parental duties, Stuart's mother was Stuart's most important moral and intellectual guide.

I didn't communicate with my father, but my mother was another story. To me she was a fabulous woman, who was well-learned in the ways of life.

She never graduated grammar school, never mind high school; however, she used to grab me by the ear. In grade 7, I remember being taken to places like Jordan Hall in Boston, Memorial Hall, John Hancock Hall to hear a wide variety of speakers, whether they be conservative or liberal or whether they be prominent theologians. We would probably go on the average of once a month, sometimes more often, and we would always go to these various lectures. So, I was exposed to a wide range of ideas [but] I had no outlet for talking [about them] except with my mother (and certainly with nobody in my peer group!). We would talk about things that now would be viewed as very progressive Catholic theology--it's ecumenical nature. She seemed to have a very early sympathy for those kinds of doctrines and beliefs, which endeared her to me.

His mother's willingness to enrich Stuart's life by exposing him to a variety of people, ideas, and experiences did not go unnoticed by some of her provincial, Catholic friends.

I learned to swim at the Y (YMCA). When I went to the Y, I never took any shit for it but my mother took it from her friends because, at that time, the Y was accused by certain people in Catholic circles of all sorts of things. Obviously there was nudity, and [reportedly] abuse of boys; but, more importantly, [they believed] that you would lose your Catholic belief because someone would take you and try to train you with a different doctrine. That never was the case. I never experienced it. I did attend a service where "Our Father" and stuff was said, but that never bothered me, and I found it fascinating to see how other people operated, but never was threatened by any stretch of the imagination. And I enjoyed going to the Y, learned how to swim, became a life guard, swam in competition and things like that. So, that worked out. Her openness of mind really permitted me to do other things. And so, I'm very thankful for that.

As Stuart began to develop an interest in the opposite sex, his mother showed wisdom in her healthy view of sex and in her ability to allow for a supportive developmental separation between herself and her son. The following illustrates the point.



She was also a believer that you could read anything. And I remember, growing up, I would go and capture all sorts of books and all sorts of nudity magazines, like Playboy. But I grabbed Peyton Place because I knew that was it. I think I devoured it in, I don't know, maybe one night. I took it and I burrowed it in the back of my closet. And I came home one day, and there it is, right on my bed. And I go, "Holy shit!" My mother was working. She worked from 3 to 11, so I go, "Oh, god, oh, when she comes home, what's going to happen?" And nothing happened. And then, next day, going out for breakfast, she said, "I always felt that you should read anything, but you shouldn't have to hide it." That was the only thing, and she said, "Someday, if you want to talk about the book, we'll talk about the book." That's how she reacted. That's when I knew that I could really read, and review [anything], and then [would] have to sort out my own value system, and it wouldn't be something where I would be threatened by, "You have to believe this ~~and~~ this and this." That was a remarkable experience. Very important.

With encouragement and assistance from his mother, Stuart did well in school, especially in science. After graduating from high school in 1961, he spent the

following two years studying aeronautics at Wentworth Institute in Boston. The training there led to a job with Pratt and Whitney, a company that was producing technical equipment which was being used in the Vietnam War. He worked there for one year and, since he no longer had a student draft deferment, he began to worry about being drafted.

I was about to be drafted because I was out of school, and was wanting this company, on one hand, to issue me a deferment so I wouldn't have to go [into the Armed Forces], and on the other hand, didn't want to stay with this company. At the same time, they dangled a service rep's job in front of me, which enabled me, if I wanted to, to go to Vietnam, but working for them in the private sector. I rejected that, went back into the draft, and was redrafted. I then grabbed my transcripts and went down to Boston State College. They took me immediately as a transfer candidate, and I started off majoring in physics right then, probably sometime in October. I did that and stayed out of the draft.

Stuart believed that he would have been better equipped to deal with the question of the draft if he had had the benefit of a Cluster-like education.

I do think that what I did was legally okay, but

morally corrupt because I [now] believe everybody has to serve, not so much in a military capacity, but to serve the country. The reason why I think it was immoral is because I used my intelligence, my ability to read, to maneuver through the cracks and get out of it [the draft]. When I think of [my decision about the draft], I think of it as kind of legal, but I'm not really satisfied it was the best thing to do. I certainly didn't want to serve in the war. It certainly was a moral decision that I made, but how much thought did I really give it? It really gravitated, in my own case, around saving my own ass. I never really thought about other people and their rights and the fairness issues, as [some] other people had. I realize that that is probably normal, but the young men and women who participated in Cluster School, I think, would have had a greater facility to discuss issues such as Vietnam and servitude to the country; when is it proper, when is it not?; the rights of the government versus the individual in times of war, (or non-war, as this situation was). So, anyway, when I think about Cluster School, I think, if I had had it during my high school, I would have been highly excited about people discussing, not only Vietnam, but a lot of issues that were really relevant to adolescents.

Stuart joined the Cluster School in its first year. He happily remembered the work there to have been as fascinating and invigorating as he had expected it would be but he also recalled that it placed tremendous demands on his personal life.

Overall, [teaching there] was fabulous. It was the-- and this is terrible to be saying this now--it was probably the best experience in my teaching life; it was also the worst time of my life, too. But, we can make distinctions here. Without a doubt, it was the best. The reason why it was the best is because we were devising methods or a process by which students were really dealing with issues that they could have some control over. The curriculum was becoming alive. The decision-making process was becoming alive. The ability to discuss things in terms of truth, fairness, to try to make decisions that would require people to role-play was absolutely fabulous. Because, at the heart of it all, was a very good process that enabled kids, for the first time, to modify their own lives in the larger world, to modify an institution, and in a larger way, to modify a community, and hence, obviously, their own lives and lord knows what. It is absolutely magnificent!

The reason why it was also a dichotomy, why it was the worst time, was that that first year--and there was nothing bad about the first year, no matter how the issues went or anything like that, because I think the adrenaline was flowing; the intellectual adrenaline in terms of creating something great but it was taking a toll. I mean, we were working, definitely, 60 to 80 hours a week, plus a couple of retreats, perhaps on a frequency of once a month. Plus, people were making decisions about their own lives during this whole process, and so you'd get through weighing community issues, then you had to sometimes deal with personal issues. It became a very draining experience. I think I was the only married member. We had children who were both young, and that was really a severe drain. When I would go back home, I wasn't really putting time in. I think it became very obvious to me at the end of the first year, during that first summer after the first year, that my time was limited to the School. And then when I intellectually confronted it, I didn't think it was fair, because the initial staff members were still going full bore, and I already knew that I couldn't do this. And, I started feeling guilty almost before September began of the second year.

In addition to the guilt he felt over not being able to put in as much time as the other faculty members, Stuart was frustrated by the fact that the Cluster faculty had little time to discuss their new model with the teachers in the host school. He attributed their inability to convince the high school faculty of the value of the model to the Cluster teachers' lack of time management skills and not to their lack of desire to share their new findings.

I really think that if we could have sold it [the model] to the moderate high school faculty, [the project] would still be going and there might be three or four 60-person groups operating [in the host high school].

After teaching in the School for a few years, Stuart continued to enjoy being with his colleagues but saw, what he judged to have been, ominous divisions becoming evident between faculty members; faculty who, during the first year of the School, had seemed to be unified and more able to accommodate their various differences, especially regarding Kohlberg's theory and its application.

The staff was a very exciting, very dynamic group to be around, and a fun group. We would work hard, be very passionate, and then would be able, for the

first year anyway, to go out and say, "You know, well, I didn't really agree with you on this, but, what the hell, we'll just get on with it." Yes, I thought that that kind of an exchange, where you could disagree, [no matter how much] you believed or accepted Larry's theory, and then still remain friends, was very good. That seemed to change, though, after a period of time. The staff became very fragmented. You had, what I call, the touchy-feely approach starting to really build, namely the counseling school of thought versus those people who were [supporting] the theory or the community-based democracy or the more confrontational [approach]. That was very detrimental in my eyes [because] I was in the middle. I could understand why the touchy-feely was developing and I could understand why people wanted to back off from the confrontational. Some kids you have to stroke emotionally. But when you go into that community meeting, you have to be able to confront.

### Conclusion

Having spent his 20's establishing himself in his teaching career and starting a family, Stuart became a Cluster teacher at age 31, hoping to find a community where he could have more personal and caring relationships

with both teaching colleagues and students. In addition to happily finding there the kind of relationships he had sought, he was also introduced to valuable moral discussion and student role-playing techniques which became permanent components in his teaching repertoire. Furthermore, as he experienced the liberating personal effects of democratic relationships with students and witnessed the productive learning that those relationships tended to promote, he became convinced of the need to democratize all relationships in schools, a point of view that continues to inform his work in curriculum development and teaching. Finally, Stuart contended that he was a better father because of the time he spent in the School. He believed that the work there conditioned him to frame issues in terms of fairness, thus providing him with an excellent parenting model and a healthy antidote to the often dysfunctional mode of communication he had experienced in his own childhood.



## Maureen

They thought they were getting someone who was like Little Miss Conservative who went to St Peter's Catholic High School. Little did they know.

Maureen began teaching in the Social Studies Department at the Cambridge High and Latin School in the fall of 1971. Her father, who had been an administrator in the Cambridge Public Works Department, was politically well-connected and used his influence to get her the job. On the surface, Maureen appeared to be not unlike many of the other political patronage appointees in the School Department. Her Irish Catholic family had lived in Cambridge for several generations and supported the conservative, "Irish mafia" politicians at election time. She had attended St. Peter's, her neighborhood parish school, for both primary school and high school, and had counted few among her school mates whose ethnicity was different from her own. In short, she had the resume of a "townie" and townies were given jobs in city departments with the assumption that they shared similar values. Those values included suspicion of people unlike their kind, racial separation, support of the Catholic Church and of conservative, "Independent" politicians and their practice of patronage politics. Even when Maureen's fellow townies moved to the suburbs, as many of her

friends did, often their same insular values, seemingly altered by the patina of financial success, continued to be held tenaciously and were reinforced by regular visits to the old neighborhood. Maureen, however, was different and was eager to break free of the townie mold.

Loquacious, witty and bright, Maureen was the only girl in a family of three children, who, as soon as she learned to read, found refuge and excitement in the books at the public library. For the usual reasons of sibling rivalry, she competed against her high-powered older brother, who later became a successful, high-tech entrepreneur, and against her younger brother, who she felt was held to a less demanding standard by her parents because he was the baby of the family. But Maureen also competed with her brothers for parental attention and affection that had been unfairly diluted by her father's alcoholic demands and her mother's co-dependent behavior, a dynamic which deeply influenced the family but went unacknowledged by it.

Maureen likewise found her Catholic school education to have been unfair in some important ways and her memory of its unfairness would later guide her teaching and act as a force in attracting her to teach in Cluster.

The experience of having gone to Catholic schools was so unfair. Even though I was such a good little sheep for such a long time so that my rebellion in

Catholic school really only took place in the last half of my junior year, part of my senior year. But [later] my moment of revelation really scared me, because I came [to know] about how favors were played and about issues of class, issues of race. I grew up, [and] I never knew a black person. There weren't that many black Catholics around. Like, all of a sudden, when you get older, you say, "Well, wait a minute, there's something wrong here," and something seriously wrong. I just think [that there was a] basic unfairness [in my Catholic education] and my experience with nuns [was that] they were terribly, terribly unfair. I was always someone who made out well, but it wasn't until I was older that I could really look at the other kids. At the time, I wasn't very self-reflective. But, as I got older, I realized that my success was at someone else's expense. I still feel bad about that.

Maureen was an outstanding high school student and upon graduating, chose to study anthropology at Northeastern University in Boston. The study of anthropology opened new worlds for her and stimulated her interest in the field to the extent that, after taking an undergraduate degree, she went on for further graduate study in the same department and spent three years there

as a teaching fellow. She enjoyed her work there immensely.

Nevertheless, Maureen had not intended to make a career of teaching and became more interested in it only in response to the political realities of the day.

I think that I never really thought about being a teacher. I really wanted to be an anthropologist, but certainly, [because of] political things outside, what happened to the Vietnam War, all the funding was drying up. There was no future as an anthropologist, and I knew that. And the only way I could possibly do what interested me intellectually was [to become a teacher] and, that's what drew me into it.

For five years, Maureen taught social studies in the regular high school and although she enjoyed the students, she found that working in isolation from other adults made her feel lonely and in need of the intellectual exchange and emotional support one often gets from working as part of a community. So, when the opportunity to join the Cluster School arose, she saw it as a possible means of addressing those concerns.

I really joined [the School] because I wanted to be a part of that community of learners. I needed to be connected. I really felt a need to be with peers. All I had to do was go over to the Social Studies

Department and look at those dolts! Plus there were only two women in the department. It was just horrible. And so the idea of being with a group of people that, obviously, (a) had a vision of education, and (b) weren't stupid, was something that really pulled me in. I needed a chance to grow. I was feeling that my life as a teacher was stultifying real fast by just being a regular classroom teacher. I remember going to my interview at Cluster and saying I was looking for a chance to develop and a chance to grow.

In Cluster, Maureen not only found the kind of community she had sought but also discovered a democratic and theory-based approach to education which dramatically changed the way she thought about and practiced her craft. In addition, because of the School's connection to Harvard, she was given the opportunity to study Kohlberg's theory and eventually to do doctoral study about the School, which she is currently completing there. The combination of community support and the exhilaration she experienced in using the tools of developmental theory and in doing related graduate study, helped to improve her self-perception as a teacher.

[Joining the School] was seminal. It changed my life. I think it changed my life, obviously, for the

better. There were two things going on. Number one was being a member of a community of learners and not just teachers but kids as well. We were exploring something that I thought was just incredibly exciting. The other thing that Cluster School did is it brought me to Harvard as well, so that's like a little sub-theme in here. There was a belief that if you're going to do this stuff, you've got to learn about it. And so, all of a sudden, I found myself in some workshop on moral development, and I had been out of school for a while at that point. I really hadn't done anything in six years. So, it fed me intellectually. I found that the theory itself was very engaging, because I could see it being worked out. That's what I really liked about it. It wasn't totally abstract. As the kids in the community wrestled with its problems, you could really see and listen and it just made a lot of sense to me. So, I think that was important. I think also the idea that we were creating this world together [was important]. The idea that there's this constant struggle. We all know it was just incredibly difficult at times. But, at the same time, there was an excitement in being-- It was totally different than anything that I had ever experienced as a teacher. To have a vision of education and then to implement that vision and to be

on the line doing it and then having interaction with Harvard, I thought that was very powerful. I thought that having Kohlberg there, and the idea of working with the researchers and having that kind of a looping kind of feedback, I thought was also very powerful. It all of the sudden validated what you were as a teacher, as a professional, even as a person, that you weren't treated as someone who was stupid, which, as we all know, often happens to teachers.

Maureen found that working with a supportive group of teachers helped her to begin to understand and accept the fact that in order to grow, one cannot avoid conflict. She remembered her most difficult developmental challenge in the School to have been when Charles, who was believed to have been shirking his teaching duties and actively subverting the work of the School, was confronted by the staff concerning his behavior. It was through that process that she came face to face with the conflict between her generally positive feelings for Charles and her anger about the effect that his actions were having on the community. She later came to understand, through the writings of Carol Gilligan, that she had interpreted her dilemma in classic female terms. Maureen recounted:

Charles wouldn't own [his own behavior] and then to call someone a racist was the last refuge of a scoundrel, and that was his response to any type of criticism. I really feel that. And then, plus, he would pull the kids in on that, which I thought was wrong in so many ways. So, that was an issue. Also, he was a nice enough guy. He was affable. It wasn't like he was an evil person. And that made it harder, too. It took me a while to really wise up, to really sort of say, "Maureen, get through this, and don't really think about what he's like as a person and just look at what it's doing to you as a person and the entire community and just say, 'Enough of this crap.'" And also the kids. The bottom line is the kids were consumers of non-education, if you will, and a lot of these were street black kids who were the ones that were being cheated the most.

I know it's the feminine--to use the Gilligan stuff--that you want to keep connected and you want to patch it up and you want to try to make it better. And I sort of felt in that situation there was a tension between [staff member] Carol and myself, and then with you and Howard, over Charles and I hated that. So, I felt torn there.



The Cluster experience helped Maureen to redefine the teacher-pupil relationship, making it more intimate, more democratic, and more humane, while, at the same time, it exposed her to the lives of students in ways that she had never before known as a teacher.

I grew immensely as a human being in that program. I became much more tolerant of diversity. Because of the style of interaction with kids, I learned about the lives of kids in ways that I would never have done as a regular teacher. And I learned to share my life with them, as well. That was very important for me, because it's easy to be a teacher and hide behind the desk and not take any risks, and I think that it taught me to be more of a risk taker and that you really can change kids' lives. It isn't my mission in life to change people's lives, but I think that, in order to be the most effective teacher or mentor you can be, you have to share. I can't imagine ever teaching in an environment that would not parallel that of the Cluster School.

#### Conclusion

Discouraged by the lack of intellectual stimulation from her colleagues in the Social Studies Department and aware that the pupil-teacher relationship in the traditional school setting tended to segment and limit the

learning process in ways that she no longer found tolerable, Maureen joined the Cluster staff at age 30. She was driven by a need for change and and by a desire to be a member of a community of scholars who would discuss ideas as well as socialize together, as in the community she had belonged to as a college teaching fellow.

Her exposure to Kohlberg's theory and to Cluster's democratic model fundamentally altered her thinking about the learning process and led her to do graduate work in developmental psychology.

At Cluster she found a supportive and challenging faculty who encouraged her to develop her leadership skills and helped her to come to a new understanding of conflict as a positive and necessary part of the developmental course.

## George

An affable man with a sardonic sense of humor, George joined the Cluster School, among other reasons, to ward off the isolation he had felt for four years as a social studies teacher at the Rindge Technical School. He had witnessed the collegial relationships between the faculty members of the Pilot School, the alternative program that was housed on the top floor of Rindge, and had found himself longing to be working with and coming to know other teachers in the way that the Pilot teachers seemed to be doing.

I came to the Cluster School because I had started at Rindge when Pilot School was starting, and I was always envious of the Pilot School staff, because they were always together. They did things together, they were innovative, they were progressive. It just seemed to be a good program, doing a lot of things. The rest of the [host] school wasn't doing that. We [the teachers] were all independent and so you did your own thing, but there was nothing going on as a unit. So, when I heard that Cluster School was starting...I looked upon it as another Pilot School [and an opportunity] to work with other staff.

The work of establishing the Cluster program, whose governance structure differed fundamentally from its host school, was, especially in the first two years of the School, a harrowing undertaking for all involved. But for George, whose exceptionally low tolerance for ambiguity and strong need for order and control, the disorderliness of the enterprise was vexing. Of those days he remembered the following:

...long meetings with the staff, conflicting points of view, confusion with the kids as to what we were doing and how to get organized, different styles among the staff and different attitudes or philosophies that we had. Nobody was quite clear what we were doing. Those of us who wanted to be compulsive and organized, like myself, trying to get everything set, and then other people looking at it as a way to experiment with different things. So, it really was a--I just remember having those horrible meetings--They weren't horrible, but--confusing meetings in the old Rindge building. We went there several times to try to get the rules made. Some kids took it very, seriously. I remember a couple of kids taking it really seriously and wanting to make fair rules and really wanted to get into it, and then other kids who were there didn't know why they were there or they were the whackos of the group and they

had no idea what was going on. So, it was a tug-of-war between the different groups of kids.

In many ways, George was not the type of person one usually found in a progressive alternative school. Although he held traditional, liberal political views, he was essentially a very conventional sort. Born into a middle-class Polish-American family in New York City, he grew up on Long Island. His description of his early life made it sound eminently conventional.

Just a regular old suburban family -- one brother, mother and father. Nothing unusual. Went to a small school in Ohio, and then [to a] big school [for] graduate school. Got married and decided to live in Boston rather than around my parents or around my wife's parents. That's how we wound up in Boston. Very smart move!

His decision not to live around his parents might have stemmed, in part, from his desire to break with the past and to establish a new and even more conventional identity. After all, he had been the only one in his family to change his unmistakably Polish surname to a short, non-ethnic sounding one.

George had ambitions of being a school administrator, (ambitions that were later realized) and all of his

professional moves seemed aimed at achieving that goal. In addition to wanting a greater sense of collegiality, George joined the Cluster School as a career-building move.

Professionally, it was a chance to be in a different program. It's good resume material. You did something different. You were working in an alternative program. I think, since [Superintendent] Bill Lannon supported the program, certainly for myself, ...I'd say, it was a way to be seen by upper administration, to be involved in something different, and so that, you know, showed who various people were, and that was part of the professional advancement.

George also ran for and was elected vice president of the teachers' union, a position which allowed him to be the quintessential insider. Since his election was concurrent with his joining Cluster, he used the office as a vehicle for keeping in touch with and cultivating his all-male and often not-so-progressive former colleagues at Rindge. His ambition dictated that he be noticed but not that he be labeled a "radical." In a liberal town, he was liberal, but not too liberal.

The moral dilemmas that were generated out of the life of the School challenged the generally accepted

approaches to schooling and problem solving. They required George to confront controversial issues that were uncomfortable for him and in their treatment, differed markedly from his carefully planned and orchestrated social study classes.

I always remember the first big issue was the thievery issue. There were some rings taken. We had a young intern from Harvard...And she was doing a jewelry course or something, and some kids had stolen some of her rings. The kids who were accused were black, and the kids making the accusation were white. I just remember going--Because that was our first discipline hearing, and it got really into issues of how--whether we were going to address these issues.

Addressing issues such as theft and race and trust are often done in abstract ways, if at all, in many traditional classrooms. In a democratically-run school, as the Cluster School was attempting to be, those important issues, as well as collectively defining authority and building respect, had to be the on-going work of the community. At Cluster, as tongues were untied by the forces of democracy, classroom authority relationships changed, and students, as well as teachers, began to explore the range of behaviors in the new relationship. George felt frustrated by the kids who were

behavior problems and with the challenges they presented to the teachers' authority. He recalled a weekend outing taken by the School.

We did go to Camp Sargeant. I mean, that was just a horrible, horrible experience! ...I think the kids were really split between those who really wanted to get into this and those who saw this as a complete freedom and they could do anything they wanted because the teachers didn't--You called the teachers by their first name, and they had no say. I remember that one little blond kid. I forget his name. He was a real-- He wouldn't do anything. He wouldn't clean up. He wouldn't participate. I forget his name. But he was only there because his mother wanted him there. I think we had a couple of other pretty quiet, ...some black students that really weren't sure why they were there. Then you had... just that whole real wide array of kids. P. L. with his obnoxious mouth. For myself, I hadn't really been exposed to kids like that who seemed to have no respect for adults in that way, and I think we all kind of got the feeling, "Where do we draw the line between, OK, whether he makes the decision, [or whether] I'm the boss and you got to do what I say."



The difficulties that life in Cluster posed for George were offset somewhat by the sense of community and friendship that he derived from the frequent staff meetings and outings.

For me, they were the part of the teaching that was missing from what I had done before. They were the way to work on something as a group and to come up with--You know, feel good about what you're doing, have a group process and activity. So, I mean-- And for me, I feel I pretty much gave my whole time to it. We all did. I mean, going up to Vermont, and-- For me, it was somewhat of a friendship group in addition to a work group. So, that was, for almost all of us, that was the plus side.

The strong commitment that he and the other teachers had to the group showed itself in many ways, sometimes to the bewilderment of outsiders. George was amused by the memory of a reaction of a project consultant regarding his own commitment to the group decision-making process.

I was thinking of taking a sabbatical or something and I asked the group if that would be OK. I remember her being so surprised that somebody would even pose that question. [She said] 'If you want to take a sabbatical, it's nobody else's business.' So, I think that kind of feeling of a group and what

we were doing...I think everybody [in the group] was like that.

### Conclusion

George became a member of the Cluster staff at age 29 and unlike many men of that age, he had clearly defined professional goals and made a relatively smooth transition into his 30's. He measured his personal development in terms of achievement, which he defined as moving up the school administrative ladder. Cluster School was attractive to him as an opportunity to affiliate with other teachers but his sense of affiliation always took a back seat to his achievement needs.

George often complained that there was no sense of coherence or control to the administration of the School. One of the ways he addressed this was by insisting that he assume command of the writing and publication of the School's daily bulletin. In so doing, he was able to exercise power in his own way, not in some meaningless power play but in order to satisfy his need to get control over events that he saw as chaotic. His talents lay more in the organizational realm and with administrative details. He did not subscribe fully to Kohlberg's developmental theory and did not seem to believe that what appeared to be chaos, conflict and "disrespect" were truly the essence of great teaching and learning opportunities.

## Dorothy

My first conversation with Dorothy was a memorable one. It took place in September of 1972 in the library of the old Cambridge High and Latin School, after a meeting in which several other new teachers and I were introduced to the faculty. I had been hired the previous day to teach Spanish and, with the exception of the school principal and my department chair, I had not yet met any of my colleagues. Before the meeting, the chair, Ms. McCabe, had asked me to give her some information about myself that she could include in her introduction of me. Among the data that I gave her were the facts that I was a veteran of the Vietnam War and an anti-war activist, two roles which had dominated my life in the immediate previous five years. It was important, I thought, to let my new co-workers know where I stood on the painfully divisive issue of the war. Dorothy thought so, too. She strode toward me, through the post-meeting coffee drinkers, with her hand extended and wearing a big smile. "Greetings" she said warmly. "I'm Dorothy and I teach English. You're the first Vietnam veteran I've ever shaken hands with and the first anti-war veteran I've ever met. I'm really glad you're here. This place needs some shaking up."

The only child of an older, college-educated couple who held very high expectations for her, Dorothy had grown

up in Cambridge and attended the Longfellow public school for the first six grades. The Longfellow had a racially diverse, mostly working class student population and Dorothy's domineering, difficult, alcoholic mother decided that her child was not sufficiently challenged by her school work there and transferred her to a private school at the end of her sixth grade.

I spent the next six years of school in the elite, white, sex-segregated environment of Buckingham. And, actually those very experiences--that combination of being rooted in Cambridge and then being uprooted and placed in this very prestigious school (for the area)--were equally influential, but also quite contradictory. It made me aware of social class at a very early age. And that consciousness was not one of comfort. I think I felt somewhat as if I had betrayed my roots by going there, although I don't think that I could articulate that.

Dorothy's family was quite religious and they attended church every week. It was to that religious environment and to her constant efforts to please her ever-demanding mother that she attributes her budding interest in "being good" and "doing the right thing."

I had a spiritual awakening in high school. I really felt like I had faith in God. This was happening in the early and middle sixties when to admit that was to have a hippie or beatnik consciousness.

Dorothy's college years were spent at Smith College, "my other elite, sex-segregated school." She believes that in attending all-female schools in both high school and college, she developed a sense of her own possibilities.

I got the message that I could do whatever I wanted. So, although it was before the second wave of American feminism, I really had these concretized ideas of what girls could do.

At Smith she majored in English and, by her junior year, had decided to become a teacher. She began to get involved in political action, working in the anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights Movements, and saw those political involvements as extensions of her interests in religion and ethics. Martin Luther King, Gandhi, and some of the ideals espoused by the Kennedy Administration were early influences on her moral thinking. As she worked to formulate her own ethical framework, Dorothy continued to try to please her mother in everything she did while she slowly began to understand the restrictive force her

mother exerted on her life.

In 1968, when I was finishing my junior year in college, I worked for the [Eugene] McCarthy [presidential] campaign, and when the Chicago convention happened, my mother refused to let me go to Chicago. I really wanted to go. Instead, I was stuck in Harvard Square, you know, helping to staff the McCarthy headquarters, in what is now Passim's [coffeehouse]. And I felt very frustrated or clamped in or shut out of participating in a more activist way of doing things, but I was too scared to do some of that, too.

I had a very hard time feeling accepted [by her mother] and did everything I could to try to please her and to try to get approval from her. So, I was a classic over-achiever and had very high standards for myself, and generally met them because I was so frightened of losing her love.

After graduating from college, Dorothy got a job teaching English at Cambridge High and Latin School. She wanted to teach students who were not college bound and laughed at some of her naive reasons for wanting to teach.

I just wanted to help people be literate and to be able to verbalize how they felt so they wouldn't sock

each other in the jaw. I thought that the reason that people had problems in communication was because they weren't skilled in verbal skills, exclusively. That was my complete analysis of it. And, so that's why I was an English teacher.

Dorothy was a hard-working, conscientious teacher and had a special fondness for working with kids who had learning problems. However, after teaching for several years, there were some serious personal and professional issues which troubled her and demanded her attention. One was her unsatisfactory work situation.

CHLS was in a shambles. Things felt very out of control. My boss in the English department was a total druid and extremely controlling and very depressing and discouraging to work with.

Dorothy was also coming to grips with her lesbianism. As an undergraduate, she had begun to acknowledge her sexual feelings for women and had dated some of them. In most of her personal and professional dealings, though, she kept her sexual orientation a secret. Nevertheless, her political awareness and self-confidence continued to grow and finally found their expression in the dramatic events of 1974, during the summer before she began teaching in the Cluster School.

In the summer of 1974, I went abroad [to Norway], and

I had a very intense experience. I went to where my grandmother had been born, and sat in the place, in the house that she had lived in as a child. I was trying to figure out who I was and where I was going. I had left a lover at home, and I was aware that I was a lesbian, but I was completely in the closet and found it impossible to say the word "lesbian" to anybody. The first time I ever said the word lesbian was to a group of Norwegian women, whom I was sure I would never see again, so it would be safe enough to do that. And in the comfort of that community, I came out.

As a result of her coming out, Dorothy became ill while in Norway and underwent a physical transformation of sorts. Doctors diagnosed it as a physical manifestation of her psychological conflicts.

I had this amazing experience where I metamorphosized [sic] and lost a whole layer of skin. I was in the hospital for two weeks...shed my former skin, came out a new person, came home, cut my hair, and declared to everybody that I was a lesbian.

That alteration was to mark a new stage in Dorothy's life.

Later that summer, when her teaching colleague, Howard, approached her about joining the Cluster School



staff, Dorothy jumped at the offer. It would provide her with an escape from the oppressive English Department and allow her to experiment with innovative instructional approaches.

Cluster would become for her a community and a safe place in which to be her authentic self. Since her more fully-acknowledged homosexuality raised many questions for her, the Cluster staff would become her support group as she learned to deal with those questions. Over time, she would also come to have a better understanding of the fact that "coming out" is not a single event but a process.

Every week was new, it felt like new energy, new excitement, and new problems. What was I going to do with this new-found discovery about myself, and how was I going to handle how my life would be led? How open would I be with my friends? Previously, except for very few teachers, a lot of the people that I worked with, I didn't have much to do with socially because I had already developed such a knee-jerk defense around being closeted. So, the Cluster staff was a way to overcome it.

Dorothy spent two years at the School which, for her, was a time of great personal and professional growth as well as one of frustration and fatigue. She remembered

the experience as being "absolutely the hardest job that I ever had" and attributed that, in part, to the staff's "trying to do everything" and to its lack of experience in a range of educational areas.

None of us knew, really, what we were doing, and we were expected to. We were expected to establish norms, create a structure, create new instructional strategies, do evaluation, set up a program, run it successfully since we were in a fishbowl, and I think the goal--at least for me, and I thought we'd discussed this as a group--ostensibly was--as opposed to the Pilot School, which had established itself as an alternative and had backed away from any commitment to making any fundamental changes in the way the regular high school was run, our job was to model or to demonstrate new ways of relating to students, and then hopefully replicate that with the whole high school, so that the whole high school would be changed into a different place. And definitely, the school needed changing. I really felt that the climate of the school at the time that the Cluster School started was not only chaotic, but it was emotionally destructive for a lot of kids. Many of those kids are the ones that ended up in our program, and they had amazing needs. And we were expected to meet those needs, without an

understanding of what special education was, without an understanding of what some of the counseling or intervention issues were around particular family problems.

When she joined the Cluster staff, Dorothy was 26 years old and, in keeping with Erikson's phase theory of development [Erikson, 1968], she was concerned with intimacy versus isolation, a central concern of young adulthood. She had felt isolated from her colleagues in the English Department because of the way the school day was arranged and because the authoritarian department chairman would not schedule time for teachers to interact with one another. She had been further isolated from them and others because she had been closeted about her lesbianism. The alternative school setting was a place to begin to trust and to develop a new self-awareness. Community meetings, in particular, were especially important for her in that process.

I listened carefully to the level of arguments [in the community meetings]. I learned how to participate in those arguments. Oh, here's a sort of thing about my family. Both my parents really encouraged me to develop my own opinions and express them. But, my mother, being a lawyer, would never allow me to win. So, it never occurred to me that my

opinions, although I could articulate them, could hold any weight with people. So, actually, even though I was an adult, I learned very much the value of persuasive oratory, and I learned how to do that in community meetings. So I was empowered, myself, in that way.

While the community meetings provided Dorothy with one means to self-empowerment, her relationship with and observations about Kohlberg helped improve her understanding of issues of authority and sexism and served to challenge her conventional notions about politeness and social proprieties.

I think, to be honest, initially, I was pleased that I was going to be participating in something that was grounded in any kind of theory, and that I was happy that it was somebody from Harvard. So, I bought into that. I bought into the system that [supports the idea that] theory-based education is better than some kind of instinctual kind of thing and that a Harvard professor is better than any other kind of professor. So, clearly, the whole idea that educational research is good and that it will help us learn how to do things better, I bought into that. And since that time, I've become a very vocal critic of educational researchers who are not practitioners. And I see

them as pseudo-social scientists.

Dorothy thought that she had to "put on a good face" for the sake of Kohlberg and the project. In the early days of her involvement, she felt "excited and flattered" to have been part of the project, but as time went by, she sometimes felt manipulated. During that period, the Kennedy Foundation was providing money to Kohlberg for research in the school and Dorothy cited a school visit by Eunice Shriver as an example of a time when she felt "used."

When Eunice Shriver came to the School was a classic case. Everybody was told that they were supposed to behave well because this famous lady was coming. And I wished I could have been one of the kids that couldn't give a shit about that. But, no, I was one of the people that thought we were supposed to be polite to Eunice Shriver and her foundation and that they were interested in this kind of nonsense.

Although she persisted in her "polite" role, Dorothy was conflicted about Kohlberg for several reasons.

I felt like apologizing for Kohlberg, because his theory was--it wasn't gaining momentum at the rate that he wanted it to, and he was beginning to have critics. I felt that he was a very unpersuasive

I feel like, because I was a woman, I was pretty much invisible to him--you know, unless you're a research assistant to him or something. I was this more or less autonomous teacher, who didn't really need [academic] credits from him, I didn't need payment from him, so I wasn't part of what the whole shebang was. And by the same token, I didn't challenge something in him personally.

He told me, or maybe he told a group of us, that he had been fired from some mental hospital because he wore socks of the wrong color. They didn't match. Different colors to work. And I thought that maybe it had something to do with the fact he forgot to zip his fly up as often as he had. But, I excused those kinds of behaviors because I saw them as superficial and absent-minded and fitting into the stereo-type of the sort of person that he was and that somehow he was doing good work that I wanted to participate in. I found myself apologizing for him while I was gaining confidence.

Dorothy believed that her observations about Kohlberg were later confirmed by the writings of Harvard professor Carol Gilligan.

I saw the complexities of having a school created to

fit a single man's theories, and I cannot tell you how happy I was when Carol Gilligan first began to publish. I felt that, finally, on some level, my own self was vindicated, because here was a feminist focussing on women in a way that we had never addressed in the School. I never felt the need to apologize for him in relation to her, and that was like a turning point for me and I was able to see beyond that.

Dorothy now recognizes the irony in the fact that her work in the Cluster School and her association with Kohlberg gave her the confidence to continue her development.

If he [Kohlberg] were alive and we were doing this again, I think I would feel much more confident in challenging him. Maybe that comes out of the process that I participated in. There is a certain irony in having felt empowered as a lesbian, participating in the Cluster School, knowing what happened to you [the author] and Howard as a result of association with Kohlberg.

In addition to her insights about the factors in the School that contributed to her increased sense of personal power, she also believes that the way the School was organized and administered created problems which

inhibited personal development and caused teacher "burn-out."

We didn't have a head of Cluster School, and for a while we shared administrative functions by rotating the administrator for a month. And that month, when I was--the one year that I had that for a month, I was just about dead at the end. It gave me a healthy respect for what administrators do, but I couldn't imagine doing that, plus being the teacher, counselor, advisor, available at all hours of the night and day for problems that kids brought to us. I felt really frayed and I knew I had to leave. I thought I was burned out for personal reasons, that I had worked too hard and I hadn't done more than a mediocre job and that I needed to give up. I now see that the structure of the School was not supportive of its staff. It did not have built into it ways to encourage professional growth, personal rejuvenation or re-energizing, recreation, and a real sense of respectful team building. What actually was a design fault, I took to be a personal deficiency.

#### Conclusion

Like most of the Cluster teachers, Dorothy saw herself as an outsider. Her sense of "outsiderness" was



attributable to her minority position as a lesbian and to her feeling that she was one of the few teachers in her department who could no longer tolerate teaching in a traditional, hierarchical, authoritarian structure.

She was drawn to the School because of its focus on moral development, viewing that focus as a continuation of her earlier involvement with religion, and the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War Movements. Her search for greater personal honesty, integrity and authenticity, (as her desire to be open about her sexual orientation), her interest in school reform and her need for a safe, supportive, non-authoritarian community in which to explore those concerns, also drew her to the School. Her development there was influenced by Kohlberg's teachings and by reacting to what she perceived to be his sexism. She also found that the staff and community meetings provided her with forums for testing her ideas and addressing such unresolved developmental tasks as confronting authority and developing her self-confidence. After two years at Cluster, Dorothy went on to work as a student rights advocate with the Massachusetts Department of Education. She later came to realize that her time at the School had been an important, growth-inducing sojourn and an excellent preparation for her next stage in life.

## Howard

Perhaps the most intellectually inclined of the Cluster teachers, Howard was born and raised in Cambridge, along with his older sister, in a close-knit Jewish family. His childhood was spent under the watchful eye of his doting, live-in maternal grandmother, with whom he developed an unusually close relationship. His father, whose first wife had died, leaving him with a girl child who would later become Howard's sister, had married Howard's mother, an unassuming member of the local Jewish community, when they were both in their thirties. An intellectual with a keen interest in politics, Howard's father, like many of those who had suffered through the Great Depression, was driven by the fear that similar financial misfortunes might befall his family and consequently always held two jobs and spent little time with his children. Howard, though, remembers his now deceased father and grandmother to have been the most influential people in his early development.

The strongest influence politically, would have been my father, who was always questioning things and causing me, therefore, to look behind the facades. Of course he always found something to be cynical about and I tried to find things to be idealistic about. That was probably a function of our ages,

more than anything. And also I think that my grandmother was an important influence because of her great compassion for people. And I think that combined with my father's probing and cynicism, my grandmother's kindness and charitable work had an influence on me to want to help others.

Another significant influence in Howard's early life was his time spent in a summer camp for gifted children. The camp personnel stressed the importance of developing a sense of empathy among the campers, which would later provide Howard with an excellent model for helping to form a sense of fairness among the Cluster students.

That was the first time I had ever gone away from home; it was an eight-week summer experience and I was nine or ten years old. I was one of the younger kids, at the time. There were just twenty-two boys and it was a very intense experience, not just with sports and with, camping and those kinds of things but, it was called "The Camp for the Gifted Child." There were supposed to be kids there who were gifted intellectually and I guess that was my first experience at having a sense of group identity with strangers. And, it was very important to me -- that feeling of camp identity -- because the camp stayed fairly small throughout my experience there. And, I

went on to be a counselor. The Cluster School experience was, to some degree, a recapitulation of the camp experience.

Although Howard's intellectual life was wide-ranging, his daily life was lived within a ten block radius of his home. He walked the short distance to the Longfellow School for his primary education and then a few blocks in the other direction, to the Cambridge High and Latin School, for his high school years. His college days were spent a few blocks beyond the high school at Harvard College. In spite of Harvard's close proximity to his home, he boarded there at the behest of his father, who had been a commuter student at Harvard himself and who felt that, as a commuter, he had not been part of the Harvard student community.

Howard majored in English and graduated with honors in 1968. But unlike most of his fellow Harvard graduates, he decided to become a public high school teacher and found a job in the English Department at his alma mater. It would be a job that would open his eyes to many problems but especially to the problem of racism.

I found the teaching at that school, at that time, because it was a very volatile time politically, obviously, 1968, to be a very radicalizing experience for me, politically, especially in the area of race.

Because, even though I had espoused liberal principles throughout my adolescent and adult life, and had a father especially who was a...I'd say a radical, but he was more of a cynic, it was actually [in] coming to teach at that school, that I had more contact with black people than I had ever had prior to that. I had had so very little contact in college and so little contact in high school and grammar school that I began to be, as I say, radicalized politically and began to recognize the price, the costs of racism to minorities and to the society as a whole. Things really got bad at the school in the early 70's and we had race riots and kids dividing up according to neighborhood and race, issues of fighting and gold chains and stealing, and intimidation. And we had riot police in the school and I came to the fore, and grew up a lot politically. I made speeches in the gymnasium calling for racial tolerance, and I was called a nigger lover to my face by my colleagues. One or two, anyway, one that I remember quite clearly from the English Department.

Howard knew that CHLS and the entire Cambridge school system needed reform. He had been encouraged when, in 1969, the Pilot School had been founded with its announced goal of serving as a model for improving the high schools.

But he was disappointed, a few years later, when the Pilot School seemed to become, what he called, "a private school within the high school." In his opinion, the Pilot School had isolated itself from its host high school and was having little effect on the school system as a whole. During that period, Howard also helped organize a city-wide group of teachers, called "Cambridge Teachers for Better Schools" whose purpose was, as its name implies, to share ideas and strategies for improving the schools. In 1972, the opportunity to develop an alternative high school program which would be more in keeping with his broader school reform objectives presented itself.

By the time the Cluster School was being discussed as a haven for the kids, there were parents who wanted more alternative education for their kids. And, up to that time, I had not thought about going into the Pilot School as a refuge from the fights, and the constant hassles and having to put up with the censorship of my curriculum. I always wanted not to abandon the fight and go to an alternative program. Totally, totally alternative. I wanted something more geared toward changing the mainstream. I think I would have considered it a personal defeat if I had gone to the Pilot School. The Pilot School had been founded on the assumption that it was going to be a

pilot program to create structures and curriculum that could be used in the rest of the school. Which sounded just fine, but I think that the way it worked out was that it became a way for upper-middle class parents, with a smattering of working class too, but mostly upper middle class parents. It was a way for them to send their kids to private school without having to pay the tuition. And, once they had their sanctuary, so to speak, they lost any mission that they might have had (I question whether they ever really had it) I think, as I recall, they had teachers who came from outside the system for the most part, with just a few people who were recruited from within the system. Some of them didn't last very long in the Pilot School. So, I think that, it's conceivable that the people they had like R. R., D. T., and E. W. who came into Pilot from outside the system or from Harvard associations, or whatever, they got into Pilot, didn't have the same motivation to help the system to change. And, so, they worked very, very, hard within Pilot School. I don't mean to demean their motives or their effort. I think they worked very hard and at the end of the day, they just weren't going to take on the battles of the whole system. They were putting their energies into making the Pilot School as wonderful a

program as it could be for the kids who were there. So, I didn't want to do that. I wanted to reform the system and I had a kind of an anti-elitist commitment, as well. So, when I was talking about forming another alternative program with Kohlberg and with Superintendent Cheatham, and so on, it was more a matter of making sure that it would be a program that would be housed within the school building, the existing school building. I knew that Pilot was on the top floor and could be sealed away and I was not interested in sealing away the Cluster School. And when we talked about it being part of the day, and that the faculty would continue to teach in the main stream, that really appealed to me. To be able to straddle and do both.

As the Cluster School got underway, Howard developed an intense interest in Kohlberg's theory of moral development and, in order to study it more carefully, he enrolled as a part-time masters degree student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He took a degree there in 1976.

I was fascinated by the moral development theory. I'd never heard about developmental stuff before. I had not taken a broad educational preparation for my teaching. I went from being a liberal arts major to



spending one summer doing a methods and materials class at Salem State, which was really just listening to some salesmen from different book companies. I mean, it was a charade. And I did do practice teaching at a summer program for 8th or 9th graders in developmental reading, or whatever, so I was really not well versed. I had not taken a psychology course in college. The Kohlberg theory was very appealing to me. And became more so the more I got into the program and the more I listened to what kids said in our meetings and in classrooms about what was right and what was wrong and why. It was amazing to me. And because it was a "just school" its aim was to foster democratic community, it appealed to my idealism tremendously. So it wasn't just some theory but it was also a mission I liked and wanted to be a part of.

Howard became something of an expert on the application of Kohlberg's theory to a school setting, and along with this author, taught a graduate section on the topic at Harvard. He also came to revere Kohlberg and to look to him as his intellectual mentor and as something of a father substitute.

He was a brilliant man. His interests went beyond the narrow confines of his [area of specialization].

His interest in literature and in history made him a very appealing man. And, I idealized and idolized him. He was my surrogate intellectual father, in some ways, and I wanted his approval because, of course, I couldn't get approval from my own. I had a father who was very reluctant to express his approval of his children, and [their] lives or worth, except indirectly. So Larry was an important person for me personally and very much intellectually. And, I think for other members, too, of the School.

Howard's commitment to the Kohlbergian developmentalist approach often put him at odds with the those faculty who favored the counseling orientation towards kids. He tended to focus on developmental goals and was frustrated by those teachers whose interactions with students seemed to emphasize "form" over "substance."

I remember having a tremendous sense of frustration with Muriel, especially, with her kind of cheerleader approach to the School. And, going "rah, rah, rah, aren't you [students] wonderful! And let's give you a gold star for today." [As if to say] "Let's celebrate Martha's birthday in place of building community over issues of more substance." If I thought that that was her strategy, I would have overlooked it but I thought that those were the

limits of her repertoire and that was frustrating to me. I don't think that it's unimportant to have parties, and celebrations and rituals, and all of that but I felt that she just didn't put that into the context, the larger context, of what we were trying to do developmentally.

While Howard was thoroughly caught up in the intellectual challenges of moral development theory and its application to the School, he had been neglecting to address his own emotional development. He was 28 when he joined the staff, and although he was a gregarious person with well-developed social skills, he had never had an intimate love relationship. He knew himself to have strong homosexual feelings but feared what the acknowledgment of those feelings might imply for him. But the closeness to others, both to staff and students, which the School promoted, continually reminded him of his neglected emotional homework.

I was afraid that I'd get depressed if I got too involved in kids' lives. And part of it probably had to do with the fact that I, for the first five years of the program, the years that Kohlberg was involved in it, I was not yet at peace with or even confronting my sexuality. And I think that made me even more vulnerable emotionally, too. And more

frightened to open up to the possibilities of these kids getting real close, or whatever. I don't mean that I was afraid that kids were going to "come on" to me or that I was going to be physically attracted to kids. I just mean that I didn't want to make myself emotionally vulnerable regarding their life struggles, because I wasn't really confident in my own strength and my own life struggle. I didn't feel strong enough to handle my own stuff. So, if a kid, for instance, appeared to be suicidal, I was probably afraid that if I got too close, I would start to feel suicidal.

It was especially devastating for Howard when Kohlberg had an emotional breakdown and accused him and the author of sexual misconduct with students. His surrogate father, in whose work and approval he had invested so much, had betrayed him, leaving him feeling confused, angry, and afraid.

Ironically, the final impetus to me to explore my sexuality was the breakdown in the Cluster School and Kohlberg's accusation of child molestation, when he said that I had been paying students for sex in the School. When Larry started to have a breakdown, or whatever, and was going behind my back and accusing me of having paid a student for sexual favors in the

School, it was absolutely incredible to me. When I first heard that he was doing any such thing, I just didn't believe it. It was one of the kids who told me about this, I thought that she was just misunderstanding something. It was so far from the truth that I just couldn't imagine. (It wasn't until much later that I heard that he had had similar kinds of breakdowns and made accusations against people). I was just unwilling to accept that he would have done any such thing, gone to the superintendent, trying to get me fired, and all of that. We had just been meeting, ...we had a meeting at my house on a Wednesday night and the first I heard of this was the following Friday. And I remember that he had been... I thought he was tired and wasn't feeling very well at my house that night. But, this would have been right in the middle of his machinations to get me fired. I just couldn't put the two things together, that he would be meeting at my house and that we'd be having a regular staff meeting and talking about the issues of the School and he was at the same time trying to get the superintendent to fire me. So, it was that incident with him and the accusations that he made, and the fact that the accusations that he had made had not been kept private but had gotten around the school, and even to the newspaper, with a

reporter calling the superintendent, and so on, that I just felt, I remember feeling very strongly, at one point, well, that if these people are believing these things about me, and assuming that I could do something like molest a kid, then I might as well just come out as a gay man. Because being a gay man is certainly better than being a gay man who's a child molester. So I might as well be what I am and who cares what people think! They were already thinking these terrible things, anyway. Which is kind of an ass backwards way of "coming out" but it served its purpose. And, you [the author] had been urging me anyway to explore my sexuality with a therapist and when I did, it was quite liberating and wonderful. The experience, though, with Kohlberg, was not at all wonderful, and I still, to this day, regret the fact that we were never able to sit down and talk about what had really gone on.

### Conclusion

Steeped by his father and grandmother in the examination of questions of fairness and social justice, Howard was outraged by the abuses of power that he encountered in the Cambridge Public Schools. He knew that in order to distribute power more equally among teachers and students and in order to democratize the hierarchical,

school administrative structure and teacher-centered classrooms, he would have to found an alternative school which would provide the system with a sensible democratic model, one that would not turn its back on the mainstream as the Pilot School had done.

In the Cluster School he found new power, new collegiality, an arena for wrestling with his special concerns of racism and school democracy, and intellectual engagement in the revolutionary ideas of Kohlberg, a man whose mind he idolized and for whom he wanted to be the perfect "son." But, although he was a highly skilled intellectual whose life seemed tidy and controlled, Howard was afraid of acknowledging his sexual orientation and the lack of "control" that that represented for him.

Ironically, Kohlberg's painful and humiliating false accusations of sexual misconduct led Howard to reevaluate his emotional life and to undertake the developmental task of moving toward achieving a more healthy and emotionally integrated self-concept.

## Karen

A popular teacher with a dramatic style and a disarming penchant for hyperbole, Karen, the eldest of three children, grew up in a comfortable, middle-class, Jewish home in Worcester, Massachusetts. She attended traditional public schools there and was active in the life of her temple's youth groups. It was in those groups that she first developed an interest in ethical questions.

[I was a member of a group] of high school-aged kids, early adolescents, who came together once a week and studied. A lot of the issues we studied were really issues of social justice, ethical issues and moral issues that the rabbi raised...and that was what interested me most about these sessions.

Karen's interest in ethics continued through high school and was encouraged and supported by her parents. She even pursued the topic further at a national youth conference which she attended during the summer before she began her college studies.

I spent the summer at Akonomowok, Wisconsin, at a National Federal for Temple Youth conference. At this national conference, probably the one person who stood out for me most, was a man by the name of Al Vorspan. And it's interesting. I met this man in



that summer of 1956, and he had written a book about issues of social justice in Judaism, and I was just intrigued. I just thought this man was pretty spectacular. And for me, at the age of whatever, 16 or 17, the questions he was raising were being raised in a very knowing and refreshing way.

Another person who played an important role in Karen's ethical and moral development was her uncle Moose.

I have an uncle who has always been a key figure in my life. He's a social worker, and has one of the most highly developed senses of morality of anyone I know. He is, almost to a fault, fair and thoughtful about things, and it's a dominant part of his personality. I think of him very often. To this day, he's still a central person in my life. His sense of right and wrong is just so powerful that when I'm confronted with issues that have to do with fairness or with right and wrong, I frequently think about him and think about how he would deal with the situation. I don't always make what I think are the same decisions that I think he would make, but I think about it. He married into our family when I was a teenager, and he has always been an important person, a real role model for me.

Having often considered teaching as a likely career choice, Karen attended Simmons College in Boston where she majored in English education.

Following graduation, she spent an "exhausting" first year of teaching in a California public school, so exhausting that she chose to spend the following year working as a secretary. At the end of that year, she returned home to Massachusetts.

In the ensuing four years, she taught English in a junior high school in Lexington. At first she enjoyed the work, but as time went on, she began to question whether she ought to stay in teaching. Although she found the Lexington assignment to be pleasant enough and the students to be well-behaved, Karen felt isolated from other adults and became increasingly dissatisfied by the lack of intellectual life she had hoped to find in teaching.

I felt very isolated. I had total autonomy. I could have done whatever I wanted in my own classroom, but there wasn't enough kind of dialogue among all of the people that I was teaching with. By my fourth year, the only thing that I found very stimulating was a professional seminar group that one of the teachers set up. Once a month, eight or nine of us would get together and talk about educational issues. Somebody would come in and present something

to us, and then we would all sit around and talk about it. And that, to me, was one of the most exciting pieces of my teaching career up to that time. But I felt so isolated that I just said, "That's it. I'm never going to teach again. If this is all it is, just going into my room and closing the door and being in here with these kids," even though I had the freedom to do whatever I wanted to do.

At the end of that school year, Karen left teaching and undertook several years of intellectual inquiry and travel. She did graduate study in visual design and photography at MIT and then spent 18 months traveling around the world, exploring a variety of cultures. When she returned home, she was unsure as to whether or not she wanted to go back into teaching but certain serendipitous developments seemed to move her in that direction.

There were two things that drew me back into teaching. One was that, because I had traveled in Africa, a group of students at the then Murray Road School--which no longer exists, but it was one of the first public alternative high schools in this area, --invited me to come out and teach a course on African art. That was really my first exposure to alternative education. And I found it pretty exhilarating. So, I said to these kids, "Look, I

don't really know anything about African art. I've been to Africa, but that doesn't mean I know about African art. However, if you're so keen to study, I will do some reading and set some stuff up for you, and basically, we'll learn together." And the course, which was supposed to last only half of the year, was so absorbing to all of us that it continued into the second half of the year. We all agreed--The kids wanted to go on, and I agreed to go on with them. I still wasn't certain what I wanted to do next, but that experience involved not only learning with the kids, which was wonderful, but it also involved talking with other adults [teachers] about that experience. I don't even know if we used the word "process" at the time, but that's what we were doing. We were processing our experience, and I was entranced with the whole idea of sitting around and talking with other people, other teachers, about what I was teaching and why I was teaching it and issues relating to individual kids. So, it was all a very powerful, positive experience.

At about that same time, Karen was living in an apartment across the hall from Carol, who was working at the Harvard School of Education and was involved in setting up the Pilot School. They often had long

conversations about the project.

She was always talking about this experiment called the Pilot School. And I became more and more interested in it, and went over to teach a class one day on African art--a kind of interactive class--and just became intrigued with the school. And then, when I heard that they were looking for an English teacher, I decided that I would look into it.

Karen interviewed for and obtained the position at the Pilot School and then spent the next seven years working in that alternative school setting. She enjoyed her work there and found Pilot to be a unique community which, unlike in her previous teaching venues, made a conscious effort to take the needs of the whole person, teacher as well as student, into account when conducting its affairs.

Through her friendships with some of the Cluster teachers, Karen came to know about the Cluster School and became especially interested in its governance. At one point, about two years before becoming a Cluster teacher herself, Karen and some of her Pilot School students arranged to sit in on a Cluster community meeting and on a student-run discipline committee hearing. She and her students were intrigued by what they heard and saw but when they returned to Pilot and suggested that Pilot

incorporate some elements of the Cluster governance model into its administration, they were met with resistance by Pilot teachers who were comfortable with the system they had in place. Karen, however, continued to be intrigued by the Cluster model and still felt that Pilot would benefit from some of its innovations.

In the spring of 1980, the need for an English teacher arose in the Cluster School and the Cluster teachers asked Karen, who had been on a semester leave from Pilot, to join the staff. She agreed and began teaching during, what would prove to be, Cluster's most difficult time.

It was a very chaotic point in time, and I was pretty overwhelmed. My first staff meeting at Larry Kohlberg's was when there was a huge fight between you [the author] and Howard and Charles. And I didn't really know any of you very well, and I was so stunned by the intensity of it all, [that] I fell asleep. It was my way of just dropping out of the picture. And, it was very obvious that some of those tensions continued straight through the spring, and that was also the spring that a couple of other critical things happened. First and foremost was Larry going through his whole breakdown and the chaos that resulted from that--the kinds of accusations he was making and the confusion that this was raising in

the minds of the kids.

In spite of the fact that Karen arrived at a difficult time in the life of the School, she vividly remembered being deeply impressed by the way the students applied Cluster's brand of democracy.

As I sat in on the community meetings, I was moved by the kind of candor with which kids confronted one another around all kinds of issues--racism and sexism and fairness. And I had had some real fears about the whole idea of kids confronting each other in this way and also of kids sitting in judgment in any way on one another in terms of the discipline committee. And, as the days and weeks went on, I really began to see that this was the most extraordinary thing I had ever witnessed, because I felt the level of honesty, and the questions the kids asked other kids were so honest and so basic that it was difficult for people (a) not to answer the questions, and (b) not answer with tremendous sincerity. And my fear that kids would sort of eat each other up alive really was replaced by an enormous respect for the kind of honesty and sincerity with which kids dealt with one another--and with staff. And it was a revelation to me, and I really treasure the fact that I learned a lot from those experiences, about ways in which kids

truly can be trusted to deal with one another.

Particularly, I think that it was critical that there was an age range. I think that one of the major keys to the success of the program was that there was such a range of levels of maturity that that also, of course, meant that there was a range of moral reasoning that was much greater than what I think you would usually find in any single group of 15-year-olds or 16-year-olds. And that was, I think, what really raised the level of discussion.

Karen also believed that the openness and candor that the Cluster environment fostered in its members, contributed to her own personal growth and development.

I was almost forced to do some growing and some stretching because the environment was so open that kids felt free to ask all kinds of questions. They were the important questions, you know: Why are you doing this? Why do we have to do this? And they weren't raised necessarily in a confrontational way. They were truly genuine questions and I really was confronted with some very hard questions. I learned to say to kids and to my colleagues, "First, let me think about that. That's a reasonable question." And then, upon reflection, I truly learned to say I was wrong or whatever, and to accept responsibility



for that, whether it was on an interpersonal basis or in terms of the group, and to change my mind, to allow myself to stay open enough, to hear what people had to say, and to be influenced by some other opinions. And that was a very important piece of my own personal development. So, I feel that I have grown a lot. I've really had to be more honest with myself, as a result of kids and colleagues asking me to be honest with them.

#### Conclusion

Already a veteran teacher with extensive experience in both traditional and alternative school settings, Karen's curiosity and spirit of adventure brought her to the School at the age of 41. There she eagerly undertook her self-defined developmental task of trying to achieve more honest, fair, and democratic relationships with her students and colleagues. In the course of that work, which she felt was rooted in the quest for justice that she had pursued as a young Talmudic student, she found herself to be more willing to be openly self-critical. And, quite by surprise, her risky undertaking had the additional benefit of helping her achieve a new and expanded understanding of intimacy and self-acceptance, which contributed to her preparation for a calm and enjoyable entrance into middle age.

## Brian

The road I traveled to the Cluster School was an interesting and circuitous one. It was not, however, an altogether surprising route to have been taken by a young man who at a very early age was intensely curious about cultures different from his own, and who, like many from his generation, combined a strong desire to explore and improve the world while responding to the call to public service.

I was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota, the third oldest in a crowd that eventually numbered eleven children: seven boys and four girls. My quiet father, whose formal education was truncated by the Great Depression but who managed to graduate from grade school, worked as a postal clerk at the main post office downtown. My gregarious and talkative mother, who had completed high school in a small Wisconsin town, ran the show at home. With humor and plain talk, they raised their kids to be polite and considerate of others and to share their passions for singing and the study of nature. The latter interest, from time to time, would even prompt them to wake us in the middle of the night so that we might hear the calls of geese in flight or witness a particularly active display of the northern lights. That connectedness to nature became a touchstone for my mental health.

For both grade school and high school, I attended

Catholic schools where the emphasis was on regimentation and rote learning but which also stressed the importance of developing a social conscience. The influence of my parents coupled with that of the nuns and brothers helped foster in me an awareness of and concern for the poor and for those without a voice.

In fourth grade, I developed an interest which helped determine the direction of my life. That year I was captivated by our study of the people and cultures of Peru. The delightful course sparked my curiosity about all of Latin America, so much so that, when in the following year I learned that there was a Mexican-American community in another section of Saint Paul, and that they were about to have a "fiesta," I requested and received permission from my parents to attend. I went by myself on the long bus trip to the river flats on the West Side, and when I arrived at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, I found that mine was the only non-Indian face at the event. The fiesta could not have been a better introduction to a new culture. The gentle people took me in, gave me delicious native food, introduced me to their families, and answered my stream of questions about their cuisine, their traditional costumes and the beautiful Spanish language that many of them were speaking.

So began my association with that community which lasted through my college years. That simple but crucial

relationship with a community of difference provided me with a means for seeing the world outside my own immediate community and became the impetus for my further study of other cultures both here and abroad.

Another important formative experience happened in the summer of my freshman year in high school when I was leading a caddy strike at a private, all-Jewish golf course near my home. A friend of mine and I, two of the older caddies, were angry over the fact that there were no drinking water and toilet facilities provided for the nearly seventy-five caddies who worked there. In response to the lack of sensitivity to our needs, we organized a caddy strike which received daily coverage in the news media and which forced club members, unaccustomed to carrying their own bags, to stand up and take notice.

It was on the second day of the strike, while picketing on the road in front of the club house, that a man pulled up in a car by the picket line and asked me how the strike was going. I told him that things were progressing well and that we hoped that we would be able to settle soon. Then, as he was about to drive off, he yelled out angrily, "Keep up the good work. Show those kikes. Show those cheap Jew bastards that they can't get away with this."

I was stunned. I had never witnessed such a raw expression of bigotry. I knew that the club members were

Jews and knew them to be the offspring of poor Russian immigrants who had fled the pogroms at the turn of the century, and had later founded an all-Jewish golf club because, at the time, Jews were not permitted to join the city's other clubs. But, in my analysis, these sons and daughters of the poor had become wealthy, upper middle-class people who had forgotten their roots and, in so doing, had become oblivious to the basic needs of us caddies. Unlike the man in the car, however, I believed that it had nothing at all to do with their being Jews.

That evening, shaken by the intensity of the man's vitriol and troubled by his misinterpretation of what we were doing, I told my mother what had happened. She assured me that the man was wrong to frame the question in terms other than those of fairness, and that he was obviously a "hater."

Ultimately our strike demands were met and the lesson I learned was two-fold: that I ought to continue to demand that people be treated fairly and that bigotry needs to be identified for what it is and rejected.

During high school, I was further exposed to struggles against bigotry through two black men whose lives influenced mine. One was the faculty advisor to the school newspaper who took a special interest in me in my role as the paper's editor. The other man, also a teacher at the school, was a civil rights activist who went to

Alabama during the summer of my junior year to participate in a sit-in at a racially segregated lunch counter. There he was arrested, subjected to beatings in which his front teeth were knocked out, and he spent part of the summer in jail. When he returned to school in the fall of 1961, he seemed like a broken man.

After graduating from high school, I spent a year as a monk in a Catholic monastery, where I learned the art of meditation. It was a gift that would sustain me during the painful and chaotic times that were to ensue.

Following my monastic year, I enrolled at the University of Minnesota as an English major but found the transition from being part of a highly personal community to being a faceless number in a huge institution to be disorienting and alienating.

It was with welcome relief, therefore, when after two years of university study, I accepted an invitation from a former teacher of mine to go to Latin America and teach English. For one year, I taught in a Panamanian Catholic high school and worked in a slum with Peace Corps volunteers. I was struck by the disparity between the rich and the poor and by the powerlessness, resignation, and despair that permeated peasant life. My year in Panama helped me to begin to formulate my thinking about the nature of underdevelopment and about the role that the developed world plays in it.

When I returned home from Panama, I was drafted into the Army and was sent as a combat soldier to Vietnam. My decision to go there was a painfully difficult one but later, with the help of Kohlberg's theory, I was able to understand my moral dilemma as a classic judgment/action problem. On the one hand, I knew that the War was morally wrong and that I ought not to participate in it. On the other, I was haunted by the fact that for generations, military service had been a rite of passage for men in my family and that, even though I knew it to be silly, I did not want my father to think that he was more of a man than I for his having been a soldier in World War II. In addition, I have realized in retrospect, while coming to terms with my homosexuality, that in going to war, I was also trying to anticipate and, if need be, deflect questions about my masculinity. And, finally, there was the question of resisting the draft altogether and facing imprisonment which, at the time, was something that I knew about only vaguely.

During the War, I witnessed the brutal and savage rape of Vietnam and its people by my countrymen, who labored under the illusion that our great military might was invested with great moral authority. Throughout my entire tour, I was wracked with guilt about participating in the War, and about my inability to act in concert with my highest moral thinking. As I lived in a quandary, I

sought to "resolve" the dilemma by promising myself that if I were to survive the War, I would attempt to right the wrong I had done.

During the War, I befriended black and Hispanic soldiers with whom I spent many hours discussing the racial climate in our country. I especially remember our conversations after we learned of the death of Martin Luther King. His murder confirmed for us something that we already knew: that the war we needed to wage was the one for racial justice at home and not the one in which we were involved in Vietnam.

When that life-altering year came to a close, I left Vietnam with blood on my soul, intent upon involving myself in the emerging anti-war and peace education movements.

Upon returning to the United States, I reenrolled in the university as a Spanish major and immediately immersed myself in the anti-war movement, conducting teach-ins, counseling draft resisters, and forming support groups for returning veterans. Through that work, my political awareness was heightened, my organizing skills were honed, and, since we were committed to running our groups democratically, I also developed a keen appreciation for the value of and difficulties inherent in the democratic process. Eventually I became a leader in the anti-war movement and was elected by veterans to be the first



Vietnam veteran to meet with the Vietnamese and American delegations at the Paris Peace Talks. In the months that followed, I took part in many radio and television broadcasts concerning the quest for peace.

After graduating from college and prior to my arrival in Cambridge, I did a year of graduate study in Spanish Literature at the University of Madrid. The Spanish people were then living under the Franco dictatorship, with its many reprehensible social and political restrictions. The experience of living with authoritarian rule, strengthened my belief in the importance of democratic freedoms and, in my work as a teacher, would come to serve as a reminder that the free exchange of ideas is a significant element in the development of the autonomous person and of a fair and sound society.

While studying in Spain, I had been corresponding with a Minnesota friend who was living in Brookline, Massachusetts. When I returned to the States, I made her a visit, and, since I had no prospects for employment elsewhere, decided to look for a teaching job in the Boston area. I found a position in Cambridge teaching Spanish and began working there in the fall of 1972.

When the opportunity for forming a democratic alternative school arose after my second year of teaching in Cambridge, it came as no surprise to me or to those who knew me that I would not hesitate to take it. I had been

a vocal critic of the autocratically-run, patronage-ridden school department and had taken steps to change it. Much of my previous experience seemed to support the choice and I was eager to work more closely with progressive and imaginative colleagues. But I also brought an angry and restive self to the new enterprise. The anger had been fueled by my feelings of having been betrayed by authority. I felt mistrustful of my church because of its condemnation of my sexual orientation and for the insidious contribution it made to my confusion over the difference between religion and spirituality. I was bitter toward my government for its lies and deceptions around the Vietnam War, indeed for the War itself, and for its increasing indifference to the cause of civil rights. I was also unconvinced that the school authorities were willing to provide the excellent education that I believe all students have a right to and deserve. And, finally, along with my simple talents, wit and enthusiasm, I brought with me to the new school a deep sense of isolation and loneliness.

### Conclusion

My observations about the School are discussed in general terms in the Background section and are addressed in greater detail in the Emergent Themes section.

## CHAPTER 4

### EMERGENT THEMES

A careful review and analysis of the teacher interviews revealed several areas of interest that they had in common regarding their involvement in the School. Certain concerns predominated in all of the interviews and that predominance was the basis for the selection of the themes.

The themes seemed to arrange themselves into six major, inter-related categories. The first one, Staff Division, addresses the philosophical and pedagogical differences that evolved within the group, and that, interestingly enough, generally fell along gender lines. The issue of Race, which should affect everyone in public education but often is not accorded the attention it deserves, was confronted in Cluster in an honest, direct and forceful way. The next theme, that of The Outsider, though not unique to the alternative setting, may be more evident there than in the traditional school because alternative programs tend to attract unusual people, individuals who are dissatisfied with the conventional mode. Although each of the faculty members was very much a unique individual, we were united in our pursuit of Community, the next theme, one that we recognized was messy and difficult but essential to our developmental objectives and for the democratic way of learning we

sought to foster. As a pioneer in the area of democratic, moral education, Kohlberg provided the inspiration and direction for the School, while at the same time, attempting to have his own intellectual and personal needs met there. As the School's principal theoritician and guide, he was a major theme in all of the interviews. Because of the intense commitment, expenditure of energy, difficulty of achieving a balance between personal and professional lives, and the pressure of being under relentless scrutiny as an educational experiment, Kohlberg and all of the members of the staff eventually had to face the issue of Burnout, the last of the themes.

#### Staff Division

It is important for an understanding of the Cluster School to comprehend a critical division that surfaced within the faculty and the position that various faculty members took regarding the division.

During the first two years of the program, the teachers began to have serious disagreements with one another over how to resolve conflict within the School community. After much discussion, it became apparent that these disagreements grew out of two differing conceptions of pedagogy. One emphasized the individual and affective needs of students, and came to be referred to by the staff as the counseling approach. (It was sometimes

disparagingly called the "feel good" or "touchy-feely" approach). The other conception, called the developmental approach, gave emphasis to Kohlberg's developmental theory and to the democratic, group resolution of conflict. (It was sometimes described with invective as the "confrontational" method). To those with the counseling emphasis, the developmentalists sometimes appeared not to take into account or even to care about the personal problems and feelings of a student when developing a strategy for addressing conflict. The developmentalists, on the other hand, argued that when formulating their strategies, they indeed took the individual's needs into account, but, that the School was not, to quote Kohlberg, "a therapeutic community." By that Kohlberg meant that the main objective of the just community was to develop the moral reasoning of its members, not to provide them with individual psychotherapy.

The case of Tommy, the first student to be expelled from the School, illustrates how the two approaches came into conflict. Tommy was part of a dysfunctional, alcoholic family that lived in a tough public housing project. He had had little success in school, had often been in trouble with the police and was a constant source of disruption in Cluster, both in classes and in community meetings. Of his many attention-getting behaviors, one of the favorites of this very over-weight youngster was to

approach other students, push his belly against theirs and then burst into laughter. While that particular behavior was unusual and made some of us laugh, like many of his antics, (most of which were much more serious), it was also inappropriate and distracting. The School counselor met with him regularly and, in vain, tried to get him to use more productive and acceptable behaviors.

Tommy also refused to abide by the community's rules. Many community meetings were spent discussing his infractions and students made extraordinary efforts to accommodate him, arranging deals and giving him extra chances to change his ways. Finally the community reluctantly voted to expel him.

In the course of planning community meetings and reviewing the needs of individual students, the faculty spent an inordinate amount of time discussing Tommy. The counseling faction constantly referred to his difficult background and his learning problems and insisted that the community needed to give him ever more support and encouragement. The developmentalists, of which I was one, saw things somewhat differently. We, too, were very concerned about his personal problems. However, we reasoned that if we were sincere about developing a community whose rules and governance process were to be taken seriously by the students and faculty alike, and if we were intent upon maximizing the conditions for moral

development according to the Kohlberg prescriptions, special exemptions ought not to be made for Tommy.

It is worth noting that although the two schools of thought were not rigidly fixed, the divisions, with one exception, were along gender lines, with the strongest adherents to the developmentalist position being men and the counseling group being mostly women. Dorothy, for example, often cast her lot with the counseling camp but because she frequently found the developmentalist objectives and reasoning to be attractive, many times she was conflicted over her decisions. She claimed to understand the developmentalist goals but did not vote to support the means to achieve them. While she agreed with the idea of creating a small just community within the larger institution and was a strong backer of student democratic decision-making, when the community-made and community-ratified rules were enforced, as in this instance with Tommy, she was unsure about what to do. It seemed that while the abstract idea of democratic rule-making was attractive to her, its application presented dilemmas for which she did not seem prepared. She did not appear to fully appreciate that community members sometimes must modify their behavior as the price for community membership. Speaking of individual student's relationships to the community, she said:

The kids that were expelled, the few that were forced to leave the program, although they were people with great psychological and emotional needs, it was [because of] the failure of the program as much as it was the failure of any individual action of any individual student. Since we were small enough, we should have been able to handle that.

In blaming the program (which, of course, had its faults), she attempted to resolve the conflict between her espoused support of democratic decision-making and its actual application.

Carol Gilligan, in her book, In a Different Voice, argues that

women perceive and construe social reality differently from men and that these differences center around experiences of separation and attachment.... [Gilligan, 1982, p. 169]

She might hold that Dorothy's unwillingness to vote for Tommy's expulsion stemmed from her identity as a caretaker and as one who saw the loss of the community relationship with Tommy to represent a failure or diminution of her own self-worth. But while the use of the Gilligan lens sheds light on the problem from an important perspective, by emphasizing the relational component in women's thinking, it does not readily suggest ways to develop rules that are fair and equitable and still satisfactorily reflect that focus.



Understanding the differences between the ways women and men conceive of and act on affiliations is a complex matter. Psychologist Jean Baker Miller contends

that women's great desire for affiliation is both a fundamental strength, essential for social advance and at the same time the inevitable source of many of women's current problems. [Miller, 1974, pp. 88-9]

In Dorothy's case with Tommy, her desire for affiliation (possibly combined with a related and projected personal fear of abandonment), which usually was an asset in her attempts to resolve conflicts and create a fair and supportive learning environment, prevented her from taking a developmental perspective. It also, nevertheless, contributed a frustrating though valuable voice to our agonizing discussions, the process of which helped create a sense of community among the staff.

My criticism of the "trapping" aspects of women's affiliative thinking is not meant to suggest that such thinking is without value. On the contrary. Understanding and incorporating the liberating components of affiliative thinking and behavior is probably the most important lesson that men have to learn from women.

### Race

Growth requires engagement with difference and with people embodying that difference. If differences were more openly acknowledged, we could allow for, and even encourage, an increasingly strong expression

by each party of her or his experience. This would lead to greater clarity for self, greater ability to fulfill one's own needs, and more facility to respond to others. There would be a chance at individual and mutual satisfaction, growth, and even joy. [Miller, Toward A New Psychology of Women, p. 13]

The Cluster teachers had had varying degrees of experience with people of color before coming to the School. Most had grown up in predominantly white neighborhoods and had attended basically white schools. Even Charles, the School's only African-American teacher, as was pointed out earlier, grew up in an all white neighborhood. Most of us came to know people of color through work or military service.

All of the teachers were firmly committed to improving race relations and to making sure that children of color were getting as good an education as the children of the dominant culture. Given our belief in democratic education, achieving those goals meant that we had to be willing to risk having a level of engagement with students that challenged us to go beyond even the usual liberal alternative school notions of power sharing and exploration of racial issues.

In the course of establishing a sense of equality and inter-racial trust in the group, some of the black students began testing teachers in various (and sometimes humorous) ways. Carol recounted one such incident.

I remember going on my very first field trip and

having several of the black kids invite me to bob for apples and then stick my head under water to see what my hair did when it was wet. And then having them make that up to me by playing basketball with me later--like, "You're OK. I mean, you didn't drown, and we're glad you're still here."

The staff believed that the race question gave rise to the most difficult, provocative and growth-inducing discussions that the faculty had to deal with. Howard said the following:

The community always talked about having drug rules, especially when we were going on retreats. We always talked about disturbances in class, we agonized over suspending or expelling kids from time to time. We grappled with what was more important, the rest of his [the offender's] life or the survival of the School, and it was all very important at the time and compelling. But, I think I would have to say that the central inspiration for me over the years had to do with race relations at the School and with watching kids go beyond the limitations of their backgrounds, to forming a community based on a common membership, if not common humanity.

It was fascinating to experience and see many of the

staff struggle to get beyond the limitations of our backgrounds, too. Some seemed willing to be forthright in the discussion of race, while others were less so. For example, when George was asked whether he thought the staff and students approached the question of race in an effective manner, he said,

We certainly had a mixture of kids and you had some pretty outspoken minority kids--B. O., and then kids who had grown up in mixed neighborhoods--B. D. and some of the other kids. So, I think the kids were pretty together on those things. As a staff, I mean myself more than others, not really letting our feelings get out on a lot of those things. I think that was another issue, too. People like yourself [the author] and Howard wanting more people to say what they were really feeling and myself and maybe Stuart to an extent, [talked about our feelings] up to a point and that's it.

One circumstance involving race, during the second year of the School, was when each student was asked to select a faculty member who would serve as his/her advisor during the year. When selections were made, it was apparent that a large number of African-American students chose to be in Charles' group. In the faculty meeting that followed, teachers voiced their concerns about what

the selections might mean for the School community. Some felt that to allow the groups to be racially imbalanced might foster racial division in the School and that, therefore, in the name of building a community that sought to affirm race and to go beyond the boundaries and dictates of racial backgrounds, the faculty ought to forcibly integrate the groups. Others argued that the black students who had selected Charles as their advisor had done so because they identified with and liked him and that, no matter how well-intentioned the objecting teachers might be, to deny the students their choice could undermine potentially important relationships and might be seen as a power play by teachers that could subvert the democratic principles on which the School was founded. After intense debate, the teachers arrived at a tentative agreement that, perhaps the best way to diversify was not by faculty fiat but through the long, slow process of developing community trust through fair treatment of one another.

From the School's inception, as was pointed out in the Introduction, our discussions about race were not some neat, abstract exchanges about the meaning of affirmative action but were rooted in the real concerns and sometimes conflicting demands of the students and teachers. The group recognized and discussed racial differences and attempted to arrive at fair solutions to

race-related questions that faced the community. Because of these efforts, which students perceived as proof of the staff's commitment and sincerity, the School climate became an increasingly trusting one. And, although fostering inter-racial friendships was not an announced goal, many such relationships were formed.

One significant departure from the staff's usual direct way of dealing with issues was in its reluctance (with the exception of Howard and the author) to confront the distressing problems of Charles' failure to do his job and his practice of labeling as racist those who attempted to call him to task. Carol, for instance, described how she "dealt" with the issue.

I remember feeling unhappy and uncomfortable with the way you [the author] and Howard, in particular, brought that issue up in staff meetings and community meetings. It wasn't that I thought it was racist; it was that I couldn't get past it [our direct manner] to really deal with the other issue. It was difficult for me for a whole lot of reasons, maybe because of my own ways of dealing or not dealing with conflict.

Carol went on to contend that it was not until she read the journal account by a student teacher of hers, who was observing the classrooms of Charles and another

teacher, that she began to allow herself to appreciate the seriousness of what was happening in Charles' classroom. The intern's observations corroborated the reports of Charles' negligence that had been made by students and staff who had been dissatisfied with his performance. Until that time, she had deluded herself about what was really taking place by focussing on the way that the unpleasant news was being delivered rather than on the news itself.

Charles told black students that those teachers who had challenged him were racists, a charge that could be seen as undercutting inter-racial trust in the community. Understandably, some of the students were confused by his charges, but the accused teachers' histories of fair treatment of students of color and Charles' own history of questionable teaching practices, kept many students from believing him. Nevertheless, the damage to the community fabric caused by Charles' actions was considerable.

Most of the staff, who seemed to be blinded by fears of being labeled racists and appeared to be ensnared by liberal guilt feelings, were unwilling to take a public stand against Charles' destructive behavior even though several of them privately admitted that they knew the charges to be true. Some of the teachers looked to Kohlberg for guidance but because of his own school intervention agenda and his limited experience with people

of color, he was of no help to them. Reflecting on the problem, Howard said,

It was an object lesson in what one can expect from many white teachers when confronting incompetence in a colleague of color. It is also illustrative of how narrow their view of the greater good is for all students, but especially for minority students.

The issue of race, probably more than any other, produced growth in the staff because we were forced to confront it in all of its many complicated manifestations, and in ways that most classroom teachers are never required to do. From affirmative action and curriculum development to the racial composition of groups and inter-racial friendships, we debated, studied, listened and observed, while, often against great odds, we tried to build a trusting and caring multi-racial community.

### The Outsider

Hoy no ha venido nadie a preguntar;  
Ni me han pedido en esta tarde nada.  
...Perdoname, Senor: que poco he muerto!

Today no one has come to inquire,  
Nor have they asked me for anything this afternoon.  
...Forgive me, Lord. How little I have died!  
[Vallejo, 1918, p. 66]

In his poem, Agape, the Peruvian poet, Cesar Vallejo, speaks with a simple, powerful voice about human solitude.



He expresses guilt over not having interacted enough with others and for not having been as sensitive to their needs as he might have been. The frustration born of his solitude leads him to want to communicate with all of humanity.

Through the poem's recurring plea, "Forgive me, Lord. How little I have died!," the poet reveals his understanding of life as a process of simultaneously living and dying. And, in order for him to live/die well, he must lovingly interact with others, as the poem's title suggests. The poet implies that in so doing, he is no longer alone, an outsider, but becomes a meaningful contributor to the whole.

The theme of feeling like an outsider was one that appeared frequently in the Cluster teachers' interviews. The sense of not fitting in, of being apart from the norm, was often mentioned as one of the chief reasons why they joined the School. At first glance that might seem surprising since many of the teachers had been popular both with their colleagues and students and several of us had been community activists and leaders in the work place prior to joining Cluster. But the feeling of being an outsider can originate from a variety of sources, each of which can play a significant role in determining how one encounters and interprets one's world. With us teachers, there were several identifiable causes for our feelings of

outsiderness and many of those causes, coincidentally, were shared by a number of us.

Four of the teachers, for example, came from families where at least one of the parents was an alcoholic. They all maintained that their parents' alcoholism dominated their family lives, and that although to others their families appeared normal, their own experiences there left them with deep feelings of shame and of having lived abnormal family lives. As Stuart put it, "As a result of my father's alcoholism, we were like a wounded group, severely emotionally impaired."

Psychologist Jane Middelton-Moz describes the result of such childhood shaming:

Adults shamed as children feel like outsiders. They often feel a pervasive sense of loneliness throughout their lives, even when surrounded with those who love and care. [Middelton-Moz, 1990, p. xiii]

For those of us gay or lesbian teachers, the feeling of being outsiders or of being different stemmed in part from the internalized voices of our oppression. The experience of being a homosexual in the work place often leads to feelings of segmentation and of not belonging, depending, of course, on factors such as the level of comfort that one has with one's own sexuality and the degree of acceptance, in the given work place, of those who differ from the norm. Dorothy, for instance, found the host school to be a place where she did not feel safe

to be open about her personal life and needed a more accepting and supportive community where she could let down her guard and be herself.

As a gay person and a Jew, Howard also felt like an outsider growing up in Cambridge in a neighborhood dominated by Irish Catholic heterosexuals. He said the following about his experience.

I felt like, and was often treated like, I didn't belong. I didn't have the same longings and ambitions as the other boys. I was frequently mocked for being unusual. In grammar school I was always the different one who tried to be accepted through scholastic achievement.

Howard's sense of outsidership continued into adulthood.

Charles knew the role of the outsider not only because of his race but because he, unlike the others, had been brought to the School from outside the Cambridge school system, in order to provide a racial minority presence on the faculty. His complex social class and racial identity confusion further compounded his sense of alienation.

Muriel, the guidance counselor, described her life as being a search to find a place where she could fit in. She believed that her sense of not belonging and her difficulty in trusting others resulted from her lack of

the right kind of attention in her formative years and, as a Jew, her feelings of not belonging stemmed from her awareness of the anti-semitism that pervades so many peoples' thinking.

From George's strong need to be seen as conventional, it could be inferred that he was concerned that he, too, was an outsider but one whose ambition dictated that he try to erase the evidence and memories of his own differentness.

As for myself, in spite of my involvement in the political life of the city, my understanding of the depths of homophobia in the host school and of the general lack of acceptance by many Cambridge natives of people from other geographical regions, contributed to making me feel that I was an interested observer who had little possibility of attaining full community membership.

The Cluster teachers were able to use our feelings of outsidersness in positive ways that allowed us to contribute sensitively to the enrichment of one another and to the creation of a teaching community that celebrated diversity and encouraged and supported the development of individual talents. Our understanding of being on the outside also helped us to connect well with adolescents since one of the characteristics of adolescence is a sense of not fitting in, or of not belonging. Finally, we also had a special empathy for

minorities and their sense of being on the outside which helped to contribute to the cohesiveness of the Cluster community.

### Community

Men [sic] live in a community in virtue of the things they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge - a common understanding - like-mindedness as the sociologists say. Such things cannot be passed physically from one to another, like bricks; they cannot be shared as persons would share a pie by dividing it into physical pieces. The communication which insures participation in a common understanding is one which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions - like ways of responding to expectations and requirements. [Dewey, 1938, p. 4]

The teachers had joined together originally because of our shared but sometimes not so easily defined desires to democratize the running of classes, to have direct control over the curriculum and the manner in which it was presented, and to work collaboratively in order to achieve those goals. We had had varying degrees of familiarity with one another prior to joining Cluster. Some of us had known others because we had come from the same academic departments or had worked together as activists in city politics. Others had had only nodding acquaintances with their new colleagues. Only Charles, who had been brought to the School by Kohlberg, was virtually unknown to everyone.

The staff's work of establishing and maintaining the just community was an exciting, challenging and enormously time-consuming endeavor. And it was all very new. Since the Cluster School was a pilot project, we had no blueprint for community-making and our sense of community was evolving as we struggled with the moral issues that sprang from the life of the School itself. All the while, we tried to keep uppermost in our minds that we were attempting to improve what Kohlberg called the moral culture of the School. As we developed curriculum and formulated ideas and strategies for realizing community for and with our students, another type of community -- a sub-community of adults -- was developing among the teachers and consultants.

Although the teachers frequently interacted with one another in our roles as team teachers and participants in the community meetings, the most concentrated and regular time that we spent together was during the weekly staff meetings. Held on Wednesday nights, each week in a different teacher's home, the staff meetings were the occasions during which the teachers, along with Kohlberg and his graduate students, prepared for the week's small groups and community meetings. Often lasting five hours or more, these gatherings, which were open to students but were rarely attended by them, were at once a study group in which we discussed developmental theory and the

practical aspects of running the School, as well as a place for teachers to socialize. Howard remembered the meetings as being unlike any other faculty meetings he had ever attended.

Not only did one need lots of energy for working with students, which is always the case, but the collegial atmosphere was intense as well. It was wonderful because we were having to meet together and work things out, hash things out, cry, embrace, get frustrated, have triumphs and successes and no program that I'd been involved in up to that time had had anything more than a perfunctory department meeting time for adults to interact and to try to govern a school together. The English department meetings were totally pro forma and still were when I left teaching after twenty years. Totally pro forma! There was never any real exchange, never any sense of growth or learning. But in the Cluster School staff meetings there was always that.

Carol believed that the meetings played a central role in the life of the School's community of adults and had an important impact on her personal development.

I thought the staff meetings were pretty extraordinary. At first, it was a shock to think that this group of people was going to go off every

Wednesday night and spend from 7 o'clock until god-knows-how-long--maybe 2 in the morning - on (and off) the various agenda topics. But, I found them extraordinarily compelling intellectually and a source of great learning and growth, partly because Larry was there and because we dealt with things on a theoretical level as well as planning the agenda and the community meetings. I thought that, by and large, compared to all groups I have ever worked with--and that includes a lot, and all kinds of meetings that I have ever been to--that, in fact, they actually ran the best. I remember thinking at times maybe they weren't so efficient. But they were efficient in a very deep, deep way, in that they addressed the group's needs. They addressed the needs for the group to come together and deal with itself affectively and psychologically and humanly, friend-to-friend, person-to-person, combatant-to-combatant, because, as you know, there were times when we were really at odds. Certainly, there were very vociferous arguments that we engaged in, which we were able to do because we were so close and we knew basically we were together. So, there was a lot of trauma involved in it, too--a lot of anxiety, as well as a lot of joy and intellectual growth and just extraordinariness.



I liked the combination of social and work orientation that the meetings had. They also, at times, were very painful. There was some little reserve in me that used to think, "Why am I doing this every Wednesday night? This is really bizarre. These people are bizarre. This school is bizarre. Why are we doing this? We're crazy. The world thinks we're crazy." So, a part of me kind of wondered, "Why are we doing this?" because I could see that we weren't your average bunch of folks, and Larry wasn't either.

The teachers were required to make an extraordinary commitment of time and energy to the project. Only two of us, George and Stuart, were married or in exclusive relationships and the time demands of the School put strains on their relationships with their spouses and children. Carol observed the following,

[I believe that] we were able to have those kinds of meetings and do the kinds of things that we did and make that kind of commitment because we were all relatively unfettered -- for a whole variety of reasons. We allowed ourselves to be immersed in this experience, which is really what it took.

Like members of all small decision-making groups, ours was faced with its own community-building challenges. One expert on group dynamics, B. Aubrey Fisher, believes that, among other things, the practice of appropriate and timely self-disclosure, the ability to work together toward shared goals to increase mutual trust, and the willingness to take risks are all essential to each person's integration into group membership and to the development of healthy group functioning. He emphasizes the following:

Engaging in risk, increasing vulnerability to fellow members of a group, is prerequisite to effective group process. To avoid risk, for whatever reason and with whatever strategy one wishes to employ, is to deny the group its ability to function with maximum effectiveness. Furthermore, it is to deny your own self an opportunity to grow and to develop your own abilities and qualities. [Fisher, 1980, pp. 36-7]

Many of us on the staff prided ourselves on the direct and authentic way in which we dealt with one another. But there were other, often more personal, less well-identified needs and expectations within the group that sometimes went unaddressed. For example, when Dorothy took the risk of disclosing her lesbianism to the staff, neither Howard, nor I, (both of whom are gay and were at various stages of our own coming out), nor any of the other staff, commended her for taking that risk or followed it up with reciprocal self-disclosure. And there

were other, less dramatic examples of opportunities for the staff to create an environment that was more conducive to personal disclosure and improved communications. We were aware, for instance, that, during the first year of the School, Kohlberg and Muriel were going through divorces. Unfortunately, both we and they failed to discuss the effects that those important processes were having on them personally and, by extension, on the group.

At one time or another, we all avoided the risk of self-disclosure and consequently each of us must bear some responsibility for having limited the effectiveness of the group. But there were some among us who were less self-disclosing than others. Referring to the her own reluctance to contribute to staff discussions, Maureen said of herself,

I did shut my mouth for the first year I was in Cluster because I was terrified. I wasn't used to being among such verbal, obviously intelligent and such intensely committed people.

The issue of mutual trust became an important one within the adult community. Although the philosophical division, which was discussed earlier, produced a low-grade dynamic of suspicion among the teachers, the word "trust" was sometimes invoked by us in ways that are quite revealing. There were teachers on both sides of the

philosophical debate who stated, usually in private conversations with other group members, that they did not fully trust others in the group. This lack of trust usually meant that the speaker could not rely on those so-called "untrustworthy" members to support his/her positions within the group or within the School. In practice, however, those claims really represented a form of work avoidance, namely, avoiding the work that could have made us more effective group members. They were strategies, whether conscious or unconscious, which were employed because of our own unwillingness to admit that there were unacknowledged feelings and issues, which all of us had, that at times impeded the functioning of the group. After all, each one of us had had feelings of jealousy, competition, fear, anger, ambition, rage, sibling rivalry, confusion, and sometimes, despair. And yet despite the staff's need to reflect upon and understand our own interactions and feelings, an understanding that was central to our growth, we neither monitored nor examined them with anywhere near the same care that we gave to the relationships among our students. On this point, Carol recalled:

[Among the teachers], there probably was a lot of competition and emerging identity issues and doubt, self-doubt, doubt about the project, and anxiety.

To encourage self-disclosure and risk-taking in a group does not mean that every group meeting ought to turn into an arena for personal gut-spilling. Rather, the group must recognize the essential inter-dependence between its organizational and personal needs and must consciously develop the habit of trying to achieve a balance between them. The search for that balance may lead to a less clear delineation between the personal and the professional domains but it also might help produce a more emotionally integrated and trusting group.

In spite of all of the positive openness among the Cluster adults, (an openness which did indeed characterize the majority of our meetings), and in spite of our ability to be analytical, confrontive and authentic with one another, these crucial, unaddressed areas sometimes undercut the group's effectiveness and ultimately contributed to its dissolution.

Sometimes the staff did not follow its own democratic community guidelines. One such serious example was when Kohlberg went to the Superintendent of Schools and falsely accused Howard and this author of sexually molesting boys in the School. Rather than notifying their accused colleagues and calling for an immediate airing of Kohlberg's charges in both the adult and the student communities, the several faculty members who were aware that the allegations had been made chose not to inform

Howard and me about the charges. Instead, they met secretly, appearing to give credence to a story that was later admitted by Kohlberg, in writing, to have been the fantastic product of his confused mind. The reaction of the faculty to the Kohlberg accusations was a betrayal of trust and of open and democratic communication, an obvious failure to live up to the communitarian principles that all of us had espoused.

In light of my own studies of community-formation and group functioning that I have done since leaving Cluster, I also have had some insights about my personal role in the Cluster adult community. The first is about "timing" and "tone." There were numerous occasions when I made excellent contributions to the process and to the substance of staff and community meetings. But there were many other times when my potentially helpful interventions were rendered ineffective or even became sources of disruption because I had neither paid enough attention to the timing of them nor to the tone in which they were delivered. One of my common practices was that of "jumping on tongues" or speaking immediately after someone else had spoken. My colleagues often interpreted this behavior, a form of feedback, as my not having respected or digested what had just been said. And, of course, they were right because, in my eagerness to contribute to the discussions, I cut into the breathing space or

acknowledgment space which many people need in order to feel like they have been heard and that their thoughts have been understood.

The tone problem was a carry-over from the way that we had communicated with one another in my family when I was growing up. I had not realized what an argumentative tone our family discourse had until I went home on a visit during my second year in Cluster and listened to a family discussion. I was amazed at what I heard. The most innocuous statements sounded like challenges to fist fights, sharp and highly charged. I then heard those same sounds in my own voice and suddenly understood that it ought not to be surprising, therefore, that some of my colleagues perceived me as being argumentative.

Several other of my group process insights also are related to my family, as so many important things seem to be. It is sometimes easier to identify the psychological makeup of others than to identify one's own. For example, in working closely with Muriel and Howard, it appeared relatively clear to me that they both had found an idealized father substitute in Kohlberg. However, in my own case, I less readily understood, for instance, the degree to which some of my colleagues came to embody for me my older siblings, with all of the complicated psychological baggage associated with those relationships; old relational patterns in surprising, new forms.

In my family, I have also served as a surrogate father for many of my younger siblings and have often felt responsible for their social development and their sense of belonging. At Cluster, I transferred that feeling to some of my colleagues, in that I felt responsible for them particularly when they were feeling depressed or were not participating at their usual level. Since I now have an improved grasp of those dynamics, I am better able to monitor my feelings in groups and to maintain my focus on the group's work.

The process of building the Cluster adult community proved to be, in part, one of learning how to improve our communication skills. In our search for what Dewey called "a common understanding," we all recognized, on some level, the importance of honest dialogue and dispassionate self-review. At times we were successful in incorporating these practices into the life of the group; at other times we failed abysmally. But no one left the community without attaining a greater awareness and appreciation of the complexity of working within a democratically-run group, as well as improving the skills necessary for making such a group function effectively.

#### Kohlberg

In the spring of 1987, eight years after Lawrence Kohlberg's association with the Cluster School had come to



a close, I attended a memorial service in his honor at Memorial Chapel in Harvard Yard. Some months earlier, the well-known psychologist and Harvard professor, who had been suffering from bouts of depression, had walked into the ocean to die. His remains had washed ashore a few weeks before the service and now his many admirers had gathered together to pay tribute to the remarkable man they all had known as "Larry."

As I listened to the series of speakers review his life and their relationships with him -- former students, teaching colleagues, his sister, a childhood friend, and a high school student from the Bronx, the site of his most recent school intervention project -- I thought about what I might have said about him if I had been invited to speak there. The first thing that came to mind was the word "fairness," a word that was very important to Larry and central to his life's work as a moral theorist and as a tireless teacher of moral education. "What is fair?" he would ask his university students as they carefully examined the various moral perspectives raised by one of his famous hypothetical moral dilemmas. "What is fair?" he would query, prodding the Cluster staff as we heatedly debated the antics of a particularly disruptive student, while thinking that Larry might be less disposed to raise that question if he were forced to spend time in the classroom with the offender. And as the Cluster community

wrestled with the competing claims over the racial composition of the School, we took up Larry's question and made it our own, "What is fair?"

Perhaps it was my memories of Larry asking that question that made me feel this way, but as the well-deserved tributes to my late teacher continued without any mention of his frailties or short-comings, I began to feel uncomfortable, sensing that the memories were incomplete, and knowing that if Larry had been there, he would have made a self-deprecating remark and asked for other points of view.

Lawrence Kohlberg, like all of us, was a human being with both positive and negative attributes and in all "fairness," ought to be remembered that way. His positive characteristics indeed were numerous and his work at Cluster highlighted many of them. Carol especially remembered his spirit of generosity and his unswerving commitment to our School.

I admired very much the fact that he actually came to the School and put in the time and stuck with it over a many-year period. I thought that was an extraordinary commitment, for which he paid a heavy price with his own health. I know it must have been very hard for him to do all the things he had to do at Harvard and be over at the School in the way that he was. And I also think that he was one of the most

brilliant people that I've ever met. And the fact that he was willing to learn from all of us who worked at the School and from the students, and to let theory come out of clinical experience and practice and to admit it and give credit to people and be generous to people in that way, I thought that was truly extraordinary.

Howard, who had been profoundly influenced by Kohlberg intellectually, came to realize that Larry was not equally talented in all areas.

He was our guru. I think some of us, and I would include myself, expected more of him than he was able to give. I think I thought, he's a Harvard professor, he's a brilliant man, he's got this wonderfully appealing theory and therefore he must know a lot about schools and he should to be able to come in here and tell me what to do. But I think that, even though I still idealize his mind and his theory, I recognize that his practice in a public school was fairly clumsy. He just had no idea how to communicate with these kids. They treated him like an eccentric uncle and were amused by his idiosyncrasies. So, I think his direct impact was more on the staff. And, he was also a man with deep, deep problems, which I, for one, was unwilling to

acknowledge for the longest time. And everybody looked to him for enlightenment. I don't think that he ever explicitly said to us [the staff], and he probably should have, "Hey look, you guys have more experience dealing with these kinds of situations and with these kids and I defer to your judgment," on this or that. He just maintained the figure of the all-knowing savant who would scratch and twist and "aaaah" and out would come the key to how we were going to handle the situation.

Maureen recalled her first memories of Kohlberg.

Larry reminded me of Giro Gearloose, the Walt Disney character. I used to joke that if we sent to central casting and asked for a combination between an astronaut and a professor, you'd get Larry Kohlberg. He was so spacey and sort of weird on one level. And, at first, I was intimidated by him. But then, once it dawned on me that there were things that I really knew about, that we knew about as a staff that he was clueless about, I saw room for a more fertile interaction.

Stuart spoke about the excitement of working with Kohlberg.

To me, it was actually really thrilling to be around

Larry, to see and experience the whirlwind of activity that he could generate, and to see how productive the human mind could be. (It was also interesting to witness the sycophants that hung onto him.) What his presence allowed me to do was to put flesh and bones on abstract ideas. And, I've always thought that life's not pure, and Larry gave me that impression too, because while he was pushing for his theory with us, he was willing to negotiate with us because he thought that the theory warranted criticism.

In different ways and to different degrees, Larry was an important person for each of the teachers. The exposure to his theory and to his moral discussion techniques not only challenged our own moral reasoning but gave us a new awareness of the complexity of reasoning structures and provided us with an elegant, clear lens through which to see them. For Carol, Howard, Maureen and me, the most serious students of his work, who tended to intentionally incorporate the Kohlbergian approach into our teaching, the theory not only enriched but forever transformed our practice. Maureen told of how Kohlberg's work continues to influence her teaching.

When I teach a course in adolescent psychology, I spend a lot of time looking at Kohlberg and getting

kids to think about stages and to try to get them to understand that there are many ways of perceiving the world. And they're very receptive to it. They like the stuff a lot. I've also developed curriculum, a U. S. history curriculum that revolves around moral law and issues of fairness. How can you be a teacher and not deal with issues of fairness? But Kohlberg's theoretical material has really solidified my response to those kinds of dilemmas and because of my own knowledge of how kids respond, I think I'm now better able, by using the right kind of questioning, to get kids to push their thinking to a more sophisticated level. It's not like I get up in the morning and say, "They're going to be in stage four," but it becomes natural to think in terms of stages. And in teaching history courses as I do, the moral dilemma is never far away. So Kohlberg's work has made me a better teacher.

Kohlberg's presence at the School, especially during its first two years, was invaluable. It was during that period that we determined the need for the various groups and activities (the discipline committee, small groups, advising groups, and the community meeting) and decided how each would work. Kohlberg was deeply involved in all aspects of the School, attending the weekly faculty and

community meetings and taking an active role in both. Sometimes, if he thought that the problems of the School required the holding of additional meetings, he would demand that the faculty meet after the school day had ended. Everything about the School was discussed and planned in great detail which Kohlberg insisted upon doing to an almost obsessive degree.

In addition to the many School-related meetings, Kohlberg and the staff frequently socialized together as well. Late afternoon staff meetings at Harvard often were followed by supper at a favorite Chinese restaurant, where Larry, the teachers, graduate students, and sometimes journalists and other visitors who were interested in the School, would spend hours together in academic and social discourse. Kohlberg often remarked that the Cluster staff was for him like a family. At the time, his relationship with his own family was failing. He was separated from his wife and estranged from his sons, and confided to several of us that the estrangement, for him a source of great anxiety and regret, caused him deep disappointment in himself as a father.

For the most part, his intense involvement with the project was appreciated by the faculty. In retrospect, though, Muriel believed that after several years at the School, his type of involvement became counter productive.

He meddled, and he, in his own craziness, had a need

to manipulate. He was a great manipulator. I loved Larry a lot, but he was a terrible manipulator, and as we learned later, a very sick guy in a lot of ways. He had these problems and he should never have been a consultant. He should have been an advisor or something else. He got himself much too involved in the staff and in the running of the School.

Unfortunately, Larry's perspective on the project became distorted. His excessively close involvement with the running of the School and his single-minded expectation that Cluster would serve as a model which would validate his work and could be replicated elsewhere, conspired to cloud his vision when the faculty decided that Charles had to go. Larry's accusation of sexual molestation, coming as it did on the heels of the faculty's decision to dismiss Charles, appeared to be a wrathful rebuke to Howard and this author whom he perceived to have been the strongest advocates for Charles' dismissal.

But, despite the painful memories of that period, Howard summarized the faculty's feelings of indebtedness to Kohlberg by acknowledging the important role that Larry's work has played in his life.

It's impossible to overstate how my exposure to the theory, and then my experience in seeing the validity



of the theory in the setting of the School, both the theory of the Stages and theory of how kids can be brought to see things at a higher stage, at a more sophisticated, inclusive stage of moral reasoning, how that has become a permanent part of my outlook. First of all, professionally. Going into any classroom from the time of this experience, it's just been so clarifying to hear kids discussing any issue of fairness or justice and being able to hear where they're coming from in a way that I never would have. It just gave a wonderful framework for understanding where kids, where people are coming from. It helped me to refine a theory of prejudice, specifically of homophobia, which I would never have conceived of in quite that way before if it hadn't been for the theory. Then, as an English teacher you might be able to leave your lessons in the school but when you're teaching moral education or you are a moral educator, you can't turn it off when you go home. And my political life, too, is now, in some way, defined by moral stage thinking. My ability to cut through a lot of irrelevant or extraneous detail and really get to the core of competing claims, in the political world, is directly attributable to thinking about these kinds of issues of moral reasoning. And, it's very helpful. It helps to clear away a lot of

clutter and to focus in on where factions are coming from in a political conflict.

### Burnout

The intense and all-encompassing nature of the teachers work at Cluster eventually took its toll on all of us and we began to experience the phenomenon of "burnout," which for our purposes, is defined as a combination of physical and emotional exhaustion. There were several principal factors that contributed to the condition.

First, there were differences among the staff as to their commitments to Kohlberg's theory. We had not taken the time, as we should have before opening the School, to hold in-depth discussions of the theory and its implications for teaching practice and to try to achieve some consensus about it. This resulted in teachers having various levels of understanding of and willingness to incorporate the Kohlbergian approach into their work. Those differences were frequently sources of conflict among the staff. Moreover, Kohlberg, himself, was not helpful in this area either since he tended to downplay the importance of knowing the theory because he wanted the model to be able to be replicated anywhere and believed that one cannot require teachers to take a theoretical course before beginning such a program. Dorothy, who

never fully agreed with Kohlberg's theory and who therefore found it difficult to use it to inform her teaching, concluded the following,

Participating in the Cluster School made me a stronger teacher, although I definitely did not feel that way at the time. I felt like I was part of a grand experiment, but that we were failing at it, and that many people were focusing on what they saw as successes in the program, and I personally was feeling more and more tired and, as I mentioned before, feeling like I wasn't doing good. I was more and more self-critical at the time. I'm happy to see now that I believe that teacher burnout is not individual. It's structural. And it has to do with not giving individual teachers a real say. And the reason I felt that we didn't have a real say was because there was an agenda that was not ours. The goal of the School was to further an idea that did not really belong to us.

The time commitment that the program required was unreasonable and left us little time for anything else. Stuart, one of the few married staff members, discussed his feelings about this point.

We were working, definitely, 60 to 80 hours a week,

plus a couple of retreats, perhaps on a frequency of once a month. Plus people were making decisions about their own lives during this whole process, and so you'd get through weighing [Cluster] community issues, then you had to sometimes deal with personal issues. It became a very draining experience. I think I was the only married member with kids. We had children who were both young, and that was really a severe drain. When I would go back home, I wasn't really putting time in there. I think it became very obvious to me at the end of the first year, that my time was limited in the School. And then, when I confronted that fact, I didn't think it was fair, because the other staff members were still going full bore, and I already knew that I couldn't do it. I started feeling guilty almost before September began of the second year.

Carol believed that the nature of the work itself and our approach to it depleted her energy.

I will also say it was one of the most exhausting experiences I have ever had, both because of what was demanded of us and also because of the way we chose to work. I mean, not to contract, by any means, [i. e., working beyond the requirements of the teachers' contract] but having meetings even in the middle of

parties sometimes. I also think that anyone who chooses at any time in life to go out and try to deal in a fairly direct way with racial differences, with group differences, and not just deal with them superficially, but to go home with kids, to have kids in your house, is going to have a hard time. For many of these kids, we were their parents. They were living in quite distressed circumstances. So, I would say that this experience called upon just about everything I had.

Exhaustion resulted not only from the number of hours we were required to spend on the project but also from the type of students with whom we were working. Howard remembered the following:

One of the things that made the program so exhausting was that we did not have a critical mass of well-adjusted kids. We tended, because of the reputation of the program from the beginning, to attract kids with problems, who couldn't make it in the main stream, no way. We were stuck with a reputation, we had administrators and guidance counselors who were telling kids "Oh, you don't want to go into that program. That's for kids who are fucked up." That was very harmful.

The administrative structure of the School also contributed stress to teachers' lives. Our arrangement of having each teacher serve as spokesperson for the program, rotating them every four or six weeks, was motivated by our beliefs that the group, rather than an individual administrator, ought to make the important decisions affecting the group. In addition, we felt that all staff ought to have administrative experience. As was indicated in the Background section, that arrangement adequately served our democratic objectives. However, they could have been achieved more easily, with less fragmentation and with a better sense of administrative continuity by having the teachers elect one teacher each fall who would serve as spokesperson and administrator for that year, and who would be relieved of some teaching duties as part of the assignment.

Another factor in the burnout process, the Kohlberg accusations of sexual misconduct, can be understood as both a cause and an effect of burnout. For many years, Kohlberg, whose physical health was compromised by an intractable intestinal parasite, had lived his life at a dangerous, breakneck speed, teaching full-time, writing voluminously and consulting to several projects in addition to Cluster. The unreasonable demands that he placed on himself caused him to have an emotional breakdown and his accusations were among several

indications of his illness. The effect of his accusations was to further debilitate an already disheartened and over-worked staff, sapping us of our meager emotional reserves and calling into question the continuation of the School itself.

Finally, in addition to the sometimes severe pressures of being constantly scrutinized as an important educational experiment, some of the teachers' unmet individual developmental needs contributed significantly to their burnout. Among the most salient examples were Charles' need to address his racial and social class identity problems, Howard's need to acknowledge and act on his homosexuality, and my own need to tend to my long-neglected personal life which had been overshadowed by my work in the School. Taken together, these factors, along with those previously mentioned, caused the almost inevitable staff burnout, which in turn ultimately became a primary reason for the demise of the program.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During my first years at CHLS, every morning I used to witness a curious ritual. At precisely 7:45, the teachers from the English Department would line up in single file in the hall in front of the department office. There they would remain, some chatting quietly among themselves but most of them standing dutifully and impassively, with books clutched to their breasts, awaiting the arrival of the department chairman. Within a few moments, their leader would appear. A tall man whose large chest augmented his imperious bearing, he would ceremoniously process down the corridor, briefcase in hand, while speaking to the teachers in stentorian tones as though he were addressing a much larger gathering. When finally he got to the office entrance, he would solemnly reach into his suit pants' pocket and produce the key to the door, an object which seemed to have an almost sacramental significance for the onlooking, obeisant staff. He would then unlock the door and lead his charges into the sanctum sanctorum, the place from which he grandly ruled the department.

To watch this daily ritual made me angry. From friends of mine who taught in the English Department, I had learned that the chairman ran its affairs in an uncompromisingly paternalistic way. Not only did he



maintain his real and symbolic control by not giving the teachers keys to the office but he further infantilized them by not allowing them to have a voice in any substantive departmental matters such as curriculum development, the selection of the courses they were to teach, or in helping to determine the agenda items for departmental meetings. Any objections to this arrangement from the ranks were quickly silenced through the chairman's use of intimidation tactics, like his giving the objecting teacher a negative annual evaluation. It made me angry to know that these were the so-called adult relationships in the school, narrow-minded tyrants and stultified, compliant teachers, who were isolated from one another in their work, and whose apparent lack of inventiveness and courage were the tell-tale products of an authoritarian environment.

It is with the poignant memory of that ritual in mind, a ritual that was emblematic of the relationships among many of the CHLS staff and students alike, that I make my concluding remarks about the Cluster School teachers. The memory highlights the marked contrast between both the moral atmosphere and the quality of the relationships that emerged in Cluster and those that were predominant in the host school.

In this paper I have shown that there were several central reasons why the men and women who taught in

Cluster were attracted to an alternative program in moral development education. For some of us, one reason was that we had come from backgrounds where moral questions were accorded a good deal of importance and were discussed with regularity. In the majority of those cases, the influences of religious training and of significant moral mentors such as parents, relatives and teachers were identified as having played important roles in shaping our moral dispositions. We believed that those influences also gave rise to our widely-held idealistic conviction that individual principled moral action can transform a society. Some of our idealism, too, was reflective of the national ethos of altruism and of a "can do" spirit that affected the lives of young people at the time that the Cluster faculty was coming of age. Furthermore, many of us were motivated, strengthened, and inspired by our practical experiences, having had our mettle tested as activists in the Civil Rights and Anti-Vietnam War Movements. We envisioned our work at Cluster as an opportunity to apply to education those same principles that had guided us in those earlier struggles. Chief among them were the principles of race and sex equity, and of the preeminence of the democratic process.

Another factor that helped draw many of us to the project was our sense of "outsiderness," originating in a variety of experiences in the realms of sexuality, race,

religion and social class, experiences that may have contributed to our dissatisfaction with the learning environment in which we found ourselves and to our increased feelings of social awareness and responsibility.

Other attractive aspects of the program were its promise of an escape from the isolation from other adults and the opportunity to affiliate with colleagues in relationships that were potentially more emotionally supportive and intellectually stimulating.

As I expected when I undertook this study, I found that, for most of us, the experience of working in the School had profound influences on our lives in a variety of areas. Our pedagogy was transformed in ways that had not been anticipated even by those among us who had most strongly advocated for the complete democratizing of the classroom. As Cluster's particular brand of democracy unfolded, our teaching approach went from being a liberal, teacher-centered one to one that was more organic and community-centered, deriving its substance and meaning from the life of the group. The experience convinced us that students as well as teachers can and must be active and powerful agents in both the teaching and learning processes. We also came to recognize the importance of identifying moral dilemmas that were generated from the life of the group and to use them to engage its members in meaningful moral discussion with the hope of enhancing our

moral reasoning development. And, for those of us who still are classroom teachers, the practice of our craft continues to be conditioned by the democratic habits we established in the School and is informed by the valuable practical experiences in democratic decision-making that we had there. Kohlberg's developmental theory and the pedagogical perspective that it suggests, while not equally well understood or embraced by all of the staff, helped provide us with an intellectual framework and vocabulary for our demanding work and, for many of us, now employed in a variety of fields, they still serve that purpose.

The teacher interviews also revealed that a majority felt that their many years of stimulating moral dialogue with Kohlberg and with one another, gave them a deep appreciation for the multi-dimensional nature of their own moral reasoning and challenged them to translate the insights drawn from the experience into principled moral action. They expressed gratitude for having been part of that dialogue and believed that their participation in it was crucial to expanding their moral vision.

Finally, a wide array of teacher observations taken from the interviews confirmed my belief that while our attention was focussed on the creation of the just community and on the moral development of our students, we teachers and Kohlberg also created an adult community

which served a number of important functions. In part, it was a community that we defined in response to the emotional needs we brought to the group. It was also an antidote to the isolation from other adults which we had experienced in the traditional school. And, although it was not fully understood or appreciated by us at the time, it became a forum for risk-taking and a laboratory for our individual and collective searches for personal liberation and autonomy. It was a safe and supportive yet confrontive place in which adult social interactions, which are often neglected in schools and are so essential to adult growth, could flourish. For us adult adventurers who had chosen to break away from the strictures like those of the CHLS English Department, it was a way station on our developmental path where we acquired the keys to the next stages of our growth and development.

In conclusion, this study suggests several lessons for those concerned with staff development. For any intervention that proposes to implement a theory-based program, it would be advisable to give teachers a firm grounding in the theory and its implications for teaching practice before undertaking such a project. This would insure that participants would know whether or not they want to commit to the theory and would provide them with a clearer picture of what would be expected of them on the job. For programs in moral development education, this

pre-service preparation ought to include training in the conduct of moral discussions which are a key component in developmental work. Such training would help avoid some of the needless divisions over pedagogy that plagued the Cluster staff. It would be useful to keep in mind, as well, that, as in Cluster, not all staff are likely to be at the same level of moral reasoning. Staff trainers should be alert to these differences and not paper them over but rather deal with them forthrightly from a developmental perspective. Trainers must also address the critical issue of conflict and the essential role it plays in the healthy functioning of a group. For example, the group should be instructed to find methods for venting hostility because, contrary to the belief that expressing hostility will destroy a group, several studies have shown that

as group members shed their inhibitions about expressing negative feelings, they develop stronger ties to their group membership. [Fisher, 1974, p. 237]

At the same time, conflict must be managed in such a way so as not to impede the functioning or threaten the fabric of the group.

Another lesson drawn from the Cluster experience is that the adult group must be attentive to its affective as well as its intellectual needs. Special effort ought to be given to developing ways of providing members with

emotional support and encouragement. And, in a related task, it would be beneficial for the group to find methods for periodically taking the developmental pulse of both the group and its individual members, so as to be better prepared to more consciously promote the developmental process.

The role of the university in school interventions needs to be examined carefully. It is not enough that the university be well-intentioned, feeling that through its intervention it is coming to the aid of a needy school system. The impact of the university on the school is far more complicated than that, since it brings with it not only the weighty influence of the institution but also the competitiveness that the hierarchical nature of the university breeds. As in the case of university professor Kohlberg, whose touted reputation as a scholar tended to mask his shortcomings, the university, undoubtedly out of self-interest, aided and abetted in the "guruizing" of the man, turning a blind eye to his problems and weaknesses and to the repercussions that they had on the intervention itself.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blatt, Moshe and Kohlberg, L. "Effects of Classroom Moral Discussion upon Children's Levels of Moral Judgment." Journal of Moral Education 4: 129-62, 1975.
- Codding, J. and Arenella, A. "Creating a Just Community: The Transformation of an Alternative School," Moral Education Forum, Vol. 6, Winter, 1981.
- Coles, Robert. The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1989.
- Dewey, John. Democracy and Education. New York: Macmillan Free Press, 1973.
- Duke, D. The Transformation of the School. Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1978.
- Durkheim, Emile. Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education. New York: The Free Press, 1925/1973.
- Erikson, Erik H. Identity, Youth and Crisis. New York: W. W. Norton, 1968.
- Fisher, B. Aubrey. Small Group Decision Making. McGraw-Hill, 1974.
- Gilligan, Carol. In a Different Voice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Hartshorne, Hugh and May, M. A. Studies in the Nature of Character. New York: Macmillan, 1928/1930.
- Kohlberg, Lawrence. The Development of Modes of Moral Thinking in the Years 10 to 16. Doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1959.
- Kohlberg, Lawrence. "Cognitive Developmental Approach to Moral Education." The Humanist, November-December, 1972.
- Kohlberg, Lawrence. Essays on Moral Development Volume 1 The Philosophy of Moral Development. New York: Harper and Row, 1981.



- Kohlberg, Lawrence. "The Just Community in Theory and Practice" in Burkowitz and Oser (eds.) Moral Education, Interactional Perspectives. Hillside: Ehrlbaum Associates, 1984.
- Kohlberg, Lawrence. Essays on Moral Development Volume 2 The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.
- Kohlberg, Lawrence. The Psychology of Moral Development. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984.
- Levine, Sarah. Promoting Adult Growth in Schools: The Promise of Professional Development. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1988.
- Levinson, Daniel. The Seasons of a Man's Life. New York: Knopf, 1978.
- Lightfoot, Sara L. The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984.
- Merriam, Sharan B. Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988.
- Miller, Jean Baker. Towards a New Psychology of Women. Boston: Beacon Press, 1974.
- Middelton-Moz, Jane. Shame and Guilt: The Masters of Disguise. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, Inc., 1990.
- Mosher, Ralph. Moral Education: A First Generation of Research Development. New York: Praeger, 1980.
- Muson, Howard. "Moral Thinking - Can it be Taught?." Psychology Today, February, 1979, p. 92.
- Piaget, Jean. The Moral Judgment of the Child. New York: The Free Press, 1932/1965.
- Power, F. Clark, Ann Higgins, and Lawrence Kohlberg. Lawrence Kohlberg's Approach to Moral Education. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

- Riordan, Robert C. "Education Toward Shared Purpose: An Interpretive Case History of the Development of Goals and Practices in an Alternative Public High School," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1977.
- Robb, Christina. "Teaching the 3Rs + 2." Boston Sunday Globe Magazine, November 19, 1978.
- Sheehy, Gail. Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974.
- Vallejo, Cesar. "Agape" from Los Heraldos Negros (1918). Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1961.
- Wasserman, Elsa. "Implementing Kohlberg's 'Just Community' Concept in an Alternative High School." Social Education 40 (1975): 203-207.
- Wasserman, Elsa. "A Participant Observation Study of the Attempt to Implement the Just Community Approach in an Alternative High School," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University, 1977.
- Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself" from Leaves of Grass (1855), The Portable Walt Whitman. New York: The Viking Press, 1973.

