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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

AUTONOMY IN MORAL JUDGMENT
AMONG BIBLE COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

JIM D. SCHNEIDER



A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1991



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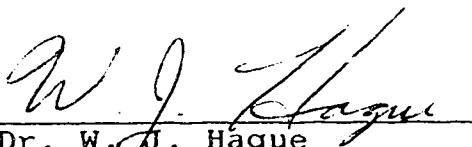
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AMONG BIBLE COLLEGE STUDENTS, SUBMITTED BY JIM D. SCHNEIDER
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY.


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ABSTRACT

Among scholars of moral development there is general agreement that high level moral judgments are those which are made autonomously by the individual. Lower level morality often emphasizes conformity to conventional standards imposed on the individual from some external source of authority. There is some debate in the literature, however, concerning the nature of autonomy in higher level moral judgments, particularly when moral judgments are made within the context of a religious faith.

The overall objective of this project was to explore the nature of autonomy in moral judgments as it is experienced by college-aged youth raised within a conservative evangelical environment. A qualitative research design was employed and data collection consisted of a questionnaire and two interviews with each of the five participants. Data were organized around five major themes: cognitive expressions of the moral judgment process, faith expressions of the moral judgment process, religious resources, expressions of community in the moral judgment process, and holistic expressions of the moral judgment process.

Participants demonstrated various levels of autonomy in the moral judgment process, reinforcing the notion of the developmental nature of autonomy. Generally speaking, their comments were most reflective of Petrovich's (1986)

definition of autonomy as an act of willful obedience. Although each of the participants indicated that they value individual free will they also acknowledged that autonomy is limited in the context of faith. Scripture was clearly the most important religious resource in the moral judgment process and family relationships continue to be influential in various ways. A number of the participants appeared to provide mixed messages concerning the role of emotions in the moral judgment process, expressing varying degrees of reliance on personal feelings but also mistrust.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

As a professional working in the area of student development at a private bible college, I have had many opportunities to informally observe and interact with students who come from a conservative evangelical background. These students have typically received moral teaching, primarily in the form of indoctrination, from their parents and the church for many years. Although one might assume that these students would possess a keen ability to engage in the higher levels of moral reasoning, as defined by Kohlberg (1984), it has been my informal observation that, while their moral and religious education has often been effective in teaching specific virtues, it has sometimes failed to provide adequate opportunities to develop independent moral judgment skills.

Theories of moral development often identify individual autonomy as a characteristic of higher level moral judgments. Lower level morality often emphasizes conformity to conventional standards imposed on the individual from some external source of authority. There is some debate in the literature, however, concerning the nature of autonomy as it occurs in higher level moral judgments. Brock (1988) defines autonomy as, "the interest persons have in making significant choices about their lives for themselves and in pursuing the courses chosen without interference from others" (p. 551).

For Kohlberg (1984), the autonomous moral ~~judgment~~ is one that comes from within the individual, through a process of cognitive reasoning, independent of any outside influence. Petrovich (1986) argues, however, that when an individual freely chooses to be obedient to an already established set of moral principles, such as we find in religion, that, too, can be considered an autonomous moral decision. Other literature suggests that autonomous moral judgments are not simply a result of cognitive functioning but also involve social and affective considerations (Gilligan, 1982). Fowler (1984), for example, understands the development of autonomy as a process of differentiation from significant others while maintaining a capacity for intimacy.

The development of autonomy, however defined and understood, is significant in early adult development. In writing about the process of leaving the supportive home environment to attend college, Gabhart (1989) observes, "Major external supports are severed, and these must be replaced with inner supports. Some [students] depend on external substitutes instead of building inner supports to the left-behind parental authority" (p. 13). For the college student raised within a conservative evangelical community, it would appear that the process may be even more difficult. DeWitt (1987) states,

Since questioning and exploration during the search for identity are viewed by many religiously-oriented individuals as things to be avoided, it would be of great significance to discover what effect this constricted approach has on the overall development of an individual. Individuals who have avoided grappling and struggling with the issues may appear committed to their religious belief system, but require the support of the group to maintain the commitment" (pg. 6).

Although there seems to be sufficient speculation concerning the nature of autonomy in moral judgments among evangelical college students, the literature remains inconclusive.

Nature and Purpose of the Study

The overall objective of the research project described herein was to explore the nature of autonomy in moral judgments as it is experienced by college-aged youth raised within a conservative evangelical environment. The primary concern was to collect descriptive data that would enhance our understanding of the subjective experiences of those who participated in the project. A qualitative research design was selected as the most appropriate method of data collection and analysis. Data collection consisted of a questionnaire and two interviews with each of five participants. Specific procedures are described in more detail in chapter three.

No specific hypothesis was developed prior to the onset of the study. Rather, an inductive approach was used to

analyze the data. Upon completion of the personal interviews, analysis of the written responses to the questionnaire and transcribed verbal responses to the interview questions occurred. While attention was given to individual expressions, the focus of the analysis was on identifying the recurring themes, expressed by the participants, as the themes emerged from the data.

Delimitations of the Study

The information provided by this research project is not intended to provide data on causal relationships or correlations between religious upbringing and moral judgments. Neither is it intended to yield information that will be readily generalizable to the larger population or directly applicable to religious education programs. Rather, it is intended to be exploratory in nature, providing in-depth, descriptive information concerning autonomy in moral judgments as it is experienced by five individuals. It is hoped that commonalities, trends, or recurring themes identified in this research will provide a stepping stone for further investigation.

Organization of the Thesis

The remainder of the thesis has been organized into four chapters in an effort to provide a coherent presentation of the research project. Chapter two contains a summary of the literature which was reviewed in preparation for the project. The amount of relevant literature is extensive and has been organized into three major categories or models of the moral judgment process: cognitive models, faith models, and holistic models.

Chapter three describes the methodology used to collect and analyze the data. It contains information on the procedures undertaken to recruit participants, the nature and degree of participant involvement in the study, as well as a detailed description of the research design employed. Personal reflections regarding my own relationship to the topic under study are also included.

Chapter four is a presentation of the themes which emerged from the data. It includes a brief description of each theme and then illustrates how the themes are expressed by the individual participants.

Finally, chapter five concludes the thesis with a summary of the major themes as reflected by the participant group as a whole, a discussion of the contributions of the study, as well as suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

Among scholars of moral development there seems to be general agreement that higher level moral judgments are those which are made autonomously by the individual. (Hague, 1986; Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1965) One may assume that a discussion of the role of autonomy in the process of making moral judgments might, quite simply, begin with a definition of the term autonomy. Such a definition, however, is premature and would unnecessarily confine the scope of this study. A review of the literature suggests, in fact, that one's understanding of the concept of autonomy depends significantly on how one chooses to conceive of the process of making moral judgments. In a sense, the context in which autonomy is understood also defines it.

Briefly, literature on moral development suggests three major frameworks for understanding the process of making moral judgments: cognitive models, faith models and holistic models. Moral judgments may be viewed primarily as a cognitive process; a function of human reasoning capabilities. The most widely known model using this conceptual framework is Kohlberg's (1984) stage theory of moral reasoning. Although his critics have been many, Kohlberg's contributions continue to be influential in the theory and practice of moral education.

Moral judgments may also be viewed primarily as a faith process or within the context of religious or spiritual development. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Panel on Moral Education (1988) acknowledged that religion continues to be the central moral guide for many individuals. Although significant variation exists within this conceptual framework, there is generally an attempt to understand the dual roles of reason and revelation in the moral decision making process.

Finally, moral judgments may be understood from a broader, holistic perspective. In addition to the individual's cognitive capabilities and, perhaps, spiritual development, consideration is also given to the function of affect, belongingness and responsibility. Many models for understanding moral judgments within this perspective emphasize the role of community in the process. Gilligan (1982) is, perhaps, most widely known for introducing an ethic of care and responsibility into our understanding of the moral judgment process but others advocating a more holistic understanding include Erikson (1963), Hague (1988), and Rest (1984).

It is important to note that the three conceptual frameworks described herein are not mutually exclusive categories. While some theories of moral judgment may be clearly identified, for example, as cognitive or religious in

nature, the boundaries are generally not so clear and many theories reflect elements of all three conceptual frameworks. Categorization as a specific type has been done on the basis of emphasis given in the theoretical model and is provided to aid the reader in understanding the vast amount of literature on moral judgments.

The nature and role of autonomy in the process of making a moral decision may be understood and defined quite differently, depending on which theoretical framework one adheres to. Even within each of the three major frameworks there is variation with respect to how autonomy is understood. A review of the literature will illustrate more specifically how individual autonomy is understood within each conceptual model.

Cognitive Models of the Moral Judgment Process

Kurtines and Gewirtz (1984) point out that, whereas divine revelation was once regarded as the ultimate source of knowledge, resulting in an objective standard of morality which commanded obedience, current Western thought has largely replaced faith, revelation and obedience with human reason.

Kohlberg's cognitive-development theory of moral reasoning continues to pervade much of the literature on moral development. For Kohlberg (1984), moral development is

essentially a function of one's cognitive abilities. More specifically, his is a theory of justice reasoning based on an individual's intellectual capacity to understand the various terms of existing rights and responsibilities.

Expanding on the work of Piaget, Kohlberg (1984) identified six qualitatively different stages of moral reasoning which are believed to occur sequentially in individuals across cultures. He identified justice, or a concern for the rights of the individual, as the primary moral virtue and developed a series of moral dilemma scenarios designed to measure, as well as enhance, one's ability to engage in higher levels of moral reasoning. The stages proceed from the preconventional level, where the motives for engaging in moral behavior are self-serving, to the post-conventional level where a concern for the equal rights of humankind emerges from within the individual. The post-conventional person is no longer moral out of a need for self-gratification from society or because of a concern for reward or punishment but because justice for self and others is valued.

Central to Kohlberg's theory is the concept of individual autonomy (Tappan et al., 1987). In short, he maintained that only the autonomous decision is truly a moral one. Critical of social learning theory which, in his view, confuses internalization of moral standards with conformity to cultural

norms, Kohlberg maintained the existence of universal moral principles and focused on the individual's capacity to formulate personal moral values through the process of reason. For Kohlberg (1984), the autonomous moral principle is not only one that is chosen freely but one that comes from within the individual, independent of any outside group or source of authority. Specifically, it is defined as "an independent and self-legislative stance taken in making moral judgments" (Tappan et al., 1987, p. 315).

As Kohlberg's theory of justice reasoning changed and developed over the years so, too, did his understanding of the concept of autonomy within moral judgment (Tappan et al., 1987). Originally focusing on the heteronomous-autonomous typology proposed by Piaget, Kohlberg's dissertation research was designed to examine the progressive nature of autonomy in adolescence. Piaget (1965) believed that individuals operate from one of two basic moral orientations. For the heteronomous-type person, moral decisions are based on unilateral respect for parents or other authority figures. This respect, resulting in obedience, was understood as a combination of affection for and fear of the person in authority. In contrast, the autonomous-type person was understood to make moral decisions based on a sense of mutual respect and cooperation among equals. A focus on fairness, reciprocity and equality of persons resulted in "a desire to

treat others as he himself would wish to be treated" (Piaget, 1965, p. 194).

The heteronomy-autonomy typology, however, proved inadequate to Kohlberg as aspects of autonomous thinking (in content, if not structure) were found to be present at various stages of moral development (Tappan et al., 1987). He subsequently identified two substages - a heteronomous Type A and an autonomous Type B - within each of the six stages of moral reasoning. Within this framework, Type B was regarded, in a sense, as the maturation of Type A, representing a shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation in moral decision making. Those individuals identified by Kohlberg as Type A persons tended to stress external considerations as well as literal interpretations of rules and obligations. Type B persons, on the other hand, exhibited "a deeper comprehension of the 'spirit rather than the letter' of roles and rules" (Tappan et al., 1987, p. 327). It was hypothesized that individuals typically move from substage A to B within each stage of moral development but failure to establish empirical research in support of this hypothesis eventually led to its abandonment.

In what appears to be, at least in part, a return to Piaget's typology, Kohlberg eventually identified two ideal types (heteronomous and autonomous) of moral judgment (Tappan et al., 1987). Although he did not conceive of an individual

as being a "pure" type, subsequent research has focused on identifying the predominant type of judgment.

Perhaps most significant to our understanding are the criteria Kohlberg used to define and identify autonomy within the domain of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1984; Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989; Tappan et al., 1987). Briefly, they are:

- freedom - An autonomous moral judgment is one that is made without reference to external controls including authority, tradition or law. Rather, it implies self-governance as one is the originator of one's own moral principles.
- mutual respect - Autonomy is not to be equated with psychological independence, where choices are made in isolation from others, but emphasizes cooperation and reciprocity among equals. "The autonomous self is in a sense created and sustained through dialogue with other autonomous selves" (Power, et al., 1989, p. 28).
- reversibility - The autonomous moral agent recognizes the importance of considering the various perspectives present when making a moral judgment. Moral laws are not absolute or rigid but are interpreted from a variety of perspectives. Emphasis is given to the spirit, rather than the letter, of the law or rule.

- constructivism - Central to Kohlberg's concept of autonomy is the view that moral principles are constructed by the process of human reason rather than established by divine revelation. It should be noted, however, that Kohlberg's later proposal of a "seventh stage" acknowledges the role of revelation in moral decision making (1981). This will be discussed later in the chapter.
- intrinsicness - Moral decisions include consideration for the value of persons as ends in themselves, rather than as means to an ultimate end.
- prescriptivity - The autonomous moral agent is responsible to act on principles of conscience regardless of individual preferences or inclinations.
- universality - An autonomous judgment must also be applicable to everyone else in similar circumstances if it is to be considered a moral judgment.
- choice - An autonomous moral decision must be based on one's capacity to reason and freedom from external laws or "determinations of nature" (Tappan et al., 1987, p. 343).

In short, the Kohlbergian concept of autonomy in moral reasoning requires that the individual be, not only self-

regulating, but also self-defining. It is not sufficient for the moral agent to choose from existing moral codes or standards. Instead, the values and morals which come to govern one's life must find their origin within the individual through the process of engaging in increasingly higher levels of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1984). By definition, the religiously oriented individual is virtually excluded from the principled levels of moral reasoning as any reference to God or the authority of the Church in response to moral dilemma situations is routinely relegated to the lower levels of moral reasoning and understood as an expression of mere conformity to an external standard (Fernhout & Boyd, 1985; Joy, 1983).

It may be argued that exclusive attention to the concept of autonomy as the criterion for moral reasoning is inadequate (Boyd, 1984; Petrovich, 1986). To be sure, one would be hesitant to conclude that an autonomous judgment is necessarily also a moral judgment. Such a conclusion would lead to relativistic morality in the worst sense. In addition to arriving at a moral judgment freely or autonomously, one is also required to justify the decision according to universal moral principles.

For some, Kohlberg's understanding of the concept of autonomy in moral judgments continues to be an illusion (Conn, 1985; Moore, 1983; Petrovich, 1986; Roberts, 1985). Quite apart from one's cognitive reasoning capabilities or external

divine authority, the influence of interpersonal relationships, environmental factors and cultural norms on the individual makes it questionable whether autonomy may be regarded in absolute terms (Breakwell, 1983; Brock, 1988). Without denying the importance of individual autonomy or cognitive functioning in the moral development process, Emler (1983), for example, maintains that the individual's internalized moral standards were, at one point in time, external cultural norms. For Kohlberg, however, the individual constructs a moral perspective independent of others even in the earliest stages of moral reasoning. Emler (1983) summarizes Kohlberg's position by stating, "Even when he accepts conventional virtues and standards, he does so autonomously - he makes them his own, experiencing their claim on his commitment as an internal compulsion" (p. 54). At the higher levels, moral principles are "surely a spontaneous product of individual thought" (Emler, 1983, p. 54), owing nothing to the individual's cultural, religious or historical heritage. Although social factors may have varying degrees of influence on individuals, to maintain that the autonomous moral principle must originate within the individual, independent from any external pressure or reference group, may be denying the reality of social and environmental influences, thus requiring more than the individual moral agent is realistically capable of.

Among cognitivist theorists there is, however, a general recognition of the developmental nature of autonomy in the process of making moral judgments. Haworth, for example, is quoted by Christman (1987) as stating, "there is no magical moment when from being nonautonomous one becomes autonomous" (p. 167). Instead, Haworth identifies three stages or levels of autonomy which develop in response to one's increasing ability to reason: minimal, normal and ideal autonomy. For Haworth, autonomy in moral judgments develops in conjunction with the development of individual cognitive functioning. To the extent that an individual becomes increasingly capable of engaging in higher levels of critical thinking he/she will also experience greater autonomy. In a similar vein, Paul (1988) calls for moral education programs that encourage critical thinking and the development of rational standards on which to base moral judgments. Such programs, it is argued, enable individuals to critically examine self-interests, desires, outside influences and pressures, leading to increased autonomy in moral judgments. In contrast, programs emphasizing indoctrination result in uncritical conformity and moral contradictions.

One's identity as a moral agent may also affect the degree of autonomy experienced. Regarded essentially as a cognitive function by Blasi (1984), moral judgments reflect an individual's level of self-understanding. For some, moral

identity may be characterized by compassion. For others, justice and fairness may be central to their identity as a moral agent. Obedience, autonomy and loyalty are other possible themes. The level of autonomy exercised by the individual in the process of making a moral judgment will depend on the extent to which it shapes the individual's identity as a moral agent. Individual differences in autonomy, therefore, result from differences in moral identity. Blasi (1984) suggests the process may be, to some extent at least, developmental in nature moving from a focus on obedience to loyalty and, finally, moral autonomy.

The notion of the individual moral agent consciously choosing to be obedient to a moral code or external standard is absent from Kohlberg's discussion of autonomy but has been the focus for several other authors (Adams, 1979; Borowitz, 1984; Burke, 1978; Petrovich, 1986; Richards, 1981; Sokol, 1986). In an attempt, perhaps, to find some sort of middle ground between the heteronomous and autonomous individual, these writers propose a definition of the autonomous moral agent that recognizes the role of obedience to an external standard, on the one hand, as well as the individual's capacity and responsibility to choose freely.

Petrovich (1986) is critical of Kohlberg's failure to recognize the validity of willful obedience as an act of autonomy. While acknowledging that moral principles may

originate within the individual as a result of one's moral reasoning capabilities, Petrovich argues that autonomy is also maintained when the individual makes a rational decision to accept an external rule or standard apart from any outside pressure or influence. "The act of consent is, therefore, autonomous since it has the authority of personal decision" (Petrovich, 1986, p. 94). Quoting Mitchell, Petrovich states:

Autonomy requires that the standards used shall be, in some sense, the judge's own standards; not, however, in the sense that he must have invented them; only in the sense that he must have rationally accepted them. (Petrovich, 1986, p. 93)

Recognizing that one may choose to be obedient for various reasons (eg. fear, ulterior motives) the issue for Petrovich is whether or not the individual, in obeying an external rule or moral code, has made a conscious decision to do so. Individual awareness of one's decision determines whether or not one is acting as an autonomous moral agent.

In summary, theorists who regard moral judgments primarily as cognitive functioning generally agree on the central role of autonomy in higher levels of moral reasoning. Autonomy is achieved as one is able to engage in critical examination of self-interests, motives and external pressures and base moral decisions on internalized universal moral principles. Several differences exist, however, within this conceptual framework. Kohlberg (1984), for example, defines

the autonomous moral decision as one which comes from within the individual, apart from any outside group or source of authority. Other theorists regard Kohlberg's definition as idealistic, recognizing the influence of external factors particularly in the early stages of moral principle formation. Autonomy is also regarded as developmental in nature, with individual differences attributed to differences in reasoning capabilities or moral identity. Finally, within the cognitivist model of moral judgments, Petrovich (1986) argues that individual autonomy can be maintained in the context of obedience to an external standard provided that adherence is the result of a conscious, rational decision on the part of the moral agent. Within this variation, however, moral judgments are understood primarily as a function of one's cognitive processes.

Faith Models of the Moral Judgment Process

The characterizing feature of the models or theories identified in this review as faith models is the recognition of the role of revelation as a legitimate factor in the moral judgment process. While revelation may not be regarded as the sole factor in the process it is, nevertheless, central in understanding moral decision making. As a result, the nature and role of individual autonomy in the process is also

redefined.

One may legitimately ask whether the definition of autonomy offered by cognitive models of moral judgment leaves any room for the religiously oriented individual who chooses to act in obedience to God's commands (Adams, 1979; Boyd, 1984; Childerston, 1985; Dirks, 1988; Feder, 1984; Sokol, 1986). Although Petrovich (1986) allows for obedience in her definition of autonomy, it is limited to a cognitive response based on one's ability to reason in contrast with a faith or spiritual response resulting from revelation or an encounter with God. Perhaps the more fundamental question for many is whether or not there is any room for God in the moral judgment process and, if so, what are the resulting consequences for individual autonomy (Chandler, 1984)? Feder (1984), expresses one interpretation of the conflict by stating, "Once God enters, then our human autonomy must be compromised, if not eliminated entirely" (p. 165). Does revelation necessarily negate the role of reason and autonomy in the process of making moral judgments?

Research suggests that evangelical conservatives do, in fact, often score at the conventional level of moral reasoning which is characterized by a concern for law and order and a general absence of individual autonomy (Childerston, 1985; Mischey, 1976). Childerston, in a study of 152 undergraduate students attending one of two religiously conservative bible

colleges, found a linear relationship between intensity of fundamentalistic belief and increased conventional reasoning. This confirms the findings of a similar study of seminary students conducted by Lawrence in 1978 (Childerston, 1985). In reviewing the results of both studies, Childerston notes, however, that one cannot necessarily conclude that the subjects involved did not have the capacity to engage in higher levels of moral reasoning. Instead, he suggests they "may be consciously choosing to reason conventionally in order to be congruent with their ideological commitments" (Childerston, 1985, p. 71). Feder (1984) suggests a similar phenomenon occurring in the religious Jew.

Gates (1986) argues that, although revelation and human reason need not be regarded as incompatible elements in moral judgments, revelation must supersede reason in the process. Viewing moral issues as primarily theological, he maintains that Scripture "deliberately demotes the power of human reason" (Gates, 1986, p. 300). God's will or biblical directives, therefore, need not be critically examined as God's will is moral. In fact, to do so would be regarded as evidence of a lack of faith. Obedience, therefore, is primarily a religious duty rather than a moral consideration. Individual autonomy, from this perspective, is limited to determining whether or not one will act on God's commands.

Nelson (1975) uses Kierkegaard's concept of "absolute

duty toward God" to explain the apparent dichotomy. In instances where God's will is explicitly known to the individual through direct revelation or specific biblical directives, ethical or moral considerations are deemed as insufficient (although not irrelevant) as God's will cannot, by its nature, be subjected to human moral reasoning. Nelson cites the biblical example of the directive given to Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac: "it is both Abraham's duty and therefore the will of God that he not kill Isaac and the will of God and therefore his duty that he kill Isaac" (Nelson, 1975, p. 185). Moral reasoning, it is argued, is inadequate in resolving Abraham's dilemma. In instances where God's instructions are explicit one is therefore required to suspend moral judgment and, it would seem, give up autonomous moral reasoning.

For many writing from a faith perspective, however, the dichotomy between reason and revelation, cognition and faith, freedom and obedience, is unnecessary. Although the emphasis in Kohlberg's model of moral reasoning is on one's cognitive capability to discover, within, universal moral principles, there is general agreement that his later proposal of a seventh stage was an acknowledgement, on his part, that religious faith does play a role in moral development. Kohlberg noted that, even if it were possible for an individual to engage in moral reasoning at the highest level,

he/she would still be confronted by questions regarding the meaning of life that cannot be answered by reason alone (Hague, 1988; Kohlberg, 1974). As Philibert (1983) points out, while Kohlberg's stage theory is able to explain how an individual moves to higher levels of moral reasoning, it does not address the "why" of moral development. Through various life experiences the individual comes to recognize that the world is not always just or fair. This, ultimately, leads one to question, "Why be moral?" or "Why be just or value justice in an unjust world?" Kohlberg (1981) maintained that, out of the resulting sense of despair, the individual begins a search for meaning in life. In what seems to be a shift from a strict cognitivist position, he proposed a metaphorical seventh stage which addresses these questions. Hague (1988) describes the shift as a move "beyond the rationalism of Stage 6 morality to a range of more inclusive attitudes toward life that are not so exclusively rational - a logic of contemplation, a mystical, ultimately religious logic" (p. 34).

Kohlberg's proposal of a seventh stage clearly is not intended to be a higher level of reasoning which has simply been "tacked on" to the preexisting stages but suggests a new orientation which gives meaning to life (Kohlberg, 1974, 1981). Suggesting that the individual move from the rational to the experiential, he indicated that the answers are found

when the self is understood as a component and participant in a cosmic order (Kohlberg, 1984). Ultimately, meaning is found, not through reason, but through the contemplative experience (Kohlberg, 1974). The sense of despair is soothed as the religious mystical experience restores one's sense of moral purpose (Smith, 1986).

For Kohlberg, however, the contemplative experience does not necessarily involve a sense of union with God. Rather, it is a sense of one's finiteness in the face of the infinite. It is a subject-object process where one gains a sense of being part of a larger whole and the focus shifts from figure to ground (Fernhout & Boyd, 1985). Tillich (1963) describes the experience as an "awareness of our belonging to a dimension that transcends our own finite freedom" (p. 25). This experience will not only lead to an objective understanding of oneself but also to the further identification of objective values (Kohlberg, 1984).

Tillich (1963) explores this experience of objective self-understanding in more traditionally religious terms. He maintains that the "Will of God" or moral imperative is no longer regarded by the individual as an external standard or law imposed on oneself but is recognized as the core of one's essential being. "It is not a strange law that demands our obedience, but the 'silent voice' of our own nature" (Tillich, 1963, p. 24). Moral laws "only become laws because we are

estranged from our being as persons" (Tillich, 1963, p. 47, 48). It is in the spiritual, contemplative experience that one comes to discover the universal moral principles that are "written on their hearts" (Vogt & Brown, 1988, p.30).

Moral behavior no longer results from feelings of duty or obligation but is an autonomous expression of one's being. It is here, at the highest level of moral development, that reason and revelation, religion and morality converge (Hague, 1986; Kohlberg, 1974).

It should not be assumed, however, that stage seven radically changes or compromises Kohlberg's understanding of autonomy in moral judgments. His description of the religious or contemplative experience characterizing stage seven is not to be equated with sectarian forms of religion which typically emphasize God's authoritative nature and, as a result, often operate at the lower levels of moral reasoning (Hague, undated). Such forms of religion often promote a rigid approach to morality in which rules are imposed on the individual from without, often accompanied by the threat of punishment. At the highest level of spiritual development, however, morality will be intrinsic in the individual.

For some, Kohlberg's seventh stage represents another world view - a religious world view as opposed to a secular world view (Petrovich, 1986). However, this would lead, it seems, to the development of a second model of moral

development rather than a higher level. A religious world view is certainly possible at all levels of moral reasoning as one is confronted by questions regarding the meaning of life at all stages of development. Joy (1983) maintains that the religious or spiritual dimension must be integrated into the developmental process, stating:

The God who is there seems quite willing to be perceived by persons using perceptual tools all along the cognitive developmental route. (p. 47)

Kohlberg and Power did, in fact, develop descriptions of the religious perspective at the various stages of development (Table 1). Rather than a two-track model of moral development, where the religious and secular run parallel to one another, it seems that Kohlberg was suggesting that, at the highest level of moral development, religion and morality converge (Hague, 1986).

TABLE 1

<u>Kohlberg and Power: a developmental description of the religious perspective</u>	
Level 1:	God is the adult who determines what is right
Level 2:	God will give a fair exchange for prayer and religious activity
Level 3:	Man's actions are designed to win God's approval
Level 4:	Man is to uphold God's laws
Level 5:	More cooperation between God and man God supports and encourages autonomous moral action
Level 6:	Man moves beyond human concerns to a cosmic perspective
(Smith, 1986, p. 282)	

Dirks (1988) sees a number of parallels between Kohlberg's description of the higher levels of moral reasoning and religious maturity as it is defined in Scripture. For example, the mature believer is encouraged to put away childish things and to think and reason in a more mature manner (I Corinthians 13:11). In another passage, Christ points out the need for the believer to move beyond a concern for the letter of the law to an understanding of underlying principles (Matthew 5:17-48). Ephesians 6:6 instructs the individual to move from outward conformity to self-chosen, internalized values. At the highest levels of spiritual and moral development the individual moves beyond legalism to exhibit a personal commitment to universal principles.

Duska and Whelan (1975) write,

If the highest level of moral reasoning is on a principled level, and if the higher principles are justice and love, and if justice and love are to be informed by a free choice, one is hard pressed to find a more consistent statement of such principles than in the New Testament. (p. 99)

In an attempt to integrate spiritual and moral development, Duska and Whelan (1975) maintain that religious beliefs provide the content for Kohlberg's structures and, in turn, the moral structures act as filters through which religious beliefs must pass. That is, religious teaching is preceded and interpreted by the individual's stage of moral development. To illustrate, for the child functioning at the

conventional stage three level of moral reasoning where group identity is an important consideration, it is important to play the good boy/nice girl role in order to meet the expectations and, thereby, maintain the approval of the church community. For the adult functioning at stage three, "the good thing to do is that which the Church approves" (Duska & Whelan, 1975, p. 87). At stage four, in an effort to resolve tensions arising from conflicting goals presented by the various groups to which one belongs, the religious individual is likely to exhibit a strong deference to the Church as the voice of God. In describing the shift to more autonomous moral reasoning, Duska and Whelan describe the individual in transition between stages four and five as much more skeptical and objective, having recognized the fallibility of the institution of the Church. The individual no longer regards the Church as a source of infallible moral guidance and often leaves the institution at this stage. If they return, it is on the basis of a mature, personal decision and not out of a sense of duty or habit. The authors maintain that moral autonomy can be achieved within a religious context but not without risks to the Church. "The Christian educator must stand by like the parent whose child has left home and can do no more than hope that the lost soul finds himself . . . there is a risk for the church that the person may find the church wanting, and not return, but as in the prodigal son story, the

best return is the return made freely, the embrace that arises from genuine affection, not from patterned reflex" (Duska & Whelan, 1975, p. 97).

Peck (1987) has developed a similar model of spiritual development consisting of four major stages. Stage One, referred to as Chaotic-Antisocial, is primarily a stage of undeveloped spirituality. The individual is basically unprincipled, governed by a frequently changing will. Peck believes that stage one characterizes most young children and one out of five adults. Transition to the Formal-Institutional Stage generally occurs by means of a sudden, often dramatic conversion experience. At this stage, one willingly submits oneself to be governed by an institution (prison, military, Church) in an attempt to escape the chaos resulting from functioning at stage one. Peck maintains that the majority of those who attend Church operate at this level, exhibiting a significant attachment to the forms of religion and a tendency toward legalism. God is viewed as external to the individual and, although He is regarded as being loving in nature, He is also punitive- a "giant benevolent Cop in the Sky" (Peck, 1987, p. 190). At stage three, the person is described as Skeptic-Individual. Identified as active truth seekers, Peck points out that these individuals are frequently non-believers but generally regarded as more spiritual than those functioning at stage two. They are actively and

individually seeking to find meaning in life. Finally, at stage four, the individual is able to rise above preconceived beliefs and prejudices and is able to operate according to higher moral principles. The person may or may not become a part of institutionalized religion. Peck (1987) describes those at stage four as possessing a sense of unity with the world, a "fitting together according to an ordinarily invisible fabric underlying the cosmos" (p. 192). The reader will recognize the similarities between Peck, Kohlberg, Hague and Tillich in describing the highest level of spiritual-moral development. Stage four is called the Mystic-Communal stage. Whereas individual's in stage two typically embrace religion to escape mystery, Peck points out that, at stage four, the individual enters or re-enters religion to approach mystery.

Fowler (1981) has, perhaps, developed the most widely known model of faith stages. He defines the term faith as "a state of being ultimately concerned" (Fowler, 1981, p. 4) and points out that this concern may or may not be expressed within the confines of traditional religious forms. Instead, it is "a person's way of seeing him-or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose" (Fowler, 1981, p. 4). Emphasizing the relational nature of faith development, Fowler (1981) maintains that the parent/child relationship established in infancy provides the individual with preimages of God and is foundational in the

later development of trust, courage, hope and love. Although he integrated the work of Piaget and Kohlberg on cognitive development into his model of faith stages, Fowler was critical of the dichotomy often presented between cognition and emotion or affect. He believed faith involves "rationality and passionality" - what he calls the "logic of conviction" (Fowler, 1981, p. 102).

Important for the purposes of the study described herein is Fowler's (1981) description of stages three to six. Stage three: Synthetic/Conventional - is generally characteristic of the period of early adolescence to age 17 or 18 but is also descriptive of a significant number of adults. This stage of faith development is called "conventional" because the individual's personal faith system is regarded as everyone's faith system. There is a strong sense of identity with the community or group to which one belongs and solidarity is expressed through shared convictions and beliefs. Religious symbols are central to this identity and considered sacred. The increased ability to engage in mutual role-taking, based on formal operational thought, generally results in a tendency to understand and interpret one's world in light of one's interpersonal relationships. It is largely a conformist stage as the individual tends to rely on the expectations and judgments of significant others for a sense of identity and the construction of values and convictions. Fowler and Keen

(1985) explain that the individual functioning at this level of faith development lacks a strong sense of identity and, therefore, fails to construct an independent perspective. There is a seeking "for a God who knows, accepts and confirms the self deeply" (Fowler, 1981, p. 153).

Stage three is also described as "synthetic" because, at this level, the individual tends to be non-reflective and non-analytical (Fowler, 1981). Beliefs and values are deeply felt but remain unexamined. Authority for convictions is external, generally based on group consensus or tradition. As a result, one's belief system and value system often contain a number of contradictions. The individual seems to demonstrate a willingness to accept a significant degree of mystery concerning these apparent contradictions. Fowler (1981) maintains that religious institutions function best when the majority of adherents are at stage three. Group commitment is strong and the authority and teachings of the institution are not challenged or critically examined. He also notes, however, that members of religious institutions need not necessarily function at stage three.

The transition to stage four, referred to as the Individuating-Reflective Stage, generally comes about as one experiences conflicting expectations and judgments from the various groups which contribute to one's identity. Typically occurring in late adolescence or young adulthood but often

much later, an increased capacity for critical reflection leads one to question and evaluate the teachings and judgments of external sources of authority. Fowler (1981) points out that this critical reflection and self-examination often occurs as one leaves the security of the home to attend college. In a new environment one is exposed to and has the freedom to explore alternate ideologies. As a result, the individual will either retreat to embrace external sources of authority more firmly or will advance to develop an individual identity and faith that is more independent from significant others. "The sense of self is now reciprocal with a faith outlook or worldview which mediates between the self and significant others, thus giving individuals a qualitatively different degree of autonomy." (Fowler & Keen, 1985, p. 69). While the individual may not necessarily separate from former group involvement, membership is no longer essential to one's identity or belief system.

As one's identity and personal convictions become more firmly rooted in a sense of self that is no longer dependent on a group, institution or other external source of authority, the individual has opportunity to move to the fifth level of faith development - Conjunctive Faith. Fowler (1981) indicated that individuals generally do not reach this stage until mid-life, if ever. The distinguishing feature between stages four and five is the willingness, at this point, to

accept paradox within truth. Whereas the individual at stage four is still attempting to formulate a comprehensive ideology or truth system that rids itself of all contradictions, Conjunctive Faith is able to accept both sides of an issue simultaneously. In a sense there is a new, qualitatively different willingness to live with the apparent mysteries of life. Truth is multi-dimensional and can be found through various traditions. Other perspectives are welcomed as opportunities to enhance one's own understanding. Group identity or membership is no longer a perceived need as one is also ready and willing to develop relationships with those who are different from oneself.

At the highest level of faith development, Fowler (1981) indicates that the individual is able to rise above the paradox experienced in stage five to an active commitment to "absolute love and justice" (p. 200).

Considered rare among individuals, this stage of Universalizing Faith includes the following characteristics: heedlessness to self-preservation, devotion to universalizing compassion, enlarged vision of universal community and a radical commitment to justice. As a result, individuals exhibiting this level of faith development often challenge and threaten more traditional, institutionalized standards of righteousness or faithfulness. As is characteristic of each of the stage models of faith development, at the higher levels

individual autonomy is an expression of internalized faith.

At the heart of any discussion on the role of revelation in moral judgments is a concern for humankind's ability to exercise free will. Cobb (1975) expresses this concern by stating, "if man is nothing more than an externally determined 'actor on a stage', the very most he can do is have the option of remembering or forgetting his 'lines'" (p. 10). In response to this concern, Moore (1983) stresses the dynamic nature of humankind's relationship to God as well as the environment:

They are acted upon and significantly influenced by both God and the world around them. Their actions, in turn, influence God and the world We are actors indeed, but the script is not yet fully written. We create the script as we interact with God and the other actors and the set. (p. 173-174)

At the heart of Moore's statement is an understanding of individual free will and the ability to move freely in one's world. Cobb (1975) stresses the individual's role as an active moral agent created in God's image.

Man's responsibility in this regard must be exercised in and with varying degrees of deference to the external moral (and natural) orders he inherits in virtue of his past and present relationships with God, other individuals, groups, nature, history, culture, and a variety of moral communities. At the same time, if he allows these orders to rule him completely, then he is living "heteronomously" and therefore amorally. In fact, this is a sinful response to his created nature, for it is in direct contravention of

the will of God for his creation. The will of God in this sense does not consist of specific rules and goals for human beings to conform to and seek, but of an intention that men and women exercise their creative moral powers to construct a human universe of moral order confluent with yet transcendent of the natural universe of physical order In this process, then, man exercises a rationaly informed will in molding his circumstances to an order that he finds acceptable. This constitutes his moral autonomy, and at the same time defines his moral responsibility.
(p.11)

In a similar vien, Owen (1984) states,

"Moral autonomy is itself a gift that God bestows on men in order that they should respond to him, not by blindly obeying his dictates, but by rationally making his will their own" (p. 6).

More specifically, Owen (1984) and Nelson (1975) point out that scriptural principles are intended to offer general guidelines but are not prescriptive in nature. Individuals, as autonomous moral agents, are responsible to interpret and apply these guidelines appropriately.

Chandler (1984) frames the question of autonomy and its relationship to an objective moral standard in more philosophical terms: Is something right because God commanded it or did God command it because it is right? The former position suggests that moral standards have been established arbitrarily by an external authority and, ultimately, require absolute obedience and the relinquishment of personal autonomy and responsibility. The alternative, however, suggests that God's command or objective standard is based on that which is

intrinsically right or good. This allows one to maintain a sense of personal autonomy since the moral agent, apart from any religious experience or orientation, has the objective moral standard evident within. It is, perhaps, this internal moral standard that others have identified as universal, objective morality (Duska & Whelan, 1975; Fowler, 1981; Kohlberg, 1984). Within this context, while there is an acknowledgement of an objective standard which has been affirmed by God, there is also the recognition of the role of the individual in identifying that standard as it exists within (Tillich, 1963).

Schmidt (1983) maintains, on the other hand, that true freedom is found only as one encounters God in a personal way. This personal encounter is often referred to as a "born again" experience by religious evangelicals (New American Standard Bible, John 3:3). For the "person who lives in Christ, there is no law, no rule, no code" (Schmidt, 1983, p. 146). Christ, in fact, condemned pharisaical obedience which emphasized rigid, outward conformity (Rowen, 1983). Instead, those who encounter God find an unconditional love and acceptance which frees them from external pressures. Christianity is, at this point, no longer a form of legal morality or a code of behaviour. "It is rather a matter of identity. Christians do what they are" (Schmidt, 1983, p. 147). Scripture also speaks of the "new man" being transformed and no longer finding it

necessary to conform to the external standards of the world (New American Standard Bible, Romans 12:2). In a similar view to Erikson's understanding of development, as one freely chooses this new identity, one exercises personal autonomy and also finds the strength, courage and motivation to continue exercising autonomy while living in the world (Erikson, 1983).

Sokol (1986) stresses the importance of considering one's motivation when assessing a moral judgment. He points out that a moral decision may be made on purely religious grounds, moral grounds, neither religious nor moral grounds (eg. fear of punishment), or simultaneously for both religious and moral reasons. In a similar view to Petrovich and Chandler, the individual who chooses on the basis of both religious and moral principles does so "out of respect for God's will and out of a recognition that what it is that God willed is worthy of respect regardless of the fact that God willed it" (Sokol, 1986, p. 433). At this level, it becomes evident that the external standards have become internalized to the degree that they are embraced as one's own.

Perhaps Adams (1979) expresses it best, borrowing Tillich's (1957) concept of the theonomous person. An individual is regarded as theonomomous to the extent that

"he regards his moral principles as given him by God, and adheres to them partly out of love or loyalty to God; but he also prizes them for their own sakes, so that they are the principles he would give himself if he were

giving himself a moral law". (Adams, 1979, p. 194)

Striking a balance between heteronomy and autonomy, Adams regards the theonomous individual as one who has truly internalized God's standards. To the religiously conservative individual he asks, "Should we not rather expect God to prefer us to be theonomous - loyal to him, but also acting out of love for the things that he loves (Adams, 1979, p. 194)? In a process that closely resembles the parenting experience, one hopes that, ultimately, the moral agent will move beyond outward conformity, resulting from a concern for reward or punishment, to embrace those standards as his/her own. In what might be considered the highest level of obedience, one becomes autonomous.

In conclusion, initial speculation about the nature of autonomy in moral reasoning within a religious context frequently results in erroneous, premature conclusions as the tendency, often, is to focus on individual obedience to external laws. Within this framework, religion appears to inhibit, if not eradicate, personal autonomy and reason and revelation are regarded as conflicting processes. A review of the literature demonstrates, however, the importance of understanding religious commitment as a process of growth. Within a developmental framework, it appears that autonomy develops in the spiritual realm much as it does in the moral realm.

Holistic Models of the Moral Judgment Process

The emphasis in the cognitive and faith models reviewed to this point has been on the development of autonomy in moral judgments as a process of individuation. From this perspective, individual autonomy might be understood as developing in isolation or through a process of separation from others. Rogers' (1975) case study of a fundamentalist religious group attempting to establish and maintain autonomy through separateness and isolation from the larger community typifies this perspective of the developmental nature of autonomy.

Recognizing the social nature of humankind, however, Aristotle observed, "He who lives outside the polis is either a beast or God" (Shires, 1987, p. 218). One's identity as a moral agent, it may be argued, is embodied in membership in society. Hague (1990) maintains that the process of development involves an expanding awareness of self but also a recognition of one's interdependence with others. "In a world as interconnected as it is, if I truly find myself, I must find others there too, and my good must be their good or its no good at all" (p. 31). Breakwell (1983) regards this interdependence and the role of group membership as more central in the process of moral development, arguing that the individual carries the group's "prescriptions, prohibitions

and purposes" (p. 232) within. Individual morality is derived from the group.

"Consequently, it is questionable whether an individual ever acts as an 'autonomous' agent: there are merely variations in the intensity with which any one group affiliation is evoked by any single context" (Breakwell, 1983, p. 232).

While there are obvious degrees of variation in the extent to which group membership or social relationships are believed to influence the moral judgment process, these models understand the development of autonomy as occurring within the context of community. In this review such models will be regarded as holistic because they attempt to account for the social and affective nature of persons, in addition to individual cognitive capabilities and/or faith responses.

Although Kohlberg's model is essentially a cognitive model of moral reasoning, it should be noted that he also recognized, in a limited way, the social and environmental impact on one's moral development (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Kohlberg, 1984). Consistent with Piaget's research on the moral development of children, Kohlberg regarded the ability to assume another's perspective (role-taking) as a necessary prerequisite to movement to a higher stage (Reimer, Paolitto & Hersh, 1983). In the process of justice reasoning, where one is concerned with determining the rights and responsibilities of those individuals involved, it is

necessary to view the dilemma from the perspective of each participant. In Piaget's terms, this occurs in the Concrete Operations period of cognitive development when the child's perspective is less egocentric (Thomas, 1985). This process of role-taking is regarded primarily as a cognitive function by Kohlberg but also requires a degree of socialization (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).

Piaget's description of interpersonal relationships, leading to greater autonomy in moral judgment, suggests a greater acknowledgment of the role of one's social development in the process (Joy, 1986). For Piaget, the development from heteronomous to autonomous morality involves a shift from relationships characterized by unilateral respect to relationships based on mutual respect (Kohlberg, 1984; Piaget, 1965; Wright, 1982). The young child's early relationship with parents is characterized by unilateral respect. Parental beliefs and rules are imposed on the child who obeys out of fear of punishment. This "morality of constraint" (Weinreich-Haste, 1982, p. 187), emphasizing obligation and submission to external authority, is heteronomous in nature. As the child matures, however, relationships with peers are characterized by a sense of mutual respect and mature moral judgments are made within the context of relationships that are based on a recognition of the equality of persons, leading to cooperation and fairness. Such relationships require a fundamental

understanding of others' perspectives, needs and interests. It is within this "relational network" (Joy, 1986, p. 406) that justice reasoning occurs. "Autonomy therefore appears only with reciprocity, when mutual respect is strong enough to make the individual feel from within the desire to treat others as he himself would wish to be treated" (Piaget, 1965, p. 194). Rest (1979) also recognizes this central role of cooperation in moral reasoning. Ironically, autonomy in moral judgments occurs as one moves from an egocentric perspective to a concern for the equal rights of others.

In an attempt to illustrate this developmental process, Kohlberg and his colleagues established a "just community" - a high school which operated on the basis of democratic decision-making, recognizing the equal rights of all students and staff (Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989). Within this model, decision-making is regarded as a process of "moral communication" (Power, et al., 1989, p. 32) requiring individuals to assess their own needs, understand the needs and interests of others and then reach a conclusion which balances conflicting viewpoints in a fair and cooperative manner. The individual is required to consider personal needs in the larger context of the community. Power et al. (1989) state that the "ideal of community is compatible with our sense of equality, autonomy and personhood" (p. 49). It would seem that, as the individual participates in a community

characterized by mutual respect and concern for the dignity and worth of persons, one not only comes to regard other members of the community as equals but also recognizes the equal worth of oneself. This recognition is likely to enhance self-esteem as one's own needs and interests are considered alongside the needs and interests of others. Trusting that one's needs will be considered, one is then free to focus on the needs of others.

As one is accepted as an equal member of the community there is also a recognition of personal responsibility in the decision making process. In a study on "moral atmosphere", Higgins, Power and Kohlberg (1984) compared students from three regular high schools to students from three alternative high schools. The alternative schools promoted a sense of community based on participatory democracy. These schools were characterized by a strong degree of unity, personal identification with the group and its objectives, and mutual caring among group members. Higgins, et. al reported an increased number of judgments of personal responsibility among students in the democratic schools. Kohlberg and Candee (1984) have identified this sense of personal responsibility as the link between moral judgment and action. That is, once a moral judgment based on the justice principle is reached there is also a judgment of personal responsibility which determines whether or not one will act on one's decision.

Their research indicated that, at the higher levels of moral judgment, where the individual is increasingly autonomous, there is also an increased sense of moral responsibility. From this perspective, the social and affective aspects of one's experience might be regarded as intervening variables between one's cognitive judgments and moral actions.

For many, however, Kohlberg and Piaget have not gone far enough in recognizing the holistic nature of moral judgments. Tillich (1963) writes, "Man is a multidimensional unity and not a composite of parts. Therefore, all elements of man's being participate in every moral decision and action" (p. 41). For Tillich (1963), the primary moral principle is agape love: "justice taken into love" (p. 42). Arising out of involvement with others on an emotional level, agape love includes the justice principle but also transcends it. Whereas Kohlberg and Candee (1984) refer to this as a "judgment of special obligation" (p. 57) and regard it as an exception to the norm, Tillich understands this interpersonal commitment to be operative in all moral judgments.

Gilligan's (1982) research on an ethic of care and responsibility in moral judgments confirms the importance of identification with community. She has been critical of Kohlberg's emphasis on the ethic of justice as it is primarily an ethic of individual rights. Even the concept of reciprocity within the justice domain may be regarded as self-

serving and egocentric. It is also regarded, essentially, as a cognitive process based on one's ability to perceive from another's viewpoint and, although there is a recognition of social factors, Kohlberg's model seems devoid of any affect. For Gilligan, the sense of community and belonging involves identification, not only at a cognitive level, but also at an affective level. She identified two different conceptions of self in relation to others which may develop as one matures. An individual will either develop a sense of separateness and individuation or a sense of connectedness and interrelatedness. For Gilligan, the former is more characteristic of male development and the latter more descriptive of female development. The individual who identifies self as connected to others will respond to moral dilemmas from a caring perspective. Within this framework there is a profound sense of responsibility to others based on one's affiliation and interconnectedness. Response moves beyond a cognitive understanding of the needs, interests and rights of individuals to an empathic identification with others.

The moral agent is "encumbered . . . bound by ties and relationships" (Blum, 1988, p. 475). The moral dilemma arises out of a sense of conflicting responsibilities to those one is connected to (Gilligan, 1982).

Morality is founded in a sense of concrete

connection and direct response between persons, a direct sense of connection which exists prior to moral beliefs about what is right or wrong or which principles to accept. Moral action is meant to express and to sustain those connections to particular other people. (Blum, 1988, p. 476)

While some would argue that this sense of interrelatedness is included in Kohlberg's concept of justice reasoning, Gilligan (1982) regards it as another voice in the process of moral judgments (Kohlberg & Candee, 1984; Nunner-Winkler, 1984). Moral judgments are based on a sense of caring and responsibility for others as the autonomous self is free to move beyond rules and regulations and responds at an affective level.

Erikson's (1963) model of human development underscores the relationship between individual autonomy and the sense of community or connectedness to others. Foundational to the development of autonomy is a relationship of trust with the primary care giver where the needs of the individual are met on a consistent basis. It is in the context of this trusting relationship that one learns to trust one's own capabilities and begins to exercise a degree to personal autonomy. Fowler (1984) describes this individual in adulthood as having,

a sense of independence, an ability to stand alone, if necessary, on matters of principle. She has clear identity boundaries that make it possible to say a clear no or a clear yes, without undue coldness and distance, on the one hand, or an excessively compliant closeness, on the other. (p. 27)

In turn, this sense of autonomy is foundational to developing "a capacity for intimacy and a readiness based on a firm sense of identity to risk the self in relations of closeness to others, without a paralyzing fear of the loss or compromise of the self" (Fowler, 1984, p. 28).

The concept of autonomy within community seems paradoxical. Typically regarded as involving competing processes, membership in community often implies the foregoing of individual rights and freedoms. Sholl (1983) suggests, however, that the processes are complementary. Using pair therapy in a case study approach, Selman and Yeates (1987) demonstrated the complementary nature of autonomy and intimacy. In the process of building relationships, there is a developing sense of autonomy as one attempts to define the psychological boundary between self and others. At the same time, there is a growing sense of commonality and relatedness. Autonomy without intimacy results in separation and isolation. Moral judgments are likely to be self-serving, lacking a sense of reciprocity as one fails to understand the needs and interests of others. On the other hand, intimacy or connectedness, in the absence of personal autonomy, inhibits the development of one's identity and moral judgments are more likely to be based on blind obedience or a desire to win approval. Borrowing Buber's concept of an I-thou encounter,

Borowitz (1984) expresses the developing nature of autonomy within community by stating that "my individuality only emerges in its fullness in relation to you and because of what we mean to one another" (p. 45). Herein lies the potential for autonomous moral reasoning within a holistic perspective.

Summary

The research project described herein was conducted in an attempt to provide further understanding on the nature of autonomy in moral judgments as it is experienced by bible college students raised within the evangelical community. The literature remains inconclusive. Many cognitivists argue that considerations which include a reference to God or some other external source of authority are automatically relegated to the lower levels of moral judgments (Fernhout & Boyd, 1985; Kohlberg, 1984). Others writing from the cognitivist perspective, however, would maintain that such considerations are possible without compromising autonomy, provided the decision is made freely by the individual (Adams, 1979; Petrovich, 1986). Childerston (1985) suggests that, although bible college students typically score lower on quantitative measures of moral reasoning, they may be doing so in an attempt to reduce dissonance between their faith and their ability to reason.

Similar variations also exist in understanding autonomy in moral judgments from a faith perspective. Feder (1984), for example, argues that personal autonomy is necessarily compromised, if not eliminated, when one acts in obedience to God's commands. Others attempt to understand the dual roles of reason and revelation in moral judgments as complementary (Dirks, 1988; Hague, 1986; Tillich, 1963).

Finally, Borowitz (1984), Gilligan (1982) and others suggest that the process of moral decision making must be understood more holistically. From this perspective, individual autonomy is fully understood only when consideration is given to the context of social relationships and emotional responses in which moral judgments occur.

Although the literature is extensive it is, in many respects, inconclusive and the reader is left with many questions regarding the nature of autonomy in moral judgments as it is actually experienced by those who adopt a religiously conservative perspective. To what extent have these individuals freely adopted the moral principles they adhere to? To what degree do they respond to moral issues with blind obedience to a biblical standard? What is their experience in resolving the tension between autonomy and obedience? What role does community and affiliation play in the process of moral decision making and how does this affect individual autonomy?

While a review of the literature brings many of these concerns into focus and provides a framework of varying perspectives, there continues to be a huge gap between philosophical reflections, quantitative studies, and real-life experiences. This research project, which is ethnographic in nature, utilizes the case study approach to enhance our understanding of the life experience of the religiously conservative moral agent. In particular, focus is on the experience of autonomy in the moral judgment process by bible college students raised within the evangelical community. While not presuming, by any means, to close the gap in our understanding, it is believed that the narratives of these individuals may provide additional insight.

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

As has already been noted, the goal for this research project was to gain insight into the subjective experiences of bible college students as moral agents, with particular attention to their experience of autonomy. It was my conviction that quantitative measures of autonomy in moral judgments would not provide this information. A statistical analysis of autonomy in moral judgments would not, in my opinion, provide insight into the nature of autonomy as it is subjectively experienced in the moral judgment process nor contribute to an understanding of the often subtle way in which other factors may influence personal autonomy. The intention, in this study, was to collect data that would be primarily descriptive in nature. With this in mind, a qualitative research design was selected as the method for collecting the data from the participants involved.

Research Participants

Recruiting Procedures

The target population for this research project was college students raised within the conservative evangelical community. Nelson (1988) points out that, although there are variations among evangelicals, the two most common

distinguishing features are:

- 1) a belief in the necessity to be born again for individual salvation
- 2) the conviction that the Bible is the word of God, inerrant in its original form.

For the purposes of this study, the term "conservative evangelical" refers to individuals who belong to the more fundamentalist protestant groups: Alliance, Baptist, Mennonite, Nazarene, Pentecostal, etc. According to Nelson's definition, these denominations would all be considered to be evangelical.

Subjects were recruited from the current student population of North American Baptist College, Edmonton. Although the college is affiliated with the Baptist denomination, the student population consists of individuals from a variety of evangelical backgrounds. It should also be noted that, while the students from this institution represent the appropriate target population, it is also a convenience sample as I am a faculty member at the college and have easy access to the sample.

Because of the indepth nature of the research, the study was limited to five participants. Selection began with a general announcement in the college weekly bulletin. The advertisement stated that I was recruiting volunteers for a research project on moral judgments and indicated the time

commitment required from those who would be selected as participants. Because the data was to be collected in the fall semester of the college term when many first-year students are adjusting to college life, including moving away from home and establishing a new social network, participation in the project was also limited to returning students (Borg & Gall, 1989).

As a result of the advertisement, eight students volunteered to participate in the research project. As the number of participants was to be very limited and because the research was to be primarily descriptive in nature, no specific effort was made to manipulate the makeup of the participant group in order to secure a representative sample of the student body (Becker, 1986). The first five individuals who volunteered were selected to participate. One of these individuals later declined to participate because of the time commitment involved and the sixth volunteer was selected as the replacement.

Upon being selected as participants, each individual received an information letter (Appendix A), consent form (Appendix B), and a questionnaire (Appendix C) with appropriate instructions. The information letter outlined the procedure which would be followed in the course of the study, the time commitment involved and the time frame in which the data would be collected. While anonymity was not possible in

the process of conducting personal interviews, the consent form stressed the confidentiality of participant responses (Borg & Gall, 1989). Participants were also informed of their right to decline to answer specific questions or to terminate participation at any time during the project without any resulting penalties or negative consequences. Each individual in the study was assigned a participant identification number and all questionnaires, audio tapes and transcripts were subsequently identified by the participant identification number only. The personal identities of the participants were known only to myself.

Participant Information

In order to protect the identity of the participants, identifying information is kept to a minimum in the thesis. The participant group included members of both sexes. Their average age was 24 years with an age range from 19 to 34 years. Two participants were in their second year of studies, two were third-year students and one was nearing completion of an undergraduate degree. Three participants were in academic programs considered preparatory for seminary and full-time ministry while two participants were in an academic program leading to further university studies. Four of the students participating in the project were single and one was married. Regarding denominational affiliation, four participants

identified themselves as Baptist and one indicated having membership in the Mennonite Brethren denomination. All of the participants indicated they believe they have had a conversion experience to Christianity. They identify themselves as being Christian between 12 and 19 years with an overall group average of 15 1/2 years.

Participant Involvement

Each participant involved in the project was required to complete a questionnaire and participate in two follow-up interviews. The questionnaire took an average of 1 hour and 36 minutes to complete with individual times ranging from 1 hour to 2 hours and 30 minutes. Each participant was interviewed on two separate occasions following completion of the questionnaire. The two interviews took an average of 2 hours and 10 minutes to complete with individual times ranging from 1 hour and 50 minutes to 2 hours and 30 minutes. The total time involvement of each participant was an average of 3 hours and 46 minutes with individual times ranging from 3 hours and 5 minutes to 4 hours and 35 minutes. More complete information regarding participant involvement is included in Appendices D and E.

Research Design

The research project was designed in a manner consistent with qualitative research, utilizing the case study approach for gathering data. The primary concern was to design the project in such a way as to facilitate the gathering of information concerning the subjective experiences of the participants as moral agents (Neimeyer & Resnikoff, 1982). The primary tools used to gather this data were a questionnaire consisting primarily of open-ended questions and two follow-up interviews with each participant to explore their written responses in greater depth.

Pilot Questionnaire

Prior to recruiting participants for the project, a pilot questionnaire was constructed. The items included in the questionnaire were based on the literature reviewed and were primarily in the form of open-ended questions. The pilot questionnaire was pretested the previous academic year with three senior students selected by myself. As a result, these individuals were no longer considered part of the target population at the time the actual research was carried out. In addition to the pilot questionnaire, each of the three respondents completed a feedback form which provided constructive feedback concerning the length of the

questionnaire, the general nature of the test items and the presence or absence of unclear or leading questions. Revisions to the questionnaire were made on the basis of the feedback provided by these participants.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire distributed to the research participants was not intended to gather extensive data. Rather, it was regarded as a means of collecting preliminary thoughts and reflections which would be explored in greater depth during the interviews to follow.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 items divided into three general categories (Appendix C). The majority of the items were in the form of open-ended questions designed to encourage the respondents to reflect on their personal life experiences.

The first group of questions in the survey focused on gathering demographic material from the participants. The information requested was minimal, including age, sex, program and year of studies, denominational affiliation and marital status.

The second major section of the questionnaire consisted of seven items related to the participant's Christian experience. It began with questions focusing on the individual's conversion experience, subsequent commitments

to the Christian faith, as well as factors which they regarded as influential in their conversion to Christianity. In addition, specific questions concerning support and opposition from family and others were raised in an attempt to facilitate initial exploration of the participant's social network and its relationship to faith.

The third section of the questionnaire included 12 items related more specifically to the participant's subjective experience in the arena of moral judgments. The respondents were not directly asked to assess the degree of autonomy they experience in the process of making a decision on a moral issue. Instead, this was explored indirectly by focusing on a variety of situations and possible influences any individual may encounter in the moral judgment process.

The items in this section of the questionnaire tended to yield the most pertinent data related to this research project. The questions were designed to facilitate exploration of the various perspectives of autonomy as described in the literature to determine whether or not they are congruent with the participant's life experience. More specifically, items 9 and 11 focused on the experiential role of cognition in the moral judgment process. Item 9 was intended to provide an indication of the value the participant places on cognitive processes in making a moral judgment and the degree of trust in one's ability to make a moral judgment

autonomously. Item 11 invited participants to explore the process involved in making a judgment on a moral issue and also provided an indication of the relative role of feelings and cognitions in the process.

A number of items in this third section of the questionnaire explored other external factors which may or may not be considered in making a moral judgment (items 8, 10, 13-15). While the majority of these items were constructed as open-ended questions, item 13 was designed in the Likert scale format (Borg & Gall, 1989). This format was not used to provide a statistical analysis but, rather, to establish the relativity of possible influences in a more general sense.

Finally, several questions were included to address the role of relationships and community in autonomous moral judgments. Items 12, 16 and 18 focused specifically on the question of interpersonal conflict on moral issues and the possible role that the opinions of significant others may have on one's autonomy in moral judgments. In addition, item 17 was included in the questionnaire to explore the overall role of the community in relation to one's moral autonomy.

It should be noted once again that the questionnaire was not intended to yield extensive data but was regarded as a preliminary tool used to facilitate further exploration in subsequent interviews.

Interviews

Within two weeks of completing the questionnaire, the first interview was conducted with each participant. Participants were informed that, while my office was available, the interview would be conducted in the setting of their choice. All participants reported feeling comfortable with conducting the interviews in my office. The interviews were taped and later transcribed to facilitate further analysis.

The purpose of the interviews was to provide an opportunity for participants to elaborate, clarify and explore issues already raised in the questionnaire. Participants were also invited to explore other related issues and concerns if they desired. This information was discussed with each participant at the onset of the first interview. At that time, they were also encouraged to speak honestly and frankly, being reminded that the goal of the project was to seek understanding of individual subjective experiences as opposed to finding "right" answers (Becker, 1986). Ethical concerns regarding confidentiality and the right of all participants to decline to answer specific questions or to terminate the interview were also reviewed. Finally, while it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to minimize the effects of the presence of the researcher in an interview, participants were also informed that I would attempt to keep my nonverbal and

verbal responses to their particular answers to a minimum. This was not to be regarded as an indication of disinterest or disapproval but as a precautionary measure so as not to lead the participant to any particular response (Valle & King, 1978; Wertz, 1984).

The format for the interviews was semi-structured. Prior to conducting the initial interview, individual responses to questionnaire items were reviewed by myself and preliminary follow-up questions were prepared. These questions varied for each individual in the study and only served as a tentative guideline to the discussion. The participants had access to their completed questionnaire during the interviews and, typically, were asked to elaborate on their written responses. Deviations from the prepared questions were frequent as new questions were often raised in the course of the interviews (Borg & Gall, 1989). In the interval between the first and second interview, the tape of the first interview was reviewed by myself and further questions were prepared.

The format for the interviews was unstructured in the sense that there was no fixed agenda and the style was conversational in nature, allowing for flexibility and interaction between the participant and researcher (Becker, 1986). At the same time, every effort was made to refrain from leading the participants to specific responses. In all cases, the atmosphere during the interviews was casual and

comfortable and rapport building seemed to occur quite easily (Osborne, undated). This was likely due to the fact that limited contact had already been established with each participant on an informal level prior to the onset of the study. Also, the college community is relatively small and promotes a sense of familiarity. There was, in a sense, a recognition of participants and researcher as co-members of the same community. Finally, my own personal history is similar, in many respects, to the histories of those who participated in the project, allowing for a greater degree of understanding. Becker (1986) states that, when the researcher is familiar with the phenomenon "from the inside" (p.105) rapport building, as well as one's ability to synthesize the interview data, is enhanced.

At the conclusion of the second interview with each participant it was mutually agreed that the topic under study had been explored to a satisfactory extent. Participants were invited, however, to return at a later time if they wished to express any further thoughts. The total time involved in interviewing the five participants was 10 hours and 50 minutes.

Analysis

Upon completing the two follow-up interviews with each participant, the interview tapes were transcribed by a third

party. As all tapes were identified by a participant number only, the identity of the individuals involved in the study was not known to the transcriber.

An inductive approach was used in the analysis of the data (Neimeyer & Resnikoff, 1982). Transcripts of interviews were reviewed and general themes were identified from the data. Analysis involved identifying the major themes for each individual as well as themes common to the participants as a whole. In order to ensure accurate representation, direct quotes of the participants are utilized frequently in the discussion of these themes. The participants also had an opportunity to review my descriptions of the data to ensure accurate representation of their thoughts and reflections (Osborne, undated).

Personal Reflections

In discussing the merits of qualitative research designs which utilize unstructured interviewing for data collection, Becker (1986) points out that, often, the researcher has had personal experience with the phenomenon under investigation. In these instances, he describes the researcher as a "life-world expert" (Becker, 1986, p. 105): someone who "already knew the phenomenon from the inside" (p. 104).

It is important, at this point, to clarify my own personal orientation as I have conducted this research project

(Osborne, undated; Valle & King, 1978). In many respects, I share a number of personal characteristics and experiences with those who participated in this study. My own faith orientation is very similar. I would, in fact, also identify myself as a conservative evangelical as defined earlier in this chapter. My personal background is also similar in that, like the participants, I was raised in an evangelical environment and attended bible college following high school. Also, I am presently the dean of students at North American Baptist College and, in many respects, have an insider's view of the community to which the research participants belong.

My own subjective experiences with the topic under investigation have proven to be both an asset as well as a liability in the course of conducting this research. To be sure, my familiarity and previous informal contact with each of the participants greatly facilitated the rapport building which is so necessary and important in qualitative research (Becker, 1986). My familiarity with the phenomenon and with the participants' personal experiences was also an asset in understanding the reflections and thoughts they expressed (Becker, 1986; Neimeyer & Resnikoff, 1982). Terms such as "accepted Christ" and "God's will", which are commonly used within the evangelical community, were familiar and readily understood. The participants' expressions of their experiences within the college community were also understood

as I am also a member of the same community.

At the same time, however, this familiarity was also a liability. The participants' familiarity with me may have hindered their free, unedited expressions. They were encouraged to speak openly and honestly and it is evident, in the data collected, that some individuals did, in fact, risk in their communication. I did not get a sense of restraint from any of the participants and, as their involvement in the project was completely voluntary, one may assume that this was not a major hindrance.

My familiarity with the phenomenon, while an asset, also threatened to become a liability as, in many instances, the expressions of the participants were, perhaps, too readily understood. Precautionary measures were taken so as not to assume their intended meaning and thereby limit the participants' efforts to communicate (Becker, 1986).

Finally, although no hypothesis was developed prior to the study, it must be noted that I did have some preconceptions as I approached the project. Although some may assume that, because of my personal experiences, I would take a defensive stance in an effort to protect the evangelical community, this was not the case. My basic assumption, based on personal knowledge and experience, as well as the literature, was that these participants would reflect a low level of autonomy in moral judgments, relying almost

exclusively on external sources of authority for guidance on moral issues. My own awareness of this expectation was, perhaps, my greatest defense in unduly leading or influencing the participants. The heavy reliance on open-ended questions, restraint in verbal and non-verbal responses to participants' expressions and communications, the critical review of transcripts on several occasions, as well as firsthand feedback concerning my descriptions from the participants, were all precautionary measures taken to control for experimenter bias. In the end, I was happy to find that my preconceived notions were not uniformly realized in the participant group.

Summary

As the nature of qualitative research designs is often highly subjective, a number of precautionary measures were taken in the process of gathering and analyzing the data in an attempt to ensure that an acceptable degree of validity and reliability would be maintained.

First of all, the questionnaire, which was used as a springboard for later discussion, was pretested with three college students with similar personal histories to those involved in the study. Their responses to the pilot questionnaire and feedback form provided an opportunity to

refine the items included in the questionnaire. All items included in the questionnaire were constructed in consultation with the thesis advisor.

In order to maximize the degree of consistency in responses provided by individual participants, the data was collected from each individual on three separate occasions. In many cases, the same issues were explored each time, although variations in wording were used. In addition, all participants were given an opportunity to review the descriptions of the data included herein in an effort to ensure accurate representation.

In order to control for the influences of maturation and historical factors, the period of time during which data was collected was kept to a minimum (Borg & Gall, 1989). Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire within one week from the date they received it. The first interview occurred within a two week period following completion of the questionnaire and the second interview occurred within ten days following the first interview. In all, the complete data collection process was carried out within a five week period, allowing participants to complete the study prior to preparation for final exams.

Subject mortality did not appear to be a significant factor in the project. Although one volunteer declined to participate, this was done prior to the onset of the actual

data collection process. All five participants who completed the questionnaire also fully cooperated in the subsequent interviewing process.

As I have already noted, experimenter effect was a major concern throughout the project, particularly given my role within the college community (Wertz, 1986). It may be fair to assume, first of all, that a certain segment of the target population disqualified themselves from participating in the study as the research was being conducted by the dean of students. Although this does not necessarily invalidate the research, it must certainly be taken into account when one considers the generalizability of the findings. Those who participated in the project obviously felt comfortable relating to me as the dean of students and this may, in fact, have facilitated the process for these individuals (Wertz, 1986).

Prior to completing the questionnaire and participating in the interviews, the volunteers were informed that the data collected would be treated confidentially and would not be taken into account, in any way, in my role within the college administration. I had also intended to disqualify any volunteers who I was currently teaching that particular semester but that was not necessary. I was not in a student/teacher relationship with any of the participants in the course of the research project.

The question of generalizability of the findings to the larger target population must also be considered, given the particular research design employed (Schulman, 1981). The participants are, in many respects, representative or typical of the student population of North American Baptist College. However, the number of participants in the study is very limited and no specific effort was made to ensure that they were representative of the target population (Borg & Gall, 1989; Neimeyer & Resnikoff, 1982). This study should be regarded as preliminary research, hopefully leading to further investigation of the phenomenon. It is intended to be descriptive in nature as opposed to suggesting causal relationships or broad generalizability (Valle & King, 1978). It is hoped, however, that the information provided by the participants and included herein "resonates with the experiences of other people, not in the study, who have experienced the phenomenon" (Osborne, undated, pg. 20). The significance of the study may very well be found in its "empathic generalizability" (Osborne, undated, p. 20), leading others to personal reflection and further research.

CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter includes a brief description of each of the themes identified in the data followed by a summary of each participant's reflections on each theme.

Themes

Although a significant amount of diversity was expressed in the comments provided by the research participants, their reflections have been categorized into five major themes, each containing a number of more specific topics. The three models of the moral judgment process already identified in the literature review provided a general framework for understanding and categorizing the insights and reflections provided by the participants. As a result, the five major themes summarized below tend to correspond quite closely to those three models.

Cognitive Expressions of the Moral Judgment Process

Observations and expressions included in this theme reflect the ability and tendency of participants to understand faith and morality through the reasoning process. More specifically, comments included in this theme reflect attempts to rationally understand and resolve moral

dilemmas, the questioning of beliefs and values, the role of cognition in the faith process, and the understanding of underlying moral principles. Comments concerning participants' level of trust in their own ability to make a moral judgment, as well as those reflecting the process of cognitive development, are also included.

Faith Expressions of the Moral Judgment Process

Statements included in this theme reflect the moral judgment process within a faith perspective. These include expressions of faith development, the role of God's will and individual free will in the moral judgment process, obedience and autonomy, as well as the role of faith and reason. Although the literature review reflects a broader usage of the term "faith", in this chapter the term is used in the narrower sectarian sense.

Religious Resources in the Moral Judgment Process

Many of the participants expressed a reliance on a variety of religiously-oriented resources when making a moral judgment. Reflections included in this theme focus on the role of Scripture, the church as an institution, the pastor and religious literature in the process of making a decision on a moral issue.

Expressions of Community in the Moral Judgment Process

The role of community and group membership in the development of individual autonomy and the moral judgment process is another theme that was expressed by the participants. Included is the role of family, the church as community, Christian friends and non-Christian friends, as well as membership in the present college community.

Holistic Expressions of the Moral Judgment Process

Finally, participants also offered a number of comments reflecting on the role of feelings, personal identity and the value of personal experience in the process of making a moral judgment. Although these, perhaps, fail to express the complete scope of a holistic model of moral judgment, they are important elements which were expressed repeatedly by those participating in the study.

Participant A

Participant A (PA) was a 24 year old male who indicated having had strong roots within the evangelical community. He stated, "I was raised in a Christian home and, as long as I can remember, I have understood the basics of what being a Christian is." He indicated that he has been a Christian since the age of five and the ongoing influence of parents,

family and the church community became very apparent in the interviews.

Cognitive Expressions

Generally speaking, in discussing the process of making moral judgments, PA provided few expressions reflective of the Kohlbergian concept of cognitive moral reasoning. This was, perhaps, most evident in his description of his conversion to Christianity.

I just knew that this was what was done. That was just a matter of course. In fact, in my way of thinking, everybody did it at one point or another, almost.

I don't know if I even so much as made a choice at that point . . . the choice had already been made . . . I knew that was what I should do and that I would do it.

Regarding his ongoing commitment to embrace the Christian faith, PA stated,

There has never been a question in my mind if I should or should not be a Christian, and that is the direct result of the early teaching of my parents.

When asked whether he is aware of having a choice not to be a Christian, he responded,

I would have to say no, I don't remember having a choice not to be . . . first of all, because my decision was so early. I never had a chance to look at the other side, so to speak. But then, also, as I have gotten older and have been able to see people who are on the other side, type of thing, this makes much more sense just in my own mind. Earlier there wasn't a choice and then, as I

grew older and, I suppose, realized that maybe I could make a choice, the choice was no longer needing to be made because I could see that what I had was so much better.

For me it just wouldn't make sense to choose not to be anymore - only to choose whether or not I'm going to live the way that I know I should.

Many of PA's comments seem to reflect a process of indoctrination. Speaking more specifically about decisions concerning moral issues, he stated,

Due to my upbringing, most of the moral decisions I've had to make so far have been decided already before I was even in that situation, either consciously or unconsciously, and so when finally faced with these decisions in life there is little or no dilemma because it is already resolved in my mind.

He went on to explain,

God has already decided what is right and wrong for me and then, through the training of my parents, they have helped me to understand what is right and wrong in a particular situation . . . so that when I come across a new situation, either experience from a prior situation or the principle from that experience is already there so it's like I already know.

In spite of these comments, which suggest a non-reflective stance on moral judgments, PA also shared thoughts which are more indicative of Petrovich's (1986) concept of autonomy in which the moral agent freely chooses to embrace an external standard. For example, discussing individual free will, PA stated,

I think that it is essential to retain some of your free will because that's what brought you into God's will in the first place . . . you need to

continue to be using your discretion and the things that you've learned to make decisions.

Subsequent recommitments to his faith after the initial conversion experience also reflect more cognitive understanding.

I never lost my commitment. I would rather define it as a deeper commitment: understanding more about God, understanding more of how my life fit in with God's plan and how I should then act in accordance with that.

When reflecting on his more recent personal development, there seemed to be a greater acknowledgment of the importance of cognitive understanding in the moral judgment process. On questionnaire item 13 PA rated personal intelligence as a very important resource in moral decision making and he expressed a fair degree of self reliance in his ability to trust his own judgment when faced with a moral issue. He attributed this to the development of a "very sharp conscience" which he defined as "the ability to logically think a situation through".

There will be an occasional grey area that you may have to think through but most things are black and white for me. And that is the other aspect of it, of being able to logically think through . . . what is going on. Like I was able to think through and understand whether or not premarital sex is wrong, and I was able to subsequently explain why I thought it was wrong. And that is part of developing a sharp conscience, is being able to think through and understand why something is wrong or not.

Nevertheless, PA's comments suggest that he has adopted an external standard as his own rather than having formulated his

own moral principles and standards.

At this point in my life I rely on myself and probably for the rest of my life as far as I can tell. I mainly rely on myself because, in growing up, I have developed the understanding and the knowledge of what is right and wrong through these other resources that I have mentioned. And so now there's the rare occasion when I may need from my own personal life as to know what is right or wrong.

Self reliance in his ability to make a moral judgment is largely based on his upbringing.

Participant A indicated that he sees value in questioning his own moral standards and elaborated by stating,

Sombody may have a different experience, a more valid experience than which you had or experience which you haven't had at all, a deeper understanding of a particular passage of Scripture or a particular viewpoint on it that you hadn't thought of. Or vice versa. Even if in any of the discussion you find that you've been right all along it's still valid to have that assurance

He acknowledged that, in most cases, such discussions have resulted in a further solidification of his views rather than a change in opinions. Speaking of a particular issue which he identified as a moral problem, he stated that, as a result of discussion with others holding a different view than his own,

I think that I have become a little more understanding of that side of the thing. I wouldn't say that it has radically changed anything.

When asked whether he thought there were inherent dangers in questioning one's views, he replied,

Depending who you are questioning with. I don't

think that there is a danger if you are grounded. If you are still in your developmental stage and, of course you never do quit completely developing, but if you are still in the major development stage when you are still developing your views, and you start questioning with the wrong people and people who are much better and have had much more experience and can twist things to their own viewpoint. That wouldn't happen if you were more experienced and knew where you were standing. There's danger in that but, for the most part, I think that it can only help you understand the situation and the world better.

Faith Expressions

Many of PA's responses to interview questions suggested that he perceives a close relationship existing between God and morality. His personal faith is central in the process of making moral judgments. He stated, for example, that God "defines your moral judgment", reflecting a belief in an objective moral standard established by God.

It is through what you understand about God and about who He is and about the way He operates, and what He requires of a person. That is what guides your thinking, the evaluating of why it would be right or wrong.

Participant A conceded, however, that moral judgments can be made apart from God.

Nobody is completely devoid of the goodness that God created us originally with and some people just have a higher understanding of what is good and what is bad. I suppose to a large degree it can be thought out rationally in the same way that a Christian would think it out rationally. Simply by observance, you look and see this causes harmony between people and this causes disunion and problems and strife. Obviously this is good and

this is bad. And through that sort of evaluation and thinking and following the good conscience that they are born with, they can definitely develop a good, strong upstanding moral judgment. But it means nothing.

Participant A went on to explain that faith in God gives purpose to morality.

For me, it means something. There is a purpose to it besides just peace and goodwill among men. I'm pleasing the Creator of the universe. I'm striving to be like the One who created me, the One who has given me life and everything else, including eternal life. For them, if they were to stop and think about that aspect of why just so that things could be nice and then you die and then what? It doesn't make, there is no point to it.

In terms of faith development, PA's comments did not exemplify movement through qualitatively different faith stages. This was expressed most clearly in his description of the nature of subsequent recommitments to this faith.

I never lost my commitment. I would rather define it as a deeper commitment. . . . It was just at these particular points that I was made aware that I needed a deeper commitment. I needed to change particular things in my life, to try harder, and so on.

Participant A's description of his own faith development suggests that the nature of his faith has not changed significantly but his commitment has grown stronger over time.

Participant A also provided a description of a personal spiritual experience which resembled, in some respects, the contemplative, mystical experience described by Kohlberg, Tillich and others as characteristic of converging levels of

faith and moral development. Recalling a stressful time of his life, he described a horseback riding experience that was particularly meaningful spiritually.

I discovered this horse at camp. I had worked with him and so we were a really good team, and he was a good horse. And so I would just go out and just ride away somewhere, for a half hour or so, and just clear my mind and run the horse. Not even necessarily saying, "Okay God what am I going to do with this?", and getting some direct answer. Just clearing my mind and getting re-tuned with God. It was one of the best experiences, spiritual experiences in my life He hadn't been ridden for a number of years. Whenever I went out, if I had some spare minutes, I would just go down to the corral and give him an extra little handful of oats or something and go and brush him. Just develop a real rapport with him and a relationship with him. And so there was sort of an understanding, something that would obviously go beyond words with this horse, a communication just from being together. I think that helped me to develop the same sort of thing with God. Not necessarily words, just get away and be together, just me, God and the horse. And the communion, the communication that went on just allowing God to settle down with me, settle down around me and just sort of feel each other . . . I guess the best word for it is, is very peaceful.

In discussing his understanding of the relationship between faith and reason, PA acknowledged the validity of each in one's life and decision making but suggested that faith is foundational to the reasoning process. He stated,

Faith is what you need to take the first step because there's no way that you can completely reason it out until there is a step of faith. . . . Once that begins you can begin to use reason to evaluate and justify that step of faith. Before you take that step of faith you can't evaluate whether or not it is valid because you've got no experience to go on. There is not enough

information to make a good evaluation. And it works in a cycle because, as you experience you discover that there is more and so the next step needs to be another step of faith.

This relationship between faith and reason is illustrated in PA's understanding of God's will.

I think God's will actually covers a very wide range. It starts out general in that God's will is for me to serve Him, to live my life in a pleasing way to Him. But it gets more specific than that in the more specific things that I do, whether or not this particular thing will please God, or whether or not it is serving God. I suppose there are situations where, to determine what God's will is, whether I make this decision or whether I make this decision, I think that there are some situations where either one of them would work. And it's just like God says, "This is your choice, you make the decision, and then we'll go with that".

I think that a good example of that would be my marriage. I chose to get married at the point that I did. I could've chosen not to. Being that I did, my life has then taken a very definite direction. And God has blessed that. . . . But . . . if we hadn't gotten married, my life would've taken a very different angle . . . and God could've easily blessed that direction too. This is the one that I chose and this is the one that I am committed to and going with and God says, "Okay, now you work with me, and we'll bless this decision". But it could've gone the other way as well.

Nevertheless, PA expressed significant dependence on God for daily guidance on decisions he is faced with. Recalling a particularly difficult time in his life, he stated,

And so here I am trying to cope with all this and keep everybody going and I was in over my head. There's no doubt. And God just forced me to be walking around on my knees the entire day. Every time I was in between things and I was walking, I was praying, saying, "Okay Lord, I need wisdom for

the next thing. You've got to get me through this".

The relationship that I had with God was so close . . . I just knew really nothing that I myself could do about most of these situations. . . . I had to say, "Okay God, this is yours, You have to work with this. You have to bring out of this situation what You want. I'm just along for the ride. You've gotta do this."

Participant A expressed a desire to have this type of faith on an ongoing basis.

The reason I was so close was because I was forced into it. I recognized that things were out of my hands. What needs to happen is that when things aren't so obviously out of my hands I then need to force myself into that sort of a relationship, into that sort of constant communion - looking to God continually.

In summary, PA expressed a faith in God that appears to be foundational to all aspects of life, including his own decision making process. While he expressed a degree of self reliance in his ability to make moral judgments he also indicated a strong need and desire to depend on God for guidance in the process. When he was asked, "What, if anything, happens to individual autonomy when one becomes a Christian?", PA responded,

I don't know that anything really does happen to personal autonomy because the person still needs to make those decisions themselves. When you are not a Christian, you draw on different sources to help you make decisions in your life . . . and it's a variety of sources that gives you advice, or gives you guidance or whatever in the decisions that you need to make. As a Christian you still are drawing on sources but the main source, of course, is God, and the other sources that He provides but you're

still making those decisions. So I don't think anything happens to personal autonomy.

Religious Resources

Participant A reported that his father was a pastor and, as a result, the institutionalized church played a significant role in his upbringing. He stated, "I never had any thought of leaving the church . . . it was always there. I was always part of it." Nevertheless, he does not regard the church as a major resource in his moral judgment process today. Although he rated it as important on item 13 of the questionnaire, several other factors were given more significant importance: family, pastor, prayer, scripture, personal intelligence, experience and feelings.

In the course of the interviews, it became very evident that PA regards Scripture as his most important religious resource in the process of making moral judgments. He provided several comments which indicated the authoritative role Scripture is given in his life. In discussing a variety of moral issues, PA frequently referred to the Bible as the authoritative guide. Although he stated that Scripture does not specifically address every moral issue, it does provide general principles which can be applied.

What it does give are the basics of what is right and what is wrong and the subsequent teaching of how we should live but not necessarily specifically saying, "Thou shalt not play football on Sunday". That is the sort of thing where we have come to,

and say, "Okay, then from what I see in the Bible and from how this activity affects me . . . that is how I need to make a decision of whether or not this particular activity is right or wrong".

When asked whether there are things in Scripture that he does not agree with, PA responded,

No. Don't understand, yes. But don't agree with, ah, no. I don't understand things like why it seems that some very innocent people were allowed to be injured severely and yet the ones who injured them appeared to be let off scott free . . . without having to pay for this injury. There's something that I don't understand there. But at the same time I'm not saying, "God, you are doing something wrong". I'm saying that I don't understand. When I come to a point, a position, a place in the Scripture, whether it is on something like that or whether it's on an issue of theology or eschatology, or whatever it is, it's not that I'm saying, um, I never come to the Scriptures and say, "God, this is wrong. There is something wrong here". The only thing that would be wrong is in my understanding of it. I understand that I am finite and I understand God is infinite and I obviously cannot understand everything that He does.

The central role of Scripture as a resource for moral judgments is most evident in PA's response to the question, "How much authority does Scripture have in your life?" He replied,

Complete. In my mind it is the Word of God and the Word is obviously an extension of God. And so, for me that is, that is as good as if God is standing right there and saying this is the way it is.

Expressions of Community

Participant A offered numerous comments which indicated that various aspects of the religious community have played a

significant role in the development of his faith and morality. Most influential, in this regard, has been the family unit, particularly his parents. He indicated that they were the major influence in his conversion to Christianity at the age of five. While reporting that he did not feel pressured to convert, he stated,

I was raised in a Christian home and so, as long as I can remember, I have understood the basics of what being a Christian is. All it took for the actual experience was for my mother to suggest that it might be a good time to pray "the prayer".

Participant A also recalled a prior experience with his father when a similar suggestion was made.

The first time that I was actually approached about it, that I remember anyways, was a few months before that. Dad was having another business trip to Calgary and what he would do occasionally was take each of the kids along with him, if it was a day trip type of thing. Thinking back, I think it was sort of planned so that he would have this time to talk to us. It was my turn, and we were driving along, and I don't remember the rest of the discussion but I do remember him asking, or bringing this up and getting around to asking if I wanted to ask Christ into my heart. And I don't even remember him necessarily explaining it all at that point, because I already knew it. It was just a matter of, "Have you ever?" or "Do you want to?" type of thing, basically. I'm sure that there must have been more to it but I don't remember much more. And being young and not understanding exactly what was going on around me, I thought, "No, I don't want to do this yet. It's embarrassing. Look at all the cars around me. Everybody will see me". So it was kind of a childish thing at that time but dad didn't push it. And so then, I think, I'm sure that it was only a matter of months later that this came up again at home.

One begins to understand the extent of the influence of the family when PA described his extended family. When asked, "Who in your immediate and extended family is in full time Christian ministry?", PA responded,

How long is this tape? My father is, my older brother is and my younger brother is planning too. I suppose we could say that my sister would like to marry someone in that. My grandfather on my dad's side is, or at least was, he's retired now. My dad's oldest brother is not in full time ministry but he does conduct a choir that travels extensively . . . and then there is dad and then his twin sister is married to a minister. My one cousin in that family is also a youth pastor. My dad's next youngest brother was a full time pastor for quite a number of years . . . and then my dad's youngest brother is also a pastor in full time ministry. So basically dad's whole family, to one extent or another, is in full time ministry.

Participant A is also planning to enter the ministry on a full time basis.

The family solidarity is evident in PA's response to the question, "Are there points in your faith where you disagree with your parents or other family members?" He responded,

I don't think so. I can't think of anything. I would have to say definitely not with my parents. I can't think of anything. There would be more chance with other family members - immediate family members. I can think of maybe one area that I am unsure of with extended family . . . but as far as immediate family members they all share the same feeling that I do about that. So beyond that I can't think of anything else.

Nevertheless, PA also expressed a sense that his relationships with family members would change significantly if he chose not to believe as they do. He stated,

It would definitely be different. I don't believe for a minute that there would be any less love there or even acceptance. It would simply be that the most important things in their life and most important thing in my life would be different and so there would be a distance there.

Participant A, however, did not appear to be aware of the significance of this in his own life and decision making process. He stated,

To be honest, I have never thought about it before. So simply on that I would say it makes no difference, but only because it's so deeply rooted in each of us that it is unimaginable otherwise.

In addition to the training and support of family, PA also reflected on the role Christian friends from the church community played in supporting his values and morals.

Almost the entire youth group, with the exception of two or three kids, were in the same high school . . . we all had our lockers together. So the youth group was not just my friends at church, they were my friends outside of the youth group. And that was a phenomenal support group. It was almost like going to a Christian school . . . the youth group was the important group in my life, outside of the family. That was where we put our energies and all our activities were with the youth group. Everything was done with the youth group and we had a very, very strong, almost family feeling.

Speaking of the present, PA indicated that he feels accepted as a full member of the college community. He did not, however, feel that this was a significant factor in his development as a moral agent.

I am, and have been, quite confident even before I was here, in myself and in my ability to make decisions. In fact, I think, the fact that I am confident and that I can stand on my own is one of

the major factors in why I feel accepted here and why I think that I am accepted. Because people don't feel that I am dependent on them. It's sort of a mutual respect sort of thing. I can stand on my own and therefore I can add something of my own to the community.

Although PA reported that he feels some aspects of the college community encourage divergent, independent thinking, this has not apparently resulted in altering his own views on moral issues.

I know that I have certainly been forced to re-evaluate and, actually, I am still evaluating or re-evaluating some positions. The one that comes to mind most easily because that was the most recent, I think, was in a particular class where the discussion of non-practising homosexuality came up. And some members of this class were saying that having homosexual tendencies is not wrong and a non-practising homosexual can be, or should be allowed, not only in the church, but in leadership in the church. Um, and, of course my initial reaction to that was, "Never, never, never. That doesn't work at all." Um, but I'm, I'm still, I have been forced to re-evaluate that. I have changed in as much as I understand and I lean more heavily and closer to that position now than I would've before I was approached on it at all. Um, I can't say that I have completely changed, and said, "yes", but I don't think that I have come to the decision yet.

In summary, PA did not indicate that his membership in the college community was a significant factor in his process of making moral judgments, although he indicated feeling completely accepted for who he is. It would seem that the family unit, although perhaps not an active agent, continues to play a central role providing the context in which many, if not all, of his moral judgments are made. He recalled,

I was known right from day one, in school and that sort of thing, as the pastor's kid, as a Christian and that was never questioned.

Later, he stated, "What you believe very much decides what you are and who you are." The apparent role of his family heritage may very well suggest, however, that who you are decides what you believe.

Holistic Expressions

Although the role of family, church and Scripture was emphasized as foundational in PA's moral judgment process, he indicated a more recent reliance on other personal factors. On questionnaire item 13, for example, he rated personal feelings and personal experience as very important resources when faced with a decision concerning a moral issue but acknowledged that he feels these sources are trustworthy because of his upbringing.

In exploring his understanding of the role of emotions in the moral judgment process, PA explained,

When I've done something wrong I know it. Part of it, I think, has to do with personality . . . I think some people are more sensitive. Not just to other people but more sensitive to themselves . . . when you do something wrong there is a feeling of guilt or of feeling bad about it. If first of all you are trained properly from young to respond to those feelings, to acknowledge those feelings, and then to continue, to take the right steps after those feelings have occurred to correct the situation . . . I think beyond a doubt, if anything, you won't have to worry about whether or

not you know something is wrong. You'll know it is wrong . . . so it can become very sharp, a very accurate tool as to whether or not something is wrong.

Nevertheless, PA stated that, while emotions can play a valuable role in moral judgments, they should not be the sole determining factor. Instead, he described a more holistic process of moral judgment which integrates reason, emotion and personal experience.

With reason you can sit down and you can look at it and you can put things into categories and you can look at other areas what other people have done, ah, and um, well, even with reason it's hard to keep out your own experience, which is also on there, and evaluate what you have experienced, and then come to a decision on that. It's very difficult though to say that is the most important because the three, the reason, the experience, and emotions work so closely as a team because it is really emotions often times that first alert you as to whether or not something may be wrong. That not everything may be in order. And then it's reason and evaluating the experience that helps you to decide.

Summary

Many of PA's responses seemed to indicate a non-reflective stance on issues of faith and morality. The strong evangelical community in which he was raised apparently provided him with a set of beliefs which he later came to adopt as his own. The role of family and the authority of the Bible appear to be central in his moral judgment process. Although PA expressed a sense of self reliance in his ability to reason, as well as a growing trust in his feelings and

personal experiences as reliable sources of moral guidance, it is evident that his Christian heritage continues to provide the context in which these factors are understood.

Participant B

Participant B (PB) was a single female, age 19. Although she was attending a Baptist college, she indicated that her membership was in a Mennonite Brethren church. At the time of the interviews, PB had lived away from home for one and a half years. Understandably, she is still in the process of establishing her identity and her independence. This is also true in the arena of moral judgments.

Cognitive Expressions

Participant B described herself as an individual who has "always questioned things" and, on questionnaire item 13 rated personal intelligence as an important resource when making moral judgments. Although she also rated a number of other factors as important resources, PB did not give a higher rating to any of the other variables mentioned. She explained,

This [ie. personal intelligence] is important because I believe God gave us brains so we'd use them. It also gives us more credibility with the world if they see us thinking things through; not just believing "just because".

It would seem, however, that, while PB values intelligence and the process of reasoning, she feels that the process of questioning and evaluating one's beliefs and values should occur in an environment that supports those beliefs and values. For example, she indicated that she chose to attend a Bible college so that she "could take courses like sociology and philosophy from a Christian professor." PB went on to relate the following:

My cousin . . . went to church with his parents and stuff and then he graduated and went to university and took a lot of philosophy courses and stuff and now he is an atheist. So I kind of thought maybe I would rather get it from a different kind of perspective. Not that I was really worried that that would happen to me, but I just thought to get it from a Christian perspective could give me a few more answers.

To be sure, PB was aware of both positive and negative consequences that could potentially result from questioning her faith and values. On the positive side, she stated,

I think that it could strengthen you, it could give you more reason for why you believe what you do.

Beyond that, she also saw value in the process from a spiritual perspective.

I think, like if you are witnessing to someone or something and you have never questioned anything you pretty well just believe it. Or you could say, "Yeah, I know what you mean, I've thought about that too and what I thought of was . . ." It can make you more credible.

In spite of this, PB expressed significant concern regarding the potential dangers involved in the process of

questioning. Again, she recalled her cousin's experience and said,

Like my cousin when he went to school he questioned everything and he didn't really look for answers. He just had questions. He got more and more questions and now he has so many questions, like where do you start finding the answers? I think that you should be careful when you question things and once you start asking questions, I think that you need to keep going until you find the answers. I don't think that you should stop at the question. Like it could hurt you more than help you.

As a result, PB's responses seemed to suggest a reluctance to be open-minded when discussing moral issues with others who have a view different than her own. For example, when commenting on the value of non-religious literature as a resource for guidance on moral issues, she stated,

I would take it seriously if it was in accordance with what I believe. I would kind of, I would take it seriously if it didn't agree with me, but I wouldn't consider it's points at all. Like I wouldn't, I don't think it would affect my position at all.

In recalling a discussion with friends on homosexuality, PB stated,

The disagreement strengthened my position because it inspired me to spend a lot more time looking at the Biblical position on the issue and trying to substantiate why I felt the way I did.

Nevertheless, PB did show evidence of her willingness to evaluate and even change some of her former moral judgments. She cited pacifism, a longstanding tradition within the Mennonite Brethren faith, as an example:

PB: I grew up with it. I see war, I really see war as murder. . . . I think war is wrong and it would never have been a question for me at all until I came here last year. Not at all. I would have just said it's wrong, that's it, it's wrong.

I. What happened in coming here last year that changed that?

PB: Talking with T. He's not a Mennonite. And he doesn't see it the same way that I do. And we discuss it a lot I never really talked it out before with somebody and so when we're talking then I listen to him and he has some good points. And, I don't, I'm starting to see both sides more than I, like I never really tried to see both sides before. Because I just thought it was wrong, no talking about it, you know. But I can't do that to him.

In discussing the principles underlying her moral judgments, PB showed varying degrees of understanding. For example, she said,

I have had non-Christian friends ask me to go to the bar with them and stuff. And I just said, "No", and they said "Why", and I said that I just don't go there.

In explaining why she believes pre-marital sex is wrong, PB responded,

PB: I think that it is really harmful all the way around. Harmful, like the Bible says it's wrong, number one . . . and it could harm your spiritual life and emotionally, and possibly physically, relationally.

I: How do you think it would be harmful emotionally?

PB: I don't think you can be ready for that outside of being married. I don't know, I would just find it really extremely hard to

deal with. Really hard.

I: Do you know why?

PB: Um, cause, um, why would I find it emotionally hard to deal with? I just, cause, it is something that's really special and I think that you just don't want to give it away. And, I don't know, just to not have that kind of commitment from somebody and to give them everything. It doesn't make sense.

I: Why does the Bible say it's wrong?

PB: I think because it's harmful to us.

I: Okay. Because?

PB: Um, because it separates us from God and I think it could prevent you from being everything that God made you to be.

I: How would it separate you from God, or why would it separate you from God.

PB: Because it's going against His will for your life. . . . Like sin separates you from God. And that's sin, and that like, you know, it's not even like a little sin that you do just by accident. I think that you know what you're doing. You know, that's like a choice to sin.

I: Okay, and why is premarital sex a sin?

PB: Because sin is anything that separates you from God, right? So that would be why, because it separates you from God. But, then we are back to where we started. I don't know.

Finally, PB also appeared to be uncertain of whether or not she could trust her own judgment on a moral issue. On questionnaire item 9 she answered positively and explained,

When I am faced with a really big decision I try to think things through pretty carefully. I pray, and I have some awesome friends to discuss things with.

Since I have gone to church all my life I feel I have a basic understanding of where Christ calls us to stand on most issues.

However, PB did not feel her own judgment could be trusted apart from these other resources. She stated,

I think, the world is full of examples of people that don't have that, and you can just see what happens.

I think a lot of the times we make the wrong decisions around choices, and then end up hurting a lot of other people. I don't know . . . sometimes it can work out fine if I just go with what I want to do because maybe what I want isn't far off from what God wants. But if it is, then it's not going to work. . . . I think that I can. But I don't think that it is all just me. I think it has a lot to do with the way I was brought up.

In summary, the following dialogue between PB and myself expresses her inner struggle. The tension results from a desire to question and to know and, yet, a need for safety and certainty.

I: How do you respond inwardly when suddenly you are presented with this other side that challenges what you believed all your life?

PB: It makes me kind of stubborn because you just don't want to give it up, because you have always believed that. And you think, "Oh, I believe that, and I still believe that and that's it". But, at that same time you just can't do that.

I: So your first impulse is to hang on to your original beliefs. Okay, then what happens? You said that you don't do that.

PB: Then you start to listen and you try to see it from the other side, but it's still, it's hard. Part of you just doesn't want to, doesn't want to listen. It doesn't want to

understand really, but part of me does.

I: What's the part that doesn't want to listen?

PB: Probably pride a bit. You just don't want to have been wrong.

I: Okay.

PB: It's, I don't know, upbringing.

I: And what's the part that wants to listen? What is it inside of you that makes you want to listen?

PB: The part that really wants to know the truth, because, like part of you just wants to hang on to what you've learned. But part of you wants to learn more and wants to figure out if what you learned was really right.

Faith Expressions

Participant B became a Christian at the age of four, following the death of her grandfather. She recalled, "My parents told me he went to heaven. I decided I wanted to go there too, so they prayed with me." She indicated that she made a recommitment to her faith when she was eight years old and described this experience as a reconfirmation of her original decision.

I think that I just realized more at that time that I need God. . . . I think a lot of it was I wanted to make sure.

In terms of her faith development, PB indicated that she renews her commitment to her faith on an ongoing basis.

I think every decision you are faced with you choose the right way or what you think would be the will of God. I think that in everything you do,

it's a recommitment. It's like a kind of renewal of your commitment.

She did not suggest, however, that these subsequent recommitments were qualitatively different from her original decision to become a Christian.

In our discussion of possible resources PB might use when making a moral judgment, she indicated that prayer is important but also stated that she does not rely on prayer as much as she should.

Sometimes I think that I talk to my friends too much and I think about things too much and I try to see how I will feel too much, instead of just praying, which is so much easier.

As an example, PB recalled a specific incident when she needed to make a decision.

I thought, "What am I going to do, what am I going to do?". Then I thought, "Wait, I'm calling the wrong person". So then I just prayed, and I just thought, "How stupid are you?" Like you know, because what does C. know on the grand scale of things, you know?

For PB, prayer is a means of involving God in her moral judgment process, therefore allowing her to trust her own thoughts and decisions.

I let God in on it. And I think that is important to Him because He wants to be a part of the decision that I make too. He doesn't just want me to make them. . . . Once I pray and ask God to be a part of it, then I'm more conscious of Him. And then when I'm thinking, then I will think, like I'm thinking God, and I'm thinking other things at the same time. Instead of just thinking of everything else. And it just kind of feels better, like, "Now I can do it". You know, that kind of thing.

Prayer is also the vehicle by which PB comes to understand God's will for her life. Her understanding of God's will is reflected in the following comments which also suggest that she is reevaluating her understanding of this concept.

I think everybody is given different opportunities and a different life. And I think God has different expectations for me based on what He has given me. I think that His absolute will for us is that we meet those expectations.

When asked whether she understands God's will to be general or specific in nature, PB replied,

I think somewhere in the middle, but I'm not sure. I would've said, about a year and a half ago, I would've said pretty specific, but I don't know. I don't know . . . because I don't really think that God creates us each with a special vocation in mind and stuff like that. But, who you marry seems like a pretty major thing that He would kind of care about, I don't know.

Participant B expressed some uncertainty regarding how to apply this understanding to her life at this time.

I don't think that our free will is limited. I don't think it's that. I don't know. I think that it's important that we realize that we do have a free will, that we do have choices. But I think that it is also important what we choose once we are a Christian. I don't think we have any reason for choosing things that don't go along with God.

I think that God gave us each a free will so that we can determine to do His will. I don't think that we just have a free will, like so that we can just do whatever we want.

Participant B indicated that individual autonomy is limited when one becomes a Christian. She explained,

I think that you give up a lot of it. I think that's part of it. I think that you have to. I don't think that you have the right to make the same kind of choices that a non-Christian would.

Other comments, however, are more reflective of the theonomous individual as described by Adams (1979). For example, PB stated,

I think we have a free will, but that's so that we can choose to subject it to God, I think. Because I don't think that God just created a bunch of robots to do what He wanted. He wants us to choose to do what He wants, and I think that is why we have a free will.

Although PB did not appear completely resolved on the question of the relationship between God's will and her individual free will, it became apparent that her own faith journey was leading her to a point of convergence. In response to the question, "Is sometimes what you want the same as what God wants? Or is it always different?", she responded, "I think it can be the same sometimes. I think that the closer I am to God the more it is the same."

Religious Resources

On questionnaire item 13 PB indicated that she regards Scripture as an important resource in the moral judgment process.

I believe that God's Word holds the answers so to look everywhere but there would be lacking. Scripture also provides arguments to substantiate its position and I like to have reasons to believe what I believe.

In fact, PB stated that the Bible has become a more important resource in this regard as she has matured.

Regarding the authority of the Bible in her life, PB explained,

Generally I think I would believe what it says is right or wrong. If it was something that I kind of had a question about, I would look into it and read a commentary or something and see what it means, like if I'm not really sure.

In this regard, she also indicated that Christian literature is another important resource when making a decision on a moral issue. She noted, however, that her behavior does not always conform to the biblical teaching, even though she may agree in principle. "If the Bible says something is wrong and I agree with it, it doesn't mean that I never do it though." As Kohlberg & Candee (1984) point out, individual behavior is not always consistent with one's moral judgments.

Participant B indicated that she does not regard her pastor as an important resource when making a moral judgment. She stated, "I love my pastor dearly and learn from him but I don't consult him in my decision making process as a rule." Later, when speaking of pastors in a more general sense, PB said,

I think that pastors should be a guide or a resource and I definitely think they have the authority to give you a kick in the butt if you need it. But I don't think that the pastor is the final word or anything. And, I don't know, if I went to my pastor with something and I really believed one way and I thought it out a lot, and if

he said something totally opposite, I don't think I would just do a one-eighty and just change because he said it.

On questionnaire item 13 PB also rated the church as "not important" in moral decision making and explained, "It isn't so much that I feel this is not important, as that it hasn't been my experience to this point." She also alluded to changing her view since being exposed, in the college community, to viewpoints that are contrary to the teaching of her church.

I don't know. Maybe, like now I'm questioning more about my church. Like this whole pacifism thing. And, I don't know, I have a more personal relationship with my close friends than with my church. And that is important to me. Relationships are important to me.

Expressions of Community

The role of community has been a significant factor in PB's faith and moral development. As has already been noted, PB's parents were instrumental in her original conversion to Christianity. Although she conceded that, at the age of four, there was a sense of wanting to please her parents in that decision, she also did not recall any significant sense of pressure to pray "the prayer". She recalled,

I know that my sister was there at the time and she didn't make that decision. So I don't think that it was a pressured thing because they just left her alone when she didn't and that was fine.

At the present time, however, PB reported that everyone

in her family are Christian and she receives considerable support from them. She stated,

My family is happy that I am a Christian. My parents write me and tell me that they are proud of me, and when I talk to them (phone or when I'm home), they tell me that. My sister and I are very close and we are both very happy to be able to share "spiritual things" with each other.

Participant B acknowledged that her family relationships might change significantly if she were not a Christian. In speculating about this, she stated that her relationships with other family members would probably be,

. . . stressful, I think. Just because I can't imagine how it would feel as a parent to know the truth, to know what was right and to know what would happen to your child. You know, so I think that would cause a lot of stress and put a lot of pressure on my parents. So that would just make it stressful at home.

Participant B, however, did not express any sense of how important this factor might be in terms of her faith commitment. In fact, she indicated that the influence of her family is decreasing as she matures.

I think family, my immediate family, like my mom and dad and my sister, get less important over time. Just because you kind of grow up and move away and pull away kind of. When you are little they are pretty important. Christian friends, I think they become more important, maybe to fill that place, sort of.

The extent of parental influence on her own beliefs and values has been a point of concern for PB in the past. In recalling an earlier situation when one of her peers challenged her

faith and the degree of parental influence on her life, she stated,

I didn't know what to say. He just looked at me and patted me on the head and I thought, "How condescending." . . . And I felt really insulted. And, I just thought, "So what? So that's maybe where my decision did come from. But now I'm older and I am still sticking to it, you know."

Speaking more currently about decisions on moral issues, PB stated,

I don't go to my parents until I've basically made up my mind. Then I tell them and see what they think.

She went on to explain,

I want to make up my mind on my own. I don't want to say this is my problem because my dad likes to fix things for me. And, I don't , like I always appreciate the thought but I don't always like it. You know?

Participant B expressed a significant amount of ambivalence concerning her father's tendency to provide her with answers.

It's harder for me to follow it, and it's harder for me not to. It's both. Like, it's kind of probably a pride thing when he makes a suggestion. I just don't want to do it because it came from him even though it could be a good idea. But I can't fully reject it because it came from him.

It doesn't give me the opportunity to do things for myself and develop things within myself - to develop to capacity.

As a result, PB indicated that she regards Christian friends as a more important resource when faced with a moral dilemma. She stated,

They help me to think things through for myself. I value their opinions and judgments. If they are truly living a Christian life they have a lot of credibility for me and I trust their help.

Nevertheless, she also pointed out that she does not always agree with their advice. She described herself as "an arguer more than an agreeer".

In terms of PB's response and receptiveness to the input of others on moral issues, the distinguishing feature appears to be one of respect for the individual. For example, in discussing the value of input from Christian friends, she indicated that it is important for her to "know the person really well, know where they are coming from and see different areas of their life". Speaking again of the influence of a Christian friend on her view of pacifism, she stated,

I think that with T. I know him pretty well, and so, like I really respect where he stands on things and I really think that he has a lot of things together in his life. And so his opinion holds more weight with me than the average Joe's would.

Related to this, PB indicated that she has not considered her non-Christian friends to be valuable resources when making a moral judgment because they do not hold a similar worldview to her own.

If I was going to them for guidance I would weigh everything they said a lot more carefully than a Christian . . . because a Christian I kind of know where they are coming from and I know what they value more than non-Christian friends. I have more questions about that kind of thing. I would wonder what they were basing their decision on and where

it was coming from.

In discussing the role of community on personal autonomy,

PB stated,

You might feel more freedom and you might feel less. . . . If you feel accepted by people you feel more free to be yourself and to just, you feel more open and not restricted. Just more free. But less because, like if it's a group of people, a lot of times it's not just an unconditional kind of acceptance that you have in that group and you kind of know on what grounds they have accepted you. And you don't feel free to maybe change yourself in those areas, like to break out of the mould, because you still want to be accepted into that group.

Reflecting on her own experience at college, PB indicated that she feels very accepted as a member of the community and indicated that this has had a positive effect on her own sense of autonomy. She stated,

I feel that when people genuinely like me for who I am and accept me then I feel more comfortable around them and am just more myself. You know, more relaxed.

It is apparent that the role of community has been a significant factor in PB's development as a moral agent. In short, she values relationships that are characterized by mutual respect providing, on the one hand, input that is based on a shared worldview and, on the other hand, freedom to draw her own conclusions and to find her own way.

Holistic Expressions

On questionnaire item 13 PB rated personal feelings and

personal experience as important resources in reaching a decision on a moral issue. She also identified a number of other resources as important in the process but when asked whether she would consider one factor to be more influential than the rest, she replied,

I make a lot of decisions on my feelings. I do. Maybe more than I should sometimes. But, I always have. A lot of times when I'm making a decision, I think, "Okay, how would I feel if I did that?". And then I think about that for a while, and then I think "How would I feel if I did this?". And then I go, "Yuck", and then I take the other one.

In an attempt, perhaps, to approach moral issues from a variety of perspectives, PB allows her emotional response to act as a guide.

The extent to which she does rely on her personal feelings is reflected in a statement she offered concerning a specific issue in which she indicated she had been seeking God's will for direction. After she had made her decision, she recalled,

I just felt good about it. I felt like this was the place I should be and I just felt good about the decision.

Nevertheless, on several occasions PB expressed concern over the extent to which she relies on her feelings. It became apparent that, in spite of the fact that she relies heavily on her emotions for guidance on moral issues, she also believes that her feelings can't always be trusted.

I think that feelings aren't always the best thing because your feelings at one moment may not be your feelings three days from then, if you sit back and think about it. . . . I'm talking more about the snap judgment . . . you can really feel like you want to, but then, if your out of that situation, you'll look at it and think, "I don't want to do that". You know?

At another point, PB elaborated on this theme.

PB: I think if I'm having a feeling that is telling me that it's wrong, then I think that is pretty reliable and, even if it's not, who cares? Like, what is it going to hurt me not to do it if that is how I feel? So yes, I think that is pretty reliable because I don't think that I would feel this is wrong if it was totally right. Like I never get that sick feeling, when I'm praying or reading my Bible, you know. So, if it was right I don't think I would get that feeling.

I: Do you think that your feelings can be trusted when it comes to deciding if something is right, as well as when something is wrong?

PB: It can play a part but it sounds pretty lame. If someone says, "Why do you think that's right?", "Well, I just feel that it is", you know. I think that you need to look into it more because if someone asks you about it you need a better reason than that, I think.

As a result of tension concerning the reliability of her emotions, PB indicated that she tries to rely on feelings and reason in the process of making a decision on a moral issue.

Participant B also indicated an appreciation for personal experience as a valuable tool in the moral judgment process.

This is important because I don't like to make the same mistake twice . . . if I just stop and think back to a similar experience, it usually helps me.

Her comments indicated a growing sense of awareness of the

value personal experiences can have in making moral judgments.

Maybe experience becomes a little bit more important as you gain more. . . . When you are 14 you haven't done a whole lot and you don't know a whole lot from personal experience, but you look to other sources more. But I think that when you get older, (do I sound like I think I'm really wise or something?) but I think that when you get older you have had more experiences and you should learn from them.

It would seem that her personal life experiences contribute to a greater degree of self reliance in moral decision making.

Summary

Many of PB's comments reflected the inner struggles often characteristic of the moral judgment process. While searching for truth, she expresses a reluctance to question. While believing God has a will for her life, she tries to preserve her individual free will. While appreciating the support of family, she struggles to achieve independence. While valuing her emotions as a guide, she also mistrusts them. She exemplifies one who desires to utilize a variety of resources in the process of making a responsible moral judgment without betraying her personal faith.

It's hard. I pray about, like if I am making a decision, and I want to know what I should do, I pray about it. I talk to a lot of people about it, I think a lot about it. I, um, I don't think that God's will would ever be contrary to the Bible, so I kind of check there. Um, I don't know, it's hard.

Participant C

Participant C (PC) was a 21 year old male in his third year of college. He expressed a high level of commitment to his faith, attempting to integrate it into every aspect of his life. As a result, faith and morality are inextricably bound together for PC.

Participant C is preparing to enter the ministry. His father is also a minister and this relationship appears to be central in his faith and moral development.

Cognitive Expressions

On several occasions, PC offered statements which indicated a high regard for reason in the moral judgment process and a confidence in his own ability to make a decision on a moral issue. Underlying this sense of confidence is a faith in God which he attempts to integrate into all aspects of life. When asked whether he could trust his judgment on a moral issue, he responded,

I believe I can trust my own judgment because now I include God in every decision. When I am walking in His will I can walk confidently in all matters. . . . Before, I did things too much out of free will and curiosity, never consulting God. . . . With age comes wisdom and I ask God for this gift continuously.

The sense of confidence in his own reasoning process is, in many respects, a faith in God who, he believes, is in control

of his thought processes. He explained,

I guess from when I gave myself to God and became a Christian I allowed Him to be in control of everything that I do and, in saying that and in doing that, I have to give Him control of my mind . . . so I trust in my evaluating and in my mind. I don't claim to know everything but, from what I do know, I put a lot of trust into it, I guess, because I feel that with God He can help me work through those things.

Participant C indicated that he believes it is beneficial to question and examine one's beliefs and values. He stated, "The Bible tells us to, you know, to test what you believe. It's a sign of a healthy person". He went on to explain,

The benefit I guess is you find out who you are and what you believe. Who you are inside and how your feelings go. It gives you a chance to reason and to understand things, evaluate things and it makes you a more stable person because you are able to weigh things out and analyze what you feel is best and what you are responsible for.

Nevertheless, PC indicated that he never considered attending a secular institution for his post-secondary education. In speculating about that possibility, he stated,

I think it would give more stress probably, just in relating to professors who are probably not Christian. Taking courses in public school, I don't think that I would've learned as much. I might have been challenged a lot more initially just for knowing my faith . . . there would be that challenge all the time and you would have to know where you stood a lot. I mean, you just couldn't coast in public school.

Related to this, PC also spoke of the dangers in questioning and reevaluating one's faith and values.

There can be dangers, I guess, in the way you

evaluate. Because I know a lot of people who evaluate certain things and they can get hooked on minor things, little things and they develop their own belief that doesn't really fit with the whole picture of what really is in the Bible. . . . If you get too much influence from someone else then you can become biased so I think that it is healthy to have your single view but you have to look at other people's views. . . . You need to pray to God and ask for His guidance.

Utilitizing various spiritual resources in his moral judgment process, it appears that PC is fairly independent in his thinking and is not easily influenced by the opinions of others. If anything, discussion with others seems to solidify his own opinions. In reflecting on this, PC expressed some concern over his seeming inability to change his views on issues.

I don't know, but I have never changed my view. I have always developed them even to a greater extent. Yeah, it is something that I have wondered about. I've wondered if I will ever change my view. I wonder if there will be anything that will come up that will cause me to change my mind, but I haven't run across anything like that yet. So, something to deal with.

When discussing specific moral issues, PC demonstrated varying degrees of understanding regarding the principles underlying his views. For example, in explaining why he believes abortion is wrong, he said,

I guess, simply, I can say that I believe it's the start of a life that God has allowed and I don't believe that it's right for a human to take that life away. I believe that the Bible says that. And I think that God has a purpose for everyone. Not that I'm saying that I know how to deal with every situation. If there were no abortions there

would be a vast population growth . . . I've done a lot of studying on it and I believe that people who are pro-abortion have an excellent case and they have good backing for what they believe. But I just believe it's wrong because of my conviction from God that His purpose is in every life.

In discussing why he believes premarital sex is wrong, PC explained,

I think that there is something wrong with it, that God would enforce it . . . because God is good and wants what's best for us. Premarital sex obviously has pleasure involved in it otherwise people wouldn't be tempted to do it, so it's not a question of whether there's pleasure in it or not. There obviously has got to be bad in it . . . um, I think that a lot of it has to do with saving yourself for the one that you do love and dedicating yourself to them. . . . So, I do think that there is something wrong with it that God, out of loving us, protects us and commanded us not to do it.

It appears difficult for PC to verbalize his moral principles without resorting to his faith and the religious resources he depends on for guidance. Faith and morality are deeply entwined.

I think that God is the provider of everything that is good. And I think that morals are based on those things that are good, so I really see God as being involved in a great part of that.

As a result, PC stated, "I do not believe in being totally autonomous because we need God to help us in all areas."

Faith Expressions

Participant C indicated that he became a Christian approximately 15 years ago. Although he was only six years

old, he recalled feeling a strong sense that this was what he was to do.

I felt moved to go to the altar and give my life to Jesus. The call was very strong and it was as if nothing could hold me back from kneeling at the altar.

In his teen years he made a recommitment to his faith that differed from his original conversion experience in two ways. He indicated, first of all, that the subsequent recommitment resulted in behavior more consistent with his convictions. Secondly, it involved a strong commitment to service, resulting in his decision to enter the ministry.

With my recommitment I obligated myself totally to His will in service . . . now I honestly seek God in every aspect.

As a result, PC's faith, it would seem, has become an integral part of his personal identity.

I can't really distinguish myself now without including God in it. I feel that God is very much part of me.

Participant C stated that he is completely committed to seeking God's will for his life, which he understands to be specific in nature.

There's things, I guess, that are everyday, I guess you could say, things that are God's will for us; how to act, how we should behave and stuff. I think that God has a plan for each one of us, everyone of us. It's sometimes difficult for a lot of people to know exactly where they are going. A lot of people have no clue and are still searching . . . I don't know why God chooses to reveal it to some people and why some people struggle with it. I think a lot of it, or it can be both ways because

people aren't really looking for it or God just doesn't choose to show them at that time. . . . For myself, I'm very thankful, like God has set a really clear plan for me, being called to the pastorate. I knew that I was supposed to come to this college and I have four years, and I know I have three years of seminary . . . God has set out a lot of things clear for me.

In explaining his understanding of individual free will in this context, PC stated,

I guess I understand free will as you have a free will to do the will of God or else you have a free will just to serve yourself which is basically what Satan wants and to have yourself as governor and lord of your life. And then he is really lord of your life because he can get you to do whatever he wants. So I think we have a free will to go either way and we can chose whether or not we want to serve God and His will and then what He wants done in that through our lives. . . . You still have a free will because it's a constant following of God. . . . You have to make decisions everyday and you have that choice all the time to do what you should do or shouldn't do.

To some degree, however, PC regards himself as an active agent in bringing about God's will in the world.

I think we have a lot of responsibilities that will help to bring about God's will in our life, so not everything is cut and dried.

Participant C related that, while he believes one gives up personal autonomy in the process of becoming a Christian, subjecting one's individual will to God's will, he also stated that this is not a matter of concern to him. It appears that this may be due, in part, to the sense he expressed that his own will is becoming aligned with the will of God.

As a Christian, my will is parallel to God's will, or my desire is parallel to what God's will is.

The more I, you get to know God, the more you know that what you do is the same as what God would want you to do.

Religious Resources

On questionnaire item 13 PC rated Scripture as a very important resource when making a moral judgment and explained,

With the Holy Spirit speaking through God's Word to me I have another direct source in learning about God and His will. Therefore, the Bible is greatly needed in reaching moral judgments.

As a result, Scripture has an authoritative role in his life. This became evident in discussing principles underlying PC's opinions on moral issues. When asked why, for example, he believes premarital sex is wrong, his initial response was, "Because I feel it's very strongly stated from the Bible. It says that it's wrong". In stating why he believes abortion is wrong, PC explained,

I believe it's the start of a life that God has allowed and I don't believe that it's right for a human to take that life away. I believe that the Bible says that.

Participant C regards Scripture as a primary source of wisdom and understanding. He stated, "That's how I think I am going to grow, in learning my Bible." When asked whether he ever finds himself questioning what the Bible says, he indicated that he sometimes does not understand. When that occurs, PC

stated,

Then it's my responsibility to find out what it does mean to me, and I can do that through commentaries, through men at the church, through other books, and just um, I think with time too. I think that God will reveal to me what He wants me to know.

Participant C expressed a significant amount of confidence in Scripture as an authority in his life.

I think there are things that I don't understand, not so much that I don't accept them . . . it's like Revelations, you know, how much do we really understand? I think it has been canonized for a reason. I trust that God has given it to us and ah, there are some grey areas alright, but a lot of them are revealed to me and I accept it even more. But yeah, I believe it's God's word.

Participant C also indicated in the questionnaire that he regarded his pastor as a very important resource when making judgments. His pastor, however, is also his father and it would seem that it is the parent/child relationship that gives credibility to the pastor as an important resource. Participant C did not indicate that the role of pastor itself should have authority in one's life.

Participant C also rated the church as an important resource in the moral judgment process but, again, it is the quality of relationships within the church, rather than the institution, which seems important. When asked how much authority the church has in his life, he responded,

It depends a lot on the people in the church and my own personal church is one that I trust very much because of the leadership and the majority of the

members are very, very strongly rooted in God and they care about me. And they are looking out for my good and they approach me in love. So, I have a lot of trust in them and I like to listen to what they say.

Expressions of Community

The role of family has been significant in PC's faith and moral development and continues to play a central role in his moral judgment process. He indicated that his family was a major influence in his conversion to Christianity at age six as it was in the home that he "learned about the love of God". He stated, however, that he had never felt a need to convert in order to please his parents. He recalled, "my parents had never been pushing me to do it or anything like that". The influence of family was, perhaps, more indirect and, primarily supportive in nature.

My family is very proud of my commitment to God, especially my father who already serves God in a pastorate position. They communicate their support to me by helping me in any way they can: financially, physically, spiritually, emotionally and mentally.

Participant C acknowledged that his family relationships, particularly his relationship to his father, would be significantly different if he were not a professing Christian.

With my father, I guess it would definitely affect it because he wouldn't be sharing with me probably as much as he does about the church and there wouldn't be that close tie that there is, like the church ties our friendship together a lot. My mother, I don't think that things would really change. She would still do a lot of nurturing for

me and the regular mother routines and stuff. It wouldn't change anything. I'm sure that there would be a gap there too but not to such a great extent. As far as my brother and sister, I guess there would be, but I think that they would still accept me a lot for who I was.

When asked whether he was aware of how his relationship to his father affects his faith commitment, PC responded,

Oh yeah, it does for sure. I know that God has given me my dad to help encourage me and to help build me for the pastorate, and I know that because we discuss a lot and we share a lot and I learn a lot from him. I'm in the process of going to be a youth pastor under him right now. So, I know it would affect or it does affect me in how and where I am going.

Participant C regarded his father's influence on his life in a very positive way. On questionnaire item 13 he rated family, and his father as pastor, as very important resources available to him in the process of making a moral judgment. He explained,

They are important (especially my father) because they know who I am and what my natural responses are. They follow God and, therefore, can give vital truth, which I may overlook, that will help me make right decisions.

As was true of his description of the church, it appears that PC trusts his family's judgment because they know him well, have his best interests at heart and follow God.

To a limited extent, PC also values the input of others when making a decision on a moral issue. Although he indicated that Christian and non-Christian friends were only a slightly important resource in such matters, he also stated,

Most importantly I turn to men and women I feel are led of God. These people are usually experienced and open to share conclusions they have come to. Personally, I trust and seek my father on many issues.

Speaking more specifically about his personal friends, PC wrote,

Only people I highly respect do I really consult with. Others, I like to learn from their experiences and evaluate their beliefs. I can benefit from all my friendships, both Christian or non, but if I fall wholeheartedly to any of their ways I lose sight of God.

On several occasions, PC indicated that "godly men" can provide valuable guidance in moral dilemmas. When asked whether this term was used intentionally or whether he intended to include godly women in the term, he responded,

I guess it's hard to say. I think it is mainly intentional. I look to men more. I guess it's not that I don't want to look to women, it's that I haven't seen any, or even met very many that carry the role of real strong leaders in the church. And I don't know, it's because we're a patriarchal society or just because people don't, well a lot of women don't feel called to strong devotion to God, I guess. I've learned that there are a lot more here through the school, through our women professors, I guess I've learned from them, I guess I don't really look up to them. But I've learned a lot from them. So I enjoy listening to them strongly, they have good issues and they really bring up issues that I would pass off as not so important sometimes. It's really good . . . it's good for me to hear where a woman is coming from in our world and that helps out. Yeah, I think it is healthy to listen to women a lot, you know, well not a lot, but to have a balance between men and women. Um, but, I think I would be more prone to listen to a man's advise for myself.

Perhaps not unrelated to this, it was clear that PC

regards his father, specifically, as a major influence and resource when faced with moral issues. He stated that his father "holds more authority" than others in his life and explained,

I trust his judgment with my whole life being involved with him. I know that he is very God minded and that God has used him his whole life and that he is really searching and I just trust what he says. I know that He works through him and that he admits that he's human too, but he's experienced a lot of stuff that I'm experiencing now, and he's got a lot of the exact same characteristics in personality that I do. And he approached things exactly the same way I do so that way he knows me, and I can trust him in how he responds to things and how he views things.

Participant C also stated that he and his father are "strongly aligned" on most moral issues and he was unable to think of any issue they might disagree on.

On questionnaire item 13 PC rated Christian friends and non-Christian friends as a "somewhat important" resource when making a moral judgment. Although it seems he would give limited credibility to individuals from either group, it became clear that he treats the advice differently, depending on whether the individual is Christian or not. For example, speaking of receiving guidance on moral issues from non-Christians, he stated,

When I know that they aren't Christians I take that to heart in how I evaluate what they are saying. Because, I guess I can listen to them but I don't take it as something that is total truth because I know that, at any moment, they can change their

mind and they really need no backing for what they do because they just do what they are doing, cause they have no will to serve God and in that way they are not really stable people to any degree that I can see . . . but I still feel that I can learn from them. I think I can learn from anyone in any position, whether I am taking what they are saying or whether I am guarding against what they are saying.

Whereas input from non-Christian friends is received with a degree of suspicion, it appears that there is a greater degree of respect and tolerance for the opinions of those who share his faith, in spite of differences of opinion. Speaking of a moral issue PC felt strongly about, he stated,

Like, he's my best friend so we've had a lot of discussions, honestly, and that's basically been one more thing that, you know, we don't see eye to eye on. He just didn't express as much of a problem with it as I did, and that it was that serious of a thing, whereas I did think it was a lot more serious. And we accept each other for who we are and where we've come from, and it doesn't change much between us.

Reflecting on his experience as a member of the college community, PC indicated that, although he feels accepted, he doesn't feel particularly close to the community because of his limited involvement. He seemed to express an appreciation for the opportunity to formulate his own values in this context.

I don't think professors expect you to take everything hook, line and sinker. You need to do some studying on your own. I think otherwise a lot of it would be presented differently - spoon fed-and reinforced. They wouldn't allow us to question and they wouldn't have the attitude toward it that they do.

He indicated that being involved in the college community has challenged him to evaluate his beliefs and values but, in the end, he appeared to be largely unaffected by his relationships within the community.

I guess, if it came right down to it, and I felt that I was heading in the right direction as far as God wanted me to go, and a lot of people disagreed with me and I didn't receive their acceptance or encouragement, I think it would be harder for me but I don't think that would change me.

Holistic Expressions

Comments provided by PC concerning the role of emotions in the moral judgment process appeared somewhat contradictory. On questionnaire item 13 he rated personal feelings as an important resource when faced with a moral issue but not as important as personal experience or as one's ability to reason. Although he appears to value the guidance he receives through his feelings and emotions, he does not appear to trust them.

I think that emotions are very important. I think that is what God gave us emotions for. When we rely on our emotions too strongly, then it is dangerous.

As a result, PC indicated that he tends to rely more heavily on his ability to rationally resolve moral issues.

I guess my mind is a process and I can evaluate things and I don't jump to conclusions whereas feelings, a lot of times, I guess to me, I, I'm um, what's the word? I guess it just comes too quickly, you know . . . and sometimes you can't trust your feelings. So I think that a lot of

things need to be thought out and there needs to be a process.

Nevertheless, PC provided several other comments which would suggest, in fact, that he relies quite heavily on his feelings for guidance in the moral judgment process. For example, he stated, "I guess I have an assurance that I feel a lot of times. I just feel that I'm right."

In a manner consistent with his faith, PC indicated that he believes these feelings are often from the Holy Spirit which he described as "God's voice within me." He stated that he often experiences the Holy Spirit's guidance as "a tugging in my heart". Participant C was not comfortable, however, with describing this guidance only as a feeling. He indicated that the Holy Spirit also "helps [him] to know in [his] mind" what is correct. He stated that, often, what he feels about a moral issue is consistent with what he thinks. When it is not, he stated, "I guess I just go with which one I feel strongest led by that that's what God wants."

Summary

Participant C's reflections suggest an unswerving allegiance to his faith. While he values his own ability to engage in moral reasoning, God is regarded as the ultimate source of all wisdom. To the degree that other resources are a reflection of God's wisdom, they, too, are trusted for

guidance on moral issues. Scripture, it seems, comes out at the top of the list and is given a strong role of authority in his life. Individuals are also valued as sources of guidance to the extent that they are regarded as "godly" by PC. In this respect, it appears that PC's father has played, and continues to play, a central role in his faith and moral development.

Finally, it appears that PC's ultimate concern in the moral judgment process is to follow the will of God. Although he recognizes the limitations this places on his own sense of autonomy, he expressed no concern about this. As a moral agent, he has a free will to accept or reject God's will. As a believer, he feels he has a responsibility to follow God's will.

Participant D

Participant D (PD) was a 21 year old female in her third year of college. She described herself as inquisitive and independent in her thinking. PD expressed a degree of self reliance in her ability to make moral judgments but this is to be understood in the context of her commitment to her faith. Scripture and prayer are, in her estimation, the most valuable resources when making a moral judgment. Several other comments provided by PD, however, suggest that personal

relationships have also played a central role in her decision making process in the past.

Cognitive Expressions

Participant D provided numerous comments which suggested that she values the process of reasoning and questioning, on the one hand, but also does not trust her own ability to make a moral judgment. She indicated that she has always been one to question and wrestle with issues.

I know that I do. It's part of my personality to do it. I can't accept things when people tell me to. I just have never been able to accept them. I have fought all my life with that. So that is my natural tendency, to fight it.

Participant D stated that she values the freedom to draw her own conclusions. Speaking of her college experience, she reflected,

I never have felt pushed into the traditional stand. In some classes you are more challenged than others, obviously. Some teachers are more, "This is the way to go." I've always laughed because you are not going to force anyone into a worldview. You have to find your own. I thoroughly believe that. And some teachers just say, "I'm not going to tell you the answers, you know. Go find them yourself and come back." I personally love that. That's a challenge to me.

In spite of the fact that her father is a pastor and she was raised in a home where it was always assumed that she would become a Christian and adopt the values of her parents, PD indicated that she is very aware of having a choice.

I think that I am responsible for it, and that you choose either way. I probably couldn't live at home and choose the other way. But I could choose either way.

In many instances, she presented herself as an independent thinker. When asked why she believed it was beneficial to question one's faith and values, she responded,

So that you know that they are secure and so that you know that they are yours. You should always be questioning, I think. That doesn't make them weak. I don't think that makes them weak at all. I think it strengthens them because if you are questioning them . . . it strengthens your thought process.

On the other hand, PD also expressed the opinion that there can be dangers in questioning.

I know some of my friends always question, "Oh, am I doing what's right, am I doing what's right?". Well, once you question you should be able to come up with an answer. It's the only healthy solution.

For PD the answers are often found in her faith. Faith and reason are intertwined in the moral judgment process. When, for example, she was asked to explain why she felt premarital sex was morally wrong, she initially responded, "I guess it's wrong because God commanded it." She went on, however, to explain,

But it's also wrong because it's not in the best interests of humans. Look at all the problems that it causes, for one thing. God gave us a perfect relationship in marriage . . . it's wrong, not only because God commanded it but because it's wrong for your own interests. It is proven psychologically wrong, it is proven physically wrong, and it's proven emotionally wrong. It's devastating. So all these things have, in time, proven that God's way was best originally.

Although PD appeared, on the one hand, to value her ability and freedom to think independently and to reason in the moral judgment process, she also expressed a reluctance to trust her own ability to do so. When asked whether she could rely on her own ability to make a moral judgment, she responded, "No, I don't think so" and went on to explain,

I don't think it's reliable because there are too many influences on you. Like if there is a moral decision set before me and I have to judge it, I just don't think that I'm qualified to. I don't think anyone in that regard is qualified to. But I can see like, okay, maybe if the Scriptures were burned and I didn't have the Scripture, I would still pray first. I don't think I have the wisdom of the whole situation because I only see part of it. You see only what you are biased to see. And if that's all you are judging it on, I think that's awful.

She expressed the view that Scripture and prayer provide an objective standard on which to base her decisions.

Participant D indicated that, although she plans to attend a secular college in the future for career training, she does not anticipate being challenged to think through her faith and values to the same extent that she has been while attending a Christian college.

I don't think I would be involved as much. Like, I know the students here, I know what they are going through and I am challenged to think things through myself, things that I don't agree with. . . . And I don't think that I would be challenged to think it through. I think I would be challenged to go the opposite way from them and to say, "No, you guys are wrong". But, being at a Christian college and thinking, "Okay they're Christian, I'm a Christian, where's the difference and why?"

It appears that PD would be more inclined to take a defensive stance if her moral judgments were challenged in an environment that did not essentially support her beliefs and convictions. Even in the present college environment she stated she has not really changed any of her views on moral issues. Instead, she related that her views have become stronger.

Faith Expressions

Participant D indicated that she became a Christian at the age of nine and made at least three recommitments to her faith in the years following. Regarding her faith development, she noted that the recommitments involved a greater degree of understanding than her original conversion experience.

When I was converted or saved, it was more of a, "Lord, okay, I want to follow you but I have no idea what it's going to involve. I have no idea of the costs". I had no idea. And then the recommitments were more of a, "Lord, I know it costs something. Lord, I know that I want you in control. I am going to give this to You, please come."

Consistent with her experience, PD explained her understanding of the roles of faith and reason in the process of spiritual development.

There is only so much that you can reason. Can you reason that God would send His Son to the earth? No, you have to believe it . . . I think you can become a Christian by faith alone, but you are not

going to grow unless you understand and reason. . . . I think that reason is important because it is reasonable what God is offering us. But faith comes in the parts that can't be countered by reason. Like, there's only so much that you can know about the Scripture without having faith. I know people who know the Scripture backwards, forwards, sideways, and yet they don't have any faith and they don't understand it, but they know it.

Participant D provided several comments which would indicate having a very strong commitment to her faith. She explained it best, perhaps, when she said, "God is in me." In this sense, she experiences God as

. . . a security or a controlling element in your life that you are never alone and that you can cope with things. But I think that other sources can point the way to how to cope with things.

One of the "other things" PD relies on for guidance on moral issues is prayer. On questionnaire item 13 prayer was noted as one of two most valuable resources available to her when faced with a moral judgment and she indicated that this has been a growing source of direction in her life in more recent years.

I believe prayer is important in reaching any decision because it is through prayer that we can communicate with God and ask of Him what He would like us to do and decide.

God is in me but I am still human and I am very blind to certain topics that I would wish to be blind to, that I might not even know. . . . Prayer would be like trying to communicate with God and seeking Him. Instead of just knowing that He is in you, that's fine, but because I'm still human, Him being in me doesn't mean that I'm supernatural, that I can understand issues . . . prayer gives you

an outlet to discuss it with God and talk it over and to get your feelings bounced off to God.

Although PD grew up in a Christian home and cited her parents as a major influence in her conversion, she indicated that her faith is significantly different from that of her parents. Stated briefly, she expressed a less rigid faith.

I know that the God they serve is very important and crucial to them and it has seen them all through their life and I do not doubt the genuineness of their faith. I don't think that they are wrong. I don't believe that anything is abnormal about their Christianity, except I know that it's different for me. It's more freeing for me. It's very trusting . . . just knowing, sensing that God is not a God of right or wrong, not a God of, "I'm going to remember all the faults that you have ever done in your past and bring them up against you every day."

Nevertheless, PD also expressed the importance of obedience to God.

I think the importance of a free will is incredible because it is not a cornered religion. It's not a list of do's and don't's. Although that comes into play, that's not the gist of it. That's not all of it. So it is very important but, yet, the obedience part is very important too. Because if you want full blessings, you would want to free will yourself into that situation.

She described her understanding of God's will as follows:

There's a general will, that is, generally you would love your brothers and try to live in peace, you know, all those things. And then there is the specific will and I feel that is part of being called. Like I feel very called to marry S.. I feel very called to go into full time ministry. I believe that is God's will for my life. I believe that is what He is preparing me for. I believe that He's working through His general will to the specific goal.

The scope of one's free will, it seems, is limited to choosing whether or not to follow God's will.

You can choose not to have God be a part of your day and you can choose that God will be part of your day. It's your choice really . . . so you always have the choice, but yet if Christ is reigning in your life you would choose to obey, cause that is the only logical step.

However limiting the choice may appear, PD seems to hold dearly to the right to choose. Speaking of a particular decision she made recently, she recalled,

I felt like I was giving up my entire life but I don't think it was my autonomy because it was still my choice. I still felt very free to choose either way.

Religious Resources

On several occasions, PD provided comments suggesting that Scripture has an authoritative role in her life and she regards it, along with prayer, as the most important resource available to her when faced with a decision concerning a moral issue.

Scripture is important because it is concrete proof of what God is saying to us yet today. One cannot refute the Living Word of God. It is extremely helpful in pointing the way if our minds and hearts are not hardened to it.

Although this might suggest that PD interprets all of scripture literally, she indicated that is not the case. She believes the Bible speaks to every moral issue but not specifically. Rather, it contains general principles which

can be applied to any moral dilemma situation. This does not, however, take away from its authoritative nature. For example, PD spoke of sexual purity before marriage.

I've heard all through growing up, like I mean everyone asks the question, "How far do you go and how do you know?." Well, the Bible doesn't really say. Well, yes it does, because it says, "To remain pure and holy, and to set your heart to God". To me, that answers it right there and how can you doubt it? I mean, yes it's your own stance of what is pure and holy but at the base of it not many people differ on what is pure and holy if your eyes are open to the situation.

For PD, Scripture provides an objective standard more trustworthy than her feelings or ability to reason. She indicated, without hesitation, there is nothing in the Bible that she does not accept or believe.

As a supplement to Scripture, PD also considers religious literature as an important resource when faced with a moral judgment.

And yet I wouldn't say it is very important, although it helps me to get a handle on the Scripture and certain elements of it. It's not Scripture itself. Therefore it has to be diminished by one step at least. But still, it is very important because I am really interested in what people of God have read and thought about and written about.

The value of religious literature, it would seem, is in its relationship to the Bible. As a result, non-religious literature is not regarded as a valuable source of guidance.

Participant D stated that the position of pastor has limited authority in her life because these individuals are

"God's appointed people" and, therefore, deserving of respect. She indicated, however, that she has met several pastors who she feels are not very deserving of this respect. Speaking more personally, PD recalled one pastor in her life who seemed to have more influence on her.

I was very happy with the influence he had on my life because I really respected him a lot, and he always had good suggestions, good resources to go to. Like it wasn't like he would ever tell me what to do, but he would give me things to look up and things to go to for help.

It appears that, although the relationship was not authoritative in nature, PD allowed this individual to have a significant amount of influence in her moral judgment process in response to the mutual respect she experienced in the relationship.

Expressions of Community

In exploring the role of relationships and community in PD's faith and moral development, she indicated that her parents were influential, in an indirect way, in her decision to convert to Christianity.

I don't think it was a sense of wanting to please them as much as a sense of wanting to emulate whatever they were doing. I wanted to copy whatever they did. I wanted to live like them.

She indicated that the church family, and the desire to belong, was also a motivating factor leading to her conversion.

When I was a little girl, everything I learned in Sunday School was always, "Jesus is your friend, Jesus is your friend". And that's all that I ever learned. And all of a sudden this idea came across that you had to be saved, and it was new, and it was exciting to me, but I always wondered, "Saved from what?". But I never really asked, I just wanted to be saved. If other people needed to be saved then I needed to be saved. . . It was just that I wanted to be a part of it. I didn't want to be left out.

Participant D never recalled feeling any direct pressure from her parents but indicated that the influence to convert to Christianity was more subtle. Although she described herself as someone who has always questioned her faith and values, she described the home environment quite differently. She stated, "It was assumed that you would always, always be a Christian, always follow Christ."

By the time PD made several recommitments to her faith during her adolescent years, the positive influence of parents and the church had deteriorated.

In high school I didn't want to be like my parents at all but I still went to church. I didn't even want to be part of the church. I was bitter towards the church. . . . I had always been the model pastor's kid and I just got very bitter towards that. But still, I never lost the knowledge that I still needed Christ, that I still needed to be saved. Even though it kind of reversed the roles - I didn't want to be like them at all.

It would seem significant, then, that the three spiritual recommitments PD described all occurred at times when she was away from her home environment. PD confirmed

this and explained,

When you are away from home you just evaluate. If I would've just stayed at home and never came here, not ever travelled, not ever gone away from home, I would probably just be a nominal Christian who wanted to do what mom and dad wanted me to do . . . I was taking it into my own hands, and not my parent's hands. I stepped out on my own. I took a huge leap for me.

Participant D stated that one member of her immediate family, an older brother, does not profess to be a Christian. She described his relationship to the family as "difficult" and explained,

We all view him as different . . . it's hard not to separate him and his wife because . . . their goals are different. We don't relate at all . . . my older brother comes and there's a block, and it's harder. . . . And I marvel at how everyone hides around it, and no one really asks him what has happened in your life in the last eight years. . . . I struggle even being with him.

Participant D also appears to be very aware of how her own relationship to her family would be different if she were not a Christian.

Even being a Christian in our home is hard, you know, because we are a different brand of Christian from our parents, I think. So being a non-Christian, I think, would just be awful. I wouldn't be living at home.

On several occasions she expressed a feeling of not being trusted by her parents.

Trust is part of our relationship that I have just never experienced. Like, it wasn't that I had broken my parent's trust over anything, I just never gained it in the first place, from day one, it seemed to me.

Speculating about her parent's reaction if she ever committed an immoral act, PD stated,

I really don't think that they would ever do that for me. I really can't see how they would fully accept me back, if I had done that, and come back and repented. . . . I believe that [she] would try to deny it, for one thing. And she would make it very hush, hush, and wouldn't accept the fact, even if I did come back and repent, I don't think that she would accept me back fully.

In spite of this, or as a result of this, PD's parents continue to have significant influence on her decisions and she appeared ambivalent about this.

It's just very tense, I think that sums it up. Because I can either have a choice between sitting there arguing my point of view or just letting Christ work with them in His time too, like He does with me. So I usually end up walking away . . . it takes me longer to decide. I am more wishy-washy, I think, until I have made a decision. And then once I have made a decision, I stick with it and they will never move me. . . . It's hard because I don't want to hurt them, and I don't want to do anything that causes them extra grief.

Participant D indicated that, in spite of this, she does not generally do what her parents want her to do nor is she generally convinced to view moral issues as they do. Later on, however, she indicated that, at the very heart of moral issues, they probably don't disagree. When asked whether she is happy with the degree of influence her parents have in her process of making moral judgments, she responded,

I'm happy with the influence that they have on me. I just wish that, once I made my decision, they would take it as a good decision.

In spite of the ambivalence, PD's comments tend to suggest that she values the input she receives from her family. On questionnaire item 13 she rated family as an important resource when making a moral judgment. She explained,

My family is important to me because I believe that they are a God-fearing family and because you really don't want to contradict your family. Like, I mean, it's your heritage, it's who you are. God gave you that for a reason.

In the end, PD seems to find herself conforming to the demands and expectations of her parents although she doesn't always feel comfortable with this.

Right now I resolve it by trying to follow, to the best of my ability, what they would have me to do . . . I still obey them. Ultimately, I'm still under their roof. So I'm still a child, I'm still dependent, I don't disagree with that. However, on issues I feel fully free to have my own decisions and have my own life and, to a certain degree, they have to live with my decisions that I make. I am an adult and if I don't start making them now under their roof, I will never begin to make them. It does produce many long arguments but I still feel that I need to assert that, otherwise I will never grow.

Participant D indicated that she does not value the input of non-Christian friends on moral issues.

I feel non-Christian friends are not important because they do not follow a moral righteousness that God calls us to. Also, not having Christ in their life means their advice is often limited and not relevant to the actions a Christian should and must take.

Nevertheless, PD indicated that she enjoys discussing moral

issues with her non-Christian friends.

My best friend and I always argue on moral issues. . . . I always leave challenged in my opinions as I know she does, but we always remain friends. . . . These disagreements with her and others have sharpened my awareness of how important it is to decide.

Participant D did not indicate that she considers Christian friends or the college community to be very influential in her decision making process, rating both as "somewhat important" as potential resources. She indicated, however, that she enjoys discussing her views with others in the college community and expressed a level of tolerance for other views.

Usually we sit over coffee time and discuss it and I have never come away from an argument feeling like I have won, or feeling they have won. We have had some very heated discussions and it's exciting because I think that this is what this time is for. . . . I let them have their own view and they let me have my own view, because there is no reason for us not to sit side by side and still worship the same God.

Holistic Expressions

Participant D indicated, on questionnaire item 13, that she regards personal experiences as an important resource when making a moral judgment. When discussing individuals who see moral issues as black/white or as shades of grey, PD stated that the determining factor often is one's degree of involvement in the issue. Consistent with her faith, PD expressed the view that God determines what our experiences

will be and, therefore, indirectly guides us to the conclusions we draw.

Although PD indicated on questionnaire item 13 that she does not place much confidence in her personal feelings as a guide on moral issues, she related two incidents when she relied heavily on her feelings in the process of reaching a decision. In both instances she interpreted her feelings as direction from God.

I know it was God's Spirit leading me because it was nothing that I had experienced before. I had been raised that that was wrong, and that was not to be trusted and yet I felt within me, not just a heart fluttery feeling, I felt a drive within me. . . . It was a deep desire in my heart, a burning, like in my gut, just to follow this through.

Recalling another point of decision, PD described the experience in strong emotional language.

I just felt in my stomach, in the pit of my stomach I felt like there was just an internal struggle. Like I really felt like, not to sound like a lunatic here, but fighting against the forces of hell. I just felt pulled from both ways, and it was in my stomach and I still don't understand it to this day. C. just totally freaked out on me because you could see it on my face. I was in such anguish . . . it just yanked on my stomach and I held my pillow against me and I can just remember crying like crazy. And I really felt like good was fighting evil in the pit of my stomach.

In spite of experiencing strong emotional reactions to moral dilemma situations, PD did not express much trust in her emotional reactions.

Emotions are somewhat important because God gave them to you but they are not always stable, as mine are not always stable . . . your emotions can lead you far, far, far astray.

As a result, when asked what factors she considered in a specific moral conflict situation, PD mentioned her own feelings, after several other factors. She later explained,

I think in reality it does come last. I would think there's a danger in putting it first, because it's not just us in this world, it's not just how we want to live and that's how we are going to live. It's not as simple as that.

Summary

Participant D values the opportunity to debate and discuss moral issues, question and reevaluate her own faith and formulate her own moral principles for her life. Underlying all of these processes, however, is a deep sense of the presence of God in her life and a devotion to the authority of Scripture.

Participant D's comments also suggest that personal relationships play an important role in her faith and moral development. The need to belong and to be able to identify with her family and local church community were central in her initial faith commitment. Later on, pressure to conform pushed her to question and evaluate her beliefs and values. Presently, she expresses a significant amount of ambivalence directed primarily at her family relationships.

Participant E

Participant E (PE) was a 34 year old female in her second year of college studies. Unlike the other participants, PE did not make a commitment to Christianity in early childhood. Although she attended the United church she did not convert until she was 15 years old. She described herself as a rebellious adolescent who has never really had any family support for her faith commitment.

Cognitive Expressions

Participant E provided numerous comments which gave evidence to the fact that she values her own ability to make a moral judgment and seeks to have a faith grounded in a cognitive understanding. On questionnaire item 13 she indicated that she regards personal intelligence as a very important resource in the moral judgment process and explained,

Jesus said I should love God with all my mind. God gave me a capacity to reason, understand and learn. If I do less I fail God and, ultimately, others in not properly reaching decisions using less than what I have been gifted with in coming to an important conclusion.

Participant E indicated that her conversion to Christianity was based on a knowledge or realization of God's love for her. She stated that this was demonstrated

to her in a relationship with another individual but, initially, it was a "cognitive knowing". She expressed a continued commitment to understanding her faith and indicated that her goal in attending a Christian college was to,

. . . learn to understand what it is that I believe better. Not to know what I believe, ah, I know what I believe, but to understand why I believe it. And a lot of times it's very different from what I'm being taught. But I'm learning how to know what I believe . . . I'm learning to understand, you know, if they believe this and I don't then why don't I? Why can't I believe that? And slowly, by tearing things apart, something that has maybe not really caught my eye, but somehow it has gotten imbedded in there, will stand up and say, "That's why?" Or maybe, "This is why you don't believe" . . . I think I understood what I believed but couldn't always correlate it with what the church was saying or what the Bible was saying, or how I was reading the Bible, or how it has been taught to me. And I'm developing new ways of reading and new methods of understanding. I'm seeing it differently. And so I'm finding ways to correlate and where I still don't know, then it's just okay to doubt.

It would seem, however, that PE is not generally satisfied with leaving her questions unanswered.

You know, there are a lot of people who are sheep, and they will sit and listen to anything you tell them. And it doesn't seem like it matters how many contradictions there are, they will just swallow it all and never say anything. And I just don't understand it. They do the same with books. You know, that just is not reasonable. If I walked from one class here over to another class there and they tell me something different my mind goes into motion and I usually ask, I say, "Well, what about this?". And everybody just sits there. . . . I've been like this for as long as I can

remember. I don't just believe anything. And I think that is the difference, I don't believe anything until I can believe it for myself. . . . I have to own what I feel and think and I have to be sure about it. I find that people raised within Christian homes or environments are particularly bad. They are swallowing it hook, line and sinker!

Participant E stated that, although she believes one can come to God through faith, she believes reason is essential to one's growth and development.

Faith is the beginning. It's believing in something that you can't see, something that you can't touch, believing that you've been redeemed, that you are loved - all those types of things, with nothing concrete. And it's taking that first step. I think that reason is important in Christian growth, because as intelligent beings we don't function until we understand. I need to understand, if I can't reason and answer, then it's suspect to me, you know, I hold it in doubt.

As a result of this emphasis on cognitively understanding her faith and values, PE expressed a trust in her own judgment when faced with a moral issue.

I am a mature, intelligent adult and I rarely act impulsively. I need a sense of certainty and surety before I can move in any direction. . . . If I am not sure I will refrain rather than risk injustice, unnecessary pain or injury. . . . I do not have the mind of God, but I trust my own judgment.

Faith Expressions

Participant E recalled that she was converted to Christianity during her adolescent years after a period of rebellion. She described her conversion as a dramatic event

and explained,

The first commitment that I made was out of a genuine knowledge of someone actually loving me for the first time. It was definitely a cognitive knowing and I experienced that through W., and I identified this type of love, through the concern and care that she was giving me, as God.

She made two subsequent recommitments to her faith and described the changes as follows:

When I was 15, I was, like I said, a very angry, rebellious person and I accepted that God loved me. I certainly did not understand why God could ever love me. I didn't understand anything about God. . . . As I grew, the commitments . . . were built more on a knowledge of God and who I am . . . life didn't make sense but, eventually, I began to understand and accept who I was and why. And that really helped me to understand what a relationship with God was all about.

A characteristic feature of the recommitments, seemingly absent at the time of her initial conversion, was a greater degree of self-understanding. Participant E indicated that self-understanding results from coming to know God and, as a result, one is moved to a deeper level of commitment.

Central to PE's process of self-understanding has been her acceptance of her alternate sexual preference. This, too, has been an important issue in her faith journey. When asked to describe a particularly meaningful spiritual experience, she recalled,

That was two and a half years ago when I was really struggling with my sexuality. I had accepted it and rejected it many times. The more I became involved with the evangelical Christian community, I realized I have to deal with this

issue. One's sexuality is a fundamental part of one's being, and mine was not acceptable to others and they were saying that I was unacceptable to God. I was a lesbian, that they were incompatible. I had to sort it out with God. Ah, trying to convince God, I guess, or me or something to change me, and spending probably ten or twelve hours in prayer and crying and crying and crying, and pleading with God to change me. And it wasn't until I reached almost physical exhaustion that I was able to decide that if this is who I am, then you have got to take me the way that I am and love me as I am. And I just felt the most incredible washing of peace that, you know, ah, I just, it was like God was saying to me, "I created you, and I love you, and I know who you are, and why do you doubt me? Why do you doubt my creative ability?" And I just felt truly at peace with who I was. I finally realized that I was acceptable before God.

Participant E stated that God is her "supreme authority" and explained,

I believe that I should allow God to be my supreme authority in everything. That I don't, is my foolishness but, in that, it is free will. God is my Lord and Saviour. God is my Creator. If not for God I would die. God owns me and, therefore, is my supreme authority. But God is also a gentle task master as well and allows us to make decisions and sometimes we make the wrong ones.

Related to this, PE indicated that she believes prayer is a very important resource available to her in the moral judgment process.

Prayer is conversation with my Lord, my maker, my supreme authority. Who better to go to with questions than God. God doesn't rush into judgment with us and I choose to follow that example.

Participant E explained her understanding of God's will

as follows:

I think there is a will and a plan regarding creation as a whole and we, of course, fit into that. But I believe that individually God has a purpose for each of us. Not to say that we are vital to God's plan because God can do it in spite of us. But, given that we have chosen to align ourselves to God, God has a specific purpose for each of us and, unfortunately, most times we don't see it.

She stressed the role of individual responsibility in this context.

God has a specific place for each of us and a job for each of us to do. But somehow that fits into the whole, too, I think. I think that we each have a part to play, a specific part to play in God's will for the whole . . . we have a responsibility, a social responsibility.

Participant E indicated that she understands God's will as very specific in nature and related examples of His direct leading in her life. In light of this, she shared her understanding of individual free will.

I can choose to ignore it, I can choose that. And you know I have and it doesn't work, you know. There are times when I have really screwed up my life. Now, if I turn around and come back to God, I find invariably those mistakes become blessings or certainly opportunities to learn and grow. But we do have a choice. I really believe that we have a choice . . . I think the difference is that God sees the whole picture. Like, if I have missed step A, God would've known that before God would've even showed me that this is what I should be doing and would already have plan B all figured out. Like, it's all in the design already. And God knows the beginning from the end and He'll work it out. And I don't believe that God does it in spite of what we think and what we want because of God's sovereignty, but, like God's got it all worked out even before we have made a choice, before we are even offered a choice. . . . I know

that there are questions about how free that free will is . . . I don't believe that we are puppets but I believe that God can see the future, that He can see the whole thing, you know, and can develop a plan knowing what you are going to do and thereby allowing you the freedom to do it. Growth, development, friendships, etc, are all a process. They all involve choice and God gives us the freedom to choose, experience the process and, therefore, grow, develop and bond in a healthy way.

Reflecting on her spiritual and moral development, PE acknowledged that, over time, her individual will is gradually converging with God's will.

I would hope that I am yielding to God's will and in that way, they are enmeshed. I would have to say that is the way it is.

Participant E stated that, in her opinion, individual autonomy often "goes down the toilet" when people become Christians. Although she does not feel this is the message of Christianity, it is often imposed on one by the evangelical community.

Jesus constantly gave liberation. He freed people from things, we bind them in those situations. . . . The evangelical community, particularly, is so restrictive that the list of rules is endless. I mean, even if you look at that little handbook that we have to sign when we come here. You can't do this, you can't do that, you can't do this, you can't do that, and it goes on and on forever. And you know it takes away all of your responsibility. It says that you are not able to determine on your own whether this is good for you or not good for you or certainly what moderation would be, you know, and how to use it sensibly. It's an insult to our intelligence as human beings and most of the evangelical community is like that. You know, you just, the list goes on and on and on. It just

Although PE has found the evangelical community to be restrictive in her own life in the past, she indicated that this is not her experience today. She stated that she feels she has gained more autonomy in the last few years.

It was really understanding the freedom that we gain through Christ and the liberation that is available in Christ. I think most people, this is my impression, that most people really don't understand how much freedom there is in Christ, that we don't need to be bound by mega restrictions, but that Christ operating in us gives moderation . . . He broke every human rule there was within the religious institution of His day. And we don't even learn from that. And I just refuse to be bound and, and as I come to know Christ and tear apart what His teachings are all about, the Bible, and I rip them apart and find truth after truth after truth in it, I just find more and more freedom to be who I am. That Christ will work out who He wants me to be in His way and in His time and I don't need anybody's list of rules. Those rules aren't going to get me to heaven any faster. The religious community is just as restrictive as ever but I don't let it bind me anymore. Inside I am free even though external restraints are placed on me. And unfortunately those restraints cause everyone to lose. No one is free to be truly honest and I'm sure this must cause God great pain and grief.

Religious Resources

On questionnaire item 13, PE indicated that she regards the Bible as an important resource when making a moral judgment. Nevertheless, other comments suggested that she has mixed feelings about the authority of Scripture in her life. She stated that, where she considers the scriptural

power". However, she also stated,

I think that, in a lot of places, Scripture is as clear as mud . . . I guess I just don't exactly ignore it. I guess I just wrestle with it. You know, it doesn't have absolute authority, or it certainly doesn't hold that position. But I wrestle with what it is trying to say and try to discover what it is trying to teach me and the, perhaps, I will be able to give it authority.

One specific issue she wrestles with is the biblical teaching on homosexuality.

I am still not resolved. I have no concrete resolution as to what the Scripture says about my sexuality. I know it says a lot of things about homosexuality - I'm not just sure of the context, the more I explore . . . about what homosexuality meant then versus what I know it to be personally, I'm not sure it's the same.

Participant E indicated that, because the Bible is unclear on many issues, caution in the process of interpretation is essential.

The Bible is ambiguous about a great number of moral issues. There are issues today that the Bible does not even address directly. On other issues, clarity is obscured by cultural differences and centuries, and lack of knowledge regarding the issues, in the original time frame. Too many moral judgments have been based on conjecture and speculation.

As a result, it became apparent that PE tends to rely more on her own personal experience in the process of making a moral judgment. On questionnaire item 8b, where she listed the various factors she considered in dealing with a specific moral conflict, she listed, "my own life

eighth. Reflecting on this, PE stated,

I know that, for me, Scripture belongs on the bottom of the list. That is terrible, I know, but that is the way it is.

She also acknowledged, however, that her life experiences often result in her interpreting the Bible differently than many within the Church.

I would have to say if it came down to a conflict between what the Church says the Scriptures say, and my life experience, then I would have to be a fool to say that I don't take my life experience into the Scripture with me. And maybe because of the difference between my life experience and a lot of other people, the Scriptures say something different to me. Other people wouldn't even see it, you know. So, how I see the Scripture often is in line with my life experience.

Participant E stated, "I do not have a lot of faith in the institutions of the world" and, as a result, she does not regard the Church as an important source of guidance when faced with a moral conflict situation. She indicated that she does not identify closely with the evangelical Church and its beliefs.

I can hold hands with the Apostle's Creed, you know, that nutshell, that core of who God is, ah, the incarnation, I understand that, I believe it . . . but everything else, some places I'm understanding, but other places I'm very far away from the evangelical fundamental mind set.

When asked how much authority pastors should have in the life of a believer, PE responded,

Minimal. I believe that the pastoral position of

tags along behind the shepherd to kind of help him. Like, you know, the ultimate authority is the shepherd. And I think that the spiritual guide, or helper position, shouldn't be so absolute.

Participant E indicated, on questionnaire item 13, that she regards religious literature as a "somewhat important" resources when making a moral judgment. In relation to this, she rated non-religious material as a more important resource. She later explained,

Religious literature is jaded, it's slanted, it's like propaganda. Like, it's someone trying to convince somebody that this is what it is. . . . I read tons of commentaries and, man, they say everything under the sun! You know, somebody trying to convince somebody of what they believe. Whereas non-Christian literature tends to be . . . less biased. Like, you know, it just tells a story. They offer an idea and you either scrap it or you take it. But with religion it seems so imperative that we believe this. And I really have a difficult time with that. You know, I would like to take a lot of the books I've read and just chuck them. Because, you know, who do they think I am, that I am going to believe that?

Expressions of Community

Participant E indicated that, at the time of her conversion at the age of 15, she was living on her own and had "no significant relationships". A major influence in her decision to become a Christian was the sense of caring and acceptance she felt from W., the person who told her

indicated that her family was "churched", she experienced opposition from them. The opposition, it seems, strengthened her faith commitment.

When I finally started to talk about my faith, and myself in relation to my faith, to my family, their response pushed me towards God. You know, their response was negative and perhaps it was that nurtured rebellion that spurred me on because I tend to respond to that and I am aware of that. But, I became even more driven.

Participant E indicated that she has also received opposition, as a result of her faith, from the gay community. More significant, however, is the opposition and rejection she has often felt from the evangelical community.

I would have to say the greatest shake to my faith, as opposition, has come from the evangelical community. And that's in saying that I could not be a Christian because of some of the things I believe I am, some of the things that I cannot resolve. . . . When people look at you and say, "Look, who are you fooling? You're not a Christian". It makes you wonder, "Am I really saved?", you know. That can be pretty shattering, you know, because you can live in that doubt for a long time.

When you receive opposition from the Christian community that's quite another matter. These are the people that God has commanded to love one another, to bear one another's burden, and to look at each other as Christ in flesh on the earth. And I'm no greater a sinner than they; no matter what I was doing. And yet, they consider you so. And so, it's more painful.

Participant E stated that she does not have a high regard or trust in institutions and community.

you know, corporate bodies tend not to reveal the Spirit of Christ. And whether that be a church, a family institution, whatever. Close community brings out the worst in people. I find that the institution tends, and this in the family, the church, the college, whatever, tends to get more, and the only term I can think of is legalistic . . . whereas people, in and of themselves, tend to be more liberal than the group - or liberating, perhaps, is better a word. . . . We will hurt the people we are closest to . . . you put us in those types of communities and, whether it be large or small, we show our worst. That's who we bite at, that's who we hurt, that's who we lash out at. And it tends to be where we are most restrictive.

Perhaps not surprisingly, PE related several painful experiences related to her past involvement in a variety of church organizations. One such congregation was affiliated with the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, an evangelical church with a special ministry to the gay community.

I took the position as a student minister in the church, and I counselled, I had counselling hours, I did office work, I preached every Sunday evening and I had my full-time job and I did all this kind of stuff. I took education by correspondence and stuff and I had a breakdown and um, the church kind of threw me out. They said that they just didn't want me to freak out behind the pulpit, you know. And I was unreliable, undependable and kind of feeling unstable, so they threw me out. And I was shattered, just absolutely shattered. It just about destroyed me. That they were gay did not matter. The church is the church is the church. Christians, gay or straight, are less tolerant than non-Christians in my experience.

In spite of her negative past experiences with church groups, PE stated that she is now attending a Baptist church. She expressed some ambivalence about this.

It became fairly apparent right off the bat that I didn't agree with everything they said but I have to respect them, for the most part, for what they know of me, they have loved and respected me as I am. People within that congregation would have a stroke if they knew everything I thought and did, and even some of the things I am exploring here. But there are those in the congregation that are fairly influential, including the pastor, who would be nothing but supportive, you know. They love me for who I am and nothing I can do, even though they might not like it, could change that. And so they have been marvellous. But I have not divulged much because I don't feel free anymore. The church is not to be trusted.

Participant E reported that she has chosen celibacy at this point in her life. She indicated that she has not come to any firm conclusions concerning the biblical teaching on practising homosexuality. In the course of the interviews, however, it also became apparent that acceptance within the evangelical community is a significant factor in this decision.

Being part of the evangelical community, to live that lifestyle is relatively difficult and I think that celibacy is partially chosen as a matter of acceptance. I'm not really sure what that's all about. Like I could just as easily leave this community and go back to MCC somewhere and be a pastor there somewhere in a matter of a year. I've got enough education and that wouldn't be an issue but, to me, it is important to stay in this community. You know, people with alternative sexuality have really been shunned and ostracized here within this community. And, you know, as a gay person who has chosen celibacy, I have not done anything wrong, and am not living in sin. And yet, I would be condemned just for what I believe God has allowed to exist in my life.

I know acceptance plays a big part. The church that I am a member of at home would kick me out.

The College, if I was living in a homosexual relationship, would kick me out. I have even gone so far as trying to conform. I've been dating a man for a year and we have a wonderful friendship, you know. It's the most ridiculous thing on the face of the earth and I love him dearly as a person. He wants to marry me but I have to say no.

There's that attempt to conform if you want to believe what the people believe and be a part of this community because that's where your heart is and your faith is. Maybe I'm not embracing it all, but the core of it, then you've got to conform. And I am very thankful to a few people in this community who have said, I have not come right out and told anybody that I am gay, but close. But people have been relatively, I've actually been affirmed. It's okay to be who I am. And that's a good thing. You know there is some real power in that attitude here, and that is a wonderful thing.

Participant E indicated that, in her opinion, the need for acceptance by the community often compromises individual autonomy.

I think we develop a corporate autonomy, is what I think happens. When acceptance is your goal and you achieve it, then you take on characteristics of the whole so that you can stay there. And you develop corporate autonomy and you tend not to deviate from the acceptable standards of the whole too much because you'll lose your place. And I think acceptance, or conformity, is injurious to autonomy, individual autonomy.

We aren't accepted unconditionally here, you know, within the evangelical community it is not unconditional acceptance. It's far from it. It's extremely conditional acceptance . . . but if I choose to remain within the community there are certain limitations that I have to accept and I hate it. It is unjust, but I must conform to some degree if I wish to stay.

Reflecting on her more recent experiences within the

college community, PE indicated that she is beginning to risk, in a limited way, being more open about her alternate sexual preference. This has resulted, it would seem, from a growing sense of acceptance by self and those around her.

I would have to credit actually, an instructor here - with teaching me that it was okay to be who I was and that other people didn't have to like it, accept it or understand it. That was between God and I. The evangelical community tends to be restrictive and if I buy into that I'm only hurting me. And that was very liberating.

Holistic Expressions

Participant E indicated that she regards her own personal feelings as a very valuable resource when making a moral judgment. The reliability of feelings, however, seems to be dependent on her spiritual condition. For example, when describing how she comes to know God's specific will for her life, she stated,

A lot of times, I don't know, it's just a heart's desire. You know, I guess that is what I consider the strongest pull, if I am feeling close to God. Like there are times when I'm distant from God and I know it and then I don't ever use my heart's desire. But if I am feeling close to God, like I'm kind of on track with my life, there is kind of a, a heart, a really deep yearning for whatever, you know? And that is what I tend to listen to be cause, I believe that God puts desires in our hearts.

On another occasion, however, PE expressed a reluctance to trust her feelings. When asked to list factors she considered when faced with a specific moral conflict, she

listed feelings after six other factors. She explained, "It's not always one hundred percent reliable".

More reliable as a resource in making moral judgments, according to PE, is personal life experiences. On several occasions she indicated that this is a factor she gives significant consideration to when faced with a moral issue.

I personally believe that the Bible does not speak to individual life experience always. Our lives are vastly different and the Bible does not deal with all of life's experiences. Absolutely not.

God has promised to take all things, including those things in my life, and work them together for good. That implies that I should look at my life experiences to see what they have to offer and say.

Summary

Participant E appeared to be very independent in her thinking on faith and moral issues. Refusing to respond with blind obedience, she indicated a strong commitment to understanding her faith. She is self-reliant in the sense that she regards her own personal resources as her most valuable assets when making a moral judgment. Nevertheless, the need for acceptance and approval continues to play an important role in that process. As she indicated, there are times when she chooses to relinquish her sense of personal autonomy in response to her need to belong.

Conclusion

Summaries and observations of each major theme identified in the data are included in the following chapter. It is, however, appropriate here to reflect on the diversity of expressions provided by the participants.

Although the majority share a similar faith experience, the factors which come into play in the moral judgment process are diverse. This diversity was evident across individuals but also exists within each individual. While each participant tended to emphasize a particular theme, they all provided expressions which reflected, to some degree, a more holistic understanding of the moral judgment process.

CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter contains summaries of each of the five major themes as expressed by the participants, a number of concluding observations, as well as implications for further research.

Summaries of Themes

Cognitive Expressions of the Moral Judgment Process

Although the participants share, in many respects, similar qualities, values and experiences, they demonstrate in this research variation in levels of understanding principles underlying their judgments on moral issues. Participant A, for example, appeared rather non-reflective in the process whereas PE's comments often demonstrated intelligent reflection on moral principles. In spite of the variation, all of the participants in the study understand faith and morality as closely related. It appeared difficult for them to speak of morality apart from God or outside of the context of their personal faith. As a result, initial responses when asked why something is right or wrong were often a variation of "God commanded it". The exception to this would be the responses offered by PE. Chandler (1984) suggests that this type of response tends to

reflect the notion that moral standards are arbitrarily established by an external source of authority and, as a result, emphasizes obedience rather than autonomy and the personal formulation of moral principles. In many instances, however, after initially responding in this manner, participants attempted to provide a further explanation of underlying moral principles.

It was also interesting to note that variation in this regard often existed within individuals as well as across participants. Participants B and C, for example, demonstrated varying degrees of understanding principles underlying moral judgments. The variation among and within individuals reinforces the notion of the developmental nature of autonomy.

Kohlberg's (1984) concept of autonomy in the moral judgment process, in which the principles come from within the individual as a result of engaging in increasingly higher levels of moral reasoning, was, perhaps, most clearly expressed by PE. Although she does not regard the moral judgment process solely as a cognitive exercise, she tended to demonstrate most consistently a reliance on her own ability to reason. The expressions provided by the other four participants more closely resembled Emler's (1983) understanding of the moral development process. Although they indicated a sense of personal ownership for the moral

principles they employ, it appeared that they have internalized a once external standard. Their comments were more reflective of Petrovich's (1986) definition of autonomy as an act of willful obedience.

Finally, although all of the participants indicated that they value the process of critical examination and reflection, several expressed a degree of caution and suspicion. Participants B and D, for example, felt that it was valuable only if one could be assured of finding the right answers. Four of the participants felt that it is important to question in an environment that supports one's beliefs and values. With the exception of PB and PE, the participants indicated that, even in discussions on moral issues that occur with other Christians, they tend to become more firm in their original beliefs rather than to consider other viewpoints in an open-minded manner. This defensiveness is characteristic of Fowler's (1981) fourth stage of faith development which often occurs when one leaves the security of the home environment and is exposed to alternate ideologies.

Faith Expressions of the Moral Judgment Process

All of the participants seemed to share a common understanding of the concept of God's will, noting both its general and specific nature. Variation existed, however, in

their understanding of the role of the individual in the process. Participants A, C and E offered comments more consistent with Moore's (1983) understanding of the active, dynamic role of the individual whereas participants B and D tended to express a more passive role in the process of fulfilling God's will. Nevertheless, it appears that all of the participants understand their individual free will as being limited to decisions of obedience/disobedience to God's will. Although all of them indicated that they value their free will they also believe that individual autonomy is limited in a context of faith. This appeared to be a matter of more concern for some than it was for others. Participants B, C, and E, for example, suggested that, at least in some respects, their individual will is gradually converging with what they believe God's will to be. Their comments were reflective of Tillich's (1957, 1963) concept of the theonomous person who comes to embrace God's standards on a more personal level.

Regarding the roles of faith and reason in the moral judgment process, the participants generally seemed to regard intelligence and one's ability to reason as an important resource in the process. But they also understand faith or revelation to be more foundational. In a manner consistent with Gates' (1986) understanding, they did not regard reason and revelation as incompatible processes but

they consistently expressed the view that revelation is the necessary first step, followed by human reason.

Participant A provided a description of a spiritual experience that most closely resembled Kohlberg's (1981) description of the mystical "stage seven" experience. Although PA appeared, in many instances, to be non-reflective and conventional, it was interesting that his most meaningful spiritual experience occurred apart from his family or church. He expressed a clear sense of union between himself, God and nature. Many of the other participants described a strong sense of peace in their spiritual encounters. Also consistent with Kohlberg, PA and PC indicated very clearly that their faith provides a sense of purpose to morality. Although the other participants did not express this understanding directly, the intertwining of faith and morality would suggest that this is also true for them.

Concerning the process of faith development, the participants did not, generally speaking, indicate significant differences between their original faith commitment and subsequent recommitments. They tended to describe the recommitments as deeper commitments to the same religion but did not indicate that they were qualitatively different from their conversion experience. With reference to the various models of faith development noted in the

literature review, it appeared that, according to Peck's (1987) model, PE exemplified stage four whereas the other participants appeared to be at stage two which is more characteristic of those participating in institutionalized religion. Using Fowler's (1981) stage model, there appeared to be more variation. Participant A and C reflected the Synthetic-Conventional stage where judgments are often based on the views of significant others and, as a result, often remain unexamined. Comments offered by participants B and D exhibited more critical reflection and self-examination, characteristic of the Individuating-Reflective stage. Participant E, on the other hand, provided numerous reflections which would suggest movement to stage five or six. Interesting, although not necessarily significant, is the fact that the male participants in this study reflected the lower stage of Fowler's model.

Religious Resources in the Moral Judgment Process

Scripture was clearly the most important religious resource in moral judgments for the majority of the participants. Four of the five indicated that Scripture is given a significant authoritative role in their lives. Although they may not always understand scriptural teachings, they indicated that they are willing to accept its directives. Participant E, on the other hand, indicated

that she critically examines scriptural teachings before accepting them.

Although all five of the participants are active members in a local church, the institution did not appear to have much authority, nor did it appear to be a significant resource when making a moral judgment. Although the majority have adopted the teaching of the church, they did not seem to regard it as authoritative in their lives.

Other religious resources, such as pastor and religious literature, also did not appear to be important in the moral judgment process. Three of the participants indicated that their pastor has played an influential role but this appeared to be based on the relationship and respect for the individual rather than on the position itself. Religious literature was regarded by most as supplementary to Scripture.

Expressions of Community in the Moral Judgment Process

Generally speaking, community and interpersonal relationships appeared to play an important role in their moral judgment process although participants did not always demonstrate an awareness of this. Family relationships were influential to varying degrees for four of the five participants. This was particularly apparent in PA. In PE's experience, the reaction of family was also influential

but in an opposite way from the other four participants who all indicated direct parental involvement in their conversion experience and continued family support for their faith. These four individuals also sensed that family relationships would probably change in a negative sense if they were not Christian but they did not appear to be aware of the possible significance of this in their lives and decision making process. Participants A and C (the two males in the study) stated that they do not disagree with their parents on any moral issue whereas PB and PD expressed some ambivalence about the degree of influence parents have on their moral judgment process.

Although the church as an institution did not appear to be an important factor in their process of making a decision on a moral issue, the church as community appeared significant in various ways for four of the five participants. Participant A indicated that his sense of personal identity has always been closely tied to the church whereas PC expressed a sense of trust in guidance on moral issues from fellow church members as they are the people who truly know him. Participants D and E indicated a strong desire to belong. For PD this was an important motivating factor in her conversion but does not appear to be as significant now. Participant E, on the other hand, indicated a willingness to sacrifice some of her individual

autonomy in an attempt to be accepted by the church community.

The role and influence of Christian friends in the moral judgment process also appeared to vary among the individuals in the study. Participant A indicated that this has always been an important factor in his faith and moral development whereas PB stated that Christian friends are becoming an increasingly more important resource, gradually replacing the influence of her parents. Three of the five participants indicated that relationships characterized by mutual respect tend to be more influential in their moral judgment process, as suggested by Piaget (1965). Input from non-Christian friends, in particular, is treated with suspicion and appears to inhibit the process of role-taking by the majority of the participants.

All of the participants indicated that they feel accepted as full members of the college community although participants B and E expressed an awareness of the conditional nature of this acceptance. Contrary to much of the literature cited in chapter two, four of the participants stated that they do not feel their membership and acceptance in the community has had a significant impact on their development as autonomous moral agents. Participant E, in fact, felt strongly that community membership inhibits individual autonomy. Participant B, on

the other hand, indicated that the acceptance has enhanced her self-esteem, thereby providing more confidence in her ability to make a moral judgment.

Holistic Expressions of the Moral Judgment Process

Many of the participants in the study appeared to provide mixed messages concerning the role of emotions in the moral judgment process. Four of the participants indicated that they regard personal feelings as an important resource when making a decision on a moral issue. Three of these, however, went on to state that feelings cannot be trusted. On the other hand, PD, who indicated that she does not consider personal feelings to be an important resource, demonstrated a heavy reliance on her emotions as a guide in the process.

All five participants acknowledged that personal experiences are an important or very important resource when making a moral judgment. Two indicated increased confidence with age and life experience. Participant E, no doubt, expressed the strongest reliance on her personal life experiences, ranking it much higher than many other resources available to her.

Concluding Observations

The original intent of this study was to provide descriptive data on the experience of autonomy in the moral judgment process among bible college students. As a result, the methodology and small sample size prevents one from drawing any firm conclusions or broad generalizations. Nevertheless, several observations are worth noting:

- 1) Participants expressed varying degrees of the use of cognitive understanding in the moral judgment process. Variation existed among participants as well as within individuals. In instances where participants appeared non-reflective or demonstrated little cognitive understanding of their morals and beliefs, one cannot necessarily conclude that they did not have the capacity to engage in higher levels of moral reasoning. Rather, they may be consciously or unconsciously choosing a non-reflective stance in an attempt to maintain congruence with their faith.

In some instances it appeared that participants did not have the life experience or exposure to moral dilemma situations that would contribute to the development of higher levels of moral reasoning. A number of the participants

seemed to have genuine difficulty identifying a moral issue they have had to deal with in the past. Participant A, for example, cited playing football on Sunday as a personal moral dilemma. This appeared to be most characteristic of those who have adopted an isolationist position with respect to their relationship to the world. Such a position limits one's exposure to other perspectives and may also assist in maintaining congruence between one's life experience and faith.

- 2) All of the participants expressed value in the process of critical examination of one's faith and morals but the majority also expressed caution and suspicion in this process. For these individuals it appeared that their desire for truth was accompanied by the belief that truth can only be found within a rather narrow context. A number of speculations may be made concerning the origin of this defensive stance. First of all, these individuals indicated that they do not trust their own moral reasoning ability and, therefore, may be cautious of the influence of others holding differing views. Secondly, it is possible that they view themselves as guardians or protectors of

the faith, thereby feeling a need to respond to non-christians with a degree of certainty rather than entering into dialogue. It must also be recognized that, for these individuals, the personal investment in their faith is very high and there may be a tendency to be protective of that investment. Finally, within the evangelical community, questioning is often equated with doubt which is often understood as the opposite of faith.

- 3) Faith and morality are closely intertwined for these participants. Without exception, they had difficulty speaking of right or wrong apart from God. For others, faith provides meaning and purpose to morality.
- 4) In the context of one's faith, individual autonomy is generally understood as necessarily limited to deciding whether or not to obey God's will which is defined quite specifically. While this may stem from a deep commitment and loyalty to God, it also appears to reduce the level of individual responsibility in the moral judgement process.
- 5) Majority of the participants expressed heavy reliance of Scripture for guidance on moral issues. Although this may be regarded as

dependence on an external source of authority, participants also appeared to recognize, in varying degrees, the role of individual interpretation in the process.

Other religious resources were not generally regarded as important in the moral judgment process.

- 6) The role of family relationships appeared to be a significant factor in each of the participant's faith and moral development although many did not express a awareness of this. One may speculate that awareness in this regard may develop with objectivity that is often gained as one is further removed, by time and distance from one's family.
- 7) The participants expressed ambivalence concerning the role of emotions in the moral judgment process. This appears to be characteristic of the larger evangelical community which often presents mixed messages about personal feelings and emotions. On the one hand, guidance from the Holy Spirit is often experienced and described in emotional terms. On the other hand, Christians are often instructed to ignore their feelings. One pamphlet which explains the "born again" experience and which has been widely circulated

among the evangelical community uses the illustration of a train to describe the relationship between factual information or knowledge, faith and feelings. Feelings are equated with the caboose which is considered a non-essential to the running of the train. Individuals are instructed to rely on knowledge and faith and, if necessary, to ignore their feelings. Consequently, they respond to their emotions with ambivalence.

- 8) Perhaps most important is the fact that the comments and insights provided by the participants reflected varying degrees of autonomy in the moral judgment process, in spite of the fact that all indicated a strong faith orientation and commitment to the same religious sect. This suggest, first of all, that it is possible, to some extent, to retain individual autonomy in moral judgments in the context of one's faith. It also suggests the importance of understanding faith, morality and autonomy from a developmental perspective.

Implications for Further Research

While providing insights into the subjective experiences of five individuals and, thereby enriching our understanding of autonomy in the moral judgment process as it occurs in the context of religious faith, this study must be considered exploratory in nature, providing a stepping stone to further research. A similar study conducted on a broader scale could not only enrich the data collected but may also point to significant differences based on factors such as sex, age, education, and religious background. Perhaps most interesting would be a comparison study involving individuals from a variety of religious traditions or faith perspectives. Further research in this area could also be helpful in the eventual development of religious education materials that would enhance individual autonomy in the moral judgment process.

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Appendix A

November 2, 1990

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research project on moral judgments. I'm looking forward to working with you and trust that you will find the experience rewarding also.

Your participation will consist of the following:

1) completion of the written questionnaire I am enclosing in this packet. The questionnaire will probably take between 60 and 90 minutes to complete. I would urge you to reflect on the questions before you give a written response. I am not looking for your initial reactions as much as I am interested in your thoughtful responses. It is also not necessary to complete the questionnaire in one sitting. However, do not discuss your responses with anyone else.

When answering the questions please be as honest as you can. Your identity will be kept confidential in the study. Identify yourself on the questionnaire with your participant number which you will find at the bottom of the consent form.

2) two individual follow-up interviews will be conducted by myself. The purpose of these interviews is to clarify and expand on the issues raised in the questionnaire. The interviews will be taped and transcribed. The transcripts will again be identifiable by your participant number and all tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the project.

I hope to conduct the interviews in the 3-4 weeks following the completion of the questionnaires. They will probably be 60-90 minutes duration and will be scheduled at your convenience. You are also free to choose where you would like to be interviewed.

In total, all of this will involve between 3-5 hours of your time. When the descriptions of your responses have been

completed, I will ask you to review what I have written as I want to be sure to represent you accurately.

The first thing you need to do now is to carefully read the consent form enclosed. If you have any questions about the study it is important that you discuss these with me immediately. If you do not have any questions and still want to participate in the study sign the consent form and return it to me in the small white envelope enclosed. It is extremely important that you do this before completing the questionnaire. Also, remember your participant number.

After you have signed the consent form complete the questionnaire. In order to complete the follow-up interviews before the X'mas rush, I would ask that you return the completed questionnaire to me in the larger white envelope enclosed by Friday, November 9th. I will contact you later to arrange for interviews.

Once again, thank you for your willingness to participate. If you have any questions please see me or call me at my home 438-5008.

Thank again,

Jim Schneider

Appendix BCONSENT FORM

I hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the research project conducted by Jim Schneider as outlined below:

1. The focus of the project is on moral judgments.
2. Each participant is required to complete a questionnaire and participate in two follow-up interviews which will be conducted by Jim Schneider. The approximate time commitment will be 3-5 hours.
3. Participants will be known to the researcher only. Personal identity will be concealed in the thesis and from any other parties involved, including the participating institution.
4. Participants are free to decline to answer specific questions and may terminate participation at any time during the project. Non-participation or termination will not result in any penalties or negative consequences for the individual.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Your participant identification number is: _____

Appendix CQUESTIONNAIREI. Identifying Information:

Participant Number: _____

Age: _____ Sex: _____

Program of Studies: _____

Year: _____

Denominational Affiliation: _____

Marital Status: _____

II. Christian Experience:

1. Do you believe you have had a conversion experience to Christianity? _____

If so, how long have you been a Christian? _____

2. Briefly describe the circumstances and/or process leading to your conversion: _____

3. Who/What do you regard as major influences in your conversion? Explain: _____

4. Since your conversion, have you made any subsequent recommitments to your faith? _____

_____ If yes, how many? _____

If yes, a) please describe the nature of these recommitments. _____

b) How did these recommitments differ from your original conversion experience and what effects did they have on your personal faith? _____

5. How does your family feel about your commitment to your faith and how is this communicated to you?

6. Have you encountered any opposition to your commitment to your faith? _____

If yes, from what sources? _____

7. Why are you attending a college that is Christian?

III. Moral Judgments:

8. Most people experience conflicts from time to time over judgments of rightness or wrongness and wonder what to do.

a) Describe, to the extent you feel comfortable doing so, a moral conflict you have encountered.

b) In thinking about the problem, what factors did you consider? _____

9. Do you think you can trust your own judgment when faced with a moral issue? Explain why or why not.

10. Do you think the Bible speaks to every moral issue? Explain.

a) What other resources, personal and community, do you feel are useful and trustworthy in reaching a decision on a moral issue? i.e. Where do you look for guidance? _____

11. In dealing with a moral issue or conflict, have you ever been torn between what you felt was right and what you thought or believed was right? How did you resolve this tension? _____

12. Do you think it is possible for Christians in good faith, to have different or opposing views on a moral issue? _____ Explain.

13. Listed below are several potential influences and/or resources available to use in moral decision-making. Indicate with a circle how important each factor is to you personally in the process of reaching a moral judgment.

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
a) family	NI	SI	I	VI
b) church	NI	SI	I	VI
c) pastor	NI	SI	I	VI
d) christian friends	NI	SI	I	VI
e) non-christian friends	NI	SI	I	VI
f) prayer	NI	SI	I	VI
g) scripture	NI	SI	I	VI
h) religious literature	NI	SI	I	VI
i) non-religious literature	NI	SI	I	VI
j) college community	NI	SI	I	VI
k) a sign (fleece)	NI	SI	I	VI
l) personal intelligence (reason)	NI	SI	I	VI
m) personal feelings (emotion)	NI	SI	I	VI
n) personal experience	NI	SI	I	VI
o) other: _____	NI	SI	I	VI

14. Specify below which factors you identified in question #13 being very important (or important if you did not identify any factors as very important) influences and/or resources in the process of reaching a moral judgment and explain why you feel each is important:

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

iv) _____

v) _____

15. Specify below which factors you identified in question #13 as being not important (or somewhat important if you did not identify any factors as not important) influences and/or resources in the process of reaching a moral judgment and explain why you feel each is important:

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

iv) _____

v) _____

16. Have you ever found yourself in disagreement with any of the following on a moral issue? If so, briefly describe the issue and explain how the disagreement affected your decision on the issue.

- a) family
- b) scripture
- c) pastor/church
- d) Christian friends
- e) non-Christian friends

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

17. Has being a part of this college community had any influence on your specific moral judgments? Explain.

18. How do you think your Christian friends within this college community would respond to you if you disagreed with them on a moral issue? Do you have a sense of how important this is to you in your moral decision-making?

19. What are the consequences and/or benefits of being autonomous in your moral judgments? i.e. in freely choosing what is right/wrong for you.

APPENDIX DIndividual Participant Involvement

<u>Participant #1</u>	Questionnaire	- 1 hour
	First Interview	- 1 hour 45 minutes
	Second Interview	- 45 minutes
	Total Interview	- 2 hours 30 minutes
	TOTAL TIME	- <u>3 hours 30 minutes</u>
 <u>Participant #2</u>	Questionnaire	- 1 hour 30 minutes
	First Interview	- 1 hour 20 minutes
	Second Interview	- 40 minutes
	Total Interview	- 2 hours
	TOTAL TIME	- <u>3 hours 30 minutes</u>
 <u>Participant #3</u>	Questionnaire	- 1 hour 15 minutes
	First Interview	- 1 hour 15 minutes
	Second interview	- 35 minutes
	Total Interview	- 1 hour 50 minutes
	TOTAL TIME	- <u>3 hours 5 minutes</u>
 <u>Participant #4</u>	Questionnaire	- 2 hours 30 minutes
	First Interview	- 1 hour 25 minutes
	Second Interview	- 40 minutes
	Total Interview	- 2 hours 5 minutes
	TOTAL TIME	- <u>4 hours 35 minutes</u>
 <u>Participant #5</u>	Questionnaire	- 1 hour 45 minutes
	First Interview	- 1 hour 40 minutes
	Second Interview	- 45 minutes
	Total Interview	- 2 hours 5 minutes
	TOTAL TIME	- <u>4 hours 10 minutes</u>

Appendix ESummary of Participant Involvement

	<u>Range</u>	<u>Average</u>
Questionnaires:	1 hr. - 2 hrs. 30 min.	1 hr. 36 min.
First Interviews:	1 hr, 15 min. - 1 hr 45 min.	1 hr. 29 min.
Second Interviews:	35 min. - 45 min.	45 min.
Total Interviews:	1 hr 50 min. - 2 hrs 30 min.	2 hrs 10 min.
Total Time:	3 hrs 5 min. - 4 hrs 35 min.	3 hrs 46 min.
Cumulative Total Time Interviewing = 10 hours, 50 minutes		