THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMITMENT TO THE COMMON GOOD:

THE CASE OF ADULTS LEARNING ABOUT GLOBAL ISSUES

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Abstract

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Society is at a crucial transition point: We can do irreparable damage to our planet or build a sustainable, just, and peaceful world. If we are to create a positive planetary future, far-reaching individual and societal change will be required. Many look to education as the key to such transformation.

This qualitative study examines the experience of twenty-three adult Nova Scotians who devoted considerable time to learning about global issues. In-depth interviews were used to probe the influences which led the individuals to this learning, the processes in which they engaged, and the impacts of the learning on their lives.

Most participants traced the roots of their global interest to their childhood. The roles of family, religion, cross-cultural experiences, and influential individuals were particularly significant. The participants had open, searching, inquiring minds and relied heavily on learning resources which provided considerable depth of information and analysis: especially books, periodicals, radio, workshops, conferences, and specialized residential programs. All participants were involved in organizations and activities which reflected a concern for global issues. It became clear that the individuals viewed their learning about global issues as part of a broader concern for the common good, and an essential aspect of their identity.
Based on participants' experiences becoming interested in and concerned about global issues, an exploratory model is constructed which attempts to describe the development of commitment to the common good. The model views learning as the process through which knowledge is conveyed from the public "Outer Self," to the private "Inner Self." The Inner Self is where commitment to the common good resides. Seven elements are identified as crucial: values, empathy, understanding, sense of self and community, passion, vision, and commitment. These give rise to three clusters within the Inner Self: the Actual Self, Moral Self, and Desired Self. In highly committed individuals, the three overlap almost completely; in those less committed, there is much less overlap. The study concludes by exploring implications for adult educators and others concerned with the development of commitment to the common good.
Dedicated to my parents,

C. Elizabeth (Bessie) Fraser (1907-1986)

and

J. Allison Fraser (1908-2000)

whose lives—individually, and as a team—were utterly committed to the "common good."
Acknowledgements

I am exceedingly pleased, at last, to be able to share with others my research and reflection on individuals who have been investing a significant amount of their time learning about global issues—issues related to the present condition and future prospects of this fragile planet we call our home.

In carrying out this project, I am in many ways simply the one “putting things together.” The stories on which this study is based, of course, belong to the 23 wonderful individuals who agreed to participate. I cannot thank them enough for their willingness to share the joys, the frustrations, and the richness of their experience! This is their story.

And, in examining the stories, we are privileged to be able to do so within the context of an insightful and growing body of literature on transformative learning, and on lives of commitment—and against the backdrop of important research and analysis concerning the present condition and future prospects of our planetary home. Within this literature, time-after-time I have been enriched by the opportunity to connect with deeply committed lives—both those of the authors, and of the many individuals one meets through their pages.

In pursuing this project, I have had excellent mentors and guides. I greatly appreciated Allen Tough’s encouragement and advice as my initial supervisor and, following his retirement, was honoured and delighted that Edmund O’Sullivan agreed to take on that role. Edmund has provided me with warm and supportive guidance, and reassurance that I was “on the right track”—exactly the combination which I needed, and which has made this such a satisfying experience! At various points, Angela Miles and Daniel Schugurensky have provided me with very helpful perspectives and feedback. A sincere “thank you” as well to Susan Hall, David Livingstone, Jack Miller, Marilyn Proctor, Jack Quarter, and the many others within OISE/UT
who have assisted me in this phase of my learning journey. My thanks, too, goes to Allan Lauzon who, as my external examiner, provided detailed constructive feedback.

The completion of this undertaking would not have been possible at this time had it not been for a sabbatical leave from my role at Henson College of Public Affairs and Continuing Education, Dalhousie University. For that opportunity I am deeply grateful both to my colleagues at Henson College, and to Dr. Sam Scully, Dalhousie Vice-President Academic and Provost. The sabbatical allowed me time for reading, reflection, and writing—enabling me to reimmerse myself in the thesis research.

Throughout my life, I have been fortunate to be surrounded by supportive friends and family. As I completed this work, I became more conscious of the influences which had helped to shape my own life and interests, for I grew up in what Larry Daloz and the Common fire team (1996) describe as a "home with open doors," where I was nurtured by "publicly active" parents, had constant opportunities to "listen from the stairway," and where the "practice of hospitality" included the making of sandwiches for the homeless men who regularly called at our door. So, for that homelife and for my parents who provided it, I am eternally grateful!

Finally, my very deepest thanks to my partner and soul-mate Elaine, whose enthusiasm, patience, and good advice have been invaluable; and to our four wonderful children, Matthew, Jessica, Zachary, and Hannah who, like Elaine, have been understanding beyond reason, and have provided me with encouragement and inspiration!

To all, my sincere thanks! I am deeply honoured to have had your support!
Prologue

As I write these final notes for the thesis, it is less than two weeks since September 11, 2001—the day of the horrific terrorist attack on the United States, when two hijacked planes demolished the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, and a fourth crashed in a field in Pennsylvania—apparently falling short of a more “strategic” target because a few of the passengers overpowered the hijackers. The final death toll is expected to approach 7,000, and may yet climb. The attack, of course, struck at the heart of U.S. economic and military power. There is a general feeling that the world changed profoundly on that day, but at this point, there is only a limited understanding of what the changes will entail on a military, political, economic, and perhaps most of all, on a personal level.

Although September 11 would appear to represent the most dramatic change in the North American context—and perhaps the global context—since I began this research, the element of change, itself, is not new. As thesis research, this project has stretched over a considerably longer period than is usual—and certainly than I would recommend to others! As I reflect back over the entire process, from the time I began thinking about engaging in this research, three distinctly different phases emerge prior to this most recent one. Examining these differing phases, I believe, has value as part of my final reflection on some of the personal lessons I have gleaned from this undertaking.

The first period, the “pre-proposal” stage began in 1986-87 when I was able to take a study leave from my position in continuing education at Dalhousie University in Halifax, in order to continue my own education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Toronto. The year in Toronto was exciting, stimulating, and enriching—not only for me, but also for
Elaine and our four children, Matthew, Jessica, Zachary and Hannah, who at that time ranged in age from 4 to 14. As my course work drew to a close, and I began to focus on identifying an area for thesis research, I kept being drawn back to a pair of questions which had been haunting me throughout my working life. I had become anxious to discover whatever I could about why some individuals developed a deep commitment to the future of humankind while others demonstrated little apparent interest or concern. Moreover, I also wanted to know how education could be more effective in fostering commitment to the common good.

The late 1980s was a time of global ferment and a time when I was deeply involved in peace education. Gorbachev had been elected General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985 and, significantly as a result of his initiatives, the next few years were characterized by internal reforms within the USSR and by a thawing of the Cold War.

The second stage of my thesis process began in 1990-91, when I was able to arrange a further six-month study leave. It was during this time that I clarified the research I wished to pursue, received approval for my thesis proposal, conducted the interviews with 23 adult Nova Scotians who had been devoting a considerable amount of their time to learning about global issues, and began the process of analyzing the data which I obtained from them. As I describe in more detail in Chapter 2, this was a period of considerable excitement throughout the global community: Peace appeared to be “breaking out all over”—though there were also some very disturbing events, including the massacre of thousands of protesters in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and the outbreak of the Gulf War in early 1991.

When I returned to full-time work in the Spring of 1991, initially I devoted nights and weekends to my thesis research, but eventually the more immediate demands of my “day job” squeezed this out, so that my research lay fallow for a time. I was, nevertheless, anxious to
complete the project that I had undertaken—and the questions which I had set out to answer continued to fascinate me.

It was not until 1999-2000 that I was able to fully re-engage—once again with the benefit of a sabbatical leave. For me, this was the third phase of work on my thesis and, by this time, the global situation had once again changed quite dramatically. The Cold War was long-gone, but in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, deeply entrenched ethnic wars had emerged. Technology was bringing people together in a single human family, but with this came not only the opportunity to communicate globally, but also a darker side in the form of global promotion of hatred, pornography, and violence. Problems associated with globalization were receiving greater public attention and were reflected in protests at Seattle, Quebec City and Genoa.

In this third phase of my research, in addition to adapting to changes in the external situation, it was also necessary to make various internal adjustments. Allen Tough, who had been my supervisor through the early stages of the process had retired; Edmund O'Sullivan agreed to become my supervisor and guide as I completed the project. I was excited to find that there was new, insightful research related to the matters I was exploring: adults learning about global issues, and the relationship of that to commitment to the common good.

This extended time span creates some difficulties but also brings with it some benefits. The most obvious limitation arises because of the changes which have occurred in society since the interviews were conducted. While we frequently comment on the "rapid rate of change" which we are experiencing, it is nevertheless sobering to realize the extent of the changes which have taken place in the time which the study spans. These remind us, however, in our analysis, to search for the lasting patterns and insights: to see the forest, not just the trees.
As I now conclude the process, the world has, once again, changed very dramatically. At this point, the longer-term implications and outcomes are impossible to judge. Nevertheless, with each of the changes in our global situation, including this most recent, profound shift, I am even more convinced of the following:

- **The questions we have been seeking to answer matter deeply: we must continue to expand our understanding.** We need to know much more about how people become committed to the future well-being of humankind and the planet—and now, we realize that we also need to know much more about how individuals become committed to causes which prompt them to engage in the massive destruction of human life. As we note in Chapter 1, as far back as 1979, the authors of *No limits to learning* argued that we are caught in a vicious cycle of increasing complexity and lagging understanding (Botkin, Elmandjra & Malitza, 1979, p. 7). As a civilization, we have poured far greater resources into our understanding of things than we have our understanding of people. But, our deepest problems are human problems. We need to invest far greater effort in understanding humankind.

- **Learning is crucial to the development of commitment to the common good, but needs to be conceived of more holistically.** *Understanding* is a key ingredient in the development of this commitment, but it is only one of several elements. *Learning* needs to be understood as contributing not only to the development of understanding, but also to the development of values, empathy, sense of self and community, passion, vision, and commitment.

- **In these times of profound change, there are grounds for hope as well as for fear.** From the time this research was initially conceived, in the late 1980s, until the final
reporting in late 2001, we can see several dramatic shifts in the global situation. As I outline in Chapter 1, we face a "momentous crossroads." Many aspects of our situation are worrisome—even terrorizing. Nevertheless, many of the underlying trends give rise to optimism. In 1999, for instance, William Ury, in *Getting to peace*, argued that with the Knowledge Revolution now succeeding the Agricultural Revolution, civilization is shifting from *land*, a fixed resource, to *knowledge*, an expandable one. This transition, Ury argues, ultimately fosters a shift toward cooperation, and away from competition. Ury comments, rather prophetically, however, that with the gathering together of all humanity in a single global family, there is likely to be increased conflict in the short-to-medium term.

Another positive sign comes from Ray and Anderson (2000) who, based on extensive research spanning more than a decade, indicate that there are 50 million Americans struggling to create a more just, equitable, and sustainable future—and the proportion of the population engaged in this struggle continues to rise, year-by-year.

- **There is much that we can do, so we must do what we can.** In the study which follows, and in the research of others who have been investigating lives of commitment, a tremendously wide range of activities is identified which can make a positive impact on the development of commitment to the common good. If we believe that such commitment is important, there is a great deal that we can do. While acknowledging, in the words of one of those interviewed in a related study, that "it is harder to be human than it used to be," hopefully this thesis will contribute to our insight, our ability, and our will, to do what we can to develop commitment, and promote the common good!
With these goals in mind, I have pushed on, not because I expect that my particular research and insights will, on their own, provide any major breakthroughs. But, like the people I interviewed, and the many other committed individuals whom I have met, and about whom I have read, I have seen my own role as part of a much larger commitment and movement. This larger movement encompasses the untold numbers who are striving in so many different ways to make this a sustainable and more hospitable home for all of creation. By learning a little more about how such people have developed their commitment, and the role that learning has played in that process, I have hoped to be able to assist educators, parents, policy makers, activists, and others who, in their own ways, are seeking to build a better world.

Halifax, Nova Scotia

September 23, 2001
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Chapter 1—Introduction:
Understanding the Global Context

A “Momentous Crossroads”

Each of us, in our daily lives, tends to be preoccupied with the concerns which, for us, are immediate and urgent. These often relate to issues and relationships in our homes, our workplaces, our neighbourhoods, and the wider community. Perhaps particularly because the pace of change in recent years has been so rapid, we often struggle to “keep up” with what is going on at the moment. We seldom take the time to stand back and get a long-term view of society—and we are rarely encouraged to do so. The primary focus of the news media is on what is happening at the moment. Television networks scramble to be the first to report “newsworthy” events and to flash them around the world. The primary emphasis is on instant reporting through mini “sound bites;” it is not on the thoughtful assessment of the longer-term implications of issues for the future of humanity. A few months after the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 1600 senior scientists from across the globe, including more than half of the living Nobel Prize winners, issued a “Warning to Humanity” indicating that we had only a few years to make dramatic changes or we would put at risk the future of human society. Virtually none of the major Canadian or US media bothered to report it. The New York Times and the Washington Post indicated that they considered the warning “not newsworthy” (Suzuki & Dressel, 1999, p. 68).

Despite the lack of attention to such issues by the media, many who do attempt to take a longer-term view have concluded that society is in the throes of a dramatic transition. As far back as 1979, the authors of No limits to learning, in reporting to The Club of Rome, described our civilization as being at a “momentous crossroads.” They argued that we are caught in a vicious
cycle of increasing complexity and lagging understanding, and that "we must break this vicious cycle ... while it still is possible to exert influence and some control over our own destiny and future" (Botkin, Elmandjra & Malitza, 1979, p. 7). Further, they perceive the irony of our human predicament, recognizing that the threat to our future existence comes not only from nuclear weapons, but also from a wide range of environmental and social problems which we have created. They elaborate:

It is a profound irony that we should be confronted with so many problems at the same time in history when humanity is at a peak of its knowledge and power. Yet to an intelligent being observing from another planet, we must appear absurd. High-energy technologies are still being developed in disregard for the dwindling global supply for petroleum and natural gas reserves and in the face of mounting public and scientific resistances to full reliance on nuclear power. Meanwhile research into benign and abundant energy alternatives is given belated and insufficient attention.... Age-old discriminations and dangerous practices of domination and superiority continue to haunt a densely populated world which is unable to develop the equitable redistribution schemes, cooperation, and moral solidarity on which survival of the human species may, for the first time in history, increasingly depend. (p. 7)

In a somewhat similar vein, Thomas Berry, in *The dream of the earth*, also observes:

We have changed in a deleterious manner not simply the structure and functioning of human society: we have changed the very chemistry of the planet, we have altered the biosystems, we have changed the topography and even the geological structure of the planet, structures and functions that have taken hundreds of millions and even billions of years to bring into existence. Such an order of change in its nature and its order of magnitude has never before entered either into earth history or into human consciousness. (Berry, 1988, p. xiii)

William Ury (1999) from his perspective as an anthropologist studying the ways in which societies through the ages have dealt with conflict, in *Getting to peace: Transforming conflict at home, at work, and in the world*, takes a somewhat more optimistic stance, but once again sees society experiencing a dramatic transformation. He focuses on the Knowledge Revolution, seeing it as including the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, and thus spanning a period of approximately 500 years. Over that period, he sees the social, political and economic
transformation being as profound in its impact on humanity as was the case with the Agricultural Revolution ten thousand years ago.

Finally, O'Sullivan (1999) provides a comprehensive analysis of the dramatic shift in which we find ourselves, describing it as a transformation from modernity into post-modernity—or from what he terms the "terminal cenozoic" to the "emergent ecozoic" period. "We are living in a watershed period comparable to the major shift that took place from the medieval into the modern world" (p. 2). O'Sullivan describes our current situation:

We are now at the end of the cenozoic era of the planet earth’s 4.5 billion-year history. This era is rapidly ending. Not only the human aspect but, even more so, the functioning of the entire planet is being altered. All living beings are being altered in the most extensive transformation that has taken place on the planet earth in the last 65 million years. So extensive is the dissolution of the life systems of the earth during the past century, that the viability of the human being can no longer be taken for granted. (p. 46)

**Getting our Bearings: Where are we?**

In order to make sound decisions about our future, we need to be able to see and understand our situation accurately and in some depth; we need to gain enough distance from our day-to-day activities to have some perspective on our situation. Many of the astronauts who have circled the earth, for example, have returned with a new perspective and a new appreciation of the priorities for themselves as individuals and for society as a whole (Young, 1983). It is for the same reason that part of the standard advice to those dealing with difficult negotiations is that they must develop the ability to "go to the balcony"—to get enough mental and emotional distance from the problem with which they are dealing to be able to look at it as if they were looking down from a balcony (Ury, 1993).

The same advice is helpful to us as we attempt to understand our human situation. If we attempt to look down from above, to view the path taken by our human species through its...
history, we can see not only the “momentous crossroads,” but as well, some additional features of the terrain.

Glimpses of the precipice: The power to extinguish life as we know it

When we get this sense of perspective on the span of human history, as if viewing it from on high, we are immediately struck by the fact that we have been travelling perilously close to a huge precipice.

Over the last half of the twentieth century we have increasingly recognised that, for the first time in our history, we have the power to destroy life as we know it, on our planet. In 1982, in *Fate of the earth*, Jonathan Schell, put our situation in historical perspective:

Four and a half billion years ago, the earth was formed.... Only six or seven thousand years ago—a period that is to the history of the earth less than a minute is to a year—civilization emerged, enabling us to build up a human world, and to add to the marvels of evolution marvels of our own: marvels of art, of science, of social organization, of spiritual attainment. But, as we built higher and higher the evolutionary foundation beneath our feet became more and more shaky, and now, in spite of all we have learned or achieved—or, rather, because of it—we hold this entire terrestrial creation hostage to nuclear destruction, threatening to hurl it back into the inanimate darkness from which it came. (p. 181)

Although, with the end of the Cold War, the threat of nuclear war has seemed to diminish, nevertheless, the basic reality to which Schell refers still remains: we are now fully capable of bringing an end to life on earth as we know it. This is new in our time, and the change is profound. It is as if the entire human community is walking along the edge of a cliff, with each individual attached to a long rope which links everyone together in a single human chain. A “wrong move”—whether made accidentally; made innocently, in ignorance of the consequences; or made in anger against an enemy—holds the potential to pull all of us “over the edge” and into the abyss. Most of us, on a day-to-day basis, appear to give this relatively little
thought—probably because, as far as we can tell, the danger is not imminent, so we feel relatively secure. We may not have fully appreciated, however, the danger we face!

Ury describes how American and Russian representatives discovered, 25 years after the fact, how close their countries had come to launching a nuclear war at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. October 27, 1962, Ury asserts, "may have been the single most dangerous day in millions of years of human evolution" (1999, p. 82). With the thawing of the Cold War, the surviving Cuban, Soviet and American participants gathered to exchange information. Ury was present at the meeting and reports on the previously unknown miscalculations and misunderstandings which occurred on both sides of the dispute. He indicates that an all-out nuclear war might very well have resulted from the series of mistaken judgements.

The slippery slope: Can our environment recover?

The possibility of humanity "falling off the cliff" of nuclear destruction has been a major worry, but it is not the only threat along the path we have been following. We have also been travelling along the edge of a dangerous "slippery slope." In contrast to nuclear war which, if it were to erupt, in a matter of days might engulf the globe, causing unprecedented and irreversible devastation, the depletion of our environmental resources is much more gradual, and thus more insidious.

David Suzuki and Holly Dressel (1999), in From naked ape to superspecies, point out the profound impact which we are having on our planetary home:

We are now transforming the biosphere — depleting the oceans, poisoning the air, levelling mountains and altering the composition of the atmosphere — and we are doing it in a mere instant of geological time. In the nearly four billion years that life has existed on Earth, no species has possessed this capability for changing the biophysical makeup of the planet and thus affecting every other species on Earth. (p. 2)
Edward O. Wilson, a Harvard professor of ecology whom Suzuki regards as one of the world's pre-eminent experts on biodiversity, uses the analogy of us collectively depleting our bank account. The danger, of course, is that we may not recognize the problem with our ways until the day when we go to make our customary withdrawal and find that we are already bankrupt! Wilson observes:

It takes a long time — millions of years — to create species as fully developed as the ones around us.... We are destroying species a hundred times faster than they could be created, even if we left the natural environment alone. We are doing the equivalent of drawing down hard on our bank account; and you can't be drawing down on your bank account at a hundred times the rate you're putting new money in without going broke very fast. (E. O. Wilson in Suzuki and Dressel, 1999, p. 29)

There may well be a "point of no return" with respect to the environmental problems we face—it may be that, even without knowing it, we could deplete the earth’s capacity to sustain life to such a point that recovery becomes impossible. We might experience a situation akin to that of an individual or a business who has borrowed so heavily that bankruptcy is virtually inevitable, even though it has not yet occurred. Or, to continue the analogy of travelling along a perilous path, the image of trying to climb back up the steep slope of a gravel pit comes to mind. I well remember, as a boy of 8 or 10, exploring with some friends outside the fence surrounding a summer camp I attended. We came to a gravel pit and decided to go down the steep slopes to check things out. As we were slowly making our way back up the side, I stepped on a hornet’s nest. Quickly realizing what I had done, I tried to scramble, as fast as I could, up the steep incline of loose gravel—as the hornets surrounded me and, in their own way, began to teach me a lesson. I was simply "spinning my wheels." As I took each step forward, I kept sliding back by the same amount—in effect, staying where I was and providing a great feast for the hornets. Eventually I did get away, but covered with bites.
The concern with respect to the environment is that we might not be so fortunate. As we allow ourselves to slip deeper into the pit of environmental decline, we are in danger of reaching a "point of no return"—of getting to a point where environmental recovery is no longer within our grasp.

Concerned about the treatment of our planetary home, Bill Rees, a population ecologist at the University of British Columbia and his colleague Mathias Wackernagel, have developed a way of measuring the amount of the planet's productivity we are using. They call this a measure of our "ecological footprint." Suzuki and Dressel comment on our level of consumption:

Canadians are among the wealthiest people in the world. We have a lavish national lifestyle. We drive big cars. We eat fresh strawberries all year round. We have big houses full of lots of stuff. It takes a lot of land to provide this lifestyle, to grow fibres for our clothes and provide space and material for our houses, as well as to grow food to feed us and pump water to sustain it all. We also need land to absorb the wastes we create. The carbon dioxide from our cars and the wastes we flush down the toilet or bury in landfills all require a certain amount of water, soil and time before they can be absorbed and made non-toxic. Therefore, as a country, we have a very big ecological footprint. (1999, p. 40)

In calculating precisely how large this ecological footprint is, Rees and Wackernagel arrived at the figure of 7 hectares (17 acres) of biologically productive land and ocean which is required to support the lifestyle of each Canadian. Initially, it may be hard to visualize the 7 hectare resource requirement, or to appreciate its significance. Two other figures help to put it into perspective. If we were to divide the total of the earth's biologically productive land by the current global population, each of us as citizens of the planet would have an allocation of a little over a hectare and a half—an area approximately 170 metres by 100 metres. If we added everyone's share of the productive parts of the ocean, we would each have an allocation of approximately two hectares of land and water. If we were to live within our "fair share" of the earth's resources, we would need to cut our current consumption to about one-quarter of its present level. As Suzuki and Dressel point out, "in order to bring everyone on the planet to the
same general level of consumption and well-being as the average Canadian, we would need four or five more Earths — right now!” (p. 42)

We recognize, of course, that much of the rest of the world does not have the same lifestyle, or equivalent levels of consumption, as Canadians. As a result, the average ecological footprint globally is much smaller than Canadians’ 7 hectares. Nevertheless, according to Rees and Wackernagel, we are now consuming more globally than the earth can sustain. Wackernagel comments:

We now live in an ecologically full world. And that’s new. After the Second World War, the ecological footprint ... was smaller than the Earth’s ecological capacity available on a per capita basis. So expansion was easy. We weren’t competing directly with each other. But now the world is overly full, and our research has shown that ... the ecological footprint of humanity is 35 percent larger than the ecological capacity of the world. (Wackernagel in Suzuki and Dressel, 1999, p. 44)

The fact that we are now using 35% more resources each year than the earth can produce means that we are not only using up the “interest,” but also reducing the earth’s capital—its productive capacity. This becomes reflected in such problems as topsoil depletion, deforestation, falling water tables, and climate change.

Other threats to our collective future

The threats to our future existence posed by nuclear war and by environmental destruction are two of the most visible ones which we encounter along the path we are travelling. But, several other threats also could have a dramatic or even catastrophic negative impact on our collective future. Among these are population growth, resource depletion, hunger, disease, and the potential negative impacts of genetic engineering.

A world “larger, smaller, and more complex”

In the introduction to their major study of one hundred individuals who have demonstrated long-term commitment to society, Laurent Parks Daloz, Cheryl Keen, James Keen
and Sharon Daloz Parks in *Common fire: Leading lives of commitment in a complex world* (1996) observe that in the past a "commons" frequently was at the heart of local communities. This may have taken the form of a town square, a general store, a ballpark, or a fishing wharf, and served as "a shared, public space of the sort that anchored the American vision of democracy" (p. 2). Increasingly, the community commons has given way to a new, global commons which is diverse in character and dauntingly complex:

A radically interdependent world economy has dissolved old boundaries, loosed waves of migrant labor, triggered smoldering cultural conflicts, and forced profound social and political reorganization at all levels. We are simultaneously fragmented into loose and shifting associations of individuals, interest groups, and tribes, yet drawn more closely into a larger web of life.

Boundaries are shifting. Old distinctions between work and home, business and government, secular and religious, the social and natural environment, male and female, and between those we call "we" and those we call "them" no longer seem to work as they once did. (p. 3)

Daloz and his associates describe our new reality as "a world gone boundaryless, a world now paradoxically larger, smaller, and more complex” (p. 3). One of the individuals in their study commented, "I think it is harder to be human than it used to be" (p. 1).

**How did we get here? Have we lost our way?**

As we have been travelling along this human path, increasingly aware that we have been perilously close to the cliff over which the whole species could fall, we ask ourselves how we came to be in such a dangerous spot. Did those who travelled before us take a wrong turn in the road? We will examine two accounts of our journey. The two emphasize different time frames: the first, by William Ury, takes a very long-term view, stretching back to the beginning of human existence; the second, with a somewhat shorter focus, examines the evolution of Western culture in the period since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While the two accounts and analyses
have different emphases, they complement one another. Each holds clues concerning how we may get ourselves, as a human family, back on a safer path.

The span of human history

William Ury (1999), from his perspective as an anthropologist attempting to understand the sources of human conflict, has traced the development of the human species from its emergence on the earth, to the present. Based on the best evidence which can be pieced together from prehistoric times, along with his study of simple societies which have continued to the present, Ury has concluded that there is little evidence of organized violence during the first ninety-nine percent of human history—until the beginning of the Agricultural Revolution 5,000 to 10,000 years ago. The explanation, Ury contends, appears to be that the basic structure of society did not encourage violence, and within this context, people worked hard at co-existing. Some interpersonal violence undoubtedly took place—but probably very few wars or other forms of group violence intended to exterminate or conquer another group—the practice that threatens our species today. Ury comments:

The chief explanation for such coexistence does not lie in the inherent peacefulness of human beings. Rather it is that fighting and domination do not make much sense for people living in a flexible interdependent network and roving all over the landscape in search of game and plants. People's livelihood depended on cooperating within the group and with other groups. The benefits of fighting and domination were few, the costs were high, and there was almost always the alternative of exit. One individual or group could just pick up their few possessions and leave. (p. 55)

Ury acknowledges that, because our perceptions are based on human history since the Agricultural Revolution, we tend to view humans as an inherently violent species. But, he makes the point that violence does not appear to be common over the vast span of human existence:

Most astonishing of all is just how long our ancestors may have lived in this “co-culture” [where conflict was handled constructively through co-existence and cooperation]. If all four million years of human evolution were to be telescoped into a single twenty-four hour day, the period of conflictual coexistence would last through the night, the morning,
the afternoon, the evening, all the way, in fact, until just before midnight. The period we call history, filled with violence and domination, wars and empires, would last barely one minute. (p. 55, 56)

Ury attributes the significant shift toward a much more violent period of human existence to the transition from a hunting and gathering culture to an agricultural one. This change brought with it several factors which interacted to encourage and reinforce the systematic use of violence on a society-wide basis. As the population grew, there was less land to support a nomadic, hunting and gathering society. But, people’s settling down in one location to grow food and raise animals, simply stimulated further population growth. As agricultural methods improved, food surpluses developed, making it possible to build the first cities. “People now faced the unprecedented challenge of coping with the conflicts inherent in large and dense groups. Crowding can create enormous tension” (p. 63). It was not, however, simply an issue of increased population density. The fact that the basic resource had shifted from roving animals and scattered plants to land, a finite resource, was highly significant:

The assumption common among simple hunter-gatherers that there could be more for everyone through cooperation gave way to the assumption common in agricultural societies that more for one person or group meant less for another. Whereas the basic resource in life once fostered cooperation, now it fomented competition....

The key factor intensifying conflict was not agriculture in itself but, more broadly, the intensive exploitation of a fixed and highly valuable resource. (p. 62)

Ury points out that when we are able to get sufficient distance, we are able to see more clearly the larger societal shifts which accompanied the Agricultural Revolution. While this dramatic change in society’s functioning brought great positive benefits, it also has some unintended, and largely unobserved, negative consequences. Ury argues that the shift from a nomadic, hunting and gathering existence to one built around the cultivation of the land and the raising of crops, created a cycle of decreasing cooperation and increasing violence—which has spanned the last 5,000 to 10,000 years, continuing to the present. The individual changes which
caused this transformation are actually remarkable simple, but the cumulative effect was a chain-
reaction which significantly altered our relations with one another and with our environment.
Perhaps the single most significant shift was a psychological one: from viewing land—along
with the plants and animals which drew nourishment from it—as a common resource, to viewing
it instead as a personal resource. Agriculture was, in part, a response to an increasing
population—a way of ensuring that the increasing number of hungry mouths would get fed. But,
the increased stability of the food supply simply led to a spiral of further population increases
and the need for still greater food production. There was thus constant pressure to expand the
lands under cultivation. As agriculturalists spread out, they came into conflict with others who
also were expanding, as well as with those still involved in hunting and gathering who could see
their game increasingly being driven off the land. Competition for land became part of the fabric
of society. When people were confronted with droughts and shortages, the competition often
turned to conflict and violence as groups attacked their neighbours and seized their crops in order
to survive. Thus, the new way of life increased both the extent and the intensity of conflict.

These changes sparked others, feeding a cycle of decreasing cooperation and increasing
violence. A marked increase in the available men who could go off to fight made it easier for a
society to engage in war. The fact that societies had settled down also tended to close off the
"exit option"—the ability in a nomadic culture, for either side to simply withdraw from the fight
and settle somewhere else, where they could live in peace. Instead, people could not now leave
the fields and possessions on which their lives depended. Conflicts intensified and since the
losers had no place to flee, they were either exterminated or became a subjugated people. The
notions of power and control which had previously applied only to the natural world now
extended to the relations between people, and a system of rigid stratification of people based on compulsion was established. (Ury, 1999, p. 67-69)

Within this new social structure was embedded yet one further incentive to engage in war. With the emergence of a ruling class, those who decided to fight a war did not have to risk their own lives in doing so. The consequence of these factors working in combination was that war, which until this time appears to have been virtually unknown, now became endemic—the accepted way of settling disputes between societies. The basic human relationship shifted from an egalitarian one, characterized by cooperation, to relationships based on power, in which competition and conflict became the norm.

There is one final point which Ury makes about the development of war as the ultimate way of settling disputes between societies: war is contagious. Societies generally continued to act peacefully while surrounded by other peaceful societies, but when confronted by a new group that was accustomed to fighting, the resident group had little choice but to defend itself or abandon its land. So, in an environment in which war made sense, war was highly contagious (1999, p. 73).

From Ury’s careful analysis, we glean a highly significant observation: Wars need not be always with us; widespread violence in society results from social conditions which encourage it. Violence is not an intrinsic part of human nature. With the Agricultural Revolution, the basic structure of global society altered; as a result, significant incentives for mass violence became part of the structure of society.

**The impact of the scientific revolution**

A further dramatic shift in the nature of global society occurred following the Renaissance, which extends back to the fourteenth century in Italy. Several authors (e.g., Berry,
1988; O'Sullivan, 1999; Suzuki and Dressel, 1999) note the particular impact of the Scientific Revolution on contemporary Western culture, and on our attitude toward the natural world, in particular. The philosophies of René Descartes and Sir Isaac Newton are seen as being particularly influential.

Descartes (1596–1650), a French philosopher and mathematician, put forward the absolute separation between mind and matter. He saw the material world simply as lifeless; even the human body was considered nothing more than a complex machine. The human mind was the only part of the world which could be considered "spiritual" or "sacred." Descartes’ view became widely accepted and, especially when reinforced by the philosophy of Newton and others, had a very significant impact on the relationship of humans to the natural world.

Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) saw the universe in strictly mechanistic terms. For him, each particle had its own existence, and became part of a larger totality by combining with others. This, in turn, lead to a very deterministic view of the world: that all events had a definite cause and gave rise to a definite effect (O’Sullivan, 1999, p. 85). Newton’s focus on the metaphor of the machine, combined with Descartes’ absolute separation between mind and matter and his belief that it was only the human mind that had any higher value, led to the belief that it was humanity’s role to have dominion over all of creation.

Carolyn Merchant in her book Earthcare (Merchant, 1995, in O’Sullivan, 1999, p. 87) comments on the dramatic shift in metaphors and the accompanying shift in our attitude to the natural world:

The metaphor of the earth as nurturing mother gradually vanished as a dominant image as the Scientific Revolution proceeded to mechanize and to rationalize the world view. The second image, nature as disorder, called forth an important modern idea, that of power over nature. Two new ideas, those of mechanism and of the dominion and mastery of nature, became core concepts of the modern world. (Merchant, 1995, p. 77 in original)
So, as O'Sullivan points out, with the development of the machine metaphor, the earth became a dead entity to be controlled and manipulated (p. 87). This shift, from the earth as "Thou" to the earth as "it," was further reinforced by the philosophy of individualism which was also gaining strength, allowing people to think of the individual as an absolute, cut off from the surrounding universe. This world view suggested that "all problems, of whatever nature, could be broken down into their constituent parts and studied separately and discretely" (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 89).

If we return to our metaphor of humanity travelling along a path which, in our time, has led to near-catastrophe, the emphases of the Scientific Revolution bring to mind two images. The first is that we stopped paying attention to the path we were on, and where it was leading, and instead focused all of our energy on understanding the fine details of what we were currently encountering. Instead of scanning the horizon, focusing on where we wanted to go and whether the path we were travelling would lead us there, we instead became intrigued with the pebbles on which we were walking, and the leaves of the plants by our side. There is an old campfire song, "The Hole at the Bottom of the Sea." With each succeeding verse it focuses on a smaller and smaller aspect of what one would see in that hole. In like fashion, it is as if, as a society, we have become preoccupied with "the spot, on the wing, of the flea, on the hair, on the wart, on the frog, on the bump, on the log, in the hole, at the bottom of the sea." Much of our research, and much of our creative energy has been devoted, metaphorically, to understanding that "spot"—we have tended, by-and-large, to miss the fact that there was, in fact, a hole at the bottom of the sea. While, collectively, all of this scientific exploration has produced some wonderful benefits for society, we have nevertheless suffered from the lack of equivalent attention to setting our
collective sights on where we want to go, and on the map and compass work necessary to enable us to get there.

**Visions of a Better Land: Setting our Sights on a Positive Future**

In order to break out from the path on which we have been travelling, and head in a totally different direction, we need to have a sense of where we are going. And, if we are not just to break free from the pack, but instead to lead our fellow travellers to a better land, we need a vision of where we are headed. Without that, we are unlikely to be able to inspire others to join in our journey—and even if we were to set off on our own, we likely would end up lost and alone! Not surprisingly, we do not all “see the promised land” in quite the same way. Different individuals have somewhat different visions. We will examine some of these, and then attempt to see what they have in common.

**Dealing more constructively with conflict**

Ury, looking at the long-term trends in the development of human society is reasonably optimistic about the future. As we move from an Agricultural to an Information Society, he sees the fundamental resource of society shifting from a fixed resource to an expandable one. “In contrast to land, which is typically improved through the act of possession, knowledge is improved through the act of sharing” (1999, p. 85). This means that the basic systems and structures of society increasingly tend to reinforce information sharing and cooperation as opposed to conflict and competition.

Ury sees several other significant societal changes occurring, either as a result of the shift to a knowledge society, or at the very least, in parallel with it. He sees war, for example, having been transformed from a win-lose proposition—which constituted a reasonable gamble for
aggressor nations during the Agricultural Period—to a lose-lose proposition. Ury points to some encouraging signs:

Wherever nations in conflict have developed nuclear weapons, their tendency to go to war has diminished rather than increased. Since 1945, there have been no wars among the major powers. For the first time in the five-thousand-year history of states, there are years in which no wars are fought between established states. One of the most telling statistics of modern war is the plunging odds of victory for the aggressor. In past centuries, the aggressor in war had at least an even chance of winning. By the 1980s, the odds stood at nineteen percent. Finally, war is losing its legitimacy. For millennia, war has been glorified as the noblest adventure of man. Now aggressive war is beginning to be seen in the larger community as what it has always been: acts of murder, rape, and theft. In the words of an old French Legionnaire ... “There is no such thing as a war crime. War itself is a crime.” (p. 78, 79)

Accompanying this shift in the “logic of war,” there are parallel shifts in other aspects of society, reinforcing the move away from war. One such general shift in the organization of society is the flattening of organizations, and of hierarchy in general. Ury comments:

Whereas pyramidal organizations create and reinforce boundaries, network organizations erase boundaries by making connections across them. The tearing down of the Berlin Wall has become a metaphor for what is happening around the globe.

The fundamental relationship between human beings is shifting from vertical to horizontal. No one should be under the illusion that the change means less conflict. Rather, it means more. For horizontal organizations do not suppress conflict. They surface it, which is why democracies often seem so quarrelsome and turbulent when compared with more authoritarian societies. Horizontal organizations, however, do have far less capacity to coerce others and they do have the capacity to transform the increased conflict into constructive negotiations. The potential for preventing organized violence and domination is thereby greatly increased.” (p. 97, 98)

With these various changes reinforcing one another, we can increasingly see the possibility of a society emerging in which violence is regarded as an unhelpful and unacceptable approach to resolving conflict.
Fitting back into the planet

The challenge which confronts us is not only how to deal more constructively with conflict, but also how to live within the resources available to us on the planet. Bill McKibben, a noted journalist, author and environmentalist, frames the issue clearly:

The story of the twentieth century was finding out just how big and powerful we were. And it turns out that we’re big and powerful as all get out. The story of the twenty-first century is going to be finding out if we can figure out ways to get smaller or not. To see if we can summon the will, and then the way, to make ourselves somewhat smaller, and try to fit back into this planet. (quoted in Suzuki & Dressel, 1999, p. 275)

Suzuki and Dressel do not spell out a detailed vision of exactly how a more environmentally balanced and sustainable society might function, but they do point us in a new direction—one which they see as potentially much more fulfilling—and they are very clear that if we continue on our present path, it will lead to destruction:

Down deep, we know that life might not be as easy if we started cutting back the luxuries and began sharing with others and helping to conserve parts of the planet. But we might also discover that life would be a whole lot more fulfilling, even a great deal more fun....

As a Species, humanity is in its infancy. We appeared very recently in evolutionary time and have exploded as an unprecedented force in this century. We know that we are exceeding the sustainable limits of the planet’s carrying capacity. It’s not deliberate; it’s simply the collective impact of all we do.... The challenge is to restore the balance between our needs and the Earth’s capacity to supply those needs and absorb our impact....

We may not think about that very often, but ... the very thought that we might be capable of destroying the source of all life is too much to bear. The path we are now on leads to the destruction of nature. It is suicidal and too horrible to contemplate. We have to listen to all the voices around us, telling us to harmonize those needs, so that we can restore the balance we so desperately need. (1999, p. 278, 279)

The emerging Ecozoic Period

Thomas Berry and Edmund O’Sullivan, as we noted earlier, each sees us at the transition point between the “terminal cenozoic” and the “emerging ecozoic” period—or “Ecological Age.”
One of the most dramatic differences between the two periods is the transformation in the relationship between humanity and the rest of the natural world. Berry (1988) comments:

The ecological age fosters the deep awareness of the sacred presence within each reality of the universe. There is an awe and reverence due to the stars in the heavens, the sun, and all heavenly bodies; to the sea and the continents; to all living forms of trees and flowers; to the myriad expressions of life in the sea; to the animals of the forests and the birds of the air. To wantonly destroy a living species is to silence forever a divine voice. Our primary need for the various lifeforms of the planet is a psychic, rather than a physical, need.

Only such a comprehensive vision can produce the commitment required to stop the world of exploitation, of manipulation, of violence so intense that it threatens to destroy not only the human city, but also the planet itself. (p. 46, 47)

**How much time do we have? How quickly must we change directions?**

In assessing our present situation and gaining a greater understanding of both where we now are, and how we came to be here, we also begin to look to the future. We know that we need to make our way to safer terrain. But this is not an individual pilgrimage. It is not simply a matter of leaving the rest of our society behind and striking off on our own to find a more positive future. Since we are all inextricably linked together, it is a matter, ultimately, of moving all of humankind from our present path onto a new one. It is a gargantuan task. But, the alternative—plodding along together, hugging the edge of the cliff, and hoping that it does not crumble beneath our feet—is hardly an appealing long-term solution.

In its "Warning to Humanity" the Union of Concerned Scientists warns us that we may only have a few years to deal with the environmental threats we now confront or the opportunity may be lost and the prospects for humanity immeasurably diminished. (Suzuki & Dressel, 1999, p. 68)
Maurice Strong, the Canadian business leader, environmentalist, and United Nations reformer, who was Secretary-General of the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, sums up our present global situation. He sees the next two decades as crucial for the future of the planet. Since what is at stake is a dramatic global transformation in our perspectives, our attitudes, and our behaviour, his estimate of the time frame within which this must be accomplished is daunting. But, few would be in a better position to assess our current situation. Strong comments:

We have the ability to control our own destiny—and the responsibility to manage it. The timeframe in which we must act is very short. It is not that the demise of our civilization could occur rapidly but that the decisions and actions that would determine its ultimate fate are likely to emerge within the first part of the new century and particularly within the next two decades. Disaster is not inevitable. It is still avoidable if we effect the kind of “change of course” called for at the Earth Summit. Every year, every day, that we delay implementing change will make it more difficult to accomplish and less likely to succeed. (2000, p. 359)

**Can education transform our human consciousness?**

If we are to accept the observations and analysis which has been presented, we must conclude that the path on which we currently are travelling is exceedingly dangerous. Even if, in the short run, we are able to avoid slipping off and tumbling over the precipice, it is quite possible (many would say virtually inevitable) that in the longer run this path will lead us to unprecedented disaster, if not extinction.

Suzuki and Dressel make the link between the current practices of society with respect to the environment, and our underlying cultural attitudes and values. In discussing the process through which they went in preparing the CBC Radio series, *From Naked Ape to Superspecies*, they observe:

What we wanted to investigate was why, when there is so much consensus among scientists that the biosphere is being altered catastrophically by human activity with results that will be disastrous for our own species, are governments and businesses failing
to respond appropriately to reduce our ecological impact? After we interviewed scores of scientists, activists, politicians and businesspeople, it became clear that it is the deep-seated beliefs and values of modern culture that are both creating these problems and blinding us to their consequences. (1999, p. 3, 4)

As a society, we presumably did not set out on a path that was clearly marked as leading us into such danger. Instead, those who have gone before us, and led us to where we are, believed that they were following the signposts labelled "progress" and "development."

Nevertheless, we now realize that the path led to unforeseen danger. But, while time is limited, we do have choices. It is not too late to search for, and find, a safer path. It is this search for a different way to which O'Sullivan refers, as a shift beginning to take place between humans and the natural world. The finding of an alternative path would appear to be quite possible—though certainly not easy. The obstacles range from our psychological inertia—the fact that we do not welcome radical change—through to the fact that the institutions of our society have been designed to benefit from our continuing to travel along the existing path. It is as if our businesses and our organizations—and even our educational institutions—are established in shop-fronts all along the well-worn path. As each new wave of travellers pass by, our institutions sell their wares and their services. Understandably, they are not pleased when some “rabble-rousers” suggest that everyone should get off this path and head off on a totally different one. O'Sullivan comments, for example, on the position of the educational institutions:

At this historical moment, almost all educational institutions are geared towards teaching the skills necessary for dealing with the needs of the consumer-industrial phase of this terminal cenozoic period. Within this context, we can clearly say that education is part of the problem rather than part of the solution. (1999, p. 46, 47)

We must note, though, that there are an increasing number of highly credible voices calling out to us to have the courage, confidence, and commitment to leave our current path and search for a better one—and to do so quickly! The context is outlined clearly by O'Sullivan:
What is needed is a radical change in perspective within educational institutions to deal with the magnitude of the problems that we are currently facing at a planetary level.

Educators have not been prepared for this momentous undertaking. They have carried out their educational tasks in the technological and industrial world that is presently our dying heritage. To cope with the magnitude of our present problems, educators must see their work within a wider historical perspective. Because educators are strongly encouraged to deal with immediate practical problems, the historical perspective that is being suggested may, at first, appear beyond their competencies. In spite of this reservation, I feel it is absolutely necessary that they ponder the broad sweep of evolutionary history.... Truly, we now have a choice either to listen to the voices of the terminal cenozoic or to follow other emergent voices that take us in the direction of transformative education. (1999, p. 47)

U.S. peace educator Betty Reardon (1988), in a similar vein, has pointed out that social transformation of the sort we are envisioning will require a profound change not only in our social structures but also in our patterns of thought. In *Comprehensive peace education: Educating for global responsibility*, she speaks of the need for transformation:

> Stated most succinctly, the general purpose of peace education, as I understand it, is to promote the development of an authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human condition by changing the social structures and the patterns of thought that have created it. This transformational imperative must, in my view, be at the centre of peace education.

> It is important to emphasize that *transformation*, in this context, means a profound, global, cultural change that affects ways of thinking, world views, values, behaviours, relationships, and the structures that make up our public order. It implies a change in the human consciousness and in human society of a dimension far greater than any other that has taken place since the emergence of the nation-state system, and perhaps since the emergence of human settlements. (p. x)

Reardon has outlined very clearly both the role of peace, or global, education and the transformation of society which she hopes will result. The intent is clear; unfortunately the methodology is not. Although this may be one of the most significant—if not the most significant—challenges faced by educators in the history of civilization, we have relatively little empirical research to guide us in developing educational strategies to respond to the challenge. The purpose of this study is to assist in filling that gap.
Exploring the Terrain: The Purpose of this Research

The research reported in this thesis is intended to assist us in carrying out the "transformational imperative" to which Reardon, O'Sullivan, and others refer. As I initially conceived of this research, it was my desire to understand, as fully as possible, how individuals' learning about global issues ultimately contributed to a profound change in their "ways of thinking, world views, values, behaviours, [and] relationships." It seemed to me that the impact of learning on behavioural change and transformation was inadequately understood.

The study was thus designed to provide a rich description of three aspects of adults' intentional learning concerning global issues, including:

- the factors contributing to individuals' decisions to engage in such learning,
- the learning process in which they engaged, and
- the impacts of the learning on the individuals.

The research was based on the belief that in order to design educational interventions to advance social transformation, it was first important to understand the related learning in which individuals engaged, on their own initiative. The research, then, was designed to document, from the perspective of the adult learner, intentional learning concerning global issues. I hoped that through this analysis, I would be able to provide useful information and insights to those engaged in transformative education.

With specific reference to global issues, I felt that educators would benefit from a richer understanding of the reasons individuals chose to learn about fundamental global issues; the learning processes in which they engaged; and the impacts, if any, on their knowledge, opinions, commitment, and action. The research was undertaken to contribute to the task of collecting and analyzing such data.
As I proceeded with the research, it became clear that for the participants in the study, engagement in learning about global issues was not seen as a "separate" activity but was integrated with their concern about, and involvement in, global issues. In describing the process by which they became involved in learning about global issues, the participants were really describing the process by which they became committed to the common good. I thus expanded the focus and nature of my analysis accordingly. This will be documented in greater detail in Chapter 2.

**Understanding the Terrain: What Pictures do we have?**

Given the potential importance of education in helping us to avoid global catastrophe and move to a more positive future, it is surprising—even shocking—that there is not a more complete picture of the ways in which education might play such a role. There is very little empirical research on adults' learning about global issues. What does exist, is very helpful, but is focused on a limited range of learning experiences. We may think of it as giving us a very clear picture of some specific formations within the overall landscape. In addition we have some "aerial photos." These are studies which provide an exceedingly helpful picture of the larger territory in which adults' learning about global issues is located.

**Aerial photos: Individuals deeply committed to the common good**

There are two exceptional studies which provide us with great insight into the lives of individuals who are deeply committed to the "common good." Anne Colby and William Damon (1992) in *Some do care: Contemporary lives of moral commitment* report on a study of 23 "moral exemplars"—individuals who demonstrated moral excellence. Colby and Damon are developmental psychologists who, for some years, had been engaged in studying moral
development. Nevertheless, they were surprised by some of the insights they gained from their study:

There was nothing in our knowledge of moral development literature that enabled us to anticipate the exemplars’ impervious sense of certainty, their disclaimers of courage, their positive attitudes toward hardship and challenge, their receptivity toward new ideas and goals, their lifelong capacity for growth through social influence, or the powerful role of faith and spirituality in their lives. We were also surprised by the extent of common developmental patterns among their extremely varied lives. Despite the individuality of each exemplar, there were startling parallels in how they had acquired and sustained their moral commitments. The developmental pattern of goals and strategies looked very much the same from exemplar to exemplar. (p. xi)

In a complementary groundbreaking study, *Common fire: Leading lives of commitment in a complex world*, the team of Laurent Parks Daloz, Cheryl Keen, James Keen, and Sharon Daloz Parks (1996) conducted interviews with over 100 people who had “sustained long-term commitments to work on behalf of the common good, even in the face of global complexity, diversity, and ambiguity” (p. 5). They sought to answer four questions: what such people were like, how they became that way, what kept them going in spite of inevitable discouragement, and what could be done to encourage this kind of citizenship.

Together, these two studies provide us with a remarkable picture of the individual who is deeply committed to society. On two dimensions, these studies differ from the research in which I engaged: they include individuals committed to a wide range of social issues, not only to global issues; and these studies examine all aspects of the individuals lives, while I focused particularly on the individuals’ learning concerning global issues. In this sense, both studies take in a somewhat broader sweep than my research. Because these studies provide such a clear picture of the personal characteristics of committed individuals, we will review some of the major findings at this point. In Chapter 6, we will examine in more detail these findings, as well as my own, concerning the developmental process which led to such commitment.
Unity of self and morality: The power of the double negative

When one distills down the essence of commitment to the common good, it is clear that such commitment is not something “added on” to an individual’s character; rather, it is part of the essence of the individual. This realization emerged both in the study by Colby and Damon, and in the one by the Daloz team. Daloz and associates, for example, comment on how commitment to the whole earth community is formed and sustained:

We have come to believe that the answer to our two central questions—“How do people become committed to the common good?” and “What sustains them?”—is finally the same. They are sustained by the very processes that made them who they are. The people we interviewed have learned that they and all others are an integral part of the fundamental interdependence of life. Knowing this, when faced with a violation of what they know to be true, they cannot not act. Their commitment derives from knowing that we are bound to one another and to the planet; it is as untenable to turn away from the world’s pain and unrealized potential as to abandon one’s child or sever one’s hand. (1996, p. 195, 196)

The unity of process to which Daloz and his associates refer, leads to what Colby and Damon refer to as “the unifying of self and morality” (p. 293). Common fire captures the essence of this as “the power of the double negative” (p. 193)—the fact that the individuals feel that they cannot not act. One of the participants put it this way:

“Commitment isn’t quite the right word…. It’s like I feel identified with the reality of service. It’s become internalized. I’m not interested in the world because somebody said I should or I think I should be. I really have no choice. It’s become a part of me. It’s what I feel I’m about and what I care about.” (p. 193)

This same notion of the unity of self and morality, of caring for the world, comes across clearly when Daloz and associates asked their participants what would be at stake if they were to quit their commitment to the common good:

One man looked at us bewildered. “Quit the commitment to the truth of my life? I can’t imagine that. That is like impossible. I have no reason whatsoever to do that!” Others echoed him....

This conviction that to quit would betray one’s most profound sense of self was deeply felt by virtually everyone we spoke with. “It’s not even up for grabs anymore. This is
who I am,” said one woman matter-of-factly. “I am my commitments,” said another, “so I would be forsaking myself if I quit. The work that I do is the outward expression of whatever my inner life is.” (p. 199)

**Empathy and compassion**

One of the most clearly defining characteristics of the committed individuals was observed by Daloz and his associates:

The single most important pattern we have found in the lives of people committed to the common good is what we have come to call *a constructive, enlarging engagement with the other*. It is the primary dynamic that drives the evolution [of those committed to the common good] ... and it appeared at some point during the formation of the commitment of everyone in our sample. We had not anticipated this finding, but early in the study as people told us their stories, we began to hear about encounters with others significantly different from themselves. On the surface, the forms of difference were variable. But when we examined this pattern more closely, the differences that were significant in the formation of commitment to the common good were differences defined by “tribe.” (p. 63)

Daloz and associates describe “tribe” as any group with which we share an identity as “like me” or “one of us”—giving a wide range of examples including family of origin, ethnicity, geographical region, religion, profession, lifestyle, organizational affiliation or role, and sports team supporter. The encounters with otherness took many forms. The differences were not necessarily the obvious ones of ethnicity or nationality. Some, for instance, had family members or friends who were “other” because of a disability or mental illness. In a few cases the experience was indirect rather than direct (through reading, for example) or with non-humans—as in the case of an encounter with dolphins which enlarged the individual's understanding of communication and intelligence.

What does seem crucial concerning these encounters is that “some threshold had been crossed, and people had come to feel a *connection* with the other ... that the ‘other’ experienced some fundamental aspect of life in the same way as they did” (Daloz et al., p. 67). The critical
element was a feeling of empathetic connection with a being viewed as “other” in some significant regard.

_Courage? A matter of perception_

When we look at the lives of the participants in these two studies, we are struck by the personal risks which, time after time, the individuals took in pursuing the common good. Yet, Colby and Damon report that the participants in their study pay little attention to risk and almost never calculate the personal consequences of their commitments. They simply do not question the necessity of doing what their principles dictate. The comment of one of the participants was typical, “It’s not anything to do with courage or fear…. I guess it has more to do with obedience. Obeying the call that I hear, and doing what I hear I am asked to do” (p. 71).

Ury (1999) reports a similar attitude when describing villagers who, at great personal risk, protected thousands of Jews during World War II:

Most remarkable of all was that, to them, their behaviour seemed unremarkable. There was not much to say. They did not think of themselves as heroic. They weren’t being modest; it was almost as if it had never occurred to them to act differently. (p. 25)

_Positivity and hopefulness_

Although the committed individuals were dealing with situations and challenges that most would consider to be discouraging or depressing, the individuals themselves typically were grateful for the opportunity to be able to be involved. Colby and Damon (p. 278) report Bishop Tutu having commented on this kind of grateful attitude in the exemplary people he had known. In his view, Mother Teresa did not look on her work among the poor and dying as favours for the people she was helping. Rather, she felt that these people were doing her a favour by offering her the opportunity for such a satisfying spiritual experience.
While others might not demonstrate a positive attitude to the same degree as Mother Teresa, most of the committed individuals were optimistic and joyful—often experiencing a sense of exhilaration similar to that noted by artists and athletes when performing well in their respective fields. Committed individuals tended to deal with bad events by not focusing on them, by construing them in a hopeful way, by finding a way to turn them to one's advantage, or by accepting them as challenges to be met.

**Growth**

The committed individuals were essentially optimists—but not unrealistically so. They were also completely honest. There was little indication of dogmatism. As Colby and Damon point out, "when commitment to honesty is sustained throughout life, it paradoxically creates fluctuation in one's other beliefs" (p. 77). Thus, while on the one hand the individuals had great certainty about their core values and commitments, they were persistent truth-seekers. This was reflected in their openness to questioning and re-examining less-central opinions and assumptions.

The commitment to truth contributed to individuals' continuous growth in knowledge and understanding throughout their lives. Colby and Damon comment:

The story of moral exemplars is largely a story of extraordinary reliability, dependability, and stability in their values and in their conduct.

Yet stability is by no means the whole story. Many moral exemplars show great capacities for change and growth, even late in life..... The stability that they exhibit, therefore, amounts to moral constancy that is wholly unaccompanied by cognitive or behavioral stagnation.... [This] presents us with a kind of "developmental paradox," in that the same processes that account for reliability and stability in the exemplars' moral commitments also account for lifelong change and growth in their manner of carrying out these commitments. (p. 167, 168)
Colby and Damon continue, making two additional observations about the ongoing growth process experienced by moral exemplars. They note that the processes are gradual and that they are collaborative in nature:

Enduring moral commitment takes years to forge, and it is not accomplished in splendid isolation but through extended, frequent communication with collaborators and supporters. Even exemplars who are widely regarded as leaders take formative guidance from others close to them, and even those noted for independence of judgement draw heavily upon the support and advice of groups close to them. (p. 168)

There is a related fascinating observation in both studies. Although we may think of committed individuals as visionaries, few were able or willing to describe a clear vision of the future. A clear sense of purpose was essential, but a clear vision apparently was not. As one individual put it, "You need goals, but you can't paint what the finish line is going to look like" (Daloz et al., p. 205). In fact, many showed a marked distrust of detailed visions, believing that the "common good" was an emergent vision best constructed in a way which respected the full diversity of "the commons."

Close-up shots: Adults' global learning experiences

Although there is little empirical research on adults' learning about global issues, studies by Martha Rogers (1994) and Gordon Ball (1998) provide clear pictures of some features of the overall landscape. Rogers examined the experience of students who were learning about global futures through a university graduate-level class, and Ball studied the transformative learning experiences of people committed to the welfare of the planet and of future generations. Both studies provide very helpful insights into the experience of individuals in particular types of learning situations.
A university course on global futures

Martha Rogers’ (1994) study, *Learning about global futures: An exploration of learning processes and changes in adults* provides a detailed account of adults’ experience as they learn about the future. Rogers studied 11 female graduate students who took a twelve-week course called ‘Crucial Questions for a Positive Future’ offered by Dr. Allen Tough at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, from January to April, 1992. “The course aimed at fostering students’ exploration into their global issues and the long-term future of humanity and the planet. Throughout the course, but particularly near the later stages, students were stimulated to consider the personal implications of their learning and to explore actions they might take” (Rogers, 1994, p. 47).

Rogers makes two over-arching observations. First, she indicates that she was “struck by how unique each person’s experience seemed to be” (p. 76). She indicates that she struggled for some time trying to allow the patterns to emerge from the data. The manner in which this struggle was resolved constitutes an important insight:

The major change in my perspective and one that influenced the ultimate analysis and presentation of the findings, occurred when I consciously realized that these students’ experiences were far more holistic than my original conceptualization had allowed. The holism was evident in two important ways. First, the actual experience of learning was found to be holistic by most students in that learning was not simply a cognitive experience but involved emotional, spiritual and social aspects of their being. Second, learning about global futures was holistic in terms of process and outcomes. When I began the study, I had conceptualized learning processes and changes (outcomes) as distinct concepts. As I dwelled with the stories told by the students, I realized that they did not separate process and outcome. (p. 77)

Reflecting the holistic experience which she observed among her participants, she reports on their learning using three categories: patterns of the mind, of the heart, and of the soul. Since learning about global futures remained a very individual process, participants did not necessarily experience all elements of her model. She likens this to a symphony in which the individual
learners represent the individual orchestra members, coming in at different points, with not all instruments playing all parts of the symphony. The pattern she describes, then, represents the totality of her participants' experiences; within that, the experience of each individual participant differed somewhat. Within this context, Rogers describes the patterns of the mind as follows:

As learners began to engage in the process, many reported some degree of scepticism, confusion or some form of discomfort with the content. A sense of significant pessimism and feeling intellectually overwhelmed were reported by many. As the process of learning unfolded, the mind, which included knowledge, ways of thinking and overall perspective, awoke to the content of global issues and alternative futures. The awakening of the mind eventually gave way to cognitive changes that included an increase in knowledge, shift of perspective and the emergence of a sense of cautious optimism. (p. 160)

Rogers observes that many of the participants found learning about global futures to be intellectually challenging, or even overwhelming. She attributes this to the fact that students were learning about "the vast, inter-related problems facing our civilization," from "extending the temporal perspective to embrace the long-term future," and from coming to grips with "one of the main assumptions in futures studies which is that many alternative futures scenarios are possible and that the future is not predetermined" (p. 168, 169). Rogers sees these as significant intellectual shifts, but believes they are essential elements in our ability to understand and deal with the global issues of the present and the future.

In describing the patterns of the heart, Rogers notes that most students in her study found learning about global futures to be highly emotional, although two of her eleven participants described their learning experience as emotionally calm. The fact that many of the participants found the learning highly emotional is hardly surprising, given the nature of the content. Rogers comments, "The losses associated with the disintegration of existing personal paradigms, as reported by some students, and imagining the possible loss of humanity or the planet are real
losses that may trigger a necessary and healthy grief response” (p. 170). Although the “awakening of the heart … was experienced as an emotional roller-coaster [it] ultimately resulted in a feeling of caring for humanity and the planet” (p. 160).

Rogers defines patterns of the soul as “the essence of the human being, including core values, the theistic or secular meaning for existence and the sense of life purpose. The awakening of the soul involved existential, transpersonal or deeply intuitive questioning as to life’s meaning and purpose” (p. 160, 161). She notes that the soul appeared to play an important role in helping learners to resolve intellectual and emotional struggles in the learning process. In addition, she notes that the search for, and discovery of, appropriate action paths appeared to engender a sense of personal power and hope. Rogers observes a “flow” in several individuals’ experiences: the learning which individuals were dealing with in patterns of the mind led them, in many cases, to respond emotionally with patterns of the heart; these patterns, in turn, led individuals to patterns of the soul. The ultimate path to action was through the soul.

Rogers also comments on a “notable and unintended” finding, running through these patterns in the learning process: the actions which students took to facilitate their own learning. Rogers has termed these “Self-Helping Patterns.” In dealing with the patterns of the mind, for example, Rogers notes that, “Many students reported a need to reduce or even eliminate, for a time, all information related to global issues or the future” (p. 91). In this way, students managed their emotions to avoid becoming totally overwhelmed and immobilized. Participants also dealt with the complexity of the issues by constructing for themselves mental frameworks which allowed them to organize and work with the concepts.

Rogers identifies three self-helping patterns in dealing with patterns of the heart. The first is that it was important for students to accept the emotional nature of the learning
experience. Students then found considerable support by connecting with others. While some found support from those close to them—family, friends, partners, for example—in other cases they sought help from other members of the class or from the class as a whole. They commented on the trust and the bonding that developed within the group (p. 124).

Other self-helping patterns which individuals used to help control their emotions included balancing the despair and sadness they were dealing with in the course with walks in nature, music, reading a gentle story, or imagining times of peaceful tranquility. In order to avoid being emotionally overwhelmed, students seemed to need to find ways of consciously taking control of their emotions. How they did so varied greatly, but the need to do so in some fashion was very clear—both to create some emotional balance in their own lives, and to find and sustain hope which could motivate action.

Finally, Rogers identifies two self-helping patterns of the soul: "connecting with the soul" and "finding a path for action" (p. 137). It is interesting, though perhaps not surprising, that the process of learning about the future caused people to find some way of connecting or reconnecting with their "centre," "core," or "the essence of their being" (p. 137). Ultimately, the most common outcome of this process was the individual finding a path for action—though the process of doing so was far from simple and straightforward.

In concluding her study, Rogers outlines what she believes to be further research needs. These remain largely unaddressed:

The most obvious need is to explore the learning experiences of others who are learning about global futures. Given that this study focused on the experiences of North American, female, graduate students, there is a need to study the experiences of other people, both men and women in a variety of cultures, who are intentionally learning about global issues and the future either in formal or informal contexts. These studies need to illuminate the human experience and thus contribute to a fuller understanding of the nature of learning. There is also a need to study the factors that precipitate or
stimulate people to engage in this kind of learning and there is a need to study the longer-term impact of learning on individuals and their lives. (175)

Transformative learning experiences of individuals committed to the planet

Ball's (1998) study explores the "noteworthy or marker experiences and events," the transformative learning experiences—that led 14 individuals "to change from caring only a little, to caring passionately about and actively supporting the welfare of the planet and of future generations" (p. 3).

Based on the work of Mezirow (1978, 1991), Brookfield (1987), and others, Ball develops a framework of four stages of the transformational learning process, and uses this framework to examine his participants' learning experiences. A variety of others also provide us with insight into transformative learning experiences (Clover, Follen, & Hall, 1998; Cranton, 1994; Mezirow, 1990, 2000). Ball identifies the four stages as:

1. leaving the familiar and entering a state of disequilibrium,
2. responding to the disequilibrium: making meaning,
3. building commitment and personal responsibility,
4. integrating through acting anew (p. 74).

Although there was a great deal of variation in the nature of the transformational experiences which Ball's participants reported, there was a good deal of consistency in their earlier life experiences and influences. Ball comments:

There is no question that early influences play a significant role in the kind of transformation studied here. Whether due to a stream of collective influences, or to the development and cultivation of a fertile ground from which to burst and blossom, the transformative learning experience did not appear to occur devoid of or outside a congruent history and context. (p. 125)
In examining the way in which the experience of his participants relates to the four-phases framework, Ball reports consistency in individuals experiencing an initial state of disequilibrium or disorientation:

In this initial state of encountering the disorientation, two features of the experience were mentioned by participants in the study, not always but frequently: (1) the intensity of emotion accompanying the experience, and (2) the real, direct, concrete, uncontrived, anti-intellectual nature of the experience. (p. 126)

With respect to the second phase he describes—making meaning—Ball does not find the same level of consistency. He comments at some length:

While the literature, particularly the writings of Mezirow (1978), suggests a deliberate, conscious, rational and analytical stage that logically follows a triggering transformative experience or event, the data in this study suggest that this is not at all a deliberate, intellectual, rational process. Mezirow believes that learning through perspective transformation involves a fundamental and thorough re-assessment of oneself and the values that one has been using to make important decisions and judgements about one’s life (p. 194). While this may occur for some people at some level, data from this study did not appear to support such a conclusion. With only a few exceptions, the lives of this group of participants did not typically allow for discrete or extensive reflections an self-scrutiny, nor did most of them report it.... In some cases, this phase, if it can be called that, seemed to be skipped entirely, or to occur concurrently with either the experience itself or subsequent behaviour changes; People often seemed to move directly from one way of being and behaving to another. Also, the locus of change seemed to be at least as much in behaviour, in being and acting differently, as in intellectual processes, perspective shift or attitude change. (p. 135, 136)

Instead of the deliberate, analytical phase described by Mezirow, Ball instead observes three features in participants' interpretations and responses to disequilibrium: “(1) a sense of break-out, metamorphosis or break-through, (2) a sense of unity and connectedness, and (3) a renewed confidence or empowerment” (p. 137).

With respect to the third phase of the transformation process—building commitment and personal responsibility—Ball identifies several prominent features. He finds, for example, that participants in his study “invariably drew a clearer and more focused direction, and renewed passion for it, from their transformative experience” (p. 149). He also finds that “all participants
in the current study said that their transformative learning experiences had led them to a freely-chosen, self-imposed duty” (p. 150). Ball observes:

For most participants, however, the integration of a personal, moral imperative was a matter of redefining themselves, as persons with a personal, global and future-oriented mission, and in some cases as part of a larger social movement. Their life missions, consequently, have become very clear and straightforward. They do what they have to do. Ultimately the only explanation they can give is that they are who they are and they do what they do. One man, when asked about what motives or commitment lay behind his activities, replied, “I suppose the answer to that is that’s the way I am, or that’s the way I have become, I am becoming.” (p. 151)

Ball also notes that what Kiesler (1971, p. 33) called an “additive effect” has occurred—namely, the more often an action is performed that is consistent with the commitment, the more likely it is to be performed again (p. 152). For the participants in his study, Ball notes that passion or intense emotion was central to the formation and sustenance of commitment. Reinforcement and support were also derived from various external sources, primarily from other people, from reading, from nature, and from the outcome of their decisions. Ball also observes that action was a necessary part of the process of individuals confirming their transformation.

Some of the highlights and implications of Ball’s fascinating study can be summarized as follows:

- Transformative experiences “had a significant role to play in the lives and personal changes of people interviewed” (p. 182).
- By their nature, transformative experiences “are surprising, and part of their effect seems to come from the fact that they startle us out of the normal flow of our lives” (p. 182).
- “The establishment of a personal, passionate, moral imperative goes much deeper than mere intellectual, rational realization. The commitment of these participants comes
out of experiences which were accompanied by deep emotion ... [and] may indeed extend into the realm of the spirit” (p. 184).

- Support and reinforcement from peers and mentors was extremely important. “This study and others suggest that those who enter into this realm by themselves are headed for discouragement and are less likely to sustain their commitment” (186).

- Ball, following Mezirow, urges adult educators to “participate actively in public initiatives in support of political, economic and social change” (Mezirow, 1991 in Ball, 1998, p. 189).

In pointing to the need for further research, Ball comments that:

Perhaps the biggest question is the degree to which transformative learning experiences are significant in developing people with an active commitment to the welfare of the planet and of future generations.... It may be that early and long-term influences lay the foundation, without which the benefits of succeeding experiences and opportunities are lost. Rogers (1994) also suggests that “there is ... a need to study the factors that precipitate or stimulate people to engage in this kind of learning.” (p. 191)

The study which follows attempts to address these outstanding questions, and related ones, by providing a rich description of adults’ intentional learning about global issues.
Chapter 2—Methodology

Motivation: Personal, Political, and Academic

The importance of personal motivation

Before we examine the results of this research project, it is appropriate that we understand the approaches taken, both in conducting the research, and in reporting it. The academic and political rationale for the research is outlined in the previous chapter. Research normally also has a strong personal base, flowing from a deep interest or passion on the part of the researcher, as we see in the various accounts reported by Cole and Hunt (1994) in The doctoral thesis journey: Reflections from travellers and guides. This study is no exception. Although it was not my intent to conduct a phenomenological study, in which my own experience became a direct part of the investigation, it is nevertheless important that I outline the personal context for the research. In this way, the reader can more appropriately assess the study’s limitations and biases, as well as its contributions.

Commitment to the research

I have always seen this research as firmly rooted in the themes and concerns of my adult life. As I now reflect on the outcomes of the research, however, I realize more clearly how deeply the motivation for the research is also rooted in my childhood upbringing and family environment—and indeed, how these in turn, reflect values which were deeply rooted in my parents’ upbringing and family experiences.

We will begin with the most direct personal links—those with my early working years. Following my university undergraduate program, I initially taught high school English for two
years and, outside school, became involved in fundraising and political action in support of those facing genocide as a result of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war.

I left teaching to become more directly engaged in environmental and international development issues, and worked for five years as a member of the Canadian staff of an international relief and development organization. While my own specific role focused primarily on fundraising and program coordination, there was always a strong emphasis (personally and organizationally) on “development education”—encouraging Canadians to become more knowledgeable about development issues, and more active in pursuing policies which would promote justice, equity and sustainability.

After five years, I moved into a position in university continuing education, and although there were some ways in which I was able to incorporate my global concerns into my work, these now found expression primarily though my participation, as a volunteer, in peace education organizations and activities.

Throughout the years, in the various roles and activities in which I was involved, two questions, in particular, kept haunting me:

- Why do some individuals become deeply concerned about social issues, while others show little apparent interest or concern? and,
- How can education play a more effective role in fostering commitment to the common good?

**Broader relevance to continuing education**

This study attempts to assist in answering those questions, and thus represents a personal quest as much as a professional one. Nevertheless, in my work in adult education, I could not help but be struck by the parallels between these personal concerns and key issues which apply
more generally in the field. This perhaps first struck me forcefully when I was facilitating the deliberations of a multi-party working group which, in the wake of the Westray tragedy\(^1\), was recommending revisions to the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act. While the group’s recommendations touched on a wide range of issues from workplace safety audits to enforcement and penalties, the report’s first recommendation, underlying all of the others, related to education. It was based on the belief that the most significant change required was one of values and attitudes—in order to create a significant, lasting improvement in workplace health and safety (Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council, 1995, p. 14).

Similar questions to the ones which I had been asking myself concerning commitment to social action, now arose: “Why were some individuals concerned about health and safety while others seemed not to be? And, how could education assist in fostering the culture change which was desired?”

Countless times since, I have seen the same pattern repeated in our thinking and planning. We identify a change of behaviour which we feel is required, or at the very least, desired. We realize that the behaviour is deeply rooted in individuals’ values, beliefs and attitudes. We describe this as a need for a “culture change”—and we look to education as the vehicle to accomplish the change. But we have, at best, only a very limited notion of how education can effectively play the role which is expected of it. The basic pattern appears and reappears in issues as diverse as racism, organizational change, the environment, smoking, conflict resolution, employment equity, and homelessness.

While the present study makes no attempt to examine learning in relation to such a wide range of issues, if the study is helpful in deepening our understanding of adults’ learning

\(^1\) On May 9, 1992 twenty-six men died in an explosion in the Westray Coal Mine, which had opened eight months earlier near New Glasgow, N. S.
concerning global issues, it may also have some relevance in other areas where basic values and attitudes are involved.

**Deep family roots**

Although initially I saw the thesis as arising from the concerns of my working life, increasingly—and especially after reflecting on the results of the research itself—I have become more aware of the extent to which this work is also rooted in my own upbringing through my childhood and youth, and indeed, how it also reflects the upbringing of my parents, in the homes of their youth.

In the case of both of my parents, as I look back on the richness, and the struggle, of their lives and their families' lives, a range of fundamental values seem to me to have provided the foundation: values such as family, church, education, and community. I now see many of these same values, albeit having evolved and changed over time, as ones which my spouse and I have attempted to reflect in raising our four children. I certainly do not mean to suggest that values are simply *inherited*—that we do not have any choice about the values we adopt. On the other hand, I think it only appropriate to acknowledge that values do not appear to simply arise “from nowhere.” And, since my values are an important part of “who I am,” they are likely to be reflected in the way in which I interpret the information I have gathered.

**The Initial Focus: Adults’ Learning about Global Issues**

I began this research with a rather simplistic, linear model in my mind. I imagined that a variety of factors influenced certain individuals to become interested in, and to learn more about, global issues; and that when the individuals pursued such learning, it frequently had a significant impact on them—causing them, for example, to modify their values, their attitudes, or their behaviour, or all three. With this model in mind, I felt it important to understand as fully as
possible the three stages of the process: influence, learning, and impacts. I hoped that, as a result of this enhanced understanding, it would be possible to increase the number of people who became interested in and concerned about global issues (i.e. the "intake" at the first stage), and ultimately, to increase the number of people taking positive action to bring about a better world (the impact at the third stage).

The importance—and difficulty—of the task

I believe that the research I have undertaken does provide a range of helpful insights in this regard, but the simple model with which I began has needed to undergo significant revision as a result of my findings. When I began, for example, I was particularly interested in determining the external influences which had led the participants in my study to become interested in global issues. I came to understand, however, that it was not these external factors which it would be most crucial to identify, but rather the internal processes which took place deep within people's inner selves. And, since the participants repeatedly described their learning about global issues as an integral part of their commitment to a better world, I also came to understand that the real question was not, "What caused individuals to decide to learn about global issues?" but rather, "What caused them to become committed to the common good?" We will address this issue in greater depth in Chapter 6, where we will develop a new model to assist us in understanding the processes involved. In order to be able to do that, however, it is important that we first understand clearly the stories of the participants. We will do that in the following three chapters, focusing in turn on the three areas of investigation: the influences which led individuals to decide to learn more about global issues, the learning processes in which individuals engaged, and the impacts of this learning on them. Ultimately, I hope that the results of this research will be helpful to those struggling to build a positive, sustainable future—
whether they be educators; parents; youth, religious or community leaders; policy makers; or others. First, though, in the balance of this chapter, we will examine some of the challenges and limitations involved in conducting the research.

**No clear decision point**

The decision to *learn about* global issues was not taken in isolation, but typically flowed instead from a *commitment to* global issues. For the individual concerned, this commitment typically involved the individual's values, beliefs, lifestyle and action. The decision to learn more about global issues, then, needs to be understood within the context of such a commitment. The apparent simplicity of the question, "Why did you begin learning about global issues?" masks several difficulties in securing an answer.

The "decision" often was not consciously taken at one point in time but rather developed unconsciously over a considerable period—often years. Henry expressed the difficulty this way:

> It's almost like that question, "When did you start speaking in prose?" I've been doing it all my life, right? I've always been interested in the world around me, world events, news events.... (Interview 7, 10-17)

**The influences often are unclear, even to the person affected**

Sharon, half-joking and half-serious, wondered if there was an explanation—other than heredity:

> I think I've come to the conclusion that it's genetic (laughter)—because I consciously thought about it.... I can't say that I've been interested in *global* issues since day one, but I've always, for as long as I can remember, been interested in justice—and never quite able to understand it [my interest], even as a child. And I really don't have an explanation for that. (Interview 18, 10-21)

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2 For quotations from interviews, reference is provided to the interview number and the line numbers assigned within *The Ethnograph*. Roy and Janie (spouses) were interviewed together in Interview 20.
Influences are part of a complex web

Third, even when individuals are able to identify specific influences, these normally were extracted from a complex web of influences. Frequently one could see other influences occurring simultaneously, and certainly, one could see or imagine a host of prior factors which had, in turn, contributed to the influence in question.

June, for instance, described in some detail the impact of the World Council of Churches workcamp in which she participated in Italy, just after her university graduation in 1950. Clearly, this experience had a deep and lasting effect on her, and contributed significantly to her desire to learn more about global issues. The fact that she decided to pursue this experience in the first place, however, was itself related to a host of factors that preceded it: the development of strong social and religious values in her childhood and youth, her decision to go into church work instead of working with the YWCA, her decision to take her Arts degree at the University of Toronto, the various influences on her there, the political environment immediately following the Second World War—and the list could go on! Each “independent” influence, then, must be understood as part of a web of concurrent and prior influences—only some of which may be apparent, even to the individual affected.

Are there any consistent patterns?

There was a final problem. Before I began this research, an experienced researcher whose judgement I valued highly, expressed concern about whether, in the end, I would have anything useful to say about the influences on individuals. I might have 20 or 25 fascinating stories—but with nothing in common from which I could hope to discern any patterns.

In spite of the difficulties, it seemed to me crucial that, if we hoped to understand more about how to educate effectively concerning global issues, it was absolutely essential that we
understand as fully as possible the learning in which individuals were currently engaged concerning these issues. And, since global learning seemed so inextricably linked to a commitment to values and action related to global issues, it seemed that the logical starting point was to hear, and attempt to understand, people’s individual stories about why they began learning about such issues.

**Identifying—but probing beneath—the external influences**

As I pursued the research and proceeded with the analysis of the influences, several factors kept recurring: the family, religion, cross-cultural experiences, and key individuals, for example, were mentioned by many. This was not surprising, as it pointed toward the kind of "common elements" which I had hoped to identify—factors which fostered the development of an interest in global issues. We examine in Chapter 3 the manner in which several factors functioned in this way. This is very helpful information from the participants in the study, as it allows us to explore in some detail the positive—and negative—impacts of each potential influence.

In the final analysis, however, even this understanding leaves us with a perplexing patchwork. There appears to be little consistency in how individuals were affected by each factor. Religion, for example, was a very strong positive influence for several individuals, but a negative influence for some others and was not mentioned at all by the majority. In addition, apparent consistency often evaporated on closer examination. The family unit in which an individual grew up was mentioned as a strong positive influence by many. As one attempted to probe the details, however, one found that the family influence operated in very different ways in different families. And, of course, many other factors were highly significant for one or two individuals but seemingly absent as a significant influence for others.
The attempt to discover common threads among apparently disparate influences led me to pursue two additional questions: "What was the process through which the influence seems to have occurred?" and "What happened internally, within the individual, as a result of this process?" These lead us, then, from examining the individual's external world, what is happening "out there," to examining the inner self, what each individual was experiencing internally. In pursuing this analysis, we might discover stronger patterns within individuals than are discernible in their external world. We may find, for example, that a strong values orientation was common across interviewees—though in one case it may have resulted from a family influence, in another the impact of religion may have been particularly significant, and for still another, the values may have been significantly shaped by a cross-cultural experience.

On reflection, this is hardly surprising. Stephen Covey and his associates (1994) in *First things first* comment:

In a sense, we each live three lives. We have our public life, where we interact with other people at work, in the community, at social events. We have our private life, where we're away from the public. We may be alone or we may choose to be with friends or family.

But our most significant life is our deep inner life. This is where we connect with our unique human endowments of self-awareness, conscience, independent will, and creative imagination. (p. 109)

Thus, while our search for influences began with an examination of individuals' public and private lives, the search lead us to an even more fruitful area of exploration: commonalities in what went on in the "deep inner lives" of those who became committed to learning about global issues.
The Expanded Focus: The Development of Commitment to the Common Good

As I attempted to understand the common threads which ran through participants’ experiences of learning about global issues, I was repeatedly drawn to the conclusion that the learning on which I was focusing was really part of a larger phenomenon: the development of individuals’ commitment to the common good. Time after time, participants described their learning about global issues not as a distinct activity in their lives, but as an integral part of how they lived their lives, and who they saw themselves to be. A model which addressed only adults’ global learning would be incomplete and inappropriate. In reflecting the participants’ experiences, a much more comprehensive model which located learning in relation to the individuals’ development of commitment to the common good was called for. This model is explored in the final chapter.

The Appropriateness of a Qualitative Methodology

This study is intended to expand our understanding of the experience of adults who have devoted a significant amount of their time to learning about global issues. In the first instance, this requires us to probe in some depth individuals’ memories and understandings of their own experience. Based on the information provided by the participants, we are then in a position to search for similarities and differences from one participant to another—for patterns which go beyond the level of individual experience—and then on the basis of these patterns, to develop a model which may help to explain individuals’ experiences and be useful for further exploration.

As has been noted, this study evolves in its focus—moving from a more limited focus on adults learning about global issues to a more comprehensive focus on the development of commitment to the common good. In a parallel fashion, the methodologies employed in the
study also underwent an evolution. The initial approach was to develop a semi-structured interview schedule which could allow for some flexibility, but would nevertheless result in essentially the same series of questions being asked of each participant.

As the interviews proceeded, I found it most helpful to regard the interview questions more as a guide than as a schedule, so that I could pursue issues raised by the participants, as they raised them. As the analysis proceeded, I attempted to develop a model which helped to describe the complexity of the relationship between participants’ experiences, their learning, the impacts on their “deep inner lives,” and the development of their commitment to the common good. A variety of sources on qualitative research methodology were of assistance at various stages (e.g. Charmaz, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Spradley, 1979; Tesch, 1990).

The Research Process

Defining the criteria for participation

In Intentional Changes: A fresh approach to helping people change, Allen Tough (1982) describes “intentional changes” as ones in which the individual deliberately chooses the change and then takes one or more steps toward achieving it. In this research, my focus was on individuals’ learning rather than on their changes, per se, but I saw the learning in which I was primarily interested as parallel to the changes which Tough had studied. I was interested in individuals who had deliberately chosen to learn about global issues and took one or more steps to pursue such learning. So, much as it might be interesting, for instance, to study a group of participants who watched the nightly television news simply out of habit, or generally to “see what was going on,” it was not incidental learning of that sort in which I was primarily
interested. I wished to focus on individuals who had decided to learn about global issues, and had taken specific steps to implement that decision.

I had established a minimum criterion of 20 hours of deliberate learning about global issues over the previous two years, but as I suspected would be the case, all of the participants far exceeded this level. In contrast to the research by both Rogers and Ball, I did not want to limit the study to any particular type of learning experience, but rather wished to explore the wide range of ways in which adults chose to learn about their world.

It was also not my intent to be too limiting in my definition of "global issues." The Invitation to Participate (Appendix A) invites the involvement of those who have been learning about at least one major global issue, with peace, the environment, human rights, and Third World poverty given as examples. I was aware that some potential participants would be apt to see these specific examples as inextricably linked, while some other participants might be interested only in a single issue, viewing it as entirely unrelated to other issues. For the purposes of this study, either view was equally relevant: the intent was to understand in some depth the motivations, learning processes, and ultimately the impact of the learning, among individuals who devoted considerable energy to that activity.

While it was assumed that many of the individuals probably would have altered some aspect of their behaviour or lifestyle as a result of such learning, this was purposely not identified as a criterion for participation in the study. If individuals engaged in significant learning about global issues and did not alter their behaviour, this was as important to know as that some did change their behaviour. Obviously, the factors contributing to a change on the part of some, and not of others, would be of particular relevance.
Identifying the participants

While it was hoped that the participants in the study would reflect a measure of the diversity of adult Nova Scotians, with a study of this nature there was no attempt to draw a representative sample. An invitation to participate in the study (Appendix A) was distributed to individuals on a mailing list which I compiled—drawn from the membership of peace and environmental organizations, and from the participants’ list of a conference, Educating for a Peaceful World, which I had helped to organize in 1989. When individuals indicated their interest in participating, they were provided with additional information (Appendix B) and, if they decided to continue, were asked to sign the letter, indicating their informed consent.

Developing the interview schedule and conducting the interviews

An Interview Guide was developed to assist in drawing out from the participants, information and reflections relevant to the study (Appendix C). Since I viewed the research as exploratory, I was very concerned that individuals not feel led in making any of their responses. Thus, in order to explore the richness and diversity of individuals’ learning experiences, most interview questions were open-ended. As I conducted the interviews, I found it most useful to use the prepared questions more as a “guide” than as a set “schedule.” While I wished to ensure that each area of questioning was explored within each interview, the sequence and manner in which this was done varied. This allowed me to maintain a natural “flow” within each interview, probing issues as they were raised by the interviewee. To ensure common points of reference, however, within each interview individuals were asked to complete or respond to each of four different “handouts” (contained in Appendix C). The first asked the individual to indicate the extent of their use of various types of learning resources. The second sheet probed various forms of assistance that the individual might have found helpful. The third asked the individual to
respond to a framework concerning “The Individual and the Change Process” developed by Barry Childers and Elizabeth Ferris (1984). The fourth sheet was used to gather basic demographic information, as well as information on the individual’s involvement in various related organizations and activities. With the exception of Childers and Ferris framework, all of the interview questions and the handout sheets were developed specifically for use in this research. In each case, I developed a draft based on my reading and my personal experience in global education, and then refined the draft based on feedback from others familiar with the field.

All interviews were conducted in the late Fall of 1990. In each case a location was identified that was judged to be comfortable for the interviewee—typically in the individual’s home, office, or in some cases, a university meeting room. Interviews typically lasted from one to one-and-one-half hours. All interviews were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Transcribing, coding and analysis

Analysis of the interviews was assisted by the use of The Ethnograph (1988) computer software which allows for the assigning of codes to passages of text. Following the transcribing, the interviews were reviewed for common themes which emerged from the data. In all, approximately 100 themes were identified; all interviews were coded accordingly. The Ethnograph allows for both the assigning of multiple codes to passages of text, and for the “nesting” of codes—the identification of a passage with one theme within a larger passage with a separate theme. The initial analysis proceeded on both a “vertical” and a “horizontal” basis: each interview was analyzed in its entirety in order to identify key data, and material on each theme was then extracted across interviews, to facilitate analysis by themes. The actual steps followed
in the analysis varied with the nature of the material. In many cases, files of highlights and quotations were first compiled, then an analysis was prepared, prior to the drafting of the relevant section of the research report. In several cases various tables or matrices were constructed; in some cases, information was entered into a spreadsheet format and sorted, in order to assist with the analysis. Throughout, extensive use was made of "memo" files and diagrams, in effect as a way of engaging in an extended conversation with myself over the underlying meaning and interpretation of the information which was provided by the participants. Regardless of the specific methods used, the intent constantly, was to both probe more deeply to enhance my understanding, and to test ideas and theories "horizontally" by checking their applicability across participants and as well as with other relevant empirical studies.

Preparing the research report

In presenting the findings of the research, I have chosen to make extensive use of quotations from the interviews, since I have felt it important that, as much as possible, the individuals “tell their own story.” Where possible, I have tried to identify and comment on themes or trends which are reflected in the experience of several individuals.

In most cases, the interview questions were not designed to determine the proportion of the total group who had had a particular type of experience or response. If that had been the intent, a rather different methodology would have been more appropriate. In exploring the range of learning resources used by participants, for example, I did not ask specifically about individuals’ use of public libraries or the extent to which they listened to CBC Radio. That would not have been appropriate for this study, since I wanted the learners themselves to indicate, as much as possible without prompting, what resources they found most helpful. The
fact, however, that several individuals, on their own, indicated that these were very helpful resources, does become quite significant. Just as parliamentarians indicate that if they receive a few letters on any given subject, it suggests to them that many more individuals share similar concerns, we may also expect that where several individuals responded in a similar way, it is likely that others may well have felt similarly, or had similar experiences, even though these went unreported.

It has been my intent, through this research, to prepare as accurate and as complete a "map" or "model" as possible, describing the territory we were investigating: adults' learning about global issues and the relation of that to development of commitment to the common good. Obviously, the interviews with the participants in the study provide us with a primary source of information and images to assist in this task. In this sense, the analysis and recommendations in the final chapter very much "emerge from the data." In addition, however, the analysis will naturally reflect both the literature I have examined, as well as my own personal experiences and perspectives. The primary literature on which I have drawn has either been referred to already, or will be discussed at an appropriate point in the balance of this report. The perspectives and biases I bring to the research have already been alluded to in this chapter.

There is one final reminder that I should give: that the "map" is not the "territory." It has been my hope that a map would assist those who are designing educational programs related to this terrain, as well as those who might, at a later stage, wish to investigate various elements of the overall landscape in greater detail than has been possible for me to do. We should not be under any illusions, however: the map cannot hope to capture the full complexity, power, and richness of the experience itself.
The Time Frame for the Process

All of the interviews were conducted in the late Fall of 1990. Since we have experienced such dramatic change in the global community since that time, it may be helpful to recall some of the events of the period, as a context for understanding and interpreting the comments of the study's participants.

At the beginning: The thawing of the Cold War

In 1990, the Cold War was still in the process of coming to an end (Bernard, 2000; Schell, 1998; McKibben, 1995). Mikhail Gorbachev had been leading reform in the Soviet Union, promoting his concepts of perestroika and glastnost. The Berlin Wall, which had divided East and West for three decades, came down in November 1989, and by October 1990 East and West Germany were politically reunited, with one million Germans pouring into the streets surrounding the Brandenburg Gate to celebrate that historic event. Other Eastern European states including Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland also were moving quickly toward both capitalism and democracy. Even China had begun to open its doors to foreign business, but the massacre of thousands of peaceful protesters in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 sent a chill through the world, demonstrating that China's leaders remained steadfastly opposed to political reform. In February 1990 Nelson Mandela, a key symbol of black resistance to apartheid in South Africa, was released from prison after 27 years of confinement. Throughout the Fall of 1990, there was an increasing build-up of U.S. and other foreign troops—and a heating up of the rhetoric—in the Persian Gulf.

All-in-all, late 1990 was a time of dramatic, and somewhat confusing, change. The tensions between East and West, and the threat of nuclear war, which had hung over the world for decades, had largely dissipated—almost overnight. In many ways, it seemed as if "peace was
breaking out all over.” Yet, in spite of that, Canada along with several other NATO allies appeared to be on the brink of war—joining the U.S. in trying to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. And, it was clear that the transition for the former communist states, including the development of a viable economy with an acceptable standard of living, would not be easy!

Many other global problems—among them, poverty, health, hunger, human rights, and environmental threats—continued to be of great concern. A key question, as the beginning of the 1990s brought an end to the Cold War, was whether this could usher in a period of global cooperation in which the resources which had previously been invested in the arms race could now be applied to solving some of the world’s seemingly intractable problems. Could we, in fact, finally begin working toward a positive global future?

At the end: The promise of the new millennium

A little over a decade has elapsed between the conducting of the interviews and the completion of this report. That requires us to perform some mental adjustments in reading—to remind ourselves of the global context at the time of the interviews. It means, as well, that in the analysis, we must also keep the time frame in mind. If we are looking for information on individuals’ use of the Internet, for example, this study will not be helpful since, in 1990, the Internet had not yet come into common use. As noted earlier, however, the study’s primary intent was not to focus on the use of educational resources at a particular point in time, but rather to examine some of the more enduring patterns concerning the role and impact of global learning in individuals’ lives.

The Learners: Description and Demographics

The research attempts to describe and to understand the experience of 23 individuals who engaged in intentional learning about significant global issues. The information on the
interviewees' characteristics is presented to assist in understanding the experience of these
individuals. Since there was no attempt to construct a random sample, the description of the
interviewees does not—and is not intended to—provide a description of the total population of
those who engage in significant learning about such issues. A summary of some of the personal

Table 1

**Summary of Participant Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Education (Degree or equivalent)</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Organizational Involvement (years)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lorne</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>&gt; 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Education Officer</td>
<td>&gt; 5</td>
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<td>Jeff</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2 – 5</td>
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<td>30s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
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<td>Gordon</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Teacher, Professor</td>
<td>&gt; 5</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Contract Worker</td>
<td>2 – 5</td>
</tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>Professor</td>
<td>2 – 5</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2 – 5</td>
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<td>Literacy Coordinator</td>
<td>2 – 5</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
<td>&gt; 5</td>
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<td>&gt; 5</td>
</tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>&gt; 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Roy</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2 – 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Janie</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Craftsperson</td>
<td>2 – 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>&gt; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Beatrice</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Professional Diploma</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>&gt; 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
characteristics of the participants is provided in Table 1. This may provide a useful reference point as observations by each of the participants are referred to throughout the balance of the thesis. Pseudonyms are used for all participants, as well as for individuals to whom they refer, except in the case of public figures (e.g. speakers at conferences or public meetings). In these cases, the actual identify of the individual is preserved since it is relevant to an understanding of the participant's comments, and no confidential information is involved.

**Age and gender**

The group of interviewees was comprised of 11 women and 12 men ranging in age from their 20s to their 70s. Although there is a good distribution of women and men across the full age range, the absence of men in their 30s and the presence of a disproportionately large number of men in their 40s constitutes a bit of an anomaly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age and Gender Distribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20s</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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</table>

**Geographic distribution**

Fifteen of the interviewees lived in the Halifax-Dartmouth metropolitan area; 8 of the 23 lived in other parts of Nova Scotia.

**Educational level**

The group being studied is highly educated. All had completed a university degree or the equivalent, or an extensive post-secondary professional program. The three individuals holding
doctoral degrees were all men whereas more women than men cited a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Level of Education Attained</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-University Professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Or equivalent

Occupations

Among the individuals comprising the group being studied, there is a heavy bias toward occupations in education. Undoubtedly, this is partly related to the fact that the list of participants in the conference Educating for a Peaceful World was used as one of the sources of potential interviewees. Since, within the study, differences in individuals' experiences will be examined in some detail, it is important to note that only one woman but six of the men were engaged in high school or university teaching, while four women and no men were engaged in elementary and junior high teaching.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Limitations and Sources of Potential Bias

The group of participants

Obviously, in a study of this nature, the composition of the group itself has a major impact on the findings. In identifying participants for the study, I was conscious of trying to reflect a measure of the diversity of Nova Scotians who choose to learn about global issues. Nevertheless, while the group is reasonably balanced in terms of age and gender, and has some urban-rural mix, all of the individuals are Caucasians: none were of Aboriginal or African Canadian origin. Other characteristics of the participants are noted above.

Limitations of the interview process

A second set of limitations is created by the interview process itself. Regardless of how carefully the questions are worded or how skilfully the interviews are conducted, the interviews constitute, at best, a window of one to two hours on a complex lifetime of experiences. The individual being interviewed will have remembered selectively, will have placed their own interpretation on past events, and will have been able to recount only a tiny potion of what they have recalled. Any number of external factors—from current problems or preoccupations of the interviewee, to the general world situation, or the specific news events in the media the day of the interview—may have had an impact on the way in which each individual responded to questions.

My personal values and biases as researcher

I have attempted to be clear about both my interest in the research and the biases which accompany that interest. These biases may have affected my selection of participants, the manner in which I conducted the interviews, or the way in which I analyzed the responses.
The research time frame

Finally, as noted already, we need constantly to remind ourselves of the time frame of the study, with the interviews conducted in late 1990 and the analysis stretching over roughly the next decade. We notice the time frame especially with respect to the political situation at the time of the interviews and also with respect to matters such as the use of learning resources. At the time of the interviews, for example, the Internet was virtually unknown, except for the limited exchange of e-mail.

A source of potential insights

In spite of all of the limitations, the group of individuals who participated in the study give us an unusual opportunity to gain some insight into the experience of learning about global issues. And, while a few of the individuals would have known three or four others in the study group (although, because of the confidentiality, they would not have realized this), for the most part, the individuals moved in different circles and participated in different organizations. This contributes to the diversity of experience on which the study draws.
Chapter 3—The Influence Process:
Why do people choose to learn about global issues?

As outlined in the previous chapter, the study’s initial focus on the external factors which prompted individuals to pursue learning about global issues, ultimately was expanded to examine much more closely the internal changes which occurred as a result of these influences. Before we examine these internal processes, however, it is first necessary to have a very clear understanding of the influence process, the learning process, and the impacts process which the participants described. We will explore these areas in the next three chapters, and then, in the final chapter, develop a model which incorporates our understanding of these into a model which seeks to locate the individuals’ learning about global issues within the development of their commitment to the common good.

Family and Childhood Upbringing

The family environment of one’s childhood and youth was a major—and predominantly positive—influence on the interviewees. Of the 23 individuals interviewed, 19 referred to their childhood family experience. Of those, 9 described their family explicitly as a positive influence. In the case of an additional 6, while the interviewee did not label the family as a direct influence, they described a role for the family that certainly would appear to be positive in its impact. Of the other four interviewees, one was ambivalent about whether or not the family had exerted an influence, two stated explicitly that they felt that their family had not been an influence and one considered her family’s role to have been a negative one. It will be helpful, then, to examine the various roles the family played and the nature of the influence which accompanied these roles.
Building the foundation: The development of values

The predominant way in which the family exerted an influence concerning global issues was in the development of basic values.

Nature of the values

In several cases, the parents held values which resulted in a strong commitment to global issues within their own lives; and the interviewees, their children, adopted similar values. Jeff, Edward, and Laura mention this explicitly, though it likely applied to several others as well. Jeff, for instance, comments on the strong commitment to service and to society found within his extended family:

There was never a sense in our family of the individual being more important than the group. It was almost as if we were Japanese. It's very strange ... the group came first and your responsibilities to society were more important than your own desires. And this always hit home. In large part, I guess, it came from the family's going through the wars [WW I and WW II], my father's family, specifically, being bombed, [family members] dying in the wars, people going across the world sacrificing themselves in many ways, and seeing other parts of the world where people were sacrificing themselves. (Interview 3, 1035-1051)

In a variety of other cases, the values were less explicitly focused on global or international issues but nevertheless contributed toward the development of an interest and concern in this area.

In several families, for example, there were strong religious values which laid the foundation for a commitment to global issues. Religion will be explored as a distinct influence later in this chapter.

In Raymond's family, on the other hand, there was a history of concern for the natural environment, with both his mother and his grandfather belonging to the Sierra Club. The influence of those values, along with Raymond's own experience of spending his summers at a
cottage, swimming and in the woods, no doubt contributed toward what Raymond described as his "deep love of the earth" (Interview 10, 371).

In Henry's case, very different values were mentioned: the valuing of education, of the individual, and of being different:

One thing that in retrospect I think I really got from my mother, especially, was, "It's okay to be different" and it's probably even better to be different. So, being different was associated with left-wing causes and the peace movement was part of that. (Interview 7, 307-314)

These values no doubt were significant in Henry's development as an individual who in the mid-1960s participated in a peace camp which "at that time was a pretty radical thing to do" (Interview 7, 62-63). Henry then went on to become an educator himself, incorporating global issues into his teaching.

**The delayed impact of parental values**

Although at times the influence was felt immediately, at other times it was almost as if, through their values, parents had planted a seed in the mind of their child—a seed which was not to bear fruit until somewhat later.

William, for instance, grew up in a community where conservative religious values were the norm, though his father adopted more liberal socio-political views. As a child William adopted the conservative values. He describes his father's influence this way:

I certainly was aware of his pretty liberal outlook on life in general. I think that encouraged me at a very early age. He was a very sane and wise countervailing voice and vision in an overwhelmingly fundamentalist and Baptist environment. And even though he didn't succeed, much to his disappointment, and probably slight embarrassment, in saving me from the clutches of the fundamentalists as an adolescent, he nonetheless never said too much about it in a critical way, even though I probably disappointed him.

He always supported me and always maintained this essentially sane and liberal stance toward the rest of the world, until I came to my senses—and actually the coming to my senses didn't occur until I left that community and went away to university to study.
That had an almost immediately moderating influence. I was exposed to the world of ideas, the wider world. So, I think he knew I'd be all right in the long run. (Interview 2, 432-460)

A similar phenomenon could be observed when several of the interviewees commented on the values of their children. Raymond, Jean, Beatrice, Roy and Janie all commented on their strong desire to have their children share their global values and all, to varying degrees, commented on the fact that their children went through a stage where they did not seem to share such values to the extent that they, as parents, would have liked. In all cases, however, the interviewees’ children subsequently demonstrated increasing global concerns.

**Modifying the values of parents**

The fact that family values contributed toward the global commitment of many individuals interviewed is not to suggest that the interviewees simply adopted, uncritically, the values of their parents. In many cases, the parental values were modified quite dramatically, but nevertheless had a significant effect.

William, for example, moved considerably to the “left” of his parents politically and theologically, but he nevertheless maintained a strong religious and political involvement. A similar pattern of modifying but not abandoning parental values was seen with several individuals.

Table 5 summarizes the range of family values which were identified as having fostered a commitment to global issues.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Family Values which encouraged global learning</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| William     | * Religion  
               * Father's liberal outlook |
| Jeff        | * Concern for society over the individual  
               * Religion, including compassion, service and responsibility  
               * Critical analysis, discussion, debate  
               * International rather than national allegiance |
| Henry       | * Self confidence  
               * Education  
               * Difference is commendable |
| Edward      | * Father was Internationalist  
               * Religion  
               * Reading, learning |
| Marguerite  | * None  
               * Reaction against father's materialism |
| Raymond     | * Love of nature  
               * Critical analysis  
               * Justice |
| Joseph      | * Critical analysis  
               * Emotion concerning international issues |
| Laura       | * Critical analysis  
               * Activists and internationalists |
| Eleanor     | * Religion |
| Jonathan    | * Justice  
               * Critical analysis |
| Jean        | * Critical analysis  
               * Left-wing political analysis  
               * Internationalists |
| June        | * Religion  
               * Cross-cultural experience  
               * Critical analysis |
| Sharon      | * Critical analysis  
               * Importance of the News |
Embracing values which elicited a strong reaction

Although the predominant role of the family was in the transmission of values, Marguerite commented that her very strong anti-materialist values were in sharp contrast to the values of her parents. In her youth she rebelled against her parents, and by the age of 15 had left home and was living on her own:

I rebelled against my family ... my father left his wife and three kids when I was one year old, to make money in Morocco. He became a millionaire, and I went to see him in France a few times... I picked up a lot of sadness in this man. Like most very rich people, there's such emptiness ... and they always want more! They're never satisfied.

It's interesting; I'm doing the reverse. The more I say, "I don't need this" the less I need ... I love it! (laughter) It's grand! So, yes, it is definitely a reaction to my father. And my mother ... she was an artist and had to teach because she was alone with three kids and now is making a fair amount of money, and that seems to be quite important for her, but not as bad as my father, definitely not as bad. (Interview 9, 713-745)

In Eleanor's case there was also a very powerful reaction, but in this case it was against the values of her father-in-law:

So, another turning point [in the development of my commitment to global issues] came when we were living in British Columbia, when we flew down to Texas to visit Ivan's Dad who was working on a military base down there, and it - just - floored - me! It just - it struck me - this blatant racism, like, "we'll use them, and we'll use the Mexicans for everything we can get. After all they're mindless and stupid and they're really not quite human anyway." So we were just in a constant battle, all the time there. (Interview 14, 295-311)

Reaching out: Introduction to a global neighbourhood

Although the impact of the family on individuals' basic values clearly is significant, it is not the only way in which the family's influence was felt. In several cases the family played a direct role in stimulating interest in global issues. A most striking example of this came in the interview with Jeff, who described a family which seemed to function in a global environment:
My father was in the Royal Navy. We immigrated to Canada. He was a navigator, so he tended to read maps and bring those home sometimes. I would see all these maps and that just naturally took me into larger maps and larger maps.

Also, my father's family spread out around the world. They emigrated to New Zealand, Australia, Rome and everywhere. When you're young and you're listening to somebody talk to you from Australia, you tend to get a global perspective.

Because of that, whenever we used to travel back to see our family in England, I would always be intrigued to find out why the family moved around, and I found out that my grandmother worked for the Royal family as a nanny and my grandfather was in the Royal Air Force as an engineer. They were always travelling and I had an uncle who was assistant to the trade minister in New Zealand, and another uncle who was an executive with a major corporation in Australia.

So they were always moving, so I grew up with a sense of the world as a small place. My extended family was everywhere. So that gave me the desire to find out about the world. (Interview 3, 90-128)

*Demonstrating interest in global events and issues*

Many of the interviewees indicated that there had been considerable interest shown in current events and international issues in the homes in which they grew up. June, for example, comments:

I recall the day that World War II broke out. I remember that very vividly. [My father and I] had quite a heated conversation because he was so confident in the British navy, that there was no question that Hitler would be beaten within a short time. And I don't know where I got my information but I disagreed with him considerably. (Interview 17, 23-33)

Jean grew up in Australia following the Second World War. In her case, several factors contributed simultaneously to the development of a global interest at an early age—but the family's interest in global issues clearly was one of those factors. She comments:

It was, as I say, the McCarthy era, and there was this terrible ... anti-Communist feeling at the time. And anybody who talked about, or even discussed such things ... and in my house, my father and mother used to talk about Karl Marx a lot and they were very interested in what was going on in the rest of the world. I used to hear all these discussions, and as a kid all these old men used to come to our house and talk, and I would listen behind the walls and hear all these discussions.
They'd have a bottle of wine and sit—all fellows who'd been sailors on old sailing vessels, and travelled the world, and they would talk about their experiences ... but I got the feeling very early that this was not "normal," it's not the sort of thing you talk about, or that you're supposed to do. (Interview 16, 1156-79)

Sharon and Joseph, both of whom came from working-class families, also comment on the interest shown in their homes in the news and in political and economic issues. Joseph, for instance, comments:

I remember my parents, when I was a little kid, talking a lot about world issues—particularly during the Korean War. I would have been only 7 or 8 at the time. I can remember them discussing some of the world issues as well as national and provincial politics. It seemed to be quite a topic....

They were not well educated in the formal sense. They had gone through the depression. My father had served during the war. And, of course, my mother was quite interested in what was going on and the global issues because they impacted on him during the war. And they were also quite concerned, because they had suffered so much during the depression, they were concerned about the economics of the social net because they could get work on a fairly irregular basis, and fairly low wage, so they were quite concerned about who was in power—Tory times were hard times. (laughter) (Interview 12, 33-65)

Acting on global issues

In the case of Jeff, Laura and Edward their parents' involvement in global issues also included action. Edward, for example, describes his father going on speaking tours in support of the League of Nations. The involvement of Jeff's family is described above and Laura's parents were very involved in education and political action on peace, justice and human rights.

Developing an analysis of global issues

In several cases (Jeff, Henry, Raymond, Joseph, Laura, Jonathan, Jean, June, and Sharon) there are explicit references to ways in which the family encouraged critical reading and critical analysis. In some cases, the parents had developed a clear analysis of international events. Laura, for example, comments, "I always felt that I was surrounded with analysis—probably because of my parents" (Interview 13, 1199-1201).
Laura grew up in a home where peace, justice and global issues were an integral part of the family culture. While this was largely positive, as a youth it left her feeling out-of-place with her peers and as she moved into adulthood she found herself still having to develop her own analysis. She describes her experience:

Through just things lying around the house or friends of my parents or discussions around the dining room table, my mind was working on all of these issues—particularly with the Third World. I was into all those books and stuff and my friends were thinking I was out to lunch! So that was frustrating. (Interview 13, 23-32)

Probably it would have been more helpful for someone to say to me, “Well, Laura, what do you think about this? And how can you put together an analysis on this?” And to a certain extent in my conversations with my mother I’ve done that on an equal level, talking about issues. (Interview 13, 1206-14)

Family travel

The importance of travel and of cross-cultural experiences as an influence will be more fully explored later in this chapter since these proved to be important influences in their own right. At this point, it is important to observe, as part of the inter-connection of various influences, that the family in which an individual was raised was, at times, instrumental in providing such experiences. Kim, for example, comments on the role of culture in stimulating her interest in global issues and in helping her to understand the connections between issues. She traces this influence back to her childhood, when her family moved frequently within Canada and she had to adapt to different regional cultures.

Referring to the travel he did as a child, Jeff contrasts his experience with that of many of his peers:

Travelling … going to England five or six times as a youngster…. You’re looking at your peers and they’re talking about, “Oh well, we’re going to Florida” and I’d say, “We’re going to Europe” and they’d say, “Why would you want to go to Europe?” Well … you can see something that was built two days ago, and I can see something that was built 2000 years ago. Those sorts of things have a lasting impression and make you want to learn, make you want to be involved. (Interview 3, 1190-1209)
**Introducing high-profile individuals**

Although a great many individuals were influential in the lives of the interviewees, many of the people mentioned were contacts which the individuals made on their own in their youth and adult years. In at least two cases, however—Laura and Jeff—the family played a significant role by exposing them to prominent international personalities. Laura comments:

Whenever I’ve been able to meet major people who have come to conferences, personally, and hear from them [I’ve been deeply influenced]—I’m thinking of once my parents had Ursula Franklin over for a meal at our house, and it was just them and me and I got to talk to her and we talked about what she did for a living and about science and women in science and I don’t remember us specifically talking about peace, but it was surrounding the peace conference and she was featured in the film, and she was one of the major speakers, so the whole thing just blew my mind, so I’ve never forgotten talking with her personally, and I still remember things that she said in the film and from her speech that night. (Interview 13, 785-813)

**The special role of one’s children**

Although most of the emphasis in this section has been placed on the family in which the interviewees were raised, in at least three cases, the interviewees’ own children played a role in prompting them to become involved in global issues. Perhaps the clearest case of this was with Beatrice, whose children were now in university. She describes her first involvement in global issues being at the end of her nursing training but indicates that “when we got married, and I was at home and had more time with the children, that’s when I really started to get active myself” (Interview 22, 30-34). It was some years later, however, when she was getting involved in the nuclear arms issue that the impact of her children was most clear:

With the nuclear issue, it was the children again, you know ... I couldn’t bear to think that there wasn’t going to be a decent world for them. So I suppose a lot of it [my involvement in global issues] stems from wanting it to be a better world for my children and therefore your children. (Interview 22, 367-375)

Isn’t that saying something, with me telling you that? I couldn’t not get involved in the nuclear issue because it was too close to how I felt about my children and the world ... and so I couldn’t stop myself. (Interview 22, 663-670)
The significance of the family influence

The values and events experienced through the family were highly diverse but generally exercised a significant positive impact on most of the interviewees, encouraging them to become interested and involved in global issues. Fifteen of the 23 interviewees described ways in which the family had influenced them. Some others indicated that they had a strong international interest at an early age, but were unable to indicate its origins. One can imagine that the influence of the family was likely to have been significant there, too.

Nevertheless, the role of family was not universally positive, as suggested earlier by Marguerite, and echoed by Barry, when asked if the family was a source of any of his global interest or social concern:

I would say it isn’t a source of it at all. I didn’t have any sense of it being nurtured in the family setting. And what I do recall ... would tend to me to be something to discourage [global involvement] and even today, my parents and a couple of my sisters, anyway, have quite opposite views about one’s responsibility beyond your own “kith and kin.” (Interview 21, 469-479)

In sharp contrast we see the positive effects of the family influence lasting a lifetime. Even though now retired himself, Edward comments that his father—who presumably died many years earlier—continued to serve as a significant role model. In commenting on his own increased involvement in global issues in recent years Edward observes, “I’m conscious that my father took an interest [in global]. I know he’d be pleased” (Interview 8, 323-325).

Religion

Along with family, religion was one of the major influences on the interviewees in the study. Of the 23, 10 explicitly named religion as a positive influence in moving them toward learning about global issues, while another two described religion in ways which would suggest that its role was largely positive. One of the interviewees indicated that religion played a
negative role. The remaining 10 interviewees made no reference to religion, although one did refer to spiritual concerns.

As with other influences, religion seemed deeply intertwined with other factors. Half of those who were influenced positively by religion also were strongly influenced by their families. In many cases, the influence of religion was manifest through the religious upbringing within the home. In some cases, however, the influence of religion was related to factors other than the family: to influential individuals or to specific cross-cultural experiences, for example.

**How did religion play an influential role?**

*Values transmission*

Just as the family played a major role in transmitting values which encouraged a concern for global issues, so too did religion. For several, religion placed a strong emphasis on values such as compassion, justice, and responsibility for the welfare of one's global neighbours. The values so transmitted often remained with the individual throughout life—even though the individual’s involvement in organized religion may have been limited to their childhood.

Joseph, for instance, comments:

> As much as I would hate to admit it, I would say that I was influenced by my Sunday School—the Sunday School curriculum did have a lot of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” “share the wealth” and such. I remember one particular project we had to do fundraising for, was a native Indian Band in Arizona that was in a great deal of economic trouble. So our little Sunday School project was to raise money to send to them. I think we raised $25 or something and sent it down to them. Now I look back and say, “Here we were sending aid money to the U. S.!” (laughter) I would have been around age 10 or so. So that raised my level of awareness of what native people were going through. (Interview 12, 87-112)

*Expansion of the individual’s environment*

For some, from a very early age, religion played a role in expanding the horizons of their world. June comments, in particular, on the role of Mission Band, a group for children ages 5 to 8
which was active within Canadian churches through the 1940s and '50s. Mission Band published a monthly magazine, *World Friends*, which focused on the lives of children around the world. June observed:

*World Friends*—yes I'm sure that the Mission Band program helped a great deal with my worldview. It was certainly broadening, but they [the children in other countries] were part of my world. They were far away, but they were part of my world. (Interview 17, 173-187)

Another way in which the churches expanded the horizons of individuals—both children and adults—was through reports, visits or other contacts with missionaries or others who were working around the globe. In many cases such individuals played multiple roles for the interviewees: transmitting values, expanding horizons by providing both information and analysis, and providing strong role models. Some of these role models were known personally to the interviewees. Others, like Mother Theresa, were larger-than-life figures who nevertheless vividly demonstrated what a life of commitment could entail.

**The challenge to action**

There was a further significant role played by religion: the challenge to take action on the basis of one's values and beliefs. In some cases the potential action was relatively limited—as in the case of Joseph's Sunday School class raising money to send to the Band in Arizona. In other cases, individuals felt they were challenged to engage in full-time "service" in some other part of the world. Lorne, for example, commented that as a young adult he had a good deal of contact with missionaries who, directly or indirectly, kept reminding him, "Yes, Lorne, there's lots of work over there for you if you want to do it" (Interview 1, 389-391).

Both Barry and June commented on the fact that at one stage of their development they planned to become missionaries. June reminds us of the extent to which this emphasis on missions was a part of the church culture:
Certainly at one time—I think I was about 12 or 13, I was sure I was going to be a missionary. But that was so common for that age and for many generations. (Interview 17, 169-173)

Barry is quite candid about his motives when he was planning to become a missionary:

A consciousness that was beyond my own locale certainly goes back to elementary school days.... [I had] a consciousness of a bigger world and a keen interest in it—geography was always a very interesting subject as far as I was concerned.

At one point in time, when I was thinking of teaching, that was what I was going to teach. And, you know, I was really fascinated by other places in the world. In my early teens when I got involved in the church, I announced to the Sunday School class one day that I was going to be a missionary. And the teacher attributed much more noble sentiments to that than it was really worth, (laughter) because it all hinged on travelling and seeing the world. A sense of seeing the world and knowing there was a big world to see has been part of me for some time. (Interview 21, 14-41)

Even though Barry attributes much of his interest in becoming a missionary to his fascination with other places, the church nevertheless played the role of presenting the challenge to take action on his interests and his values. The concept of action therefore seems to have been integrated with the notion of learning and values from a very early age.

Providing learning opportunities within a supportive environment

For some, religion played a highly significant role in encouraging their learning about global issues by providing key learning opportunities, within an environment which both supported the individual’s learning but also challenged their existing world view. Lorne gives one example from the time when he was a student in the 1950s:

Back in the '50s ... you know the '50s, nothing going on ... and the SCM [Student Christian Movement] was at least saying, "We’re going to have a panel on the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament or something ... and it would put you in touch with people who thought very differently than you. (Interview 1, 396-404)

It is certainly significant that at a time when there was relatively little questioning of the strategy of nuclear deterrence, a student group with a religious orientation was among those who were encouraging a discussion of such issues. The significance of Lorne’s comment, however,
and of the role of religion, goes beyond that in two ways. First, the SCM was instrumental in confronting Lorne with a worldview that was significantly different from his own. Lorne was encouraged to grapple with this worldview and come to terms with it intellectually. Second, he was provided with a supportive environment in which to engage in such critical reflection. These hallmarks can be seen in other experiences which interviewees reported on in some detail.

June, for example, describes at some length the very positive learning experience she had in a work camp organized by the World Council of Churches in northern Italy in 1950. The work camp brought together young adults from Italy, German, the Netherlands and North America—individuals who had been on opposing sides during the Second World War. One of the Germans had been a prisoner of war in Canada.

We soon discovered that the Dutch and the Germans ... were not associating with each other at all.... They had the same language—the Dutch spoke German, or they could have conversed in English—both were very friendly with most of us from North America; certainly I was friendly with both groups, and finally one day, one of the Dutch chaps started to tell me how terrible it had been for him and his family after the Nazi occupation, and his sister had died. She had contacted TB, but she died from lack of nourishment. The last winter they had lived on tulip bulbs—that sort of thing.

And he said, “I had such hatred in my heart for Germans, and I thought I can’t continue to live as a Christian and carry that hatred around,” so he and his friends had deliberately come to this camp where they hoped they would meet Germans as well as Italians, though it was really the Germans for whom they had most difficulty.

Of course they got there and then they couldn’t deal with it at all. However, one day, I saw this Dutch chap with [name], the POW. They’d been assigned to work on the road and they were off by themselves. They were working together. I was trying to watch to see if they were speaking—I don’t know if they did or not, I wasn’t aware of it.

But that evening I remember saying, “I noticed what you were doing; it must have been difficult.” And he was very quiet for a while and he said, “Yes, it took a great deal of energy.” Then they shared some more of these experiences, and just the last night we were at camp I saw him talking and laughing with the youngest of the Germans. And I thought, “Aha, there’s been a breakthrough there.”

But that was a great experience in ... living—there were young people from practically all over the world. There were different lifestyles and values and we had to struggle. And in the end, when we were leaving, it was the Italians [with whom initially I had felt
the least in common] who touched me the most deeply. They were kissing us on both cheeks and tears streaming down, so we were their dearest friends. (Interview 17, 303-369)

Negative roles played by religion

Not surprisingly, as with the influence of the family, so too with religion: not all of the impact was positive. The negative aspects of religion were evident in several ways.

Transmitting confining, conservative values and beliefs

In a passage quoted earlier, William commented on the conservative religious beliefs in which he was raised. In effect, these initially constrained the development of an interest in global issues: it was only after he freed himself from the conservative religious values that he was able to pursue an active interest in global issues. He suggests that, in his case, this was a natural process given the influence of his father and the exposure to the world of ideas which he experienced when he left home to attend university. His religion was, nevertheless, an obstacle to be overcome.

Beatrice, Eleanor, and Lorne also grew up within quite conservative religious environments. While the full impact of these is not known, each individual comments on ways in which their involvement in global issues required them to question, rethink, and free themselves from some of their earlier religious beliefs. It certainly appears that these individuals' religious beliefs initially were an impediment to their becoming involved in global issues and that, as such, each individual was required to re-think and reformulate their basic religious beliefs before they were able to become deeply involved, in the way in which they did, in global issues.

Jean, too, indicated that although the church demonstrated concern for poverty in other countries, it did so within a framework which she found counterproductive:

I grew up in the Catholic Church and the Catholic Church used to give us all these brainwashing sessions about the poor people of China and about the terrible communists and what they were doing to all these people—and that hindered, rather than helped, I think. (Interview 16, 47-56)
Conservative political alliances: Siding with big business, against the workers

When asked if there had been any obstacles to her learning about global issues, Jean, without hesitation, responded that the role played by the church in her youth, in Australia, had created serious problems. The church, on both local and international issues, adopted a position of supporting the status quo and strongly challenging any opposition to it. Jean describes the situation in some detail:

I was brought up in a Catholic school, until I was 12, in Australia. The church played a very important role in that town of 20,000 people. This is growing up in the '50s during the McCarthy era and I had a lot of connections—my uncle was very involved in the trade union movement—and the Catholic church, at that time was very antagonistic towards that particular element in the trade union movement. The church was trying to get all of its people elected, so they could do a number on the workers. So I happened to be on the wrong side of things!

And I was learning ballet and I used to dance in these concerts for the trade union movement. And the church would know—they used to have like a Gestapo that watched me on weekends and they would know when I'd performed at the Trades Hall....

Just last year the whole place [Trades Hall] was destroyed by the earthquake, so I can just imagine if any of those nuns were alive today they would probably say, "Oh, well (laughter) it finally came to the right end!" (Interview 16, 1071-1119)

Negative psychological impact

The negative impact of the church in Jean’s life went beyond simply discouraging her global concerns. In fact, it had a very negative and lasting impact on her psychological development, making her much more hesitant to take action than would likely otherwise have been the case.

While, on the surface, this may seem unrelated to an involvement in global issues, as we will see later, the development of the individual’s self-concept and self esteem was a significant factor in the formation of a commitment to global issues. Jean comments on the church’s negative impact on her psychological development:

They used to give me a terrible time, and I got the feeling very early that somehow or other my thinking and my connections were not quite right, because I wasn’t playing the
game their way. I was the only kid in the class that wasn’t made an angel. (Laughter) Things like that, you know....

But through being involved with these trade unionists, I used to hear them speak, too, and I could see what they were getting at, that workers had a need to fight to better their conditions—they were having a really rough time. And I was on their side and the Catholic church was taking the side of big business.

I had to learn very quickly to shut my mouth a lot of times and not get into arguments with anybody and I had to keep very quiet what I did. That all brought a great toll on me. At 12 I had a nervous breakdown. I hated going to school because the nuns were giving me such a hard time, so I got out of it.

And my mother finally agreed that I would go to state school. So that was a turning point, but it also left me very timid, too, about expressing my views and about being open. (Interview 16, 1121-1155)

Although Lorne did not elaborate to the extent that Jean did, he suggests that there were negative psychological effects of his early religious upbringing as well. He comments on the guilt which he has felt and relates it, in part, to his early religious upbringing:

I never felt that I had done the right thing or lived the right way ... I wasn’t out there on the front lines, I didn’t know what it was like to be on the streets with people, so every time the unemployed or whatever talk about their plight I feel, “Well, I’ve never really been out there on the front lines or I haven’t been over there in a Third World country facing the music.” And that becomes destructive, in a way, of what you can do. I’ve spent a lot of time in my life feeling guilty about not being on the front lines. (Interview 1, 849-857)

He continues by commenting on the fact that it has only been relatively recently and partly through reading alternative theological perspectives, that he has come to focus on what he can do and thus free himself of these feelings of guilt.

**Why was the role of religion so significant?**

While many did not mention religion at all as an influence, for several it clearly had a major impact. When one examines the ways in which religion affected the lives of the interviewees, four characteristics of the influence of religion help to account for the significance of its impact.
Interaction with other factors

Religion was usually intertwined as a factor with several other influences—which, themselves, were also significant influences. The two which appear most prominently are family and other people. Usually the impact of religion occurred within a context of strong family influence, or in the context of other strong individuals who were role models for the interviewee, or both. Thus, the impact of each influence reinforced the impact of the other.

Life stages

With many of the individuals in the study, religion exerted its primary influence during their childhood and youth. This was also the time when they were forming their basic values and attitudes. Thus, the impact of religion was greater than might have been the case had it come somewhat later. In addition, for several, religion exerted its influence over a long period of time, spanning several life stages. Whereas some other influences may have been intense, but of limited duration, the impact of religion often began in childhood, continued through youth, university years and (at least) into young adulthood. Thus the continuing effect over a long period of time, including periods when the individual was forming and then re-thinking their basic worldview, reinforced the impact of religion in the individuals’ lives.

Levels of impact

For several, religion operated as an influence on several levels simultaneously. Religion played a positive role in fostering global commitment through what Rogers (1994) termed the patterns of the mind, of the heart, and of the soul. Each pattern of learning, or level of involvement, reinforced the impact of religion on the other levels. Moreover, religion typically had an impact not only on individuals’ mind, heart, and soul, but also on their feet! The challenge to act on one’s values and beliefs was frequently presented forcefully by religion; and
the taking of action was itself a powerful influence on individuals’ future action and commitment.

**Skills development**

The environment provided by religion—at its best—helped to develop skills in the interviewee that were crucial to the individual’s continued involvement in global issues. Religion provided a supportive environment which nevertheless assisted in the development of critical thinking and analysis skills, leadership skills, and, in certain cases, skills of independence. These skills became highly significant in the political environment in which individuals functioned through much of their lives. To be concerned about global issues often meant standing in opposition to the status quo—at least in one’s views and often also in one’s action. The interviewees needed great personal fortitude to withstand the pressures on them. Often these skills were developed around religious rather than global issues, but they nevertheless were highly significant in the individual’s ability to adopt and act on a position on global issues which clearly fell outside the mainstream.

**Travel and Cross-Cultural Experiences**

Interviewees commented on a variety of influences which included cross-cultural experiences. While there were several dimensions to each experience, I have attempted to examine these experiences according to the characteristic that most accurately reflects the dominant attributes. In many cases, of course, it is in fact the interaction of influences on several levels that makes the experience so powerful.

Twelve of the 23 interviewees referred to cross-cultural experiences as positive influences, encouraging them to become more deeply involved in global issues. In general, the impact was felt somewhat later than that of the family and of religion.
Travel

Many of the interviewees had engaged in travel which provided a cross-cultural experience. In Kim and Jeff's case, this travel was early enough in their lives so that it seems to have helped to move them toward an interest in global issues. In other cases, the experience built on an interest that had already surfaced. As such, it served to reinforce or deepen their involvement. In all the cases noted, however, the travel appears to have expanded the individuals' worlds, deepened their interest, and provided them with a much richer base of experience from which to develop their lives. The experience of a few individuals will help to demonstrate the diversity but also the depth of the impact.

Catherine travelled extensively. She travelled across the United States on the SERVAS program—an arrangement by which people can travel on their own but stay with other SERVAS members at no cost. The program was founded after the Second World War in the belief that if people knew each other better it would help to break down stereotypes and differences. Indeed, Catherine commented that it had had that effect on her with respect to her American neighbours, "they were just wonderful, they were just the most incredible people ... it completely wiped out my prejudice in terms of that narrowness [of the American people]" (Interview 11, 1104-1111).

Catherine also learned Esperanto—a language intended to be used as a universal language—before travelling through Asia and the Pacific Islands. Although it was difficult finding anyone who knew Esperanto, she nevertheless did find some and thus used it to assist her in communicating directly with individuals who did not speak English. Catherine also referred to having learned German when she was in Germany and was a strong advocate of the importance of language to facilitate direct communication among people of different backgrounds.
Travel influenced Catherine in several ways. Three, in particular, deserve note. First, differences in the political situation both sparked her interest and advanced her analysis:

When I was in New Zealand a few years ago, I was impressed with the way they dealt with the Americans—you know, they kicked them out; a small country like that stood up to them, and they would not have nuclear weapons or nuclear ships in their harbours. I was very impressed with that—such a small country. (Interview 11, 34-44)

Secondly, Catherine was impressed with the value which many other cultures placed on the connections between issues. In contrast, she had long been troubled by the compartmentalization of knowledge in North America. She comments:

I’ve always been a person who has tried to see the whole and haven’t really felt that comfortable with the way that society breaks things up in separate expertise and specialities. The education system broke everything up into subjects and to me [there was] no real understanding of the whole.

I think that is what has driven me to try to see the whole because it’s seemed obviously lacking to me. In schools [as a teacher] I always fought to try to have a more interdisciplinary approach to everything so we could connect it all together. So my whole life I’ve been trying to connect things, helping people make connections. [Otherwise] it’s almost like divide and conquer so nobody really knows what is going on and nobody’s really responsible … nobody sees the whole picture therefore nobody deals with the whole problem.

When I travel, I notice that other cultures have a lot more connectedness in almost everything they do—in their community and their society. I found that to be lacking in our society. (Interview 11, 470-513)

In her own case, she sees the emphasis on connections, in part at least, arising from her long-standing interest in nature, her appreciation of nature, and her comfort in it. She has tried to apply the kinds of connections she observes in nature to her analysis of social issues and has felt frustrated because mainstream North American education tends to dissect problems rather than grapple with them in a holistic way. In Catherine’s case, that led her to study at the Center for Holistic Resource Management in New Mexico. Her experience there will be dealt with in more detail later when we examine the process of individuals’ learning.
Finally, and perhaps most important, Catherine found through travel something that many of the interviewees—in one way or another—expressed a need for: confirmation that their worldview had legitimacy. In commenting on obstacles to her learning, Catherine identified her own culture:

I would say living in this part of the world [was a major obstacle]. I consider this part of the world probably one of the most traditional ... it wasn’t really until I travelled that I realized that my way of looking at things was acceptable. (Interview 11, 1315-1321)

Gary’s experience in travel was rather different. Gary was elected as national vice-president and then president of his professional association. In his role on that body and on the board of it’s international counterpart, Gary engaged in considerable travel. Several of his trips were to international meetings or conferences. Even though these were short and focused on business matters, they nevertheless forcefully impressed on Gary, and no doubt on the other individuals involved, the international environment in which they were operating. The day before our interview, for example, Gary had just returned from an international committee meeting. The half-dozen involved in the meeting came from Honduras, Ireland, Japan, Canada and the United States. Even for this small meeting, simultaneous translation in English, Spanish and Japanese was required.

For five years Gary served on the international development committee of his Canadian professional association. He describes the richness of the experiences associated with his work on that committee and the impact that it had on him, particularly his first field trip to South Africa in the mid-1980s, during apartheid:

My initiation was to go with the Program Director who travels widely.... Bill took me in hand and we went off to, of all places, South Africa, so I had the chance—perhaps one of the most important days in my life in having a long-term effect—I had the opportunity to visit four schools in Soweto. (Interview 19, 401-422)
Gary clearly realized what a privilege it was to have international contacts of this nature.

He commented further on this first year on the international development committee:

So that was fascinating, and it blows one’s mind so that I still kind of pinch myself with the fortunate opportunities I’ve had ... to sit there and say, “now I’m talking with someone from the Cameroon,” then, “now I’m talking with someone from Zaire, and the Zambians are coming at lunch time....” (Interview 19, 646-656)

Something of the impact of these experiences can be seen when Gary describes his reaction to the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990:

So that has had an effect, to the point that last February, when Mandela was released, I was sitting home watching this on TV, the channels had it live, and emotionally I felt I have to talk to somebody about this—I never thought I’d see this day! I’ve been talking about it and I just got wrapped up in it! And I got on the phone and got to my buddy in Ottawa [the project officer], and the two of us were almost like.... honest to heavens, we were getting up and cheering, you think you’re removed, but you’re not removed at all from the situation. (Interview 19, 424-443)

Although many individuals travelled, there are two additional experiences which are worth noting since they were very different from either Catherine’s or Gary’s. At the end of his university program, Jonathan travelled across Canada and back again by train. In this case, the benefit of the travel seems to be less in what he saw and who he met, and more in the fact that it provided him with a complete break from his normal, very active lifestyle. As he travelled by train he had time to read and to reflect:

I had a lot of chance to read and did a lot of reading, and in particular I read Joan Baez’s autobiography. I was getting into her music through university, and saw her in concert. And then I read her autobiography, and she talked a lot about non-violence and about King and Gandhi and that prompted my interest in the pacifist side of things, and I hadn’t really considered it before—that there was a difference between being a peace activist and being a pacifist—quite a strong difference when you really get into it.

And later on, on that trip, I bought a book on Gandhi and read that. I was fascinated by that. And I’ve been quite strongly interested in non-violence theory [since then]. (Interview 15, 232-257)
Yet June, who travelled extensively, reports another type of travel-related influence. Usually her travel was directly related to her interests in global issues but once she travelled purely as a tourist. It is interesting to hear her comments:

The other thing that I’ve discovered is that . . . I’ve always wanted to travel the Caribbean area, and a few years ago I was down in St. Lucia for a winter holiday and I know now I can never go again to one of those winter holiday resorts, in those areas.

It was a fairly posh resort—it was one of the package deals so it wasn’t that expensive. But to see the poverty, just on the edge, on the fringe of that place, and we would deliberately travel on public buses when we went to the town and so on, and to see the hostility against the tourists. And as I say, I could never again go into a situation like that.

I could go and live amongst the people, but not to a tourist resort . . . it makes me so angry to think that we had this beautiful seashore in one of the choice beaches on their island, and they had no access to it. So that kind of injustice, it just . . . [deeply angered me] (Interview 17, 795-822)

Finally, Gordon provides us with an image of travel that reveals much about its significance. In thinking back to the roots of his interest in global issues, Gordon relates the following:

I remember as a kid looking through the National Geographic Magazine and there was an American with a rucksack sitting there on a Rialto in Venice, and this was back in the early to middle ’50s, and I said, “I’m going to do that too.” So after I failed grade 12 I went to Europe for a year and hitch-hiked around and sat on the Rialto, wishing there’d been someone there to take my picture! So there’s always been that curiosity, that I can remember instances of in elementary school and high school. (Interview 5, 24-38)

I think that, certainly as a teenager, I was bored out of my skull. Anything but growing up here . . . you know, Ontario, Boston or Europe . . . it was a matter of breaking free.

But I think there was definitely an intellectual need. I was interested in politics, I was interested in all sorts of social issues but there wasn’t any scope for that in school or in my community. And I couldn’t have articulated what I wanted, but I knew I wanted something more substantial than I was having, so a glimpse, to see a chap sitting on a bridge in another country—that perhaps helped to crystallize the possibility of breaking free. (Interview 5, 70-94)

Travel was a very significant influence. As with other major influences which we have examined, the influence was felt differently by different people, and the influence often was
exerted in combination with other factors. Nevertheless, we can see that among the positive influences of travel are its contribution to individuals’ knowledge, their analysis, and their values. In particular, it stressed the connectedness of problems and issues. It also played the role with Catherine of valuing and giving legitimacy to the views which she held. Travel contributed toward a much-expanded worldview and, by taking the individual away from their daily routine, provided the opportunity for reading and reflection. Finally, Gordon identifies two important aspects of travel: it reflects and encourages curiosity, and it represents a breaking free from the constraints of one’s daily circumstances and lifestyle. It is perhaps this “breaking free”—physically, intellectually and emotionally—which constitutes its greatest significance.

**International work or workcamps**

June and Gordon were the two interviewees who had had an international working experience as young adults. June’s experience in the World Council of Churches workcamp in Italy has already been examined. Gordon and his spouse went with CUSO to teach in Zambia in the late 1960s. Reflecting on his CUSO experience, Gordon comments, “I suppose that was the beginning of a very strong and active interest [in global issues]” (Interview 5, 13-15).

As both June and Gordon elaborate on their international working experience and on other influences in their early lives, it is clear that by the time they decided to participate in these programs they already had developed a very substantial interest in global issues. The work outside Canada, nevertheless, was very important—but primarily in fostering the growth and development of their international interest, not in initiating it. Gordon comments on the role of the experience in his development:

It’s always been in my blood. So I guess the CUSO experience really cemented it, made it firm and important, and it has always informed my learning ever since.... Certainly by that time I was politically astute enough to know that I was going to be a guest in another country but I never thought, when I was in Zambia, that I was doing anyone a favour. I
was, in my own mind, the chief beneficiary of that experience. (Interview 5, 49-53, 102-109)

In response to a question about whether the experience had caused him to significantly alter his attitudes, Gordon responded that it had not, although it encouraged growth in his political analysis: "I think that politically I probably matured, my politics was probably reinforced by that experience" (Interview 5, 122-125). CUSO also helped to focus his academic interests:

I had messed around with my MA in political science for two years. I had done the course work and I had thought of doing something on Social Credit’s position on foreign policy. Couldn’t get anywhere on that; went to Zambia and I then discovered some purpose. I was always unhappy with political science because … it was wrong to take a political position … the behaviourists were dominant and it was just an arid academic game.

Zambia changed that; it showed me that things that I was interested in were worth talking about, worth getting involved in. So I came back and did my thesis on African foreign policy. I whipped it off in good order because I had some purpose, and believed in what I was doing. But I abandoned political science for those reasons—it seemed to be remote from the issues of the real world. (Interview 5, 261-285)

It is interesting to observe that two of the themes running through Gordon’s comments are reminiscent of Catherine’s experience. Both experienced considerable frustration with the traditional academic approach to international issues and both found that their own personal international experiences gave legitimacy to their perspectives and analysis.

While the international working experience of June and Gordon was very positive, it is worth noting that Gordon also comments on a man who had recently spoken to one of his classes about his year working in Africa.

Here is someone who is probably very naive about Africa, and I still think he is…. I don’t know whether that [experience of working in Africa] has entered his soul…. He seemed to have a negative view of Africans. Yet this man was essentially honest. He’s not a racist…. I think he’s a good human being, but I think this experience in Africa in no way changed his worldview. (Interview 5, 746-788)
Once again we see the phenomenon which we observed in relation to other positive influences: what is a positive influence for many may nevertheless have no impact or even a negative impact on others. While the evidence is limited to a few individuals, in this case the international experience was very positive in a context where the individual was already interested in global issues but in the case of someone who had no apparent international interest or background, it did not appear to be sufficient, alone, to significantly alter his worldview.

**Language learning**

Although language learning is closely related to other factors, including travel and exposure to other cultures, and although only two interviewees mentioned it, it nevertheless deserves separate attention. While language learning seems not to have been a significant influence for many of the interviewees, for Catherine and Laura it was very important. We have already seen how Catherine learned Esperanto to assist her in communicating directly with those who didn’t share her language or culture, and Gary, though he hadn’t learned other languages, recognized its importance for communication and the difficulty that others must have trying to communicate in English.

Laura is the interviewee who focuses most directly on the value of language learning. She sees it as having very practical application for her as she pursues job opportunities relating to global issues, but more importantly, she sees language as a significant key to understanding other cultures. At the time of the interview, Laura was teaching French in an elementary school immersion program and hoping eventually to work in Canada on Latin American issues.

[Another thread running though my experience], interestingly enough, is second language learning. I learned French early on in Ottawa as a child—I was in Immersion for grades 1, 2, and 3. Then we moved here [to Halifax, and at that time] there wasn’t Immersion, so I couldn’t continue with it, but ... I kept up my French and as an adult I went to Laval and studied for two years....
The learning I value [most] from those years was the whole cultural experience. I learned about Quebec as a society. In fact, at Laval, you do the language learning in context, living with a family, which I did my second year. My friends were Quebecois. And that has changed my life. So from early on, and keeping the [second language] thread going, and as a young adult really picking it back up—that has changed my life professionally in that it opens doors. But it’s [also] changed my opinions about politics in Canada and about Quebec and English Canada questions, and it’s made me value how much another language and learning about another culture really opens up your world.

It’s so cliché, but it’s true—it’s easy to appreciate why people don’t understand Quebec if they are unilingual, if they’ve never had a second language.

Right now I’m working on my Spanish.... I understand how key a language is both to future career goals, and to learning in depth about Latin American issues in Canada.

I don’t envision myself going off and saving Latin America, or even working there for extended periods of time; I envision myself working here in Canada. But language learning, I think, has changed my life, and I think really will open up new doors.

(Interview 13, 1434-1504)

How did cross-cultural experiences play an influential role?

Most of the cross-cultural experiences involved travel to a different environment and, in that environment, extensive contact with a culture with which the interviewee had been previously unfamiliar. There were, however, many reasons for the travel and thus for the cultural contact.

A few of the experiences came to the interviewees as children as a result of family decisions or circumstances. As noted earlier, Kim, for instance, was exposed to different cultures through her childhood, since the family moved several times. At an early age this experience of moving from place to place raised her level of awareness of different cultures. Gradually she also became more aware of the interconnectedness of cultures and issues from one situation to another.

As a young girl growing up in Australia just after the Second World War, Jean had a rich opportunity to gain an appreciation of an ethnic and cultural experience very different from her own. Her closest friend was a Jewish girl whose mother was a Russian Jew and father was a German Jew:
So exposure to Paula when I was 12 made me very interested in her background—her father and mother escaped from Germany through the Underground. They were *movers*—very, very important in helping to get people out of Germany. They escaped, actually, through Canada. That was probably what sparked an interest in world affairs. (Interview 16, 32-43)

Family-related influences also include Jeff's travel to Europe on several occasions. Such travel broadened his horizons, stimulated his interest in European history and current events, and certainly further reinforced the interest in global issues.

**Education**

**The school system**

Although at the time of the interviews, formal education was very important in the lives of many of the interviewees, during their childhood and youth it seems to have played only a relatively minor role in influencing them to become interested in learning about global issues. To the extent that it did, the positive influence normally was related to a specific teacher or project. Joseph, for example, comments:

As I continued on through school I used to read a great deal and enjoyed that very much. I remember in particular a high school teacher, a civics teacher, world politics, and I was greatly inspired by him. (Interview 12, 69-74)

This is a useful reminder that certain people and experiences from childhood have a lasting influence through our lives. June, looking back 50 years, recalls:

I think it was about Grade 9 that I had to represent our class in a public speaking contest. I chose (chuckles) a comparison of communism, socialism, and fascism. I didn't know that much, but I can remember some of the quotes so vividly, "Workers of the world unite, you have nothing but your chains to lose and the world to gain." And another one, I jotted it down this evening, I’d forgotten it for so long, "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need." And that has stayed with me ... but I also recall, and I think it was probably about Grade 11, reading books like *Inside Europe* by John Gunther. (Interview 17, 48-75)
Gordon, however, provides us with a reminder that the school system does not always serve us as well as it might:

I never thought that I had been particularly well served by my schools—even by my university. I don’t think that I was given much help. I’m not sure if anyone was supposed to give me any help. I was able to find my own way, but I didn’t run into a lot of people who could suggest rich resources or wonderful books about life elsewhere, and I’m sure my learning could have been more efficient if I’d run into teachers or friends along the way for whom these kinds of questions were interesting. (Interview 5, 535-549)

Laura’s school experience wasn’t particularly positive, either, but in her case the feeling of alienation from her peers seemed to be particularly significant.

I remember in high school being very frustrated with the atmosphere because none of my friends, nobody around me at school or socially, apart from the home, was talking to me about issues that I had become aware of. (Interview 13, 15-21)

While there is a reasonably even split between positive and negative comments about the role of the school system, only 8 of the interviewees mention it at all and the primary message we receive is that for most, it simply was not a major influence.

University

There was more positive comment about the role of university education. This is not surprising, since it is a more recent experience and in some cases a continuing one. Certainly, too, one would expect global issues to be examined in the university environment. Nevertheless, there was a good deal of variation in people’s university experience. William, for instance, attended a small Maritime church-affiliated university and comments,

I went to university in the early ’60s before the so-called counter-culture revolution, so not only did I not get exposed to any intellectual stimulation while I was there, it was positively claustrophobic with its concern for embracing the status quo. In retrospect, as fond as I am of the university in many ways, it was the worst possible training ground for anybody to go to think independently.... You got a good liberal education in the very traditional and probably narrowly defined meaning of that term, but you got no exposure—or at least I didn’t—to anybody who had a radically different point of view, one that deviated from the mainstream. (Interview 2, 1447-1471)
June had a more positive experience in the 1940s:

I think of those years when I was around the University of Toronto—they were very rich in terms of the many, many contacts we had, people from all over, and SCM [Student Christian Movement] was part of that, but also the United Church community at the university. So that was really an informative—it wasn’t formative, but it was an informative period. (Interview 17, 663-672)

Laura, too, had a positive university experience in the 1980s. Contrasting it with her high school experience, she comments:

In university it was a whole different ball game. I remember thinking all of a sudden: my, there are all these people—there are groups dealing with this stuff [global issues], there are courses, and even though I had grown up in the [activist] family I did, I didn’t have a sense of all these things, at Dal, anyway. (Interview 13, 34-42)

Taken as a whole, university experiences seem to have been reasonably significant.

Fourteen of the 23 interviewees mention them positively, with two additional people giving a mixed review. June’s distinction between university as an informative rather than a formative experience seems to apply to many. So, in university, individuals found a rich environment in which to pursue their interest in global issues, but in the case of most individuals in the study, the basic commitment to global issues had been formed before they reached university.

**Peers, Mentors, and Role Models: Significant Individuals**

While at a certain level, all influences are rooted in people, it nevertheless seems appropriate to comment directly on the role of individuals. Although there is bound to be some overlap between the role of individuals and other influences, this section will attempt to focus particularly on the role played by individual personalities as distinct from the environment in which they operated—such as the church or the educational system, for example. These have already been discussed in their own right. In addition, the role of speakers and resource persons within educational events such as public meetings, conferences, and residential programs will be dealt with in the next chapter, as part of the examination of the learning process.
When we begin to examine the impact of individuals, we are immediately struck by the magnitude of the influence. Almost every participant identified individuals who played a significant role in their learning and the development of their commitment to global issues. Only one interviewee, Gordon, when asked about individuals who were particularly helpful or influential as part of his learning process replied, “No, there weren’t any” (Interview 5, 432). In all other cases—though it often was not necessary to ask the question directly—the interviewees commented on individuals who had played a significant role in the development of their global consciousness, or in support groups to which they belonged.

**What roles did individuals play?**

Although the influences of individuals occurred in a wide range of different settings, they fell primarily into three roles: challenging beliefs and assumptions, encouraging action, and providing support.

*Challenging beliefs and assumptions*

Three of the interviewees identified individuals who had caused them to question their basic values, beliefs or assumptions. The outcome of this questioning, ultimately, was a stronger commitment to global issues. It is interesting that almost all of the individuals identified as playing this role functioned within a university setting.

Jean’s experience was as a science teacher who moved to Canada and had to take university courses to obtain her Canadian teaching license. Since she was living in a smaller community without a university, she took university extension courses which were available. These exposed her to a range of faculty members in history and the social sciences who challenged many of her earlier assumptions and beliefs.
Raymond describes going to university near his home in the U. S. and again, somewhat by accident, encountering a professor who stimulated him to question his world view:

I thought I was going to be a pre-medical student, and found out that I wasn’t. Chemistry and I didn’t hit it off! [So] I took a course called “Basic Beliefs of Modern Man” and was exposed to some alternate views and had a wonderful professor who was actually a guy who’d been blacklisted during the McCarthy era, who had a fairly radical critique of what America was about—a wonderful person, really—and was exposed to some different ways of seeing things. I started reading I. F. Stone’s Weekly and there was also a radical magazine called The Minority of One. (Interview 10, 237-253)

Earlier, Raymond had encountered a camp counsellor who prompted him to begin thinking about different lifestyles and world views:

When I was at a summer camp when I was around 13 I had a counsellor who was an artist, actually, and I spent a lot of time in the craft cabin talking with this guy. I think we had a kind of bond there around a kind of aesthetic view of the world, an appreciation of natural beauty. And he was also a [role] model ... he was also a semi-Bohemian type. He was from Oberland College ... the first time I’d encountered that, and I was totally fascinated by somebody that could live a different kind of life than what I’d seen in Shaker Heights, which was the suburb of Cleveland where I grew up. (Interview 10, 477-493)

Henry echoes some of the same sense when he speaks of two of his mentors. Henry had not been particularly involved in global issues in his early teaching years in Vancouver. In moving to Montreal to teach and pursue graduate work, he was particularly keen to learn about the Quebec culture. Largely because of his faculty advisor, however, he was exposed to a circle of Jewish friends, to Jewish culture, to the writings of Martin Buber, and inevitably to the holocaust and other global issues. The other individual Henry mentions was also a graduate advisor, but later, in Alberta. This person was a social studies educator and curriculum theorist, who “encouraged me to think in broad conceptual terms of world views and world paradigms” (Interview 7, 444-446). Henry’s comment on his readiness to learn is very interesting:

I was interested in the idea of world views before I got there ... I think you can only be influenced by people when you’re ready to be influenced so that the seed was already there and he certainly provided a role model in thinking and acting and in writing. I think
it was from that experience with him, then, that I was open to thinking of other global issues. (Interview 7, 448-461)

In each of these cases, then, there were people close to the interviewee who caused them to critically examine their beliefs, assumptions, and commitment—and, as a result, to develop a much stronger commitment to global issues.

**Encouraging action**

In the case of Jean, Raymond, and Henry the challenge coming from other individuals was to the beliefs of the interviewee. There is thus a somewhat similar pattern in all three. In Lorne's case, however, the situation was rather different. Lorne was well-versed in global issues and had been teaching university courses in this area for many years. He probably would have had many of the characteristics of those faculty members described by Jean, Raymond, and Henry—and probably had, himself, been instrumental in challenging many students to begin thinking seriously about international issues, particularly related to the arms race, peace, war, and conflict resolution. But, when some of Lorne’s colleagues became concerned about the arms race and began meeting to determine what they could do, it prompted him to deepen his own involvement:

I think I developed a guilty conscience ... when other people got concerned.... I had already gone through that stuff [on the nuclear arms race] and my immediate reaction [when the faculty group got together] was: “Oh, yea, I’ll go to the meetings but I’d been through this before. Why get so excited?” But I still was sensitive enough to what they were talking about and I thought, “Well, actually, this is interesting, this is important.” And once they started to look at it, of course, I realized, “Ooh, this is much more serious than I thought.” I remember the meeting where some faculty came together and said, “What are we doing about what was happening? What are we going to do? What are you going to do?” And that triggered the new course [on the arms race]. (Interview 1, 244-293)
Providing support

Almost everyone interviewed identified peers or others who supported them in their global learning. In most cases, these individuals provided support during the learning process. For the individuals in the study, peers were not normally a significant influence, contributing to the initial decision to learn about global issues. Jeff was an exception. He describes wanting to learn so that he could participate in discussions with his friends:

I had a lot of friends all the way through university, and we used to just sit and discuss politics—[these were] not people that were involved [in action], they just discussed global issues—and most of the time I'd just sit on the side-lines and listen. I didn't feel up to participating. But I think that's part of what may have spawned my interest, to be able to participate. (Interview 15, 137-148)

The extent of the support available to the interviewees was astounding. Twelve of the interviewees belonged to on-going peace education groups such as Project Ploughshares or Educators for Social Responsibility. All of the others except Gordon identified friends or co-workers who provided support.

While, in recent years, the political climate has changed very dramatically, we are vividly reminded by Beatrice of how important such support often was to individuals. Interestingly, however, the groups often both provided support, but also challenged their members to go as far as they were prepared to, in terms of their actions. Beatrice, in a comment part of which was reported earlier, reflects on her role as a spokesperson of the Peace Support Group, in reporting to the parent body, the local United Church Presbytery:

Now you're not [seen as] so far out Left and you're not [seen as] so radical when you talk about these things, but then, it was difficult because they did look upon us as really very radical. I mean, to stand up in Presbytery and talk to all those Centre or Right people that was—that was difficult! It really was.... You forget that for all those years it was difficult to go to groups and talk about these things—because they either didn't want to know or they thought that you were being unpatriotic and that we definitely needed a deterrence. (Interview 22, 748-772)
In most cases, the support of peers was provided through an action group. People seemed to draw great support from other participants in such settings and, in many cases, it was obvious that the participants worked very closely together, often over a period of years. Ten of the interviewees commented on this form of support. In several cases, it appears to have been their major form of support. Interestingly, 9 of the 10 were women. And, in Sharon’s case, the support she spoke of was very closely tied to the women’s movement:

I would have to say that I’ve been very fortunate in that I have ended up tied in to people who have indeed helped me with many of these things. I think networking is really important. And I’m just lucky, I guess that I’m a very outgoing and inquisitive person, so if I want to know something, I have no hesitation in picking up the phone and calling somebody I don’t know, whose name has been given to me, and saying, “Hi, I hear you have this information. Would you like to share it?” So I have no problem doing that. (Interview 18, 535-553)

Again, I think I’ve been very fortunate because I’m tied in with a lot of very strong women in this community, who are involved with everything from the women’s movement to peace initiatives. There’s a wonderful woman who’s involved in everything, and I’m fortunate enough to have become friends with her. She’ll call me if there’s something going on that she thinks I should know about. And if not, every once in a while I’ll call her and say, “Let’s do some catch-up; what’s going on?” (Interview 18, 609-626)

While networking was one very common form of peer support, there were other variations, as well. In several cases, interviewees seemed to draw great strength from a second person with whom they could team up. As Beatrice described her involvement over the years, one could see the pattern repeating itself. On three different projects, in different locations, over a span of 10 years or so, one could see the pattern of linking up with a second person so the two could support one another.

Jean, too, described a similar need—this time in a teaching situation in a small town. She clearly felt that she had something to fear both psychologically and in terms of job security. Having grown up in Australia and having lived in western Canada, she found Nova Scotia very conservative, and the small town in which she lived quite oppressive:
In a town like [mine], people are very much under the control of [the primary industry]. You don’t dare kick up a fuss, and anytime when I’ve told the kids about conditions, one said, “Well my mother works there, and she gets a bundle of rags for Christmas.” It’s not good for kids to be brought up in that kind of environment ... I would say that has had an important influence on my personality. (Interview 16, 1211-1223)

Jean comments both on how the teachers worked together when there were four who could support one another, and on the lack of freedom she felt when she was acting alone:

Whereas in the past I was so afraid to have the kids write letters, now, because I have support from another member of staff, when there are two of you, the idea mushrooms. So we had four on our staff last year who were getting their kids to write letters to McDonald’s [about styrofoam packaging], and my gosh, they would kick up a stink when we used to go to McDonald’s for class outings. The kids would say, “Oh, I’m sorry, but would you please wrap that up in paper.” And they would get off their rocker and send us letters saying, “We’re doing all this wonderful stuff for the environment, how come you’re criticizing us?” ... but I notice they’ve taken away the styrofoam. That’s all because there were a number of teachers who started doing similar things.

Patricia in science would be talking about the rainforest and I would then follow it up with the International Monetary Fund which insisted that the Third World countries pay back their debt. What’s it going to do? It’s going to mean they have to raise more money; they have to cut down more forest. So I could cover the economic side of things. And the English teacher, then, used to get them to write more letters, and so we all had them writing letters and we were getting into trouble with the Principal because he wasn’t too keen—thought we were being a bit too critical....

As one lone person on that staff for 20 years, I was quite scared to do anything, because the Principal would just, “Well you can’t do things like that!” ...

Mind you, they split us all up. Two got moved, I am away this year, so it’s Patricia on her own trying to carry the banner! (Interview 16, 404-464)

There is one other way in which peers played a supportive role. Both Victoria and Roy commented on the feeling of strength and empowerment which they felt as a result of attending a large public function which they saw as validating their views. On the surface, then, in these situations the peers played their supportive role passively—simply by their attendance at a meeting or conference. The sense that runs through several of these experiences, however, is that people tended to feel quite alone in what they perceived to be an unsupportive environment.
They gained great strength from the rare occasions when they experienced an environment in which their views and beliefs were valued. Victoria comments:

Well, I guess the two positive emotional experiences in terms of the peace issue were hearing Dr. Helen Caldicott, and the peace conference at Dal [Educating for a Peaceful World]. In both instances, there was a very positive emotional response when it came to seeing the numbers gathered, the numbers of people involved, and I think it helped with that sense of "what's the use, one person can't make a difference". Well, here's not just a single person, here's a whole group gathered together with a single purpose in mind. So I think that was an uplifting emotional thing. (Interview 4, 201-217)

Who played these roles?

As one looks through the material on the individuals who provided inspiration and support, one cannot help but be impressed. The human resource pool from which the interviewees drew inspiration and support was incredibly rich!

There are clear mentors or role models for at least 16 of the 23 interviewees—and in several cases, there are multiple role models. These constitute a very rich and significant influence, and are characterized by their diversity. There is little similarity in the background of the role models, in how they came to be known by the interviewees, or in when their influence was primarily exerted. What does run through the various accounts by the participants is a "looking up" to someone else whom they perceive to be farther along on a similar journey. The participants in the study, then, looked to the role model for a combination of inspiration, validation, information, analysis, challenge, and leadership—in learning, commitment and action.

Other Influences and Factors

While we have already examined some of the primary factors which were influential in the lives of the study's participants—leading them toward an interest in, and commitment to, global issues—there are nevertheless many additional areas of influence which also were important, for at least some of the participants. We will examine two of these additional areas
briefly: transformative experiences in the lives of the participants, and some aspects of the individuals' personality.

**Transformative experiences**

In probing the factors which prompted individuals to become involved in learning about global issues, I certainly encountered some experiences which one would be inclined to describe as "transformative." Eleanor's encounter with deeply rooted sexism in the B. C. school system very likely would have met Ball's criteria for transformative learning experiences. There were others who also had remarkable experiences.

Raymond, for example, had a cluster of experiences over a period of two years or so, from 1966-68, associated with his being drafted to fight in the Vietnam War. Together these certainly seem to have constituted a transformative experience in Raymond's life. He elaborates:

I had been drafted in the United States Army in 1967, so the Vietnam War and the protests against the war had had an absolutely profound effect on my life—and still does—probably a major, major factor in the course of my life.... I think as a young person growing up I believed in the American line.... So it came as an incredible shock and awakening, I think, when I was around 20, to begin to realize what American foreign policy was really about. And that, I guess, was a major learning experience. And also finding out about information from sources which were not mainstream—and the kinds of criticisms that you get when you come up with opinions that don't follow the mainstream.... So that was a learning experience that was really profound for me.

I was very much interested in peace, having been conscripted into an army and deciding not to do that, and to leave the country that I was born in, because of that. Well, as I say, just a very powerful experience. And probably I've been concerned about peace issues ever since that time. I was very involved in the Students for a Democratic Society, the SDS, at that time. I spent some time in Berkeley, California, around 1966, influenced by the anti-war movement out there.

Coming to Canada I was very involved in a group called Union for American Exiles—we supported each other, the people coming up from the United States, and had Mounties following me around and telling me that I'd better watch my step and so on, so through those kind of activities, kind of getting a sense of what's allowed and what isn't, and taking personal stands on things. (Interview 10, 22-82)
There were many other significant points in the development of individuals' interest, analysis and commitment. Most of these, however, had more the character of significant highlights or markers along the journey as opposed to major turning points, at which individuals decided to dramatically alter their direction. It is unlikely, then, if any such experiences would have met Ball's (1998) criteria, which, in part, he adopted from Daloz (1986), "'a radical change in vision, with perception shifts from smaller to larger systems' (pp. 188-89), causing us to relate to the world in quite a new and different way" (p. 5).

Clearly, transformative experiences were highly significant for those individuals who had them. For most individuals in this study, however, the commitment to global issues developed gradually over a lengthy period of time, rather than as a direct result of a particular experience that we might consider transformative. Indeed, William observed that some of his peers had had such experiences, but that he had not, at least in recent years, and in relation to global issues. William was nevertheless deeply committed to global issues, though in his own view he felt that he lacked some of the drive and passion that tended to flow from transformative experiences.

William comments:

I feel passion and am articulate in putting forward in pretty passionate fashion what I believe and what I believe should be done, but that's not the same as being ideologically driven. I would think that you have to have a kind of transformational, almost conversion experience, such as Beatrice [participant in this study] and Eileen [involved with Beatrice in peace education and known to both William and myself] had about the peril, the threat posed by nuclear weapons. I think that transformed their lives for several years. And I don't think I've ever had that. [Reflecting further] I think I had that in my early 20s....

I think that conversion experience—I think that Phil [also active in the peace movement], for instance, strikes me as a chap who has undergone that conversion experience ... [concerning] the whole business of militarization and nuclear weapons and so on. To me, he's utterly convincing and genuine. I don't always agree with his observations or his assessments of things, I might not always agree, again, with his modus operandi, but all that pales beside my genuine respect and admiration for the degree of his commitment. So I don't count myself in that category. (Interview 2, 1325-1387)
Personal characteristics

As we examine the personal characteristics of the participants in the study, not surprisingly, we do not find any single, consistent profile. Nevertheless, we do find some recurring themes—which tend to appear more as "clusters" than as single characteristics.

Inquiring, open, searching minds

One such cluster is that several of the participants, in one way or another, revealed that they had very open, inquiring, searching minds. In several cases, this appears to have been deeply rooted in their upbringing and, as well, to have been related to their tendency to be voracious readers. Two related characteristics are the questioning of authority, or of the status quo; and a concern for viewing issues holistically, rather than dissected them into component parts. Lorne, for example, comments, "I don't know where that comes from, but I have always been sort of anti-establishment." Jeff, discussing his childhood, observes, "We were also taught to read bits and pieces of information and books on conflicting views so that we could judge for ourselves." Henry was raised to believe that it was okay—even better—to be different. Edward, in retirement, sums up the attitude of many when he comments:

Almost every week some new idea or some new way of looking at things comes to me and I think that's because I have read about things, my mind is active and I'm not grimly determined to hold any particular course because I feel insecure if I don't. I don't feel a lack of security in my beliefs, in what I think is happening. Reading and keeping up with it make you more able to adjust when somebody comes in with a new idea—and, bless them for it, thank them for it. Say that's good! There usually is a synthesis with what you already knew. (Interview 8:1064-1091)

In general, having a very active, searching, inquiring mind, and also reading extensively seemed to be a combination which was very prevalent among the participants in the study. This pattern was associated with clear values combined with an honest search for the truth; it was certainly not characterized by any dogmatism. William comments, "It's clearly unhealthy to
have a circle of friends, none of whom would ever challenge your world view. I think that would be too comfortable” (Interview 2, 1074-1078).

*Emotion, sensitivity, and appreciation of the arts*

The second cluster of personal characteristics relates more to the emotional dimension of people’s lives. This is expressed in a variety of ways, including an emotional sensitivity and empathy towards others; an involvement in, or at least an appreciation of, the arts; and a feeling of being attuned to nature. Once again, this is cluster of characteristics which is in evidence across many of the participants, expressed in rather different ways. Henry and Jonathan each cited singers as significant influences; Eleanor was deeply involved in directing school music, and had a bond to some of her closest friends through music; Henry was an artist; Raymond was an amateur nature photographer; and Jean used drama extensively in her teaching. Several commented on their strong ties to nature—Marguerite recently having moved to a year-round cottage by the Bay of Fundy. Catherine shares the affinity for nature and comments that she’s “always been a person who has tried to see the whole and haven’t really felt that comfortable with the way society breaks things up in separate specialities.”

It is also clear that the participants often felt deep emotion concerning various issues and events with which they were dealing. We will explore this further in Chapter 5.

*Relation to Rogers’ patterns of the mind and heart*

It is interesting that these two patterns of personal behaviour are very similar to Rogers’ “patterns of the mind” and “patterns of the heart.” While it is impossible for us to judge the relative contributions of “nature” and “nurture” to each individual’s personality, we can see quite clearly that in many cases these characteristics, at the very least, were encouraged or supported in individuals’ upbringing from an early age.
Chapter 4—The Learning Process:
What facilitated or hindered participants’ learning?

Since an objective of this research was to gain a better understanding of the wide range of
learning experiences that individuals pursued, the definition of learning was intentionally broad.
Included, for example, were both the planning of learning activities, and also the pursuit of
learning through reading, listening, observing, or learning in some other way—if the individual’s
main purpose during that activity was to gain and retain certain knowledge or skill. In addition
to the material presented in this chapter, information concerning the learning resources used by
participants can be found in Appendix D.

Time Devoted to Learning about Global Issues

Total time

As we examine the participants’ learning, we are immediately struck by the significant
amount of time which participants report devoting to learning about global issues. Nine of the
23 individuals interviewed regularly spent more than 20 hours a week engaged in such learning.
Even those at the low end of the range typically devoted 3 or 4 hours per week to global issues.

One is also struck, however, by the dramatic variation in such time, with the same
individual, at different points in their life. Some of those who reported devoting the largest
number of hours to global learning, had also gone through periods when they devoted almost no
time to such learning. Two cases, in particular, stand out. In both instances, the individuals were
female teachers who were unable to integrate, in any significant way, their interest in global
issues into their job responsibilities. When time permitted (e.g. in the summer), they devoted a
large amount of time to global issues. At other times, they were consumed by teaching, extra-
curricular, and family responsibilities. It is worth noting that both women expressed considerable frustration with the periods when they were unable to devote much time to global learning. Such learning was central to their lives and their self-concept. Being unable to devote time to that dimension of their lives created a high level of frustration.

Finally, one is struck by the integration of learning into the lives of many of the individuals. This is perhaps captured for many by Gordon who, when asked about the amount of time he devoted to global issues, commented:

Well, my first reaction is all of my waking hours are spent at that: all of my reading at night, the novels that I read, the newspapers that I read every day, the clippings that I take from the various papers I read every day . . . I would say it’s total absorption. Most of my interests are focused on that sort of thing, and I’m teaching in this area, so that even makes it moreso. (Interview 5, 461-472)

Kim used a graphic metaphor to describe the role of global learning in her life. She referred to it as part of her fingerprint—an essential part of who she was as a person, not something that was tacked on in her spare time.

**Extent to which global learning was done in work or non-work time**

When one examines the time that these learners devoted to global issues, from the perspective of its relation to their paid employment, some very interesting patterns emerge. For all of the women interviewed, learning about global issues was engaged in primarily within their personal, non-work time, or was a mix involving both work and non-work time. In no case did any of the women engage in learning about global issues primarily within the framework of their paid employment.

In contrast, nearly half the men who were interviewed engaged in global learning primarily within their work time rather than in their personal, discretionary time. Several possible explanations for this phenomenon can be suggested, but in examining the personal
characteristics of the interviewees, it seems likely that this situation reflects, at least in part, the differences in the opportunities which had been available to women and to men.

Within the group of interviewees, men were more likely than women to hold an advanced university degree. In addition, although there were roughly equivalent numbers of women and men working in education, six men were involved in teaching in high school or university, but only one woman. High school and university are environments where there is often sufficient specialization to allow for a concentration on international issues.

Stages of the Process

Childers and Ferris’ framework: The individual and the change process

Since one aspect of individuals’ experience which this research sought to better understand was the process of becoming committed to global issues, each of the participants was given a copy of “The Individual and the Change Process,” an outline of seven stages in the change process constructed by Barry Childers and Elizabeth Ferris (see Figure 1). Each participant was asked to comment on how they saw their own learning and change process relating to the stages outlined in the Childers and Ferris framework.

Responses to the framework

For many, it described their change process well

It was very clear from the responses to the Childers and Ferris framework both that it struck a very responsive chord with many of the participants, and that there was nevertheless a great deal of individual variation in the stages people experienced. About half of the participants indicated that the stages outlined by Childers and Ferris described their experience reasonably well. The comments ranged from Roy’s enthusiastic exclamation, “I think this is uncanny ... I
think it's right on, for me, at least." Janie, Roy's partner, added "Yes, I agree. It's incredible in regard to what I've experienced" (Interview 20, 2292-2311). Gordon agreed, but was somewhat more reserved, indicating, "I feel some resonance with most of these points" (Interview 5, 926-927).

**Figure 1**

*The Individual and the Change Process*

A. **Becoming Aware**—Simply moving from NO awareness of the problem/issue to becoming aware that there IS a problem. There is as yet no particular concern or personal involvement.

B. **Becoming Interested/Concerned**—Here the problem becomes the focus of some attention, for one reason or another, but has little or no PERSONAL relevance and has not yet assumed a special importance to you.

C. **Taking a Special Interest**—Here you have made some personal connection with the problem and are beginning to feel that it IS important to you. Thoughts about it may be starting to take on the character of calls to conscience, the beginnings of a felt need to take some action.

D. **Period of Turmoil**—A period of time during which you experience a good deal of inner conflict with regard to the problem and your concern; perhaps about whether or not you SHOULD take action, or about changes in your values or priorities, or maybe about whether or not or in what way you might be RESPONSIBLE for the problem, or it could be about WHAT you should now do or how you should do it.

E. **Taking Action**—Some sort of barrier is crossed that is significant for you. It may not be the first thing you've done about the problem, but it has a special importance. You feel "over the hump" in some way, and more firmly committed.

F. **Feeling Personally Responsible**—Here you are beginning to see that you are, in fact, by virtue of your lifestyle, your nationality, your work, or whatever, in some measure RESPONSIBLE (whether intentionally or not) FOR the EXISTENCE of the problem.

G. **Increasing Commitment/Changing Priorities**—Now you no longer consider your activities that relate to this problem as being of equal importance with many others. They are now taking on an importance that sets them apart. They are moving much higher on your list of priorities.

*(Extra Categories)*

Most of the other participants indicated that parts of the framework applied to their experience, but that other parts did not apply or would need to be reordered or modified for the framework to fit. Not surprisingly, the proposed adjustments varied from individual to individual. We will examine them later in this section as part of the more detailed examination of the comments on each stage in the process.

For one, it didn’t fit

Only one participant indicated that the framework did not in some way reflect her experience. Catherine commented concerning the stages, simply, “They don’t really fit my [experience]. It’s not that none of them do, it’s just that … this is almost step by step, and mine often would do a big leap” (Interview 11, 1543-1547). Catherine comments on the way the messages build up prior to her getting involved:

When I get enough messages, then I feel on an intuitive level that I have to do something about it. And that’s basically what happened with peace education. With environment it was similar. I felt that so many issues in all the different newspapers and magazines and radio and TV were coming up and none of them seemed to fit together. It just seemed like this problem was here, and there were floods and, you know, there was not enough food here, it was just sort of confusion and it was overwhelming. And I thought, I just can’t stand this! I’d have to bury my head in the sand or I’d have to find out how this all fits together—what’s going on. (Interview 11, 209-228)

For many it partially fit

For many of the others, the framework provided by Childers and Ferris partially fit their situation, but there were significant changes they would need to make—especially in the sequence of stages—for the framework to apply to them. Gary, for example felt that the sequence of stages generally applied to him except that he did not experience the Period of Turmoil stage. William, on the other hand, found the categories “quite finely graduated” and indicated that he would be inclined to collapse them. He comments that once he had passed the first three stages, “by that time I think
that I’m already convinced of the efficacy of a certain course of action. So that period of turmoil around whether or not I should take action, or changes in my values or priorities—I’ve never been troubled by those sorts of things. So more often it’s the modus operandi that troubles me.” (Interview 2, 1281-1289).

Henry’s observation is somewhat similar. He sees the first three stages happening in order but with the presence or absence, and the order, of the others varying from situation to situation, “It’s not necessarily linear, they may not always happen with every issue or with every topic” (Interview 7, 847-850). Jonathan also observes that even for a single individual, the process is apt to happen differently at different times:

That’s certainly close to the way it happens some of the time. I don’t think it’s always that way. For instance, with South Africa which was one of the first things I really started studying about, it certainly did follow this line of hearing about it, becoming more informed, and then getting involved, but like I say, with the peace movement, I more got involved first and once I was involved I quickly tried to learn more and more.... But I think once you become more involved in things, if a new issue comes along you tend to skip a lot of this. (Interview 15, 1322-1361)

Observations on stages in the process

In commenting on the Childers and Ferris framework, participants made many comments about how they had experienced various stages in the process. Since many of these comments contribute to our understanding of the richness and diversity of people’s experience, we will examine a sampling of these individual comments with respect to each of the seven stages described. Following that, we will make some general observations about the change process, and address some of the implications which emerge from participants’ reflections on it.

Becoming aware

In examining the comments concerning the first stage of involvement, the stage of “becoming aware,” one is struck both by the fact that it is often a very slow, gradual process, and
also that the awareness of global issues is often linked to an awareness of other issues which are important in the individual's life. In fact, one can see in the comments of participants, insights concerning two rather different types of awareness. The first relates to an initial awareness of global issues; the second relates to an awareness of a specific issue, after the person had already become aware of global issues generally. Sharon, for example, who was familiar with a wide range of other global issues, commented in a passage quoted earlier, about becoming aware of the issue of NATO's low-level training flights over the Innu lands in Labrador.

The "basic" awareness of global issues, then, developed slowly for most. Victoria, for example, observed:

I don't know about these first stages ... I don't ever remember it as, "Yesterday I was unaware; today I am aware." I don't ever remember that kind of dichotomy. It was much more gradual than that. And I don't know, it seems to me that, as I said, there's a reason to become motivated in the first place and I think that the natural tendency is to connect it with your own life or your own involvement. (Interview 4, 1031-1043)

Kim also observed that her awareness of global issues grew very gradually, and through her awareness of related issues. She traces the path by which her involvement in the peace issue developed:

I think it's been a path of about 20 years, actually.... I was transient as a child, so I lived in northern Ontario, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Quebec, so I had constantly new cultural input and I think it was at that time I became aware of culture. Then in university, what I became acutely aware of, was women's rights, and human rights as they related to women. From there it went through work: I worked with native Indians. Again, that was human rights and resource management issues—the environment. So sometimes you'd become aware of the fact that the two of them should be called one, and that'd be "environmental discrimination," encompassing both environment and human rights. And from there, I think, [I became involved in] peace—I worked on the Peace Pledge Campaign—I was very active in getting that mobilized. (Interview 6, 19-48)

Eleanor's developing awareness is also very interesting to trace. When asked how long she had been concerned about global issues, she responded that it had been less than 10 years, beginning to develop when she was age 28 and first became involved in women's issues. She
also describes an "awakening moment," however, which was several years before that, when she was a college student:

When I was in Teachers College in one of my last years of training, my Dad had been ill for a long time from heart problems, and there was going to be a family meeting ... this was really an awakening moment for me personally but I didn't spread it out [to apply to other issues] for some reason.

I came home for the family meeting about what would happen to the farm. And I had three older brothers who were very used to being in control, so they came up with a plan, after much discussion, that the farm would stay the way it was, but in the Will, it would be worded so that the farm land could never belong to anybody that didn’t have the last name of Hennigar. And I sat very quietly for a moment and then I thought, "Well now, wait a minute! If I get married that means that I have less right to live on this land, even though I love the land as much—and more than a couple of my brothers—I have less right to live on this land than your great-great-great-great grandson—who may be a brain surgeon in Botswana or Toronto or something. And how is that right?" And I'm sure they hadn't even thought about it before because it just brought the family discussion to a complete Bumf [stop], you know suddenly it halted and we couldn't go anywhere with it. So it was really odd, and actually it has never gone anywhere else. That's as far as it went. But that for me was kind of a personal thing and then I began to think about it too in relationship to my religion and my church—I began to suddenly examine things there. (Interview 14, 140-195)

In each of these cases, and generally with other participants, the initial process of developing awareness in global issues was gradual, lengthy, and often circuitous.

**Becoming interested/concerned**

June, at a couple of points in her interview, in effect, reminds us that we shouldn't view an interest and involvement in global issues as an entirely sober matter! When asked about her use of learning resources which she found "helpful," she was quick to counter, "I'm not sure if I do it because I find it helpful, but because I'm interested. I think that's it" (Interview 17, 643-646). In addition, with respect to the stages of the change process, she comments, "Well, in some ways I have a feeling that becoming interested and concerned was prior to my becoming aware ... I'm sure there are other people who have encountered the same" (Interview 17, 1125-1130). While this may seem like a minor distinction, it suggests an important factor to keep in
mind. People do not necessarily become involved in global issues out of duty or a feeling of responsibility, but may often become involved because global issues simply interest them!

Gordon made a somewhat similar observation concerning his involvement in CUSO, when asked whether it resulted from a social concern or social commitment which he experienced at that time:

That came along later. I can be quite clear about that ... there was absolutely no sense of service at that stage—just the opposite, probably. I wouldn't have understood the notion, or would have been cynical about it. (Interview 5, 69-80)

Taking a special interest

There was relatively little comment on Taking a Special Interest, perhaps because for some there was not a sufficiently clear distinction between this stage and the previous one.

Nevertheless, the reference in the description of this stage to “calls to conscience” prompted Jean to observe:

Yes, yes, that’s certainly a stage that you go through too. Yes, your conscience starts to prick you. You really start to think, “My gosh, it’s all very well to start to think about it and to talk about it, but you know, you really have to do something about it. And that goes on for a long, long time before you actually realize that you have to! (Interview 16, 1370-1380)

Period of turmoil

There was an interesting range of responses with respect to the Period of Turmoil. Gary, for example, indicates that the turmoil is not really part of his experience. He recounted how he had got involved in responding to famine in Ethiopia, but without any feeling of turmoil such as Childers and Ferris describe:

[Referring to Sheet C] In my personal experience it doesn’t happen quite like that. In particular, as I said, it’s not that people don’t have it [turmoil], but that’s a stronger thing than I would [experience]. It suggests that they’d be sitting around for a week wondering, “should I do it or shouldn’t I?” If I’m going to do something, I do it! (Interview 19, 2218-2231)
In contrast, several of the participants did report periods of turmoil, though the types of situations prompting the turmoil varied considerably. Referring to the description of the Period of Turmoil, Edward comments, “Yes, Yes, I guess I agree with that. That’s something I feel at times. I’m not sure what to do—how much longer can I dodge it [the issue]? I wonder if I am dodging it” (Interview 8, 1250-1255). Jean, too comments, reading from the description, “a good deal of inner conflict … about what you should now do or how you should do it.” Yes. I’m probably in that stage right now, you know” (Interview 16, 1381-1385). For Eleanor, the turmoil is never far away. She comments, in reflecting on her recent experience in Cuernavaca:

[The change process] is cyclical because … especially these last few weeks … I mean, I felt in a period of turmoil periodically … I really was in a great stew in Cuernavaca—everybody was, there—I know I wasn’t alone, certainly…. I go through periodic periods of turmoil, weekly I would say [laughs]. Really, really, I learn something more and I go through a panic period and I say, “Okay, what can I do about this?” Is it that I’m going to inform myself, or I’m going to write some letters or I’m going to see if I can find a group that knows more about it, or I’m … you know, it’s still so much the learning thing for me, I guess. I really feel a responsibility to learn about it now! (Interview 14, 1286-1312)

Although several participants agreed that they experienced turmoil, it was prompted by quite different things. William indicated that he did not normally experience any turmoil about taking action, but on the other hand, “After having taken action I sometimes had a period of turmoil or inner conflict.” He relates a couple of experiences—and some insightful observations—related to the turmoil he sometimes experienced after becoming involved in issues:

I remember very clearly in that Challenge for Change program with the tenants in Saint John, the period of turmoil because of the way the group was operating—the motivations that were being admitted or not admitted. I went through a period of turmoil about that.

Likewise, I find that a lot of people in the peace and justice movement are often quite doctrinaire. Just like any other kind of in-group, there’s considerable pressure, sometimes quite covertly, to keep people in line. If you express a dissenting or unpopular opinion that deviates from the mainstream, there are subtle forms of censure. So ideology always is troublesome for me. Often I think people have said about me that I’m
ideologically driven to a degree that they have never been, but I think I’m only somewhere in the middle of the spectrum compared to some people I’ve seen who truly trouble me. For instance, before the Berlin Wall fell and Eastern Europe became liberated, so to speak, a year ago, there were some of my friends in the peace and justice movement to whom you couldn’t make very much criticism at all ... the socialist doctrine was [accepted without question].

I persisted, partly because I’m mischievous, and partly because I think you’re no friend to anybody if you don’t fairly sharply challenge where you think there’s either a mischiefous or even a pernicious point of view involved. So I’ve run into some difficulties there, and there’s certainly been turmoil sometimes involved when you’re very much involved in the action of the group. (Interview 2, 1205-1255)

The turmoil which Joseph experiences relates to managing his time and involvement, in the face of many competing issues and causes. He comments, “I think one does run into a number of periods of turmoil, because you have to pick your battles ... otherwise you’re lost, burned out” (Interview 12, 1631-1635). And, finally, Marguerite’s turmoil is rather different again. She describes the turmoil she has experienced, both at the time of the interview and some years earlier:

Well, you see, I’m very much in this area right now [referring to Taking Action] ... I see where some people would go through that turmoil [about] whether they should get involved or not. No, never, never, I never had that turmoil. My turmoil, actually, is if I don’t on a daily basis reflect on it. If I don’t think about it, then I get that turmoil, that state of depression inside ... I get a nauseating feeling....

Yes, yes I did have a little area of turmoil! Now that’s interesting—because I wanted to live in a monastery. I wanted to get away from all of this. And you see, if it had been 300 years ago, I would have been okay. I can’t now. I can’t now because of the state of the world. I’m talking as if I’m going to make all the difference (laughing)! I just cannot! It’s not the right timing. On the other hand I reserve, if ever I have the chance of living old, and I will say, I have done what I could and that’s it and—then maybe I would love to end up in a monastery! (Interview 9, 1725-1735, 1760-1777)

Taking action

In examining the comments on taking action, one gets the impression that most of the participants simply assumed that taking action was an essential part of the journey they were on. That did not mean, however, that individuals were equally comfortable in taking action, nor did it mean that they were equally active. Marguerite, for example, in the passage above just
indicated that her ideal would be to live a contemplative life, but she felt that such a life would be impossible for her, given the state of society. When asked if she gained energy from taking action, she replied, “Yes, fabulous!” (Interview 9, 1740). She went on to describe a global walk for which she had written for information:

They’re crossing three chains of mountains, starting in England, I think, crossing the Alps, crossing the eastern European mountains and also the Himalayas, going to Japan and ending in Hiroshima. And I wrote to them and I said “Look, I would love to participate in this, because ... I mean I wouldn’t mind giving a year or two—I wouldn’t care.

And this walk is, again, that meditative side of the monastery that attracts me, the contemplative side, and it’s active at the same time. And when I wrote to this person in charge I said, “Look, it would be wonderful, I said, in the way that people are sort of dormant here ... you know, students knowing that a teacher gave her time to go and walk like that ... who knows what that may do to people. It’s more than words and throwing stuff at them, it’s like, “Hey, I left and I went and walked—maybe you can do the same.” I don’t know. I hope it would have some kind of impact on a few people around. (Interview 9, 1748-1759, 1781-1798)

Although Marguerite obviously gets a sense of exhilaration from taking action, not everyone is equally comfortable with taking action. Victoria, for example, described herself as being somewhere between the stages of the Period of Turmoil and Taking Action. She comments:

I’ve taken some action but I don’t think I’ve taken it to the extent that I would like. You know how they say, inside a fat person there’s a thin person. I think inside me there’s a social activist waiting to get out. And I think that some of the barriers you talk about—the barrier of getting over that hump—I think some of it has been my own personality in the sense of a reticence or a hesitation. So I think that’s certainly another thing that gets in the way. So that’s why I say a social activist screaming to get out. [laughter] (Interview 4, 1053-1069)

Lorne, too seemed troubled that he had not been more of an activist throughout his life:

I feel that I don’t like the action part. I’m sort of a ... I’m not a couch potato, and I can’t stand to look at myself if I do get into that, but I’m not eager to be out there marching every day either. And I don’t know what that’s related to. I’ve never liked the role of being a salesman of any kind, even if it’s a cause. And maybe some day I’m going to have to think that through, because maybe it’s related to the fact that I haven’t faced up to
the real knowledge that I don't really believe that's very effective anyway. (Interview 1, 540-554)

Beatrice, too, refers to getting over the "hump," "The first time you stand up, that's a hump, that's a definite hump!" (Interview 22, 833-837).

Having got over the hump, Joseph recounts the sense of satisfaction which he experienced after having taken action:

I think when you're first getting involved ... you stand up at your first meeting and make an impassioned speech on something and everyone claps afterwards and you sit down and you feel elated about yourself and that you've done something—taken a stand. I guess [also] as you do something new—when I was at this Unitarian social justice conference, it was also combined with lobbying Congress—members of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Of course I'm not an American in the first place, though my wife is, so we picked the reps from her home town and I had quite a feeling of trepidation walking through the halls of power, but I found, I had a lot of misconceptions. It's just people in there and offices and you go to their office to see them and talk. We have thousands of people here doing the same thing. So you're just another person to state their view. But when I walked away from there I felt really good! I talked to the old hawk himself! [laughter] You go in there and his shelves—every flat surface has a model of a rocket or a fighter plane or warship—pictures on all walls, standing on the aircraft carrier, at the controls in the cockpit [laughter] ... he noticed we weren't happy with what he's doing! (Interview 12, 1665-1703)

One of the themes which runs through many of the comments on the stages of people's involvement is that the participants in the study tend to become involved in several different issues. The result is that the individual may be at different points in the process (on different issues) at the same time—and with many of the issues, may never reach the level of Increasing Commitment and Changing Priorities. Jonathan reminds us of this in relation to Taking Action, and also reminds us that the process leading up to Taking Action is often a slow one:

When you mention feeling guilty, with the environmental issues that's often the way I go. I start, for instance, throwing out tin cans [rather than recycling them] and I know I shouldn't but I can't be bothered to [do anything else], and eventually I start to feel guilty every time I throw out a tin can and once that builds up long enough, I stop. And that happens with many things. It starts off, and goes through a period where you still do things but feel guilty about them and when the guilt builds to a certain point, you stop doing it, [because you know] you shouldn't. (Interview 15, 1339-1368)
Both Janie and Barry remind us of a similar struggle around personal time, commitment and involvement: even though one still believes in the importance of an issue, it is sometimes necessary or advisable to move on to other concerns. Janie comments:

I think it's hard, too, after having experienced all of these separate stages, to know when to stop. When is it not your problem any more? When do you break away and say, "I've done all I can do. Now it's up to the rest of you to carry it on..." It's taken me three years to get from A to G here. Then where are you? Do you carry on just because no one else will do it... I want to do other things! I feel I've done my potential on that one. I've reached where I wanted to get... Having gone through all those stages, then what is your responsibility?... [I want to] get on to do something beneficial on some other issue!
(Interview 20, 2237-2288)

_People_ feeling personally responsible_

Some of the participants (Victoria, Raymond and Catherine) felt that Feeling Personally Responsible occurred at an earlier stage of the change process, but the most interesting observations about this stage related to the depth of emotion which accompanied this feeling of personal responsibility. William, for example, commented:

No, I've never felt that problem of collective guilt, the white man's burden, or the fact that I'm a WASP. I cheerfully acknowledge that—there's not much one can do about it. To me that's sort of an ersatz liberal guilt that's fashionable—I've never been very much troubled by it. We are who we are. (Interview 2, 1295-1304)

William, throughout his interview, gives every evidence of being thoroughly "grounded;" he knows what his beliefs and values are, and pursues them in a very low-key but determined way. Kim expresses concern about "remaining grounded," and as a result, is careful not to become too deeply involved in issues. She comments:

I would say that F [Feeling Personally Responsible] rings true. And G has its truth as well. I think there's a balancing act. I do guard against becoming so embroiled that an arrogance might set in. So maybe I stop at feeling personally responsible. I feel personally responsible, take the action, the increasing commitment I think can be come very much—addictive. I stop at that. I do try to balance [my involvement]... with the other responsibilities in my life, so that I remain grounded. (Interview 6, 982-998)
As one reflects on the various comments on Feeling Personally Responsible, it is clear that several of the participants had concerns associated with getting to this level of involvement. One way or another, most of these concerns related to the fact that people felt that if they really were prepared to accept personal responsibility for some of the global problems they were concerned about, it would require them to make huge changes in their lifestyle—going far beyond what they were prepared for, at least at the moment. Jean, for example, comments: “Responsible for the existence of the problem.” Well, yes ... I probably don’t set a very good example. If we were really truly genuine about the way we feel, about wanting to help other people, we would be living in a hut somewhere” (Interview 16, 1422-1428). Joseph adds:

Personally responsible—yea, on wider issues, like how we in North America are exploiting the Third World for our lifestyle—that’s a really big issue and I haven’t come to grips with that yet! I don’t think anyone else has either unless they just reject everything they have and live a life of poverty.... I’m very concerned that what we’re doing is educating the Third World to adopt our lifestyle, which would destroy the planet. In the meantime, what do we do? (Interview 12, 1718-1738)

Eleanor, too, is troubled by the feeling of personal responsibility, but is trying to work her way through it:

Yea, I feel very responsible—for things that are wrong—for things that are going on.... Maybe as a person gets older ... maybe as a person becomes more involved in it, you are able to deal with that responsibility a bit more—instead of thinking, “I’ve got to do it all, right now.” you begin to realize, okay, here’s a little step that I can take to kind of alleviate—not give up my responsibility—but I can at least help a little bit right here, right now—which is an important step in coping.... I went through a real panic period, even with my first realization of women’s issues. And of course, I guess it’s very typical, the real period of anger, you know, and “I’ve got to change everything, at once, immediately!” (Interview 14, 1315-1342)

Finally, Lorne described a situation in which, because of his concern for social justice issues, he had wanted to pursue certain activities, but his family had objected because they felt that it would jeopardize their relationship with the neighbours. Later in the interview, Lorne
adds a further, extremely important observation about the impact of one’s actions on their family and others close to them:

Yes, I feel personally responsible … and that’s where all of the problems come in, too. It starts to relate to your personal lifestyle and that involves other people…. It isn’t as one might have thought from the outside … as though you’re taking the easy way out and just don’t want to get involved, but there are other people who will pay the cost for this, so when I make these moves, I’ll make them in areas, if I can, that don’t hurt those other people…. What I do in my courses and in this office doesn’t have to impinge on my family. (Interview 1, 1320-1350)

**Increasing commitment/changing priorities**

The comments concerning Increasing Commitment/Changing Priorities reveal some very interesting patterns. As with other stages in the process, it is important to keep in mind that for many, the commitment to particular global issues was taken within a context of an overall commitment to social justice. Within the range of issues that an individual might have been concerned about, then, it was not unusual for individual issues to rise and fall in priority relative to other issues.

Joseph comments on this with respect to his own experience, but also relates it to the book-buying trends he encounters though his work with the Red Herring Cooperative Bookstore:

I think one changes as issues change. You accomplish something, you’ve got it where it’s no longer a growing problem, it’s on hold now, maybe even in retreat, and you go on to some other issue. That’s happened to a lot of community activists with the peace issue—trying to sell books at the Red Herring on peace—"peace is dead in the water," taking it from a bookseller’s perspective. No one will buy a book on peace. But they will on the environment, women’s spirituality, and on various issues, but not on peace—not this year…. I think it’s healthy for a person to change their priorities or their issues, for their own mental health. You can beat something to death and become very frustrated. You reach a plateau where you’re not going any further. But when you consider that it’s an important issue and someone has to be doing something about it, you’re liable to come right back. (Interview 12, 1740-1778)

Finally, it is important to recognize that for a variety of reasons, individuals who at one stage are deeply committed to particular issues may well “move on.” Raymond and Barry each
indicated that, to some extent, at least, they had done so with respect to the peace issue. Their reasons for doing so seem to include a mix of personal and environmental factors. As Joseph indicated above, changes in the world situation prior to the interview had lessened the interest in and concern about global peace issues. In addition, Barry felt that his time was needed on another program, and Raymond had invested a considerable amount of time in a couple of global adult education initiatives, and in both cases there was very little response from the potential participants, so he became rather discouraged. Beatrice, too, described herself as:

I'm at a lull.... I'm kind of—burnt out a little bit from that point of view and just waiting now to see—I mean I know we should be doing something with what is happening [just prior to the Gulf War], but I am—having a little break. I think, I'm putting it down to that.... but I do think that I'll never _not_ be involved in something. (Interview 22, 478-511)

William comments at length about this stage in the change process—both as it relates to his own life and to the experience of others whom he knows well who are also involved in the Peace Movement. His references to the Challenge for Change program relate to his involvement in that community development program (associated with the National Film Board) in Saint John in the late 1960s. William had devoted a tremendous amount of energy to that program:

[Reading the description of Increasing Commitment/Changing Priorities] I would think that that would be true. That's speaking there about an intensifying level of commitment where you become _very_ absorbed in it. I think I experienced that in my very early years that I described in the Challenge for Change program, but I don't think that's ever happened to me subsequently. Whether psychologically I was fearful of investing that much, or whether I became—as is more likely—more self-centred, and wasn't willing to give of myself to the same degree. (Interview 2, 1306-1406)

**Observations, insights and implications**

When we reflect on all of the material on the stages of the change process—the stages described by Childers and Ferris and the observations of all of the participants in the study—several insights emerge:
A useful generic framework, with lots of individual variation

Childers and Ferris provide a useful generic description of the change process, though there is a great deal of individual variation.

The process is lengthy and involves several stages

Their framework provides a reminder that we do go through various stages, and that this is apt to be a lengthy process. Not all individuals reported going through all stages, and not all reported experiencing them in the order outlined by Childers and Ferris. Indeed, several reported going through the stages in different sequences at different times, depending on the issues involved. Nevertheless, for everyone involved in the study (including Catherine who did not feel that the framework particularly reflected her experience), the process of change which resulted in people becoming committed to global issues was lengthy, and involved several quite distinct stages.

A web of interconnected issues

People were typically interested in and concerned about a web of interconnected social issues, rather than a single issue. This added a layer of complexity to the Childers and Ferris framework, for it meant that an individual might well be simultaneously at several different stages of the change process—at different stages with different issues. In other cases, it meant a more cyclical process: getting to a relatively advanced stage with one issue; and then, after a time, shifting focus to another issue. At that point the individual might well be moving back to an early stage of the process, to go through it again. A related phenomenon was the pattern of beginning with one issue, but as one progressed, expanding one’s concern to encompass other issues. Eleanor, for example, began her journey through a growing awareness of women’s
issues, which then came to include the plight of women globally and then to a wide range of
global issues related to peace, development, justice and human rights.

**Impact of stages of life**

Several of the participants commented on the impact which their stages of life and life
circumstances had on their involvement in learning about, and taking action on, global issues.
These, in effect, create a kind of "overlay" over the framework proposed by Childers and Ferris,
so that we need to understand the stages in the change process in relation to the rest of their lives.
Following are some of the common "stage of life" issues which affected participants' global
learning and action.

**Pressing demands: Limited time**

Several of the participants indicated that when they were young adults, with the pressures
of getting established in the work-world, and often raising a young family, they simply did not
have much time to become involved in global—or any other—social issues. Laura, for example,
throughout university had been very involved in global issues. Now, however, in her second
year of teaching, she has found that she has very little time she can commit. "A lot of
professions don't leave you a lot of time to be involved in volunteer work," she comments. "I've
really missed that on a personal level [both] in terms of what it gives to me, to be able to say I'm
involved—but intellectually, too" (Interview 13, 120-127). Several others expressed similar
frustration. Janie, for example, commented on not being more actively involved when, not long
after she was married, many in her community were immersed in opposition to herbicide
spraying along their roadways:

> So we've been following ... the herbicide trials here and that whole thing—not being
> able to be really partaking in it because we were busy doing the house and you know,
> you're immature, you're newly married, you've got all these other pressures. When
> Jason went to school I started working—just those kinds of things, that you couldn't
really become involved in anything. You don’t even know what you’re talking about, so you were following the whole thing that was going on, but standing in the background. Now I think I’ve gathered enough information to maybe be able to talk to people in the community about these issues. (Interview 20, 254-274)

**Mid-life reflection**

A second life stage that several commented on was mid-life. William, in his 40s at the time of the interview, reflected back on his varying levels of involvement through the years:

I would say that through a good part of the later ’70s and early ’80s ... I was much more career and family oriented and much less inclined to get engaged in those things, because I was carrying a terrible dual burden in the late ’60s in Saint John, being a full-time teacher-principal in addition to logging an enormous number of nights and weekends in the Challenge for Change program. I was very close to burnout. Even though I was young and healthy and very committed, I still nearly did a very great deal of damage to my family. So that impression stayed with me for a long time. I had to be more balanced. (Interview 2, 469-487)

William continues, commenting on how the other demands in one’s life have a major impact on the extent of involvement one is able to have:

But, again, I think that after—say the age of 40, when your marriage has failed, you’ve had to make enormous adjustments, you’ve had to change where you’re living and losing a lot of your former friends, just by accidents of geography, and set up housekeeping with a new mate and adjusting to stepchildren and being deprived of your own children.... I mean, that certainly radically reorders the priorities of your life. I don’t think I could ever again—maybe the environment will, up ahead, either immanently or in the longer term galvanize me morally in the same way that I experienced in my young adulthood. It may be capable of doing that. (Interview 2, 1408-1426)

Raymond and Catherine, also in their 40s, reflect as well on the impact of their life stages on their involvement. Catherine, in her interview, had been reflecting on the significance of intuition in her learning process, and then commented, as well, on the impact of mid-life:

I guess intuition to me is very important. You know, where you just know intuitively in a holistic way ... this action is going to fit into a bigger picture of what you want ... especially as you hit mid-life, too, you tend to look back and think, half my life is over and it doesn’t look that great.... I haven’t really had any goal that I’m proud of, it’s just like crisis management. I survived. I tried this relationship and it didn’t work—and it took a lot of energy—and then I tried this, and dabbled in this and [that]. So I think mid-life has a lot to do with focusing and committing yourself. You know, you went through the 20s which was just sort of “lucky to be alive” and all the crazy things you ended up
doing; so maybe mid-life fits in there somewhere, in looking back over the first half of your life and thinking, “I hope if I do have a second half as long as the first half, it’s not as scattered as the first half was, it’s a little more self-directed, it has a little more purpose. (Interview 11, 1584-1617)

Gaining wisdom through experience

Participants who were a bit farther along in life also commented on the changes in their outlook and approach that came with their greater experience. Though she uses as an example a social issues which is more local and national than global—dealing with the opposition to the ordination of gay ministers—June observed that her approach was significantly different now than it would have been in her youth:

There was certainly a period in my life when I could not have handled that [conflict] as well. I would have taken a definite stand: “This was it!” And I would just try to talk others into agreeing with me. And I was pleased to discover how relaxed I can be now to sit back and let people talk it through and look at the various aspects of it. (Interview 17, 1220-1230)

Managing commitment to multiple issues and avoiding burnout

It was clear from the comments of many of the participants that they became aware over time—partly from their own experience and partly from observing others close to them—that the depth of their passion and commitment, combined with the fact that so many issues were interrelated, created the distinct possibility that they could “burn themselves out” attempting to be fully committed. We see a variety of strategies—employed consciously or unconsciously—to guard against such burnout.

Barry and Joseph both mentioned that after devoting a great deal of energy to an issue, perhaps over several years, it may be helpful to switch to a different issue to avoid burnout.

Barry comments:

Well, for me, [moving from one issue to another is a way of avoiding burnout] certainly subconsciously, and maybe consciously.... Things were at a point where what I perceived to be the need for my time invested in the Christian Festival was of the nature
that I couldn’t [also continue to] invest the kind of time I was investing in the Peace Task Force. But there also was the sense … that other very capable hands are involved here and why should we all get exhausted when [we can be] … supportive of each other. But certainly, looking at it from another point of view … I got a sense of being exhausted … and it was time to give it up or to begin to have some sense of bitterness about it, or frustration, or whatever, and whether that is something teetering on burnout or what, I don’t know, but what I did, basically, was to say, “I invested myself in that for 4 years, [and] with increasing intensity the last 8 to 10 months, and in those last 8 to 10 months I did put my academic pursuits on hold. Okay, September’s here. I’m going to get back to that. I’ll finish it out. So really, I just took a lot of energy out of that and put it into the studies. And I think, for me, anyway, that’s a way to avoid burnout. You still have the energy, but invest it in a different direction, and that … is re-energizing. (Interview 21, 1243-1302)

A different form of this strategy was employed by Joseph who, within the same issues, periodically switched from being deeply involved in action and in organizing, to instead investing his energy in further learning. In that way, the learning and the action became somewhat cyclical, allowing for enough change and renewal to avoid burnout. William, as we have seen, after investing so much time and energy in local community development as a young adult, and after he “nearly did a very great deal of damage to my family … had to be more balanced” (Interview 2, 483-487).

What help did people receive, and what further help did they want?

Participants in the study were asked several questions in order to determine what help they had received in learning about global issues, and what help they desired in the future. To stimulate their reflection on this, participants were given a sheet (see Figure 2) listing several types of assistance they might desire in learning about global issues. These were developed by reflecting on my preliminary sense of individuals’ experience in learning about global issues, and were revised prior to the interviews based on feedback from others. Participants were also asked, “As you look ahead to the next ten years, what resources, educational programs, groups, TV
programs or other services would be most helpful to you as you pursue further learning on fundamental global issues?"

**Figure 2**

*Sheet B—Assistance which would have been helpful*

1. assistance in providing or clarifying information or analysis concerning the issues
2. assistance in clarifying learning goals
3. assistance in locating resources
4. assistance in the learning process itself
5. assistance in evaluating your learning
6. assistance in dealing with emotions concerning these issues
7. assistance in translating learning into action
8. assistance in dealing with personal relationships directly related to these issues
9. other assistance

**Opportunities for learning and reflection**

**Opportunities for learning**

As has been observed in the section on the learning resources, participants made use of a wide range of learning resources and opportunities including all manner of print and audio-visual materials, courses, workshops, conferences, and residential programs. A great many of these were pursued at personal expense—sometimes at substantial personal cost. In spite of all of the learning opportunities that they had, however, the participants were anxious for more! Perhaps they were addicted to learning!
Opportunities for positive encounters with otherness

The types of learning experiences they desired are interesting. Though Jean did express interest in having courses available which would give background on issues which were currently in the news, generally participants sought other types of learning experiences. Several of the participants sought further intensive learning experiences which, in the terminology of Daloz and his associates (1996), would provide them with the opportunity for a "positive encounter with otherness." Both Raymond and Lorne, for example, expressed some regret that they had never lived outside Canada, or in a different culture. Lorne had recently investigated the possibility of he and his wife working in northern Canada. Raymond expressed interest in spending time overseas. Gordon, who had earlier spent time in Zambia was considering taking a teaching position in China the following year. Jeff was looking for an opportunity to take time off from teaching to pursue a Master's degree, or perhaps to change jobs. Catherine taught on a deferred salary arrangement which allowed her to periodically take a year off, and was interested in seeing if she could be helpful to the aboriginal community as it developed its educational system. For many of the participants, then, learning was an extremely important part of their lives, such that it constituted a major part of their personal longer-range planning.

Opportunities for reflection and discussion

Another form of learning opportunity which several of the participants found very helpful was the opportunity to relate to a group of individuals with whom they could engage in reflection and discussion. Sometimes this happened informally among friends. At other times, it operated in more organized settings. In the late 1980s, prior to the interviews, there were many small peace groups. One to which both Lorne and Raymond belonged was a small, quite informal, grouping of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). Typical attendance at a meeting would
probably have been half a dozen, and sometimes it was only half that number. While the viability of the group would appear questionable, it nevertheless appears to have served an important function. Lorne (a university professor) observed that what he found particularly helpful was a group with whom he could discuss both his personal learning on global issues, and his teaching approaches to these issues. He comments:

All of the groups that I belong to, as I start to think about it, are filling that gap. So our [faculty] group is largely either facilitating different educational programs—courses, interdisciplinary courses, workshops—or actually learning together, ourselves. ESR is the same way—and the last two meetings there have only been three of us there, but Frank and Russ and I would go away saying, “Gee, this was fantastic!” (Interview 1, 1044-1056)

Limitations: Availability, Time, and Cost

In spite of the desire of many to immerse themselves in global issues, there were lots of obstacles. Several of the participants commented on the fact that many of the programs they wished to attend required extensive travel—to central Canada at least, and often to the U.S. or further afield. All of this obviously meant limited opportunities to pursue such—because of both time and cost. Even the learning opportunities which were close to home often required more time than the participants had available. So, several of the participants expressed as high level of frustration because they were not able to pursue the learning they desired.

Supportive peers and mentors

Another very strong theme which runs through the comments on help received and desired, is that other supportive individuals were extremely important. Sometimes groups like the ESR group which Lorne described operated as a support group. Often these support networks were completely unstructured. Sharon, for example, commented on the support she received from women in her community.
Good sources of information, including background information

Participants' receipt of, and desire for, information appears paradoxical. On the one hand, they were inundated with information, to the point that several complained about information overload. Roy commented on this in the context of trying to teach about global issues:

One [problem] that comes immediately to mind for me is that I suffer from information overload..... If I wanted to start just with the bare essentials, to take one issue, and try to educate the kids on that, I find that there are so many variant and tangential issues ... you'll get caught up in all the extraneous information.... Information keeps coming to me and I can't disseminate it—I'm not a computer and I find it difficult to know where to start, so what I've done—I tend to ... lead with my heart and go from there. (Interview 20, 1644 -1669)

Janie also comments on information overload as it affects her personally, and causes her, at times, to restrict her own intake of information in order to avoid the overload. She elaborates:

I think the more knowledge you have, the more guilt you have—because now you have the knowledge, you know better! All of a sudden, sometimes I say, “God, I’ve got information overload.” Sometimes I don’t want to watch the news—it’s too depressing. There are some days I take a break from the world—I don’t answer the phone—I go over to my pottery shop and I sit there with the clay and I think, “Well, great! This is therapy.” And I think you need that. You need to get away. (Interview 20, 1262-1282)

At the same time that people are swamped with too much information, they are also frustrated by the lack of certain kinds of information which they are seeking. Roy, for instance, was at one point seeking specific information on the environmental practices of Coca Cola, but was unable to find anyone who could even suggest where he might look.

Moreover, it was not always simply more information which people required. The ability to organize the information into a framework that was meaningful to the individual seemed crucially important. Several commented on having put together, on their own, or having adopted from others, an analysis which allowed them to see similarities across issues, and thus to make the mass of information with which they were dealing more manageable. June was quite frank
about the fact that such an analysis did not come naturally to her. She had grown up, and worked in the Church for many years. She had a rich experience of global issues, having read and travelled widely, but she did not have an extensive background in political analysis. When appointed to a position in the national office of her church, she relied heavily on support from those in a related office, Church and Society, to assist her in formulating her analysis. She comments on her feeling of a continuing need in this area:

I was there from '74 to '80, and there was a lot of action then. Of course there had been in previous years, as well. At any rate, I think the whole analysis process was really new to me when I [started there] and I still feel that that’s an area in which I appreciate help] ... because that was just not a way of thinking that I had been even aware of, let alone accustomed to. And so I think that’s still an area that I need assistance in. (Interview 17, 1075-1088)

Understanding, and acting on, the relationships among issues

Another theme which comes across very strongly in the comments on help received and help desired is that the participants themselves saw a host of issues as strongly interrelated—but they did not believe that many of the social justice groups (including those to which they belonged) behaved as if this were so. They expressed this view in a variety of ways. Jonathan commented on the connections among issues:

The more I’m involved, the more it becomes clear that it is just one issue—and you can attack it from so many different sides, but it’s one issue and they all intermesh together. For instance my friend, Nancy—we’ve worked very closely on a lot of things, and she’s quite involved in feminism and has done a lot of studying and reading on feminism—and where she works in feminism, I work in Gandhian non-violence, but we both come to exactly the same realizations. It’s just great! And I’ve seen a lot on this walk [concerning the low-level flights over the Innu] of the ties between women’s spirituality and native spirituality and environmentalism, true environmentalism, and how they tie in together so closely. (Interview 15, 1196-1216)

Several others commented along a similar vein. Laura related a metaphor which had been shared with her and which she found meaningful, both in terms of seeing the commonalties among issues, and also in terms of determining how to invest her own energies:
My brother-in-law, Malcolm said to me once, "You know, it's like a pie, Laura. If you understand, if you have an analysis about a certain issue, and you understand it through and through, you go from the outer edge of the pie all the way in—you've got a piece of the pie completely analyzed, then you understand all the rest of the pie. So you can apply that analysis to all of the rest of it." I always think of that as a circle, and there are always other issues, and if I understand one thing to the core, you can apply that to other issues.... And it also works if you're very active in something that you care about, somewhere where you really feel you can do a lot of good—this sounds awful, but it sort of lets you off the hook for the rest. I mean, how much can you be responsible for? (Interview 13, 1534-1574)

In spite of the fact that many people commented on how interrelated they perceived a host of issues to be, several also commented on the lack of coordination in the approach to these issues. William, for example, expressed his frustration about the response to low-level flights in Labrador, an issue with which he had recently been involved both through his work and as a volunteer:

I think, in so far as I've been involved—through my work because of the film Hunters and bombers and through my volunteer activities [concerning] ... the effect of low-level flying on the Innu people—some sort of clearinghouse there [would be helpful]. It seems to me there are a whole lot of different groups involved and it's quite fragmented—the so-called peace and justice movement ... are renowned for being fragmented and duplicating each other. So, there's been a problem there—it would have been very helpful if some sort of clearinghouse operation with adequate staff and support could have provided the kind of information and clarification about the whole issue and could have acted in a support fashion to a lot of groups—or [then] a number of the groups might have coalesced more. It's fragmentation and duplication and lack of cooperation—too many people running around, all working on the same thing. That's one of the chief problems that I have. (Interview 2, 948-976)

Jonathan made a similar observation:

I think one of the big problems [is that] ... you find groups concentrating entirely on their one issue to the exclusion of others. And you actually get competition for attention and competition for resources ... I hate seeing that. For instance around the low-level flights, there has been a problem with a lot of peace groups who see it as a peace and disarmament issue entirely, and are not concerned with the native rights or with the environment, and just want to push it as a peace issue.... On their little pamphlets they don't want to mention the women's aspect, the environment aspect, the native aspect, because they think that might detract from it—and if everyone was willing to work together and just see it as one issue, I think it would work so much better. (Interview 15, 1230-1258)
Integrating the learning into one's life: Emotions, action, and relationships

It is interesting—and probably not very surprising—that while participants were always keen to obtain more information on the issues of particular concern to them, they generally were quite self-directed learners who felt little need of assistance. Thus, while many indicated they would welcome more information or analysis in specific areas, there was relatively little response to items 2 to 5 on Sheet B (clarifying learning goals, locating resources, assistance in the learning process, and evaluating their learning). It was the next three items on the list—"dealing with emotions concerning these issues," "translating learning into action," and "dealing with personal relationships directly relating to these issues"—that triggered the greatest response. All of these relate to individuals' efforts to integrate their learning about global issues into their lives.

Managing one's own emotions and assisting others to manage theirs

Many of the participants expressed a strong desire for assistance in dealing with emotion. In examining these comments closely, we can see three kinds of need. A few of the individuals, on occasion, were overcome with emotion related to the state of the world around them. Roy describes the following situation:

About 2 or 3 years ago Janie and I had an emotional situation—we were dealing with the house and finances and all that kind of stuff, but anyway we had a hell of a spat over the thing and I got mad as hell, but when I finished getting mad I went outside and I started to cry—deep rending sobs. And I walked around this house—I walked miles around this house. And I could not control myself. I was totally unable to control myself. And of course, it wasn’t the spat about money—I mean that happens frequently—it wasn’t the frustrations of the house or that sort of thing—I recognized it was, in me, a primal getting down to [a basic fear concerning the future of the planet]... I imagine that there are millions of people going around with that potential need to explode in that way, or in some way, and of course if this hadn’t come out in the way that it had, God knows how [it would have.] (Interview 20, 2009-2034)
Marguerite also relates an experience that was very emotional for her. She is passionate about nature and since she feels a strong attachment to animals, is a vegetarian. She had recently purchased and moved into a winterized cottage overlooking the Bay of Fundy. She describes, with considerable emotion, a recent experience:

One day, about two months ago, I was here just looking at the birds migrating. Ahh, the beauty in this, you know! And the challenge it is for these birds! To think that they can go for thousands of miles like this! All day I looked at them. A friend of mine invited me to celebrate that I bought this here [her cottage/home]. And she knew, she knew I’m vegetarian. I have been there many times. They would never serve me any meat. (Pauses) There was a duck [served for supper]. (Sigh) It was hard. It was hard. Here I was, I was feeling like I was part of them (gesturing to the ducks flying over the Bay), and here (gesturing) on my plate. (Trying to hold back tears) It made me sick. (Pauses) A lot of them vanish because they are on our plates. A lot of them vanish because we experiment with them. And they vanish because we’ve polluted their milieu. (Interview 9, 2213-2236)

Victoria, too, in reflecting on the obstacles to her own learning, commented on the role played by her own discouragement:

I think sometimes it becomes pretty disheartening, so that becomes a barrier. There really is that tendency—at least I would say I sometimes have that tendency—to just feel overwhelmed: bogged down, overwhelmed. Is anything really making a difference? Because that’s the ultimate goal: to make a difference—whether it’s on a personal level, or a societal level, or what have you. And I think there are times when you can seemingly learn a lot, you can try to implement on your own small scale, and yet, because the big guys out there are really running the show, it doesn’t seem to work. It doesn’t seem to effect the change you would like it to. So I think that’s a barrier. (Interview 4, 311-352)

For some, then, there were times when they felt deeply emotional because of the world situation and they would have welcomed support in dealing with those emotions. Some others exhibit a different need for emotional support. Here, the emotional need is a secondary one. They may already have dealt with their despair over the future of the earth. Indeed, Laura comments specifically that she feels that the peace movement has dealt effectively with this type of emotion:
I think the peace movement has dealt very well with emotions concerning nuclear issues, and [for] children and adolescents in particular, dealing with despair and empowerment—there's a lot of good work done there. I've attended good workshops on that. (Interview 13, 1303-1311)

For several others, however, the emotions they described related instead to their relations with other people, and in particular, the difficulty of having others reject what they, themselves, feel so passionately about. This, then, constitutes a second kind of emotional issue. Jeff, for example, comments:

It would have helped if people weren't negative, or didn't pass off an emotion. You'd be talking with friends, or even with colleagues or students, and when you say, "This is really important to me." ...when those emotions are just cavalierly passed aside, and I can think of statements that have been made—"Oh, get off your soap box".... When people do that it's not helpful, so I would rather that they either ignore me or question it rather than just trying to pass it off either because they aren't interested, or don't have time, or whatever. (Interview 3, 917-936)

Barry also comments concerning a similar frustration:

I've often felt like I'm an island in the midst of a sea of people who don't want to learn, or who don't want to talk about it, anyway—and I think some hesitancy that I experience in addressing things publicly is that I'm not aware where these people are at, all the time, or certainly don't have a sense of where the community is at. (Interview 21, 1000-1010)

What Barry and others no doubt desired was what Eleanor expressed very clearly when she commented on dealing with her own emotions concerning the intensive experience in Cuernavaca:

That really strikes me very hard sometimes emotionally, but I also think that's important. And I would like to have had more people around who could also experience that as deeply emotionally—I don't mean that to sound like it's bragging, because I don't particularly think it's bragging—but I would like to have had more people to have kind of shared that, and really just in the last year have developed some of those kind of links—because I do miss that—I miss somebody to talk out these things, really at the gut level. (Interview 14, 515-530)

Finally, because many of the participants are, themselves, educators or leaders of groups, they often find themselves in a position of needing to help others to deal with their emotions.
When given Sheet B, the list of various types of help that people might desire, Barry, thinking of his work within his congregation, commented:

Well, one from this list that just jumps right out at me is "assistance in dealing with emotions concerning these issues." Not necessarily my emotions, but my ability—some assistance to help me help people deal with their emotions. It amazes me that even in a learning setting, emotions can play such a significant role. Again, even in the small World Outreach committee that we have—almost without exception, I guess, each time that we have begun a year—the first two or three meetings are well peppered with people's emotions. And we've been able to identify that. I'm not sure we've been able to deal with it well. (Interview 21, 747-767)

*Integrating learning and action*

A second form of assistance that people desired, in integrating their learning about global issues into their lives, was specifically in integrating learning and action. We will examine the various types of action in greater detail in the next chapter, but we should note at this point that "action" is here interpreted broadly, to include people's action in teaching, and in altering their lifestyle as well as in "activism."

Many expressed a desire for more help in this area, and people frequently linked such assistance to a support group of some sort. Eleanor, once again thinking of what action needs to arise out of her experience at Cuernavaca, commented:

How do I get from this piece of blob that feels so deeply, into actually doing something that is important? And I think Mexico has helped me with that, although I would like to go back again, just to kind of focus on that end of it—because there was so much to translate there into my own life, and so many people who were knowledgeable said, "Don't do anything for us, do it with your own country. Go back and work on your own country. Make it more democratic. Make it more honest. Insist that your newspapers at least get at some of the truth." And so on. But you need a support group for that—you know, to keep going, you just need bolstering! (Interview 14, 535-555)

In a somewhat similar vein, June commented:

"Assistance in translating learning into action." Yea, I still need to work at that. For instance I've got an Amnesty International calendar there and I sit and think, Oh, I should be writing letters—and I don't. It's hard writing letters, even to my friends. I could do more of that.... Yes, I think it's the two—it's the analysis and getting motivated into
action. And really, I get that kind of motivation from being with others. I think I need that push. (Interview 17, 1102-1121)

Impact on relationships

An extremely important area, which is often overlooked, is the impact of one’s involvement in global issues—or other social issues—on their relationships with others, especially with one’s partner or others who are very close. Lorne, William, Jeff, Marguerite, Joseph, Eleanor, Sharon, Janie, and Roy all commented on this, and all except Joseph and Marguerite recounted personal experiences in which there had been strains on close relationships. Lorne’s and William’s cases have been recounted earlier.

Relationships also were an issue for Sharon. She has come to appreciate the importance of sharing similar values with those who are close to you, but is not convinced that there is much that others can do to assist with this. She comments on her experience:

“Assistance in dealing with personal relationships related to these issues,” I think that’s something I had to work out on my own, and I’m not sure someone really can help you with that. I just think of relationships I’ve had with men, and often ending relationships because, “I’m sorry, but your head isn’t where mine is.” And I think that’s a lesson I had to learn on my own—as much as you know, parents will tell you, and people will tell you, “You really need a shared value system.” Well that’s very theoretical. What is a shared value system? You learn the hard way—you really do need that for a relationship to grow. (Interview 18, 583-605)

In Eleanor’s case, she was living amid the relationship strains at the time of the interview. She had had a very strong sense of justice from an early age, but had been later than some becoming actively involved in social issues. She indicated that her first active involvement was when she was in her late 20s. By that stage she was already married and established in her career of teaching. She became involved in the women’s movement and within a year or so afterward had her first child. Through these experiences she became increasingly aware of the plight of
women and children on a global level, and became passionately involved in global peace and development issues.

At the time of the interview, a decade later, she and her husband lived with their 3 children in a comfortable home—though certainly not lavish—in a rural area outside Halifax. By all appearances, Eleanor was a highly successful teacher. She was constantly on the go. She was being encouraged at school to consider moving into administration. On the surface, her life, and that of her family appeared full, successful, and satisfying. But because of the two weeks which Eleanor and her husband spent in the residential program in Mexico, Eleanor was in turmoil.

Administration was not her goal. She comments, “they’re bothering me about administration, which I would rather die than do—I mean it just doesn’t appeal to me at all!” (Interview 14, 1247-1250). She is anxious to learn more about global issues, but she is not sure what route to follow. She has looked into a Master’s program in global education,

because I would like to continue to study because I think it’s important to be with people that you can also talk to about that, and Ivan’s [her husband] kind of interested in that, because he’d like to get a different focus.... I mean, I would really love for us to be able to do it together. (Interview 14, 1175-1186)

But, Eleanor is also unsure that another university degree is really what she wants. One of the people with whom she was greatly impressed at the program in Cuernavaca has undoubtedly become something of a role model. He had left home at an early age to work washing toilets, now had several master’s degrees and a doctorate in education, had studied with Paulo Friere and Jean Paiget, had done research with Friere in Angola, had headed education programs for the Organization of American States, and had been asked by Mexico to head their education system but had decided instead to “work with the peasants—really feeling that all the
formal education that he’d had really only taught him that that wasn’t what he needed to do”

(Interview 14, 1213-1218).

Eleanor continues, describing her dilemma concerning further education:

I’ve really thought about it in all the spare moments that I’ve had, because it really makes you wonder if what you’re doing when you’re participating in formal education is simply educating yourself to the system. You know ... what am I really learning? ... I mean, even The New Internationalist has a limited viewpoint, often. It’s looking at it from one side, and you wonder, because it’s not looking at double sides, what the real value is for yourself. So I don’t know ... I’d like to, on the one hand [take the Master’s program in global education], but on the other hand I don’t want to fall back into ... you know, I don’t want to “get another degree.” (Interview 14, 1220-1244)

Eleanor is questioning a lot of the “basics” in her life. She enjoys her teaching and her work with children and believes that she is good at it, but she does not want to follow the career path into administration which she is being encouraged to pursue. She is anxious to deepen her understanding of global issues, but is unsure that a Master’s program she has been considering is the best way of doing so. In fact, she is wondering if she should be pursuing further formal education at all, or if it simply encourages her to become more a part of “the system.” She is also seriously questioning her lifestyle. Though there was no indication of any extravagance, or of any preoccupation with consumerism, she was nevertheless concerned that her life may have been too comfortable. She and her husband have been grappling with some of these issues:

So I have some really clear choices and we’re in the process of talking through some personal choices here. We’re talking of selling our home, and moving down to something much simpler, in fact, even talking about winterizing a cottage and moving there, so ... I mean, I say “we” but again, it’s been mostly [me]...—although Ivan’s really coming, you know, he’s really coming, but ... again, it has been, I feel, more [me] pushing, so on the one hand I feel really manipulative, but it’s this desperation, too. If I don’t get it to a certain point ... I don’t know how long I can handle that. And so it’s really moving and we’re having so much better talks, Ivan and I, we are developing a relationship—finally—where we can talk about things that are meaningful. But I know it’s been a strain, because he just didn’t come from that, and goodness knows, neither did I. (Interview 14, 867-908)
In order to understand some of the relationship issues which emerge when people become deeply concerned about global issues, it is helpful to pause to reflect on Eleanor’s comments. She is wrestling with some major questions in her life: her future directions in her work, in her learning, and in her family lifestyle. She has few individuals with whom to discuss these matters other than her husband: her friends from university are concerned only with what are, in Eleanor’s mind, frivolous matters; the one individual locally with whom she could discuss important issues has recently moved to B.C.; and the couple with whom she and her husband visited immediately following the Cuernavaca program live in Ontario. So, it is doubly important to Eleanor that she be able to talk these decisions out with her husband: some of the decisions will need to be made jointly with him, and the others will certainly affect him—and, she really has no one else to talk them over with!

So, there is a lot at stake. Because of her passionate concern for global issues, she is placing heavy demands on her relationship with her husband. She recognizes that neither she nor her husband came from “that”—by which it appears that she means both from a concern about global issues and from family relationships where people can talk openly about “things that are meaningful.” We do recall that Eleanor sees her husband as being very different from his parents, but that she was shocked by them and considers them to be “so racist.”

Since this major life turning point is arising many years after their marriage, one would not be surprised if Eleanor’s husband was having his own difficulties in adjusting, and in contemplating options such as selling their home to move into something considerably more modest.
Joseph, one of the other participants who has been very involved in union activity, does not recount any personal experience with strained relationships, but does comment that he has seen problems frequently among those involved in social action:

I’ve seen so many couples split up when they get involved in, whatever the cause.

[Do you have any explanation for that? Is it that one partner becomes much more involved than the other? Or is it something else?]

I think that’s one of the main reasons. I noticed personally when I was involved in the union that a number of members of the executive ended up being divorced after about a year or so—because it was a very activist union; we were a break-away from the Steel Workers and were really involved in issues—not just in the workplace, but in the community as well. So it just took people [away from home]—you know, there were meetings every night, after work, and during the day whenever there was spare time. Their spouse would be at home, or out of the union picture; it was like being widowed. The activist was ignoring all of the responsibilities at home. And in Nova Scotia here, on environmental issues, if there is something that is of imminent danger and you organize to deal with it, you get away with it for a couple of months, but when it starts to go longer than that, then you run into a lot of problems—serious problems, at home. Both members of a couple have to be involved. Then they can understand the other person’s perspective…. It has to be a joint thing in order to keep a relationship together. (Interview 12, 1443-1495)

The “joint thing” which Joseph refers to is achieved by some. Janie talks with some satisfaction about she and Roy being together in their concerns and action—though clearly it was not always thus!

We’ve had rifts through our marriage, just because I haven’t reached the same stage of thinking that he has, or he hasn’t reached the same stage of thinking that I have. And this year we were married 20 years and I think we’ve diverged in our paths and now we’re coming back—and it’s a really nice feeling to know that, hey, this is what we really want! We’ve gone about it, and fought about it, and you know, up and down, all the way along, and really didn’t know what we wanted, but now because I think we’re thinking more on a global level, we’re not thinking of our own personal little inconveniences, or whatever. I think we’ve come to the realization that less is more, and we’re going to work towards that end. And it won’t happen, like Roy says, today. But that’s kind of where we stand now—and you can sleep a little easier because he’s doing his work with the students; I’m doing bits here and there in the community. I’m making a difference, I think, on the homefront as far as not consuming as much as I used to, by far. [We’re] growing as much food as we can. Cooking healthfully. Not eating sprayed [vegetables.] Taking a holistic approach to our health, our bodies, our thinking, but I think you have to… no two people reach that stage in the same way. (Interview 20, 1282-1325)
Chapter 5—The Impacts Process: How did the learning affect participants?

Learning—Part of “Who I am”

As has been noted previously, one of the very strong themes which runs through virtually all of the interviews is that learning about global issues, for the participants in this study, was not a separate activity which occurred in a small part of their lives. Instead, it was an essential and integral part of who they were, and who they perceived themselves to be. Participants expressed this in different ways, but the message was remarkably consistent. Martha Rogers (1994), in her study of students in a global futures class found a similar pattern.

This integration of learning into the lives of the participants has significant implications. As I noted in Chapter 2, I began with a simple model in mind: that various influences prompted individuals to decide to learn more about global issues; and that this learning, in turn, resulted in various impacts on the individuals’ knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviour. This simple model, borrowed from experimental research, saw the individuals’ learning similar to a “treatment,” administered to an individual, giving rise to certain effects. If we now understand that the individual’s learning about global issues is not “separate,” but is instead an integral part of their lives, and of who they see themselves to be, the challenge of separating out the impact of the learning per se, is rather more complex. A more helpful approach, at least initially, might be to attempt to trace some of the patterns which seem to arise frequently in the way the individuals’ global learning relates to other aspects of their lives.
Learning-action patterns

Although virtually all participants indicated that learning and action were very much intertwined, when we examine the more precise patterns of interaction, we find greater variation. We will examine five distinct patterns of interaction between the learning and action.

Which comes first: Learning or action?

Many of the participants were quite involved in taking action which they believed would, in some small way, help contribute toward a better world. The action may have been taken through changes in the individual’s lifestyle, through political action, or in some other way. Participants were asked whether, in such cases, their learning about various issues tended to lead them into action, or whether they first got involved in taking action, which then led them to engage in learning. In several cases, participants indicated that their action and their learning were so integrated that they could not identify either as leading to the other. In several other cases, however, participants indicated that their learning about an issue preceded taking action. Participants, for example, often commented on how important they felt it was that they be knowledgeable and well prepared before engaging in any public action. Eleanor comments on her hesitancy to take action on the peace issue:

I think I’ve often been a person who acts before I know. And perhaps unfortunately, perhaps fortunately, with the peace issue I felt kind of desperate to at least become informed enough so I don’t goof it up somehow. It’s an issue that people tend not to listen to you at all if you’re not informed. And I think that’s unfortunate—I think it could be much more an emotional issue. “You just can’t do that because it’s wrong—just because it hurts people!” you know, and not sticking just with the economic logic and things. I think it would be much better for the world if we could deal with it on that level, but I have been really cautious, and that’s one reason that I joined Project Ploughshares. (Interview 14, 790-812)
Although becoming concerned about an issue, learning about it in considerable detail, and then taking action on it constituted the most common learning-action pattern, it was certainly not the only one! Two others were also observed.

In Beatrice’s case, her introduction to taking action on global issues was through the Shelter movement and Save the Children Fund in England. In these cases, she responded with compassion to situations of real human need, without feeling any necessity of doing a lot of learning first. A similar pattern can be seen later, after she moved to Canada. Here, one of the first issues she got involved in was in assisting Vietnamese refugees (“The Boat People”) who came to Canada. She describes how, once again, she got involved quickly, because she felt she “had to do something.” No time was taken for much learning; the response of compassion and duty was immediate:

We had 5 teenagers to look after. We were expecting a family and we had arranged housing and a job for the family and we got 5 teenagers instead, because nobody else wanted them.... Another friend of mine, a lady who is now in Vienna, said to me, “Well, we’ll have to do something!” So we took that to the church and we took it to the community and she and I ... led our little group—but we got the whole community involved in that. It was really good because we had the people going backwards and forwards, taking them to English lessons, and we had people doing special English lessons for the children, because we had one little boy—I think he was only 11. So we had a lot of care. (Interview 22, 145-177)

As Beatrice, herself, observed:

For me, I think action leads to learning ... I think I take steps even though I haven’t thought an issue through very much. I begin doing things and then I want to read about it or do something more about it. I find that more effective. So I think probably action precipitates the learning, although I’m sure sometimes that the learning precipitates action.... Intuition, or something, leads you to the action; then it tickles your mind and you really want to know more about it and you have to go on. You can’t stop. (Interview 22, 396-420)

Finally, there were also instances where much of the learning took place through the action. Jonathan participated in a Walk from Halifax to Ottawa, demonstrating solidarity with the Innu people in their opposition to NATO low-level flights over Labrador. The walk was a
difficult but powerful learning experience. Jonathan describes the impact of his experience on the walk:

For me personally, as far as what I got out of it, it's probably the best thing I've ever done! But it's also the most difficult thing I've ever done! (Interview 15, 870-874)

During all this, of course, I'm really educating myself about the Innu and what's going on there. One of the things I learned about immensely on this walk—which was one of the things I was hoping to, I suppose, was just solidarity work in general and what that means. That was a big issue among the organizers and the participants in the walk: just what does solidarity mean? When do you lead and when do you follow? And when do you step back and let things go? Because there were a lot of times when things wouldn't necessarily be going the way that I thought was best; or the way the non-natives, in general, thought was best. But you've got to realize it's their struggle and if they want to say things a certain way or they want to do things a certain way. It's not to us to change them. It's up to us to change us. (Interview 15, 554-605)

Learning-action cycles

A further pattern which was frequently observed was a cycle, with the emphasis alternating between learning and action. The reasons and time-frame differed, but the cyclical pattern was a very common one. Often, this pattern was related to burnout—either to preventing it, or to coping with it. Joseph, for example, in describing how he manages to avoid burnout, comments:

Well, there are times when I really get tired and I find that I have to pull back ... do something else for a while.... And, actually, I probably increase my formal learning at that time. I cut out the meetings and the involvement in the organizing, and concentrate on a couple of classes. (Interview 12, 1328-1361)

Joseph indicates that after a "learning break," he then feels invigorated to get back involved in action, with his new knowledge and perspectives.

Expanding scope: Increasing the range of issues

There was a very common tendency for participants to become involved in global issues through a single issue, and for them then to gradually expand their interest and concern into a much wider range of issues. Eleanor, as we have already seen, initially became involved through
local women’s issues, but her growing awareness of the plight of women globally led her into an involvement in peace and development concerns. Janie became engaged when her son was born and she became much more conscious of food processing and the additives placed in food—and ultimately she became involved in a wide range of environmental concerns. Beatrice became involved raising money to assist cyclone victims in Bangladesh and then became involved in assisting refugees, and in the peace and disarmament movement on a local and regional basis.

For Jonathan, his involvement in various global issues was like a chain-reaction. Although his initial interest was in the situation in South Africa, over the span of a couple of years he became involved in a half dozen or more separate global issues.

Coupled with the expanding involvement in issues was a conceptual understanding of the relationship between and among issues.

The commitment-action gap

One pattern which was quite illuminating, coming through in many of the interviews, was the lengthy time frame which was often associated with involvement in global issues. In Chapter 3 we observed the extended time frame over which various influences had an impact on individuals. Here, in a parallel way, we see the extended time frame over which many individuals engaged in learning before they took significant action. We may, naively, expect that if people could only “understand the situation” or “know the truth” they would immediately change their behaviour. For many of the participants in this study, taking action on their new knowledge did follow—but often much later. There were several reasons.

Eleanor, perhaps partly because she had such an unfortunate experience with the male teachers and with the media when she was involved in the Status of Women Committee in B.C.,
was very leery of taking any action without being well informed and well prepared. As a result, after joining Project Ploughshares, she proceeded very cautiously:

I mean I didn’t say anything in that group for two years, I didn’t as much as ask a question, because I was so totally ignorant. Now I will ask. I feel much freer to ask and ask and ask, because I do feel it’s really important to inform myself. (Interview 14, 814-820)

Edward was also slow to act, but in his case it was because he was uncertain what action to take, so he was waiting for leadership and was constantly trying to learn more. He comments:

I feel that I should be doing something, but I’m not sure what to do. Again, I wait for leadership. I realize that people like me are inclined to let somebody else take the action. They perhaps haven’t read as much about it but they—bless them—they have a gut reaction, “This is wrong!” and they’ll fight for it. I guess that’s the problem with intellectuals [like me]. They’re always trying to learn a little more before they’ll do anything. That’s the curse! (Interview 8, 1041-1054)

The slowness to act, in several cases, also reflected a gap between knowing what action one should take and actually doing it. Raymond comments:

I think my conception of things and my understanding of what I think could be done is always way beyond what I actually do. You know, my mind is always swimming with all this stuff, but then I’m [just] going in and coordinating my little literacy program. [laughter] That’s just me. (Interview 10, 1085-1092)

This gap between awareness of an issue and taking action on it seems to involve several separate steps: commitment to the issue, becoming informed about it, knowing what to do, and then actually finding the personal strength to take the action. On the one hand, this suggests that we may need to revise our expectations of how quickly individuals may respond to their learning about global issues—recognizing that the process is often a lengthy one. Since we have seen evidence of people “stuck” at each stage along the way, however, it also suggests that people may often need considerable support and assistance in developing to the point where they feel comfortable taking action on an issue.
Action impacts: Stronger emotion, deeper commitment

Although the process was often a lengthy one, we can clearly see that learning often had a significant impact on individuals, ultimately resulting in them taking action. In a somewhat similar fashion, however, often the action itself also had a powerful impact on the individual. Sometimes, in the cyclical pattern of learning and action noted above, the action led to further learning. Beatrice, for example, has indicated that in her case, taking action tended to prompt her to pursue more learning. Eleanor, too, although she has been taking a considerable time to learn about the peace issue before engaging in action. Nevertheless, when an individual does reach the point where they engage in action, the action itself may have a very powerful impact. June, retired from a career in church work, describes the impact on her:

I think that one of the toughest things I ever did was in Sydney [Nova Scotia] when ... our peace group paraded down the streets of Sydney. At that point I'd been working there for a number of years and you know, a number of people saw me! [laughter] And another time, in Toronto, we went down to Bay Street to one of the buildings there.... And that's the thing—I know now it's a lot tougher; it takes more courage. And I suspect if I had been more of a firebrand or whatever, I probably would have got into a lot more "challenging" situations than I did! [laughter] You see my milieu was Christian development, and within the church.

There comes a point when you have to stop learning and take action. And even to parade down Main Street, Sydney is not much of an action but it is—you're involved with your total being—your body and everything else. And on reflection, I would say, having done that, you are committing yourself at a deeper level, and even though you know it's not going to affect the larger issue, to any degree, it's a sense of standing in solidarity with [people]. The Bay Street, Toronto march was against the Banks' [involvement] in South Africa. And we stood on that corner and we sang Kum Ba Ya and it was purifying for me.

[That was a very strong emotional experience for you?]

Yes it was ... we had a very strong sense of community, even though most of us didn't know one another. I suppose there were three or four whom I knew, but a lot of the others were strangers. But it was also, I recall now—what I liked about it was the fact that we weren't being strident, and people came, stopped, and came over to look at the placards and some stayed with us. So it was ... an act of solidarity and in some sense I had some feelings of connection with the dispossessed in South Africa. (Interview 17, 945-1033)
Life without global learning

Participants were asked if they could imagine what their lives might have been like had they not engaged in learning about global issues in the way they had. Interestingly, most found the question virtually impossible to answer. A concern for the common good, including an interest in, and concern about, global issues was so much a part of their lives that they found it very hard to imagine what their lives might have been like without it. A few people did venture a response, or at other points in the interview made comments which were relevant to this issue. Though limited, these are rather revealing!

Emptiness or bliss?

Barry responded, indicating that, “I have this frustration with people who don’t want to learn, and I think, ‘Oh, what a shame! What emptiness there must be in a life that doesn’t want to learn!’” (Interview 21, 1071-1076). Sharon, on the other hand, recounts a discussion on this subject a few days earlier:

I had this discussion with a woman the other day. Some days I just get so frustrated and so stressed out because of worrying about so many things that I looked at Janet the other day and said, “Ignorance is truly bliss!” And I believe that. I truly believe that if I wasn’t aware of many issues I would be a whole hell of a lot happier. Because that would be so much stress taken away instantaneously. (Interview 18, 848-860)

Sharon continues, citing the example of her roommate who knew practically nothing about apartheid, and indicates, “that would have been me if I hadn’t become interested in these issues” (Interview 18, 935-937).

Freedom from responsibility and guilt?

For Laura, contemplating the prospect of living one’s life without learning about global issues raised a related issue:

For people that are involved in social justice issues—how many pieces of the pie [issues] do you get involved in? And where do you stop? And how can you keep piecing
yourself up? Do you become responsible for every single ill in the world that you become involved with? or you become educated about? The more you raise your consciousness, do you have the responsibility for “carrying” absolutely everything? (Interview 13, 1515-1527)

By implication, then, if learning about global issues were to burden us with responsibilities for all of the world’s ills—and guilt for all of the action that we believe we should be taking but, at least at the moment, are not taking—then we can well see how not learning about global issues could become a very attractive option!

**Impacts of the Learning**

Because, for most of the participants, the learning was so fully integrated into their lives, it was not only difficult to imagine what their lives would have been like had they not engaged in the learning, but it was also difficult to isolate specific changes in behaviour which one could attribute to the learning. Nevertheless, individuals identified three kinds of impacts that their concern about global issues had had on their lives:

- Internal impacts: knowledge, understanding, values, and attitudes
- Personal impacts: lifestyle and personal behaviour
- Public impacts: behaviour and action in the community

**Internal impacts: Knowledge, understanding, values, and attitudes**

Many of the participants indicated topics or issues about which they had been gaining new knowledge. There was, not surprisingly, a wide array, including peace and disarmament, natural resources and the environment, native issues, women’s issues, development, food, and human rights. A very common situation was that learning about global issues had enabled the individual to develop an overall analysis or overarching framework, into which their understanding of one issue began to mesh with their understanding of other issues. An
increasing sense of the parallels and interconnections between and among issues thus was very common.

In many cases, individuals indicated that the global learning in which they engaged served to deepen their knowledge and understanding, and often to strengthen their commitment, but for most participants in this study, it did not alter their basic values or take them in a fundamentally different direction than they had been heading. Their fundamental values were established before they began, in a serious way, learning about global issues—and their fundamental values were reinforced, rather than altered, by their global learning.

In a few cases, participants indicated that there had been a change in their attitudes which they would not have expected if they had not engaged in learning about global issues. William, for instance, articulated some of the ways in which his attitudes and his life would have been somewhat different if he had not engaged in learning about global issues:

I would have been much more interested in the trappings of material success. I think one obvious way—I would have been far more conservative in my world outlook. I think there is little doubt I would have been far more inclined to strenuously support the status quo. My circle of friends would have been very different. I think people tend to, consciously or unconsciously, seek out for friends those people who share their world view.... I think it's very important to have people who have the same broad value system as you do [but] there are lots of friends who don't. (Interview 2, 1054-1074)

**Personal impacts: Lifestyle and personal behaviour**

*Reduction in consumption, increase in recycling*

Many of the participants indicated that they took personal action to recycle, to reduce their consumption, and generally, to limit their negative impact on the environment. Marguerite, and Roy and Janie (spouses) were particularly vocal on this point. Marguerite, for instance, had recently moved to a winterized cottage on the coast and has tried to adopt a very simple lifestyle. Roy comments on the lifestyle that he and Janie are working toward:
I think we could sum it up in a word by saying ... that we are fully cognizant that indeed, "less is more"—to the extent that the opportunity becomes available for us, we will actively divest ourselves of all the superfluous things that we have accumulated over the years. We will actively seek out a simpler lifestyle. It's not going to happen tomorrow or next year, but that's our aim for the future. We really do hope to be able to get to a very, very simple lifestyle. (Interview 20, 330-345)

**Contrast between environmental and peace movements**

As Victoria points out, however, it is not always easy to know what action one can or should take in support of an issue—and, at times, one can feel quite overwhelmed as a result:

I think there have been times—I think there still are times—when I just feel overwhelmed. I take a 10-minute newscast and I listen, you know, [laughter] and it's not heartening. And I find that the temptation is to say, "What am I fighting here?"

Then I think that in the end there is also the empowerment that comes through knowing that you can make specific changes. With the environmental thing ... I think there's something very positive about being able to do something very tangible—and to see the fruits of your labour, as it were. [In contrast,] I think there are times when we can go to meetings and do all this reading, you can amass information, but that is what you have done. And then if you don't somehow find ways to translate that, it's just overwhelming—it does not become empowering. (Interview 4, 934-959)

Victoria indicates that for her it has been easier to become empowered with respect to environmental issues than the peace issue, because in the latter case, it is often unclear what action an individual can take that will be helpful. She believes that she might have felt differently if she had been able to participate in the activities of peace groups, in which she has not been active because of her evening work schedule.

**Relationships**

As William noted above, one's involvement in global issues may have an impact on who one seeks out as close friends. Eleanor also noted this, observing that when she moved back to Nova Scotia, after becoming much more actively concerned about peace and justice issues, she no longer had much in common with her friends from college days:
I thought, well, I’ve got to do something, and I’ve got to get to know some people better who are empathetic to this too, because I was surrounded with the old college lot who were very much not connected to that [peace and justice]. And, although we have social connections, still are not, either. It’s like I couldn’t—no matter how much I felt it or how I seemed to talk about it—I couldn’t get any reaction. So I felt, well, I’ll work on this in the justice area and joined Project Ploughshares at that point. (Interview 14, 197-213)

Many others also make reference to their close friends as folks who share similar values and concerns. Roy and Janie, for example, comment on a couple who were close personal friends:

[They] were among those who put everything they owned—lock, stock and barrel—up against the budworm spray. They were some of the complainants. They ... put their money where their mouth was, and stood to lose everything they had worked for. They’ve been a big influence. (Interview 20, 1552-1567)

Although close friendships were important, if the individual had a partner, shared values with the partner were exceedingly important, as we have seen already through the observations of Lorne, Joseph, Eleanor, Sharon, Roy and Janie.

Public impacts: Behaviour and action in the community

Paid employment

As noted earlier, educators were heavily represented in the study. Eight of the participants were teachers within the school system, and while only two of those were teaching courses on global studies, all were able to find some ways of incorporating their concern for global issues into their teaching and extra-curricular work with students. Three of the participants were university faculty members, all of whom were regularly able to do some teaching related to global issues. Four were in other educational roles; three of the four were regularly able to incorporate global issues into their work. Of the eight remaining, three were in other roles dealing with social issues (two of whom could incorporate global issues into their work); two were retired; and three were in other roles. In total, 16 of the 23 were, in some way,
able to incorporate global issues into paid employment—though for most of those, it did not constitute the primary focus of their work.

**Activism**

Attitudes toward—and involvement in—organizations, protest activities or political activism relating to global issues, varied greatly.

**Active in a range of environmental, peace, and social justice organizations and activities**

Many of the participants were deeply involved in a wide range of community-based environmental, peace, and social justice activities. Jonathan provides a useful example. He had become actively involved in global issues late in university, after doing a good deal of reading on apartheid, pacifism, and non-violence. He attended a meeting following the visit of Dr. Helen Caldicott to Halifax, and became involved in the Peace Pledge Campaign. Over the next couple of years he became involved in the Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Harbour, the Canadian Peace Alliance, the Coalition Against Apartheid, and the Shadows Project for Hiroshima Day. He travelled to Toronto to the rally for Nelson Mandela following his release from prison, and participated throughout one summer in a Walk from Halifax to Ottawa in support of the Innu in their opposition to NATO low-level flights over Labrador.

Like Jonathan, most other participants were also involved in multiple organizations and activities.

**Teaching, school-based activities, and teacher organizations**

Some participants saw their teaching as the main area for their involvement. Gordon, for example, comments:

*In Nova Scotia and Canada [I’m] ... increasingly disinclined to get involved. It goes back to ... my feelings about Canadian politics—I think it’s irrelevant, as far as I’m concerned. I’m not a terribly social creature, I guess, to begin with. I’m not a joiner.... I*
do my work as a teacher, and I'm afraid I don't do much beyond that. (Interview 5, 904-916)

Activism integrated with professional interests

Henry had been involved in a peace camp when he graduated from university in the mid-1960s, but then had not been active in the peace movement again until the 1980s when he had an opportunity to integrate his activism with his personal and academic interests in art. He describes his involvement:

I guess that [my involvement in the peace issue] probably surfaced again, 4 or 5 years ago when it became ... more of a [public] issue once again.... I guess what brought it home to me was the Shadow Project.... That was probably about '83.... It happened in New York, right? And then the second year it caught on here, and that really caught my interest because here was essentially an art-based form of protest. And I very much identified with [it]—I just thought it was such a strong and aesthetically bright kind of observation and protest. So I got involved with that. And... my son, who was probably about 13 at the time, got involved too. Again, that made it more meaningful.... So that kind of kindled my interest again. (Interview 7, 75-106)

Teaching and activism in schools

For Marguerite, Jean, and Roy, the school was the primary forum for expressing their concern about global issues—though this was not always welcomed by the school administration or even by other teachers. Marguerite, for example, had a conflict with another teacher who was hosting representatives of the atomic energy industry in his classroom. She describes the situation:

Apparently every year the nuclear companies have tried to make their way in [to the schools] but they've never [been successful]. And one day the Science Department put up a notice that so many students would be absent from the courses in the afternoon because there was a lecture being done from such-and-such a company from Ontario ... from Chalk River.... And I realized, this is a nuclear bunch here, and I was enraged! So I met this teacher in question, and I said, "Have you been reflecting on the garbage you're going to throw the kids? They're going to be indoctrinating them, completely!" And he said, "Yes, I know" and I said "Jeepers, as an educator don't you have any ethics?" I was so upset! And he couldn't believe I was so upset. And to him it's almost like it's filling up an afternoon.... And I thought to myself that I was trying to go easy on him, not to turn him off, you know, I lent him a book, I said, "Look, I have a book" written by Rosalie Bertel, you know, on the nuclear problem.... Well, two months later I never
heard from him again, and I put a little note [in his box] saying “Well?” [laughter] And the next day I have the stuff in my box. No word, nothing! So this is what we’re up against…. And I’ve been checking out real hard to see if they were going to have this group come in again, and I was really going to oppose it this time. Go and see the principal about it, and get this out in the news that we are indoctrinating kids. (Interview 9, 1509-1603)

Jean indicates that she feels a real threat of losing her job if she is not careful in how she deals with global issues—or any other social issues—in school. She observes:

In this town, I have the distinct impression that you can’t say too much or you’re going to lose your job…. Any one who is a bit of a radical and has kids protesting about the environment or wanting to do something about the situation in El Salvador, or Nicaragua, they’re not looked upon too kindly—they’re considered to be rabble-rousers and trouble-makers and teachers are so afraid…. So it’s a very bad situation—entirely controlled by the authorities. (Interview 16, 1491-1521)

In spite of the dangers involved, Jean has been quite active in pursuing environmental, human right and other global issues with her students—especially when she has been able to do so in concert with other teachers.

**Guilt because not more active**

Some folks seemed to have a good deal of regret or even guilt that they were not more active than they were. Victoria, for instance, regretted that she was not more involved, but found it difficult to participate in organizations because of her evening work. Lorne, too, expresses regret that he has not been more of an activist, but has now become reconciled to the fact that he can make his contribution through his teaching and his contact with students.

Clearly several of the participants devoted a great deal of thought to the issue of activism—whether or not they were actually engaged in activism themselves. Marguerite read a lot about the activism of others, admired those who were activist, and wished at some stage to join them—though at the moment her activism was highly limited by the fact that she was engaged in teaching school. Although she, herself believed in non-violence, she took a great deal of interest in, and clearly admired her friend Jody who had been arrested—and kicked out
the window of a police car—in protesting a local environmental issue. As well, Marguerite has
read a great deal about other protest movements, for which she has great admiration. Examples
included Greenpeace (Canada), Greenham Common (England), the Global Walk (European-
based), the Chip-Co Movement (India), and Earth First (USA).

Church and other non-school-based environmental and peace education activities

Finally, for several of the participants, their primary involvement was in peace and
environmental education activities in settings other than schools. The church was the main such
venue, with it serving as the primary area for Edward, June, Barry and Beatrice, and as a
secondary area for several others.

Organizations focusing on global issues

Participants in the study were asked about their involvement in environmental, peace, or
other organizations which focus on major global issues. Their responses were impressive! All
but one of the participants identified at least one such organization in which they were involved.
The sole individual who was not actively involved had previously attended some Project
Ploughshares meetings but currently worked in the evenings, when most groups held their
meetings, so was unable to participate actively in any organization—though she indicated that
she would like to.

The 22 participants identified a total of 48 different organizations with which they were
involved, all of which included a focus on global issues. In several cases, more than one
individual was involved in the same organization, so in total there were 64 organizational
involvements from the 23 participants. Perhaps not surprisingly, a wide range of organizations
were identified, including national and international peace and environment organizations (e.g.
Project Ploughshares, Educators for Social Responsibility, Greenpeace, Tools for Peace, Voice
of Women, Veterans Against Nuclear Arms); local environmental groups (e.g. Ecosense, Citizens Against Uranium Mining, Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Harbour); professional organizations (e.g. School Board Environmental Committee); and church organizations (e.g. United Church Presbytery Peace Support Group).

When we look at the extent of involvement, we also find that this was a very active—or activist—group of individuals. Fourteen of the participants indicated that they were “very active” in at least one of the organizations they named; 6 indicated that they were “moderately active”, and three that they were not very active. Of those, one was the individual referred to above who was unable to become more involved because of her evening work schedule, and a second had previously been involved but at the moment, again because of the demands of work, was less involved than previously. Finally, we note too that the individuals generally had a longstanding involvement with global issues. Fifteen of the participants had been active for more than five years, with another 7 active between 2 and 5 years.

Other behaviour and action

Marguerite, though she sees for herself the possibility of a life of activism, nevertheless reflects on the inner turmoil because of the limitations of her current situation as a teacher:

Things have to be tackled on every front, and I think we have to recognize where we’re good at [things]. We have all sorts of talents. Now you could not put me in front of a whole big crowd and talk and intellectualize on the problems. It’s not me; it’s not my nature. I just don’t have that way. But, on the other hand, when Greenpeace was here two months ago, I was on the boat and I said to this woman who was showing me the boat, I said, “Do you know what, I want to work with Greenpeace! I know I want to work with Greenpeace! You’re doing something well worthwhile and it’s tremendous learning for me and I’d put all my heart into it,” but I said, “Don’t you ever stick me in an office or campaigning door to door. I don’t belong there. I know that’s not my kind of talent.” I said, “I belong—you see this rubber raft right here—this is it, [I belong] right in the middle of the ocean!” [laughter] So she said to me, “Well, if you’re that interested, next week we’re going to Grand Bank or George’s Bank to protest something with the birds, what’s happening there, and the seals,” and I said, “Yea, I want to go!”—but I started school! [laughter] (Interview 9, 1377-1411)
The Role of Emotion

The emotional dimension of people's involvement in global issues is an extremely important area to understand. Considerable attention has been given to emotions in the literature on the nuclear disarmament issue. Joanna Macy's (1983) book, *Despair and empowerment in the nuclear age* had been, through the height of the peace movement, a standard work, widely read and referred to. This book has been followed in 1998 by another, with Molly Young Brown, also dealing with the role of emotions: *Coming back to life: Practices to reconnect our lives, our world*.

It is important to see what we can learn about the role of emotion in the lives of the 23 individuals who constitute our study.

Model for understanding emotions

Within the interviews, in probing participants' emotions, as with other areas, I was anxious not to "lead" the participants toward any particular observations or conclusions. Not surprisingly, this resulted in participants relating rich experiences and observations, but on first blush, the observations were "all over the map." Eventually, however, as I sorted through all of the emotion-related material, I was led to a basic matrix as a useful way of describing participants' emotions. The emotions can usefully be described in relation to two dimensions: the individual's future outlook (pessimistic or optimistic), and the individual's sense of personal empowerment—their perceived ability to influence this future. Figure 3 below illustrates these concepts. Representative emotions for each quadrant are shown in regular type in the outside corner of the quadrant; typical behaviour arising from these emotions is indicated in bold type in the centre of each quadrant.
Individuals do not reside only in one area; they experience different kinds of emotions. Typically, individuals experience several, if not all, of the different types of emotion. Their emotional reactions vary depending on a host of factors, including the nature of the issue, and the myriad of influences on them in the rest of their lives. That being said, we can also see that at any given point in time, each individual tends to "live" in one quadrant more than others. While undoubtedly there are emotions which may not neatly fit the model as outlined, nevertheless it can assist us in understanding a large proportion of the emotions, at least of those individuals who participated in this study.

**Figure 3**

*Emotions Concerning Global Issues*

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<tr>
<th>Feelings of Personal Empowerment</th>
<th>Emotions Concerning Global Issues</th>
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<tr>
<td>Empowered</td>
<td>Anger, Outrage</td>
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<td>Protest</td>
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<td>Disempowered</td>
<td>Passion, Vision, Excitement</td>
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<td>Despair</td>
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<td>Guilt, Depression</td>
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<td>Pessimistic</td>
<td>Trust, Optimism</td>
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<td>Optimistic</td>
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**Quadrant 1: Protest**

In this quadrant we find the strong emotions associated with people who feel very negatively about what they see going on in the world around them, and feel empowered to challenge what they see. These are the emotions of protest. They are the emotions of anger,
outrage, and injustice. The emotions usually appear to lead to action—albeit action of working *against* something—though this action is dependent on the feeling of empowerment, and may not necessarily occur immediately. In fact, in the earlier stages, this "protest" may well take the form of a "mental protest"—saying to one's self "this is not right!"

While all of the individuals in the study probably felt anger or outrage at certain points, we see emotions from the first quadrant particularly clearly with Marguerite, Eleanor, June, Sharon, Janie and Roy. Sharon, we may remember, had commented that, "I've always, for as long as I can remember, been interested in justice—and never quite able to understand it, even as a child" (Interview 18, 16-20). She also indicated that:

> I think the biggest emotional issue for me has been racism.... To see out-and-out blatant racism really, really bothers me and that's something very emotional. And, I think, especially by going to the Youth and Race Conference really helped me deal with that, and my own feelings about it, as well, gave me strength to say to somebody ... I mean, before I went to the conference I'd always have these feelings but it would be very difficult for me to walk away if someone was telling a joke that I found offensive. You know, I wouldn't laugh, but I'd still be there, because, well what do you do? ... But now ... I find it quite easy to say, "Excuse me, but I find that [remark] offensive." ... it's not to hurt their feelings, but it's just to let them know that I don't appreciate this. (Interview 18, 235-284)

Sharon, then, from a very early age was aware of injustice. Initially, her protests were silent, knowing within herself that something was "not right." In her youth, her protest on the issue of racism initially took the form of "passive" protest—namely, she did not laugh at racist jokes but did not directly register her objection. After attending a conference on racism, however, she felt more empowered and, as a result, no longer felt hesitation in indicating what she found offensive.

As we would expect, with different individuals, we find different issues triggering the strong negative emotions. In June's case, for example, it's bullies:

> One of the things that I discovered [about myself] was I really—others pointed it out to me—I really take on bullies.... If there's anything that rouses my ire, it's a bully ...
whether it's the Hitlers or whomever in this world—or when I see injustice or evil in people exercising power over others. (Interview 17, 615-637)

At another point June, now retired, comments, “I can get just as heated about injustice as I ever did” (Interview 17, 838-839).

Eleanor has experienced a good deal of the strong emotion associated with quadrant 1. It is illuminating to examine in some detail the development of her anger and her protest. She recounts an experience from her youth which gives us an early indication of her passion for justice:

I was probably very lucky in my upbringing, because although there was no opportunity to look at justice issues in the face, at least my parents didn’t present anything that would be in opposition to that. For instance, I had absolutely no idea that my parents might have any feelings of racism until I was much older—when I was 19. I had gone to a music camp and I had developed some friends there who were Black, and that was the first inkling that there was any type of feeling there at all ... there was no one in our farming community that was of a different racial, or even religious background. Everybody was White and Baptist and that was it [laughter] in our community.... But I had some really good friends that were Black in that music camp and my Mom didn’t say anything vicious, you know, like “Don’t hang around with them,” but “Certainly be friends with them and have a good time but on the other hand I wouldn’t want it to go too far, you know.” And that was—I can remember that as being “Poo!”—a real shock! (Interview 14, 238-282)

Eleanor continued to be concerned about justice issues, though not necessarily seeing this as anything out of the ordinary. In her interview, she mentions her amazement at two other incidents: the exchange with her brothers about who would be eligible to inherit the family farm; and her experience in visiting her husband’s father, whom she found to be “so racist.” In both cases, she showed her displeasure by protesting verbally. In the incident with her brothers, she drew the injustice to their attention, and the issue was quickly dropped. At the time of her visit to her father-in-law’s, she comments that his attitudes “just—floored—me.... So we were in a constant battle, all the time there” (Interview 14, 301-311).
It was with this longstanding and growing concern for fairness and justice that Eleanor, in her late 20s, became involved in a provincial teachers committee concerning the status of women. As she learned more about women's issues, she also became more concerned about ensuring that others also were aware of the same information. In effect, her feelings concerning the injustices involved were taking the form of a relatively mild form of protest—a modest educational initiative among teachers in her area. Eleanor describes the project, and the reaction:

[It was] a display which was going from school to school and it was simply on women and work—because I really thought [what] people needed more than anything else was just education. So it was just going from staff room to staff room in the district. It went to all the elementary schools and was very well received and I received a lot of good feedback, and then it went to the big high school in [our community in the interior of BC] and they defaced it completely—and of course, it was in an area with about 3 women and 50 men—which wasn’t an excuse at all, as far as I was concerned.... They had this huge phallic symbol and stuff up on the wall and tore posters down—it was just, it was so hurtful! (Interview 14, 1369-1394)

Eleanor continues, describing the continuing fallout from this educational display:

I didn’t know quite what to do, but I had been scheduled to go and make a presentation to the School Board, on the Status of Women, and what we were trying to do in the area, and to ask for their funding—just to put a newsletter out to tell people what was going on. So I explained to them what happened in the school, and there happened to be media there—and it was just awful, it was just awful! I mean, I was 27 and naïve—oh dumb, dumb, dumb—but I mean, I didn’t really say anything very incriminating at all, I just explained how I thought this was an example of why we needed a lot more education for the teachers.

[I explained that] if this type of disrespect for simple facts about what the average wage of women in Canada is, if we had so much disrespect for simple facts, just because it had to do with women, surely our teachers needed more education before we could bring the children around in the classroom to act fairly—which was absolutely true! But nevertheless, it made the front page of the paper and was on the radio for 3 days that week and it was like me and me alone.... There wasn’t really anybody to talk it out with at all and the [high school] principal demanded a public apology, which I didn’t give, and all sorts of awful, awful things! (Interview 14, 1396-1441)

And I thought, “Oh, my God!” And really the only person—I had a principal who was older, and he retired the next year, and he was just wonderful—thank God, he was a wonderful man [and he said] “you did exactly the right thing—Dear” [laughter] [Referring to the “Dear”] But by that time I needed a Dad anyway. It was quite all right!
My Dad was on the other side of Canada. So I was pretty happy that we were leaving! (Interview 14, 1442-1455)

The past few years Eleanor has been back in Nova Scotia and has been teaching, raising her family, and engaging in peace and justice work. As indicated above in the section on relationships, at the time of the interview she was wrestling with several fundamental issues concerning the future direction of her life. In effect, her protest now encompassed not only the world “out there,” but also her “old college friends” (with whom she no longer felt much in common), and even her own life. She was no longer content that through her life and her lifestyle she was making as great a contribution to the world as she was capable of. She had done lots of protesting, but now she was anxious to move to quadrant 2, to make her contribution, but she was not sure how best to do so:

I feel like I have a bit of a larger purpose, for some reason. . . . I feel like I don’t want to waste what I know I have—even though I don’t want to sound egotistical . . . but I feel like I have some ability to do something with [my ability] . . . I don’t know what to do with it yet. But, whether it’s going to be informing myself to speak to people, to get them into action; or simply informing people of this so they can choose their own action; or whether it’s simply going to be working through education [with] kids . . . I really, I haven’t decided yet. . . . That’s been a real dilemma for me. It’s like, okay, what do I do now—quick—because I feel like time is ticking! (Interview 14, 830-861)

Quadrant 2: Constructive action

Many of the individuals in the study spoke of feelings of empowerment. This, of course, did not mean that they always felt empowered or that they were free from feelings of discouragement or despair. We find some of the individuals who experienced strong emotions in quadrant 1 appearing again in quadrant 2. This is not surprising, since in both cases the individuals had strong feelings of personal empowerment. What separates the two quadrants is the individual’s outlook on the external world. If they were more pessimistic, their emotions were more likely to take the form of anger or outrage—expressed through the actions of protest.
If, on the other hand, the individuals were feeling more optimistic about the world around them, they were more likely to experience emotions of passion and excitement, and to pursue the issues through some form of constructive, future-oriented action. Given this, it is not surprising that individuals' attitude toward the events around them might vary, at some times tilting toward pessimism but at others, leaning toward optimism. It is also to be expected that, depending on the issue, individuals may see strong likelihood of a positive outcome on some issues, but be quite discouraged about the possibility of anything positive happening on other issues.

As we examine the participants' comments on their emotions, the results are fascinating as we search for positive emotions to balance the more negative ones of quadrant 1. There are a good many examples of somewhat more restrained positive emotions—satisfaction or pleasure, for example, but practically nothing that one could consider to be an intense positive emotion, like excitement or passion. There was one partial exception. Marguerite was a passionate individual. She had described her anger and outrage at what she saw around her: the destruction of the environment, the exploitation of animals, the use of the schools to promote the nuclear industries, and the lack of concern of her teacher colleagues. She also was passionate about taking action. She told the person working for Greenpeace, for example, that she would love to work on one of their boats and participate in their protests. Marguerite is also excited about an article on the "Walk for a Liveable World" in an environmental magazine. She sees it responding to both the contemplative and the activist sides of her character.

There are a few more positive emotions related to action people were taking, but none of those could in any sense be considered a strong emotion of passion or excitement for a positive future or for the contribution in that direction made by any action taken by any of the participants.
Both Marguerite's emotion and June's sense of satisfaction with the protest on Bay Street reflected strong feelings of empowerment, but only very modest positive feelings regarding the external situation. In both cases, the action in which the individuals were involved was essentially protest action. The examples cited stand out, however, because in the midst of the protest there is also an element of hope and looking to a more positive future. Thus, we might appropriately place Marguerite's and June's emotions near the top of the chart, but only a bit to the right of the centre point—only slightly into quadrant 2.

There were several other individuals who were somewhat positive, but certainly not overly so. They, too, expressed emotions which were somewhat within quadrant 2, but far from its excited, passionate extreme. William, some years earlier, had been very deeply involved in community development activity.

As a result of that experience, in subsequent years, William has been philosophically and intellectually no less committed, but has not engaged in the same level of activism, and appears not to have operated from the same level of passion as he had some years earlier. He sees a significant difference in the level of individual's involvement. He observes that he had spent much more time pursuing his social action commitments when he was in his 20s, than at the time of the interview, in his 40s.

William's experience is an extremely important one. In effect, it appears that in young adulthood, William had been extremely passionate about the issues in which he was involved. While also carrying heavy work and family responsibilities, he devoted a huge amount of time to the social justice issues about which he was so passionate. As he says, however, he came close to doing very serious damage to himself and his family. There was no weakening of his commitment to social justice—far from it—but in effect William seems to have determined that
his life was not defined by his social justice work alone. His life was also defined by his commitment to his family, to his work, and to himself, among other things. It appears that, in order to maintain this balance—whether consciously or unconsciously—William determined that he must avoid the extreme emotions of quadrants 1 and 2, and live, instead, closer to the centre.

In both quadrants 1 and 2 we find the emotions associated with feelings of empowerment. Feelings of empowerment or disempowerment formed a continuum, represented on the model by the vertical axis. Participants in the study frequently talked of events or situations which made them feel more empowered—though they did not give the impression that they felt that they had ever “arrived” in the sense that they felt fully and constantly empowered. They did, however, identify several factors which provided them with strength, or energy, or a feeling of empowerment. A sampling follows:

- Marguerite gains energy from a hand-full of other individuals who are involved in action. In contrast, people who do not understand or share her concern drain her energy:

  Well I draw strength from being with people but I haven’t been with the right kind of people. They did the contrary. They took all my energy, because they had no understanding of my anguish about the state of the world. (Interview 9, 850-856)

- Marguerite also draws strength from nature and the environment. It is partly for that reason that she has recently moved to a winterized cottage overlooking the Bay of Fundy.

- Victoria indicated that she feels empowered when she is able to take action, though she also comments on the fact that for her, it has been easier to feel empowerment concerning environmental issues than concerning the peace issue.

- Laura comments on the empowerment she received from “good theory:”

On the other hand, I’ve read theory about issues like feminism and feminist theory and pornography ... you can feel a certain way, and think a certain way or have opinions about an issue ... but you’re no good in an argument about it. But one Spring I ended up doing two different academic works—for the same course—I think, it was a Women and
Health course—and I read good materials on both pornography and reproductive technologies and at that point it clicked, what the use of good theory was. It could set you ideas straight about certain issues and clarify them and give you good arguments, but also let you know—sort of unlock your opinion about something and if you’re struggling to express why you feel a certain way … about an emotional issue, like pornography or infertility and reproductive technologies, if you see all the theory written out, you can say, “Yea, that’s why I believe that.” And that’s empowering—in an intellectual way, and probably in an active way in that you can talk to people about it and explain it. (Interview 13, 1098-1136)

- Victoria, Catherine and Roy all commented on the strength they gained from attending lectures or meetings or conferences where there was a substantial crowd who shared a similar concern.

- Finally, Catherine draws strength from keeping things manageable and ensuring that she follows through on educational experiences:

I find that I try only to take one or two things from [a workshop or conference]—even if it’s just a book that I commit myself that I’m going to delve into. I … try to take one or two ideas and even if it is to write down the name of a book and promise myself to get it from the library—something very concrete—otherwise it will just all fly away…. it’s the only way I can cope with those big overwhelming things. (Interview 11, 355-377)

Quadrant 3: Despair

Quadrant 3 is the area of discouragement and despair. It is characterized by feelings of disempowerment and by a negative or pessimistic view on the world around one. From the comments of the participants, it was clearly a place that many of them “visited,” even if they didn’t permanently “live there.” Following is a sampling of some of the comments about a range of negative, essentially passive emotions of pessimism, cynicism, discouragement, depression, frustration, sadness, despair, and a feeling of being overwhelmed:

- Raymond expresses discouragement with the limited impact of people’s personal changes:

I think that we’re in a crisis situation on the earth and all indications are that it’s really going to unravel itself. And who can do anything about it? I mean, there are examples—
pockets here and there of wonderful things that have changed... [but even thinking about my own lifestyle in 5 or 10 years time] ... Probably ... it'll be about the same, although I'm probably not a big, big consumer, compared with many, but compared to a typical African, I'm an incredible consumer.... Of course, what's one going to do? We want to participate in society, we want to work, we want the luxury of enjoying getting out of the city in Canada ... it just seems structurally that things are set up in a way [that perpetuates our consumption] ... for example, any radical change in the use of fossil fuel is going to happen [only] when the fossil fuel runs out. And everybody's going to be burning it up until the time when it does. (Interview 10, 888-940)

- Raymond is an educator. Not long before the interview he had taught a week-long Elderhostel class on the environment and the future of the planet. In the end, however, he was also discouraged about that:

I used some Suzuki stuff and also looked at attitudes that have to do with the typical masculine idea of dominating nature, and so on. I think if they ask me back, I'm going to do something on humour! I'm going to show Marx Brothers! ... it was mostly older Americans. They had wonderful things to say about all of the regions they came from, and people who go to these Elderhostels are amazing people—very perceptive and all the rest of it, so it was a wonderful sharing session. But it's just like a lot of bad news! And what's going to be done? I don't have any answers! So I don't know, should we haul ourselves through that experience? ... that's my pessimistic view on things. (Interview 10, 950-975)

- Catherine, Kim, and June all commented that as adults they found Nova Scotian society to be exceedingly conservative and stifling. Several made similar comments about the communities in which they grew up. Kim comments on her experience:

I left [Nova Scotia] when I was 10 or so, so the last 10 years have been a learning experience to be back here, to see the landscape, to appreciate some of the values that are here, but it's also been very frustrating. Very, very frustrating. It's just so difficult to shake the complacency ... so even though there have been those really positive incremental growth stages, it's marked with a sadness. (Interview 6, 810-832)

- Marguerite, Kim, Catherine, Raymond and Roy all have some sadness and frustration because they attempted to take some initiatives in global education which either didn't materialize, or at least didn't in the way that they had hoped. Kim, Catherine and Raymond each, separately, designed and tried to offer a continuing education course on the environment or the future of the planet. None of the courses had sufficient enrolment
to be offered. Raymond tried to organize a global education committee within an adult education organization, and Roy tried something similar within his teachers' union local. Marguerite took some of her students to a global education conference, hoping that they would become more sensitized. In all of these cases, the projects either failed to materialize—from apparent lack of interest, or money—or, in the case of Marguerite's students, they simply became frustrated because they felt she was trying to convince them to adopt her viewpoint and concerns.

- Finally, Roy, a few years earlier when he had turned 30, had been very depressed about the world situation, but this then led to a spiritual awakening. He and his spouse, Janie, describe it this way:

  [Roy] went through a whole period when [he] turned 30.... He was Doomsday Dora, you know. So I kept listening to all this stuff, "There's nobody left that thinks like me," and "I can't do anything about it!"

  Roy: I still feel like that in my gloomy periods.

  Janie: He went through this real transition of utter despair....

  Roy: It was a spiritual awakening, too.... I really have come to the conclusion that mankind has been given the power to make choices and it's up to us whether we take good or evil, if you want to get down to that simplistic point of view. And it's still not too late—I have to believe that.... Once you have your consciousness raised, once you have your awareness raised, then you've got to be able to hang your hat on some hook.

(Interview 20, 2837-2874)

Quadrant 4: Hope

The emotions of quadrant 4 were those based on a positive view of the external world, or at least some element of it, combined with a low feeling of personal empowerment to take any action to affect the future. It is here that we would expect to find complacency and hope—though a passive hope, rather than hope combined with action. In fact, while there were many who, at least from time-to-time, experienced emotions of despair in quadrant 3, there were very
few examples among the participants in the study of people feeling positively about the world and its future and not associating this with any action.

Lorne, as he glances up to a photo on his office wall, comments:

I'm sitting here looking at this picture of Prospect, and thinking there have been moments when I've just been lost in that, but so often I keep seeing environmental disaster and nuclear war and I can remember so many times just walking and thinking, "I can't fully appreciate this because it's not lasting." And I think there's a kind of living of each day, and acceptance of each day with openness and excitement, that can be destroyed by a preoccupation with these issues. (Interview 1, 1151-1164)

Lorne's comment is very illuminating. He seems to be suggesting that as he looks at a particularly beautiful coastal scene, his natural inclination is to be "lost in it," being inspired by the beauty of nature. To the extent that he does become "lost in it," and accepts each day with "openness and excitement," he is moving to the right side of our model, demonstrating emotions which are very positive and optimistic concerning the world around him. But, because he was so aware of both the threat of nuclear war and the threat of environmental catastrophe, much of the time he is unable to appreciate the beauty but instead focused on the potential loss of this beauty. He is, in effect, letting us know that if it were not for the peace and environmental movements (of which he is an active member) he would be able to enjoy the emotions of hope and happiness—the emotions of quadrant 2 and 4. Because he is more aware, he loses that ability and, instead, the beauty of nature simply reminds him of all that can be lost through environmental disaster and nuclear war. These, then are apt to lead him into the despair of quadrant 3.

Those in the middle: The neutral zone

Although we have examined emotions which fit the four quadrants, there were several who showed a tendency to cluster closer to the middle of our model. These are people who were neither overly pessimistic nor optimistic concerning the world situation, and did not indicate that
they felt strongly empowered or strongly disempowered. Participants were asked whether their learning about global issues affected them emotionally, and if so how—whether as a result of the learning they felt more excited or more depressed, more or less empowered. Barry’s response is typical of folks whom we might consider to be “in the middle:”

Not depressed. And I want to begin with that because I’ve been in settings where that’s what I’ve heard people say. “Oh, my soul, there’s just too much! Forget it! Give up! Quit!” And that has not been my experience. The increased knowledge has angered me, caused me to become angry. Energized me—for sure, “This is something that I’ve definitely got to do something about! I’ve definitely got to make sure we do this letter-writing campaign,” or I get out and get some financial contributions, or I go down town and walk with pickets with whomever. (Interview 21, 308-325)

Henry, in a similar vein, comments, “I tend not to get depressed about things.” Instead, he tries to turn his learning into action of some kind, including the action of teaching (Interview 7, 747-749). Edward, too, comments:

I don’t really get depressed.... [I’m] always having the feeling that there is something that can be done. And one of the things that is a revelation to me is the feeling that there’s no “good old days” or there’s no future, it’s the present—we are making history and we may be making it in a funny way, but we are making history and we have this opportunity to make history. (Interview 8, 1155-1179)

Finally, William gives us some insight into how he, as an educator, avoids despair and instead becomes focused on how he can help others to “have their views or imagination enriched:”

I don’t think I’m really given to despair. My strong affirmative impulses save me from despair. I don’t think it matters too much what I’m reading, either. My reaction tends to be that of an educator, rather than one who goes out to proselytise.... So I tend to get very excited about ideas or books or films or anything that will trigger off these sorts of [concerns]. I want people to be as fortunate as I am—and have their views or imagination enriched or quickened as much as I have. It seems to me that I have enjoyed a degree of success in doing that—just from the sheer energy and enthusiasm with which I mention these things. (Interview 2, 1093-1129)
Emotional patterns

As we examine the material on emotions, we find not only an intriguing model to help us interpret the emotions, but also some fascinating patterns.

Becoming less emotional, more cynical, “hardened”

Four of the participants—Raymond, Jeff, Joseph, and Roy (all males)—indicated that over time they had become less emotional, more cynical or more “hardened.” Jeff, for instance, comments that, “emotion is becoming less and less. I thought the passion of youth would remain, but it’s not.” (Interview 3, 348-354) Roy comments on a similar phenomenon:

Another thing that I’ve found in my professional life, is that I have become, from an extreme idealist, I have become quite cynical about things. I have become very cynical—of course, I have been teaching for 18 years, and I guess that’s bound to come with time. Philosophically I’ve become more cynical. I don’t think that’s a native quality of mine; but it’s something that I’ve acquired. (Interview 20, 1435-1457)

While none of those affected give an explanation for why they have become less emotional or more cynical, Joseph, in effect, seems to put it in the category of a survival mechanism. His observation is that:

I think you can get really emotional and carried away and I think it’s important to have someone to say, “Let’s not let it destroy us”. I think back to High School with the teacher who said, “Let’s try to keep it more objective so you can analyze it and then you can make a decision on your own about what you can do, rather than pounding the table and jumping up and down.” I think I’ve overcome a lot of emotions—I guess a lot of it is because there are just so many issues now that I find myself becoming hardened—you know, after you’ve seen a lot of Amnesty International’s material and read all of the information about it that they’ve written or other people have written....

I find that for people who have not been hardened at all, the emotions will destroy them .... they just won’t be able to take that level of emotional stress. They’ll have their big “blow-out” and then you’ll never see them again.... They burn out somewhere along the line. Very quickly, as well, which is a real shame, because then after that they won’t touch anything which will affect them emotionally. Whereas some others will have a certain degree of tolerance and stay away from that issue, and pick a cause they can handle. It doesn’t have to be a cause that is not important. It can be an important one, but it is one where their emotions won’t get in the way. (Interview 12, 1034-1055, 1288-1318)
Avoiding breakdown and burnout

In addition to those who became less emotional, and as a result avoided the extremes which may have led to burnout, some of the participants followed other strategies in order to manage their emotions. One approach used by a number of individuals was the limiting of information which they took in. In this way they, in effect, prevented themselves from going into the territory on the far left side of the model, and thus avoided the possibility of the most serious despair situations. Janie referred to this earlier when she recounted how there were days when she would simply go into her pottery studio and cut off the world. In a similar fashion, Sharon indicated:

I think that a combination of things has led me to think I'm just going to do what I can do—because you can't carry the weight of the world on your shoulders all of the time. You just can't do it—you'll have a breakdown. (Interview 18, 421-427)

A second strategy, and in this case quite consciously followed, is to find humour where initially there may not appear to be much. Catherine tells us how she followed this approach:

A big obstacle for me was not being able to see the humour, you know, the comic side of any of it. I was getting caught up in the intensity of it—and it is a very intense thing. Whereas now, especially in the environment, I just look at it as, "Well, you know, I'm going to do whatever I can, but ultimately we're not trying to save the earth. Basically Mother Earth is just going to kick us out if we continue to abuse the planet." It will be a shame for the human race, but all these people are saying we've got to protect the earth and we've got to save the planet and all that—I don't look at it like that. I see it from a more comical point of view. You know, she'll put up with a lot and at some point she'll just change things so we can't survive and then that will be the end of us as a problem and ... the whole planet will just revitalize itself again. And so I have to giggle at that whereas before it was, "Oh my God!"

I think it was an obstacle for me because people didn't want to talk to me about it. I was too intense. And I didn't understand, I couldn't really, I couldn't just be light-hearted, it was pretty heavy.... It was hard for me to talk to people because the more they would say, "Oh, it's no big deal," the more intense I'd get and the more emotionally upset I would get. And then, you know, it was like, "Oh my God, can't we talk about something else?" And then I realized I was really defeating [my own] purpose because really I was turning a lot of people off by my own inability to look at it in a less intense way. (Interview 11, 1383-1439)
In addition to these two specific strategies, to the extent that people became conscious of what factors contributed to their empowerment or disempowerment, they also tended to seek out situations which contributed positively to their emotional health and avoided situations which tended to lead toward disempowerment, discouragement, or burnout.
Chapter 6—Learning and Commitment: Continuing the Exploration

This research project was intended to enhance our understanding of adults’ learning about global issues and the relationship of this learning to the development of commitment to the common good. The following areas for investigation initially were identified:

- the factors contributing to individuals’ decisions to engage in such learning,
- the learning process, and
- the effects of the learning on the individuals.

My desire was to provide an overview—a kind of “relief map”—showing the primary features of the terrain. I hoped that this would be of particular assistance to those engaged in education concerning global issues, but that it would also benefit those engaged in education concerning other social justice issues. In addition, I hoped that it would provide a foundation for those who might, at a later stage, investigate various elements of the overall landscape in greater depth than had been possible for me to do.

In this chapter, then, we attempt to “pull together” some of what we have discovered through our exploration. As we have travelled along our path, we have examined some of the literature which describes the general landscape, and have looked in some detail at the experience of 23 individuals who have devoted a considerable amount of their time to learning about global issues. We have examined the influences which contributed to their decisions to learn about global issues, the learning processes in which they engaged, and some of the impacts of this learning on their lives. With this background, we will create a preliminary model to help us understand such individuals. Like a map, our representation of reality will fail to capture all of the richness, the magic, and the mystery of the territory it describes. The smell of the woods,
the warmth of the sun, the coolness of the morning dew, and the majesty of the sunset do not find their way onto a map. Nevertheless, a map can be of great value. It helps travellers understand where they have been and where they are going. It enables individuals to make appropriate choices along the path they are following. It helps them to get where they want to go. In a similar fashion, I hope that the model which I develop below will assist us in understanding the development of commitment to the common good, the role which adults' learning plays in that process, and the areas which appear fruitful for future exploration.

The model which we will construct is based on two primary sources of data. First, it draws on the stories and the insights of the participants in this study, and the themes which we were able to draw from their collective experience. In this sense, the model "emerges from the data." Second, since others have explored some of the surrounding territory and have provided us with information concerning the elements we are likely to encounter, our model will also draw upon their investigation and insights. Undoubtedly, the model will also reflect, in part, my personal experiences and biases.

Sharpening the Image

The Initial Model

When I began this study, as indicated previously, I had a relatively simple linear model in mind: I believed that a variety of influences led some individuals to want to learn more about global issues, and that once they had engaged in this learning, it frequently had a significant impact on them, leading in turn to changes in their values, attitudes, and behaviour. I thus wanted to learn about each stage of the process. If we could gain a clearer understanding of what prompted people to take an interest in learning about global issues, and further, if we could also understand what moved people from knowledge to action, we might have a much better chance
of using education effectively to contribute toward a positive future for our planet. The starting point, it seemed to me, was developing an understanding of the influences in people's lives which prompted them to decide to learn about global issues.

As I became more engaged in the research, I realized that my initial search was too limited. While I may not have been looking in the wrong places, I had been paying insufficient attention to some of the most important places. As I came to understand more fully the processes involved, it appeared that equally as important as identifying the external influences on the participants, was understanding the internal processes through which individuals became committed to learning about, and taking action on, global issues. While the external influences and learning processes were important to understand in their own right, the ways in which these fostered growth and change within the individual's inner self was even more significant.

**Perspectives from the Journeys of Participants**

While we have already described in some detail the experiences of the participants in this study, it may be helpful at this point to summarize some of the major themes which emerge from participants' collective "story."

*Learning is deeply integrated into participants' lives.*

As we observed previously, when asked at what point they started learning about global issues, many indicated that it dated from their earliest memory. Henry, we recall, commented that "it's almost like that question, 'When did you start speaking in prose?'" (Interview 7, 10-12) and Gordon indicated that most of his waking hours, one way or another, were related to his interest in global issues. Almost universally, when participants were asked about the influences which led them to begin learning about global issues, they described the ways they came to be concerned about and committed to global issues. For them, learning about global issues was an
integral part of their commitment to those issues—and this commitment was, in turn, part of their commitment to society as a whole.

*Life experience makes a difference.*

As I asked participants about what led to their commitment to global issues, not surprisingly, certain types of experience, and certain "locations" were raised frequently. It became clear that the nature of our life experience *does* make a difference. Many of the significant experiences were associated with the family; religion; travel and cross-cultural experiences; education; and with peers, mentors, and other significant individuals. We have already identified some of the characteristics of the experiences, within these locations, which contributed to the development of commitment to the common good. This is an area for ongoing investigation.

*Commitment forms within individuals' inner selves.*

We can identify seven crucial elements of the inner self which, among the participants of the study, led to the development of commitment to the common good. These are: values, empathy, understanding, sense of self and community, passion, vision, and commitment. We will explore these more fully below.

*Learning connects individuals' experience with their inner selves.*

As the “bridge” between the activities of the outer self and the essence of the individual within the inner self, learning is an integral part of our lives and of our human development. It is through learning that influence occurs.

*Tension often accompanied living one’s commitment.*

We do not always do what we believe we *should* do. Participants struggled with how they could reconcile what they believed they should do, with what they felt able to do. In some
cases, there was a significant gap between the time when they decided they should change a particular aspect of their lifestyle and the time when they actually made the change. In other cases, they struggled with how it was even possible to fully live a life of commitment while remaining within Western civilization.

**Insights from those Investigating Neighbouring Territory**

*The foundation provided by Berger and Luckmann*

In *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967) provide a strong theoretical foundation for understanding participants' experience in learning about global issues. Berger and Luckmann argue that as individuals develop, they interact not only with their natural environment, but also with a particular cultural and social order, which is mediated by those surrounding them. Thus, "the organism [our physical body] and, even more, the self cannot be adequately understood apart from the particular social context in which they were shaped" (p. 50).

Within this context, Berger and Luckmann distinguish between the impact of primary and secondary socialization:

Primary socialization is the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he [sic] becomes a member of society. Secondary socialization is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society. (p. 130)

As part of the process of primary socialization, children internalize the world of their parents as the world. It is often considerably later when they realize that this is not the only world there is, but rather that it "has a very specific social location, perhaps even one with pejorative connotation" (p. 141). While in primary socialization there is usually a strong emotional bond between the parent and child, the same is not normally the case in secondary socialization. As a result, there is a strong tendency to incorporate the knowledge gained
through secondary socialization in a way that complements, rather than contradicts, the knowledge gained through primary socialization. It also follows that “it takes severe biographical shocks to disintegrate the massive reality internalized in early childhood; much less [impact] to destroy the realities internalized later” (p. 142).

The concept of the self, developing in response to the social context in which it is located, constitutes a key element of the model of the committed individual which we will develop below. The relationship between the individual’s primary and secondary socialization will be explored further within the context of this model.

**The insights of Colby and Damon**

Important insight on the development of the self is also gleaned from the work of Colby and Damon (1992). They observed that the moral exemplars whom they studied did not fit common expectations. They comment:

A common notion among psychologists is that moral action is a choice that one makes after sorting out one’s options and weighing the consequences of action or inaction to the self and others.... The picture of humanity that follows from such theories is a picture of well-intentioned people constantly in the throes of decision (or indecision, as the case may be). Moral choices are seen as products of inner battles with oneself, wrung from never-ending crises of conscience. It is, we believe, a picture not too distant from our everyday intuitions about moral behavior.... In any case, *this picture most certainly does not describe the manner in which our moral exemplars approached their moral choices. Among our moral exemplars we saw no “eking out” of moral acts through intricate, tortuous cognitive processing. Instead, we saw an unhesitating will to act, a disavowal of fear and doubt, and a simplicity of moral response. Risks were ignored and consequences went unweighed.* (p. 69, 70)

*None saw their moral choices as an exercise in self-sacrifice.* To the contrary, they see their moral goals as a means of attaining their personal ones, and vice versa. This can only be possible when moral goals and personal goals are closely in synchrony, perhaps even identical. (p. 300)

While, initially, Colby and Damon’s observation might be thought to contradict the point made above concerning the tension within the Inner Self, it actually serves to reinforce it. The
moral exemplars in the Colby and Damon study had advanced to the point where this tension had been resolved, so that their moral and personal goals overlapped almost completely.

Later in this chapter we will return to the issue of moral goals, to examine this phenomenon more closely. At the moment, however, the important point is that, while the external influences are important, what seems particularly significant is the closeness of fit between the individual’s personal and moral goals. We see these as being within the individual’s *Inner Self*—part of each individual’s conception of *who they are*. This appears to be what drives the individual in setting the priorities and making the decisions which affect the course of their lives. It is here that their commitment to global issues and to the common good resides—or fails to reside.

**The “interdependent patterns” of Common fire**

*Common fire: Leading lives of commitment in a complex world*, the study by Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Parks (1996), points in a similar direction. In commenting on the factors which were most significant in leading individuals to a life of commitment to the common good, this team of researchers summarize some of their key findings:

As we have discussed this study in a variety of public forums, people often ask for the single most crucial thing they can do to raise socially aware and responsible children. We do have a response for them, but it is important to say at the outset that there is no “Gandhi pill.” No single event can ensure that a person will or will not live a life of commitment to the common good. It is a mix of key ingredients that matters.

Taken in isolation, many of the important experiences that we describe here—a loving home, for example—are desirable components of any healthy life. Clearly, there is no certainty that a child from a loving home will grow into a life of commitment, but add parents who work actively for the public good and the possibility increases. Then add opportunities for service during adolescence, cross-cultural experiences, and a good mentoring experience in young adulthood, and the likelihood grows still stronger. In general, we have become persuaded that the greater the number and depth of certain key experiences one has, the greater the probability of living a committed life, and although there are no guarantees, this work can significantly inform the effort to foster commitment to the common good. (p. 17)
Daloz and his associates go on, through the main part of Common fire, to explore seven "interdependent patterns" which they observed in the committed individuals they studied. These are:

- **Connection and Complexity**—Individuals were reaching out for a "new set of connections, some more adequate way to make sense of a world gone boundaryless, a world now paradoxically larger, smaller, and more complex" (p. 3).

- **Community**—Most of the participants in the study grew up in a supportive environment—often with parents who were involved in their communities, and with teachers and mentors who could appropriately introduce young people to the community at large. This fostered a sense of belonging to the community, and the confidence that it was possible to make a difference, "to become at home in the world" (p. 18).

- **Compassion**—The capacity to 'feel with' those who are 'other' was considered to be an essential characteristic of committed individuals. "In a world in which cultures are colliding, we see in committed lives the signal importance of constructive engagement with those who are significantly different from oneself" (p. 18).

- **Conviction**—Empathy was essential but so, too, were effective "habits of mind." "In a society which has too often reduced education to training or even entertainment and where busyness eclipses time for reflection, these new ways of thinking enable committed people to engage the challenges of the new commons" (p. 18).

- **Courage**—"Images, stories and symbols are critical to the encouragement and sustenance of the consciousness of committed people" (p. 18).
• **Confession**—Committed individuals are not immune from their own personal struggles and fallibility, but have the capacity to “live those struggles well” (p. 189)—to be able to acknowledge, forgive, and work with their own fallibility and that of others.

• **Commitment**—“The conviction that to quit [one’s commitment to the common good] would betray one’s most profound sense of self was deeply felt by virtually everyone we spoke with. ‘It’s not even up for grabs anymore. This is who I am’” (p. 199).

Five of the seven “interdependent patterns”—all but the first two—are to be found deep within the individual, not on their external surface. These are part of the essence of who we are, of who we see ourselves to be. The work of Daloz and his associates thus provides a further indication that careful attention should be devoted to what is happening within people’s inner selves.

### Developing an Exploratory Model

#### The Components and Processes

From the experiences and observations of the participants in the study, together with insights from related research, it appears that there are two quite distinct components of the Self—the Outer Self and the Inner Self—around which we should build our model. These components are linked by two complementary processes: the Learning Process and the Expression Process.

**The Outer Self**

The Outer Self consists of all of the experiences which constitute an individual’s external life and reality. This is the part of an individual’s life that others see—or at least the part they could see if they were present to do so. This includes all of the individual’s behaviour—the
things they read or watch, the people they talk with, the organizations they participate in, the changes in their lifestyle. The Outer Self, as we are conceiving of it, includes what Stephen Covey (1994) referred to as both the “public life, where we interact with other people at work, in the community, at social events” and also the “private life, where we’re away from the public ... with friends or family” (p. 109). For some individuals, the Outer Self is rich and varied. It includes a full range of activities at home, at work, in education, in the community, and in personal relationships, as well as activities one engages in alone. For other individuals, the Outer Self contains far fewer activities—perhaps without work or community involvement, and with only limited personal relationships. Regardless, the Outer Self develops and evolves over time, incorporating both the primary and the secondary socialization to which Berger and Luckmann referred.

Although I did not articulate it in this way at the outset, much of the research which I undertook as part of this study was initially focused on the Outer Self. In searching for Influences, for example, I was initially looking within individuals’ experience, within their Outer Selves, for factors which stimulated their interest in global issues.

It is the Outer Self to which Daloz and his colleagues refer when they talk about home life, intensive group experiences, contact with mentors, opportunities for service, and cross cultural experiences as being positive influences. All of these are part of individuals’ experience which we, as observers, can see if we are present to do so.

The Inner Self

The Outer Self does not, however, include what goes on “inside our heads.” That is part of our Inner Self. That is the part of us that others do not see—at least directly. They may well see evidence of our Inner Self. They may see our excitement, our anger, or our compassion—but
what they see is the outward expression of our inner thoughts and feelings, not the Inner Self directly.

There may be significant changes which take place internally—changes in understanding, in values, in attitudes, and in passion, for example. These changes occur within the mind, heart, and spirit of the individual. We do not see these changes in others directly—though the individuals may, of course, report them to us, or we may be able to see evidence of the changes in the individual's Outer Self. These activities and changes go on within the individual's mind, where it is impossible for another individual to observe them directly.

So, while this research project examined both areas of the Self, inevitably conclusions about the Inner Self must be drawn indirectly—either through observation of the Outer Self, or through the personal reflections and interpretation of the individuals concerned.

The Learning Process

Obviously, a major focus of this study is on the processes which individuals pursued in learning about global issues. In thinking about the relation of these processes to the Outer and Inner Self, we can view the Learning Process as the vehicle by which knowledge, skills and values move from an individual's Outer Self to their Inner Self. It is through learning that the Inner Self acquires input from the individual's experience, thus enabling the individual to change and grow.

The Expression Process

The Expression Process operates in reverse. The individual's Inner Self seeks to express itself in the external world. It may do this through an expression of love or an outburst of anger, through participation in a demonstration, or through a change in lifestyle. Regardless, it is the Inner Self seeking to express or pursue something which is meaningful by taking some action—
by *doing* something in the individual's outer world. This process translates the desires of the Inner Self into action in the realm of the Outer Self. In our model, we term this the Expression Process. It is through the Expression Process that the *impacts* of global learning on the individual (i.e. on the Inner Self) are translated into action.

**The Committed Individual: A Model for Exploration**

If the two key components of our model are the Outer Self, which others can see, and the Inner Self, which others cannot see, the image which comes to mind is of a sphere: we can see the outside of the "ball" but not the inner core (see Figure 4). Like our planet itself, we can see what is on the surface, but we cannot see what is buried deep beneath the surface. In the case of our model, the two processes we have identified connect the Inner and Outer Selves. The Learning Process carries knowledge, skills, values and attitudes from the experiences of the Outer Self to the Inner Self—our mind, heart and spirit. The Expression Process works in the opposite direction: it carries the expressions of our values, attitudes and beliefs from the Inner Self to the Outer Self.

Together these two components and two processes constitute the model of the Committed Individual. In imagining the sphere of the Committed Individual, then, we can see directly the outside of the sphere, the Outer Self, but we know that at the core is the Inner Self which we can only hope to understand imperfectly. We are never able to see it, or examine it, directly. We can see only our own Inner Self—but even there, we often have considerable difficulty in fathoming the depths of our own inner being.
In developing our understanding of the model, we are faced with significant challenges. Three of the four elements and processes represent aspects of the self which are hidden from our view: we see only the reflection or the evidence of them in the fourth part, the Outer Self. When it comes to learning, we may mistakenly have thought that we could observe it directly. In fact, however, whether we are dealing with an individual's performance on an examination, our observation of their behaviour, or their own personal account of their learning, we are always
examining the outward expression of the learning, rather than the learning itself. The *actual* learning takes place deep within the Inner Self.

When we observe the model in action, we see a continuous “flow.” In the Outer Self, we see a very wide range of activities. They include reading books and newspapers, taking courses, attending meetings, participating in work and voluntary activities, building things, taking walks, and the myriad of other activities which fill our days. From all of these activities we select out information, ideas, impressions, and insights which we transfer to our Inner Self. We call this process “learning.” The learning often results in changes to the Inner Self. These may include acquiring knowledge or understanding; developing skills; or at times, changing some of our basic values. Regardless, we seek to express the beliefs and the feelings that are central to our Inner Self in the rest of our lives. In doing so, we choose to strengthen some personal relationships and not to pursue others, we choose to educate ourselves on some issues but not on others, and we take action on some issues but not others. This is the Expression Process. Through these actions we construct a new experience for ourselves—which in turn becomes the source of new learning, and the cycle continues.

**Probing the Model**

**The Outer Self: What Others See**

When I began the search for *Influences*—factors which encouraged individuals to pursue an interest in global issues—I initially looked throughout what I now refer to as the Outer Self, attempting to determine which factors contributed to this interest, and to what degree. I was seeking to identify a short list of influences. Based on such a list I hoped I might be able to prescribe an appropriate mix of activities which would stimulate an individual to become committed to the common good. In effect, I hoped to be able to answer the question which
Daloz and his team so frequently encountered from parents in public forums—what could they do to raise socially aware and responsible children?

Through the process of conducting the research, however, I came to the realization that what I had been thinking of as influences, in fact, really weren't that. Instead, they were simply sites or locations at which influence frequently took place. Within any of the sites, for example, a wide range of activities would occur. Many of these activities—likely the vast majority—may have had no significant influence on the individual becoming committed to global issues or the common good. Some small percentage may have had a positive influence—or a negative one. In many situations there would be a mix of positive and negative experiences. In that case, what is the significance of these sites? The situation is simply that, for the individuals who participated in this research, these are locations where we might be more likely to find experiences and events which created a positive influences on the individual concerned, encouraging them to pursue an interest in global issues and the common good.

It is not surprising, then, that there is considerable variability among the individuals in the study. This is to be expected. One individual will have had a wide range of family experiences which will have provided a positive influence; another will have had primarily negative family experiences; and a third individual may have had nothing of significance within their family experience, at least that they can readily identify as constituting an influence—either positive or negative.

The significance of identifying a location such as Family as an influence site is twofold. First, it is identified as a promising place to look in searching for positive influences. But, the family is not the influence per se; rather, it is the site where rich encounters and experiences between and among individuals take place—and some of these constitute significant influences
on the individual. The second reason that it is important to identify influence sites is that these may provide promising locations for future educational initiatives.

- With this background in mind, we recall that we previously identified various sources of influence. While initially we may have been viewing these as the influences themselves, we can now see that these are in fact simply some of the locations where influential experiences are more likely to be found.

The Learning Process

Through the Learning Process, various experiences of the individual’s Outer Self have an impact on the Inner Self, though, as indicated in Chapter 3, it is difficult to identify consistent patterns. In one individual, for example, religious upbringing in the Outer Self may have had a positive impact on the development of values of compassion within the Inner Self, while in another individual, religious upbringing may have encouraged the development of values of intolerance. In a similar fashion, if we examine the roots of individuals’ values of social justice, we see that in June’s case, such values were encouraged by her family, her neighbours, her community, and her church from the time when she was a young child, but in contrast, in Raymond’s case, these developed much later, when he was in university at the time of the Vietnam War. In both cases, according to our model, the Learning Process accounts for the impact of the experiences of the Outer Self on the values within the Inner Self.

Although a full exploration of the nature of the learning process goes beyond the scope of this study, Robert Kegan (1994, 2000) presents a framework which warrants further investigation. Kegan outlines five levels in the growth of our “ways of knowing.” At the first level, the young child understands “single points”—movement and sensations, for example. At the next level, which is typically during adolescence, the individual understands “durable
categories”—classes of perceptions and impulses. The third level, which individuals often achieve in early adulthood, Kegan terms “cross-categorical knowing.” It includes the ability to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes and the ability to relate one issue, perspective, or point-of-view to another. The fourth level, “systemic ways of knowing,” includes the ability to have a bigger vision—a more comprehensive belief system or worldview into which one’s individual values fit. The fifth, and highest level of the framework is the postmodern, which includes the ability to evaluate different belief systems.

Daloz (2000) makes the connection between an individual’s life experience—the Outer Self—and the level they achieve in Kegan’s framework. Daloz sees Kegan’s work as complementary, for he perceives Kegan to be arguing that “although the capacity to develop more adequate meaning-making frameworks is always there, transformative learning is by no means inevitable and depends strongly on the particular environmental and cultural forces at work in the individual’s life” (2000, p. 104). Daloz continues, “clearly some conditions, such as an effective education and good friends, are more conducive to transformation than, say, growing up alone in a hostile world” (p. 104).

Although Daloz (2000) begins to explore the links between Kegan’s framework and the development of commitment to the common good, this is an area which warrants further investigation.

The Inner Self: How it Develops

One of the very significant findings of the Colby and Damon (1992) study, was that the moral exemplars did not see themselves committed to some worthy cause out there but rather saw themselves simply as acting in keeping with who they were, with who they saw themselves
to be. An absolutely fundamental issue, then, seems to be how we come to see ourselves in a particular way. How do we form our sense of who we are?

Learning from experience

Clearly the sum total of our experience—our Outer Self—plays a very large role in determining the nature of our Inner Self. Typically, the family provides the venue for most early experiences, but as each of us develops, we are exposed to a wide variety of experiences in our communities—potentially including experiences in our neighbourhoods, in our schools, sporting activities, youth organizations, religious organizations, music and other extra curricular activities, and so on.

The role of genetic inheritance

Determining the role that heredity plays in shaping who we are goes well beyond the scope of this study but it is, nevertheless, important to recognize that it does play a role, even if we cannot adequately define it. Daloz and his associates, for example, cite studies by Daniel Bateson and his colleagues as providing some evidence for a genetic predisposition to empathy. On the other hand, they also report that “Alfie Cohen’s extensive review of the literature on altruism ... finds the studies claiming heritability unconvincing in their design and conclusions” (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 250). So, while the nature-nurture debate continues to rage, we will not join in, except to note that there is much in human behaviour which cannot be accounted for on the basis of experience alone. It seems clear, as Daloz and his associates also note, that “both nature and nurture have a hand in who we become” (p. 26).

The role of personal will

While we are heavily influenced by both heredity and our environment, our Inner Self is not simply an accumulation of our heredity and all of our experience. We do not live in a
deterministic world, devoid of free choice. We each have a will—the ability to make choices, including choices about what portion of our experience we “let in” to the core of our lives, to the essence of who we are. So, the Inner Self develops from the raw materials of our genetic inheritance and our cumulative experiences, but it is ultimately our own will which determines the final outcome—which shapes our genetic inheritance and our experience into the essence of who we are.

Cumulative and interactional continuity

An important insight concerning the role which we play in shaping our own development is highlighted by Colby and Damon (1992):

Contemporary personality theorists have identified two types of personal continuity that can act as powerful forces for both stability and change in a person’s life. The first is called cumulative continuity: the tendency of individuals to create or select environments that reinforce their own personality characteristics. People often channel themselves into environments that amplify the precise qualities that led them to choose such environments in the first place…. Over time, with repeated exposure to such self-chosen environments, one’s personality characteristics become increasingly resistant to change.

The second type of continuity is called interactional continuity: the tendency of individuals to evoke, through their own particular styles of social interaction, particular sorts of responses from others. These tend to reinforce the interactional style that triggered the response so that another personal continuity is established, this time on an interpersonal level. In this manner, the quality of a person’s social relations tend to be repeated as the person develops a particular way of interacting with other people. (p. 187, 188)

The impact of these forms of continuity will be seen when we examine the experience of the participants in the study. The phenomenon is an important one, for it means that in many cases, once the individual passes a certain threshold in terms of their interest in and concern for global issues, they then tend to take action which in turn reinforces this interest and concern.
Primary and secondary socialization

As we have noted previously, Berger and Luckmann (1967) have noted that primary socialization tends to have a much stronger impact on the individual than secondary socialization. This is certainly consistent with the findings of this study, for one's family and childhood upbringing was an exceedingly important site for influence for many of the participants in the study. Equally enlightening are Berger and Luckmann's observations about the conditions necessary for secondary socialization into certain roles. Citing examples such as individuals involved in music, religion, or a revolution, Berger and Luckmann argue that for some roles, "special techniques must be developed to produce whatever identification and inevitability are deemed necessary.... The techniques applied in such cases are designed to intensify the affective charge of the socialization process" (p. 144, 145). Undoubtedly, socialization which would result in commitment to the common good would fall into a similar category: once again, emotion and passion are essential. While the findings of my study are consistent with the argument advanced by Berger and Luckmann, the identification of the seven elements of the Inner Self, to be outlined below, extend beyond the knowledge and emotion implicit in the framework presented in The social construction of reality.

The Expression Process

When I embarked on this research project, one of the objectives was to determine the impact of the participants' global learning on their lives—and specifically on their knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviour. Now, as we understand the processes more clearly, we see that the learning affects the elements of the Inner Self. While we may think of the learning as affecting "understanding" in particular, it may, in fact, stimulate change in any of the seven elements of the Inner Self. In most cases, the elements appear to change gradually over a long
period of time, but we are certainly capable of an "epiphany." When we experience a dramatic and sudden change in any of the elements of the Inner Self, it is likely to be linked to a transformative learning experience. In this regard, we might think of Eleanor's experience as part of the teachers' Status of Women Committee in B. C. in order to get a sense of the relevance of our model. It is unlikely that that experience significantly altered Eleanor's values; there is every indication that Eleanor's values were strong, and had been developing since childhood. Eleanor does report, however, that the film *Not a love story* "triggered every possible outrage ... over justice, and suddenly I just saw more and was more open to things." In all likelihood, then, there was a significant increase in Eleanor's passion and understanding; quite likely there may have been significant changes in other elements as well, such as her sense of self, her vision, and her commitment.

It is then this altered Inner Self which seeks to express itself in the world around it—through the External Self. Probing the depths of "self-expression" goes well beyond the scope of this research, but the research did include participants' identification of the ways in which their learning about global issues led to changes in their lives or behaviour. Within that context, we can identify the primary changes as ones in lifestyle, in organizational involvement, and in activism. While we have explored some of these changes in the previous chapter, we will here relate them to the model we have been developing.

*Lifestyle changes*

As Victoria observed, the type of changes one might make in one's own personal lifestyle, as a result of involvement in global issues and concerns, varied with the issue. Victoria, and several other participants, were deeply concerned about the environment. They appeared to have little difficulty identifying changes which they could—and should—make in their lives. In
some cases, such as Marguerite, Roy, and Janie, they indicated that their concern about the environment prompted them to adopt a very different philosophy concerning their consumption and use of resources. In other cases, however, such as Raymond's, we see frustration and pessimism—both because he acknowledges that he, himself, has not made as much change in his lifestyle as he thinks he probably should have, and also because he worries that lifestyle change at the level of the individual will be insufficient to address the larger problem.

So, people's learning about the environment, and their increased concern about environmental issues, did result in lifestyle changes—reduced consumption, avoidance of excessive packaging, increased recycling and composting, and so on—but even so, there were two frequent problems. The first was that there was often a significant gap between what people believed they should do, and what they actually did. In several cases this appeared to be more a time-gap than a refusal to take certain action. It often took people a considerable time of "living with" the realization that they needed to change their behaviour before they actually followed through on the change. The second major problem with lifestyle change was the general acknowledgement that it was necessary but not sufficient. Victoria referred to a conversation she had recently had, in which a friend questioned the value of individual change:

I was talking with a friend the other day—and he was saying, "Can one person really make a difference, because it's the multinationals, it's the big corporations, it's the big industries," and there's a lot of truth in that, but I think you almost accept a defeatist attitude if you say that one person can't do anything. So I've been looking to see what kinds of things I can do as an individual. (Interview 4, 36-48)

There was a further problem with individual action. Again, it was identified by Victoria. She comments that although with the environmental issue she can see quite clearly action that she can take in her own life, in the case of the peace issue, the individual action is much less clear. She comments:
I guess the issue gets back to what can one person do as an individual? I guess in a way, I find the efforts to work as an individual on that one [the peace issue], for me, less concrete than trying to do something in terms of the environmental issue. It's been an information-gathering process, but then in terms of how that was translated into my own life, I don't know, but I'm not sure it's been as concrete, as tangible. (Interview 4, 57-70)

Others commented in a similar vein with respect to other issues. As June observed, one could write letters in support of Amnesty International, or join a protest concerning the involvement of the banks in South Africa, but it was often hard to push one's self to actually do so, and even having done so, one was often uncertain that such action, even when taken collectively by many, really was making a significant impact on the overall problem.

Organizational involvement

A second form of expression of the concern over! global issues was through an increase of involvement in related organizations. In the previous chapter we examined such involvement.

Action and activism

A third form of expression of the concern over global issues was through involvement in activism concerning the issues. This is distinguished from the lifestyle changes which were purely individual action. The activism took many forms, as outlined in the previous chapter.

The Elements of the Inner Self

One of the important insights from this research is that it is within the Inner Self that personal change takes place, and commitment is formed. It is, therefore, the Inner Self to which we need to pay particular attention in terms of understanding the formation of commitment to global issues and to the common good. A further lesson which we glean from this research concerns the elements which comprise the Inner Self, and specifically those elements which seem most connected to commitment to a cause beyond ourselves.
The study points to seven elements within the Inner Self which appear to have had particular significance for the individuals involved. These elements had a direct impact on the decision to learn more about global issues, and on the development of commitment to global issues and the common good.

Although I did not recognize it initially, it was, in effect, these seven elements which I was seeking to discover. I was hoping to identify common elements in individuals' experience which led them to an involvement in global issues. Ultimately, however, I realized that it was not at the level of external experience that the primary commonalities were to be found: rather, it was at the level of the Inner Self, two steps removed from the external experience. It was at the level of the Inner Self that a commitment to global issues and to the common good was—or was not—formed. The question which we legitimately might ask, then, is how our personal initiatives and actions, and our various educational programs, are affecting these elements of the individual's Inner Self. To enable us to better understand the dynamics, it will be helpful if we examine, in turn, each of the seven elements.

These are elements which typically were found in the individuals who participated in this study. We should not necessarily expect to find evidence of all seven elements for each individual. Since I did not embark on the research with these elements in mind—but rather the elements emerged from the research—I did not systematically ask participants about each of the elements.

I should also note that, perhaps not surprisingly, there is considerable overlap between the seven elements of the Inner Self which I describe below and the seven "interdependent patterns" of committed lives which Daloz and his colleagues (1996) outline. In describing the elements of the Inner Self which I observed in the participants in this study, I have undoubtedly
been influenced by the rich and insightful descriptions of these interdependent patterns in the *Common Fire* study. I have, nevertheless, attempted to focus on the experience of the participants in my own study, and with them in mind, to explore the elements of the Inner Self. There is thus, in the elements described below, both overlap with, and deviation from, the interdependent patterns described by the Daloz team.

**Values**

The individual's values constitute the essential foundation on which their commitment is built. In most cases, the individual's values appear to have begun to take shape at a very early age, and are significantly influenced by their parents and early family life. One of the patterns which we observed frequently among the participants in the study was that the values espoused by the parents were also being reinforced in several other ways. In many cases, other relatives, the church, the school, and the community provided strong reinforcement of values through the individual's childhood and youth. Indeed, it would appear that one of the factors which was very significant was the degree to which similar values were reinforced across multiple situations in which the individual found themselves. Daloz and his associates (1996) comment on the way in which the early home influence affects individuals' development:

> The primary mediators of reality during our early years are our parents, or for some, grandparents, step or foster parents, or older siblings. They teach us how things are: whom to trust, whom to shun, what is safe and what is dangerous, how to love, and how to hate. In the mini-commons of the home, we learn in a pre-verbal, deep-bone way, fundamental dispositions toward generosity or meanness, respect or scorn, equality or domination. (p. 27)

We should also remind ourselves, as we observed earlier when we were examining Influences, that a diverse array of values stimulated individuals' concern for global issues. When individuals indicated that their values played a role in the development of their commitment to global issues, they may have described their religious values, their concern for justice and human
rights, or their love of nature and their concern for the environment. Some of the “threads” which frequently appeared included a concern for others, a concern for justice, and a concern for the natural world. While these common threads are important in their own right, the key point at the moment is that individuals’ values constituted one of the key elements which appeared to provide the foundation for a life of learning and commitment relating to global issues. The precise values may have varied, but in all cases individuals’ values constituted an essential part of the foundation on which their involvement in global issues was based.

We also have observed that values develop and change over time. So, while some individuals may initially have adopted many of the values of their parents, they may later have developed a rather different value orientation. In the case of the participants in this study, many indicated that the foundation for their life-long values had been initially built in early childhood, and only one individual indicated that her values were in strong opposition to those of her parents. A very common pattern, however, was that values became modified over time, but tended to do so more with respect to the details than the basic principles. It was very common, for example, for individuals to alter their specific religious beliefs, while still holding spiritual values as important in their lives. In a similar way, some individuals abandoned, or significantly altered, their involvement in organized religion, while at the same time continuing to espouse many of the values which had been developed, in part, through the religion. Clearly, for the participants in this study, the values learned in childhood at home and within their closest circles—their extended family, friends, school, church, and community contacts—provided a strong foundation which in many cases endured throughout their lives.

Values provide the foundation for the interest in and commitment to global issues and the common good. It is on the foundation of values that individuals’ commitment is based. It is
because of their values that individuals declare, as Daloz and his associates observed, that they could not *not* take certain action, which was in keeping with whom they saw themselves to be. It is because of their fundamental values, that participants in Colby and Damon’s study saw themselves to be individuals who simply do what is right, regardless of the personal cost. Values, then, were the necessary prerequisite for a life of commitment to the common good.

**Empathy**

The ability to see things from the perspective of the “other” is also absolutely fundamental. Daloz and his associates discuss this at some length, because they found, somewhat to their surprise, that meaningful encounters with “otherness” were a key ingredient in the background of all those whom they studied. This is a foundation skill; without it, the individual is unlikely to be able to fully appreciate the perspective of others. It is this ability to “place one’s self in another’s shoes” which enables the individual to understand and appreciate perspectives other than their own. Empathy enables the individual to “feel with” the other, and thus to feel compassion.

**Understanding**

Understanding, as it is intended here, goes beyond knowledge to a deeper level, best thought of in relation to the individual’s analysis or world view. Understanding did not happen at a single point in time, but continued to evolve. Typically, at the time the participants were interviewed, they possessed an analysis of at least one global issue, where they felt that they understood many of the underlying causes of the problem. Most, as well, were conscious of the parallels between several different issues. Often it appeared that the individual’s ideas and beliefs were developing over a considerable period of time—perhaps years—and then at a particular point it was as if the simmering pot boiled over! They reached a significant new
understanding. Often such an understanding was reached initially on a single issue, but eventually the relationships and parallels with other similar issues emerged. Eleanor provides an example of this, cited already, where she first became conscious of social issues in her mid-20s through the women's movement—though one can clearly see the roots of this concern stretching back into her childhood. Once she had developed an awareness and analysis through her engagement with feminism, this soon expanded into a concern and understanding of related peace and justice issues. This pattern was a very common one, of initially becoming interested in one particular issue, seeking to learn more about it, and then as the individual’s understanding deepened, expanding the interest, concern, learning, and understanding to a much wider range of related issues. Sometimes the initial involvement was in action, sometimes it was in learning; but with the participants in this study, it usually developed into a commitment to both learning and action on an expanded range of global issues.

Understanding was important to individuals since it provided depth to their convictions. If Values in some sense constitute the “heart” or “spirit” component of the Inner Self, then Understanding is certainly the “head” component. With knowledge and understanding, individuals’ involvement in an issue cannot be seen—either by the individual themselves, or by others—simply as an “emotional response.”

An in-depth understanding of issues also provided a foundation for effective action. Many of the participants indicated that they felt that they had to spend considerable time educating themselves before they could take any effective public action; if they did not understand the issues in sufficient detail, others would not take them, or their point of view, seriously.
Sense of Self and Community

A sense of self and of community is a crucial element of the Inner Self. Without a strong sense of self—including self-knowledge and self-esteem—the individual is weak and deflated, feeling unable to rise to the challenges which present themselves. With strong self-esteem, individuals feel like they can tackle the world! Thus, having a strong sense of one's self is an important prerequisite for effective action.

While important for anyone, this is particularly important for individuals engaged in learning and taking action concerning global issues or other social causes. Many of the issues in which individuals became involved were apt to be contentious. Certainly Beatrice commented on this in terms of her experience concerning the peace issue. Without a strong sense of self, individuals were apt to “lose their footing” amid the conflicting positions. In addition, many of the issues were inherently complex. If an individual is lacking a strong sense of self, they may become overwhelmed by the wide range of ideas and options, even before they contemplate action. The complexity of many global issues means that it may be difficult to know what direction should be pursued, and even when one has determined that, to know what specific action is going to move one effectively along that path. If we are not able to pursue action which we feel is effective, we are apt to conclude that, “In the face of an issue that really matters, I’m a failure.” Such a message, obviously, would be self-defeating.

There is a further issue relating to self-esteem which is raised by Kegan (1994, p. 126). He has made the astute observation that empathy without self-esteem is a common—but very dangerous—combination. In effect, if an individual has empathy but does not have the ability to stand back from the other’s situation and assess it in relation to one’s own world view, they are in danger of feeling responsibility for something over which they are powerless to act. For many
reasons, then, it is crucially important that a strong sense of self become one of the essential elements of the Inner Self.

One of the important lessons which emerges from both the interviews and the literature is that a commitment to the common good is exercised in community, not by individuals alone. Individuals need the strength of others to sustain them—even if, in some instances, the others are not physically present. So, for example, although most participants drew direct support from a community of other individuals around them, Marguerite’s primary community seemed to exist through her reading, and both Kim and Catherine refer to feeling very much alone and out of place until they connected with others with similar views through their reading.

Daloz and his associates (1996) speak of the importance of being “at home in the world,” linking the notions of trust and agency. They comment:

For most, a positive sense of being at home [in the world] arises from experiences of interbeing that enable us to know we are connected in trustworthy ways and have some confidence that we can make a difference. Erik Erikson taught that the first great question of a human life is how to establish a sense of basic trust. His second and third great questions asked how we learn to stand on our own two feet with confidence, and how we learn to act with purpose.... What is needed to undergird the qualities of citizenship required for the twenty-first century is a significant measure of trust and agency. We flourish best when grounding trust and agency are learned in the home from the beginning. (p. 26)

Colby and Damon also identified the essential presence of a supportive community for all of their exemplars, “From early to mid-adulthood, the exemplars all had some community of friends, coworkers, religious compatriots, or other intimate companions who played critical roles in the formation of their beliefs” (p. 182).

Passion

Passion is the drive, the “fire” which Daloz and associates describe in Common Fire. It is the emotion which provides the energy which pushes on, in pursuit of the common good, in spite
of obstacles. This emotion has been examined above but we note here the crucial importance of emotion to the process of commitment and taking effective action on global issues. Where passion is lacking, the drive to pursue a vision or direction is also lacking.

Without passion, individuals may still respond responsibly and morally with respect to global issues, but are much less likely to initiate action on their own. When presented with a situation, they may well do the “right thing” on the basis of their values and understanding of the situation, but they may well be missing the “spark” that is necessary for people to get excited, to be creative, and to embark on major new initiatives.

**Vision**

Vision is the individual’s sense of purpose or image of what might be possible. We are not using it here with the implication that it must include a clear picture of exactly how things will evolve. As noted previously, Colby and Damon found that while the moral exemplars they studied passionately pursued certain *directions*, they frequently did not have a clear vision of what the ultimate result might look like. On the other hand, they clearly did have a sense that “a better world” was possible. Vision and passion are closely linked, in that the individual’s passion provides the energy while the vision provides the focus for the action. Vision typically goes beyond simple “moral” action, which may be entirely *reactive*, and contemplates, instead positive possibilities, something which is *better*. It gives the person holding the vision something to work toward, something to strive for, something to attempt to create or realize.

**Commitment**

Commitment is the pledging of one’s self to something else or something greater. We take on commitments when we marry, when we have children, when we accept a new job or responsibility. In the context of global issues, *commitment* indicates that we are forming a long-
term intention to pursue certain values, issues, goals and courses of action. For many of the participants in the study, it is clear that their commitment to global issues in particular, and certainly to the common good, in general, was a very deep and long-term one. In a great many cases in this study, and in the studies by Daloz et al (1996) and by Colby and Damon (1992) the individual's commitment to the common good was rooted in a belief in a higher power.

As we have seen, depending on a variety of circumstances in individuals' lives, they may have felt more or less able to work actively in pursuing their commitment. It is worth noting, too, that the strength of the commitment appears to increase with increasing generality of the goal. Time and again, participants indicated that they were committed to a specific issue at the moment, but that over time, they switched focus from one issue to another. In all cases, however, their commitment to the common good was long-term and seemingly unshakeable.

**Tensions within the Inner Self**

Since we have determined that it is really the Inner Self that is particularly important in the development of commitment to global issues, and to the common good, it is helpful if we can understand the Inner Self as fully as possible. We thus explore in the following section a further level of detail in the Model of the Committed Individual which we have constructed. On closer examination, we find that the Inner Self is actually comprised of three clusters: the "Actual Self," the "Moral Self," and the "Desired Self." Within each of these three, we find all seven of the elements of the Inner Self which we have described previously. An expanded view of the Inner Self is found in Figure 5.
**The Actual Self: Who I Am**

The Actual Self requires little explanation. It is the portion of the Inner Self on which we have been focusing. It represents “Who I am” at present. It naturally evolves over time, but at any given point, the Actual Self includes the values, empathy, understanding, sense of self and community, passion, vision, and commitment which are driving the individual’s life, behaviour and choices.
The Moral Self: Who I Ought to be

The Moral Self is not who I am but rather who I believe I ought to be if I was behaving completely morally, ethically, and responsibly. It is, in most cases, not the individual's current reality; the Moral Self, as we are defining it here, exists in the individual's mind and imagination. And, it is important to recognize that, as described here, the Moral Self reflects the individual's personal definition of what constitutes moral, ethical, and responsible behaviour. The Moral Self undoubtedly will overlap with the Actual Self, for there are many ways for an individual in which "what I am" is consistent with what the individual believes "I ought to be." If the two are very close, there is a high degree of overlap. If what I am is quite different from what I believe I ought to be, there will be much less overlap.

Within the Moral Self we find the same seven elements of the Inner Self that we have identified—but in this case, each element reflects the image, in our minds, of what is moral, ethical, and responsible. In the Actual Self, for example, consumer-oriented values may predominate, although in the Moral Self, a much simpler lifestyle might be valued. In this case we can clearly see a discrepancy between the two "Me's." As we go through the seven elements, we may find that the Actual Self (the essence of who the individual really is, at present) and the Moral Self (who they believe they should be) may be very close in the case of one individual, but quite divergent in another case. In the former situation, there will be a high level of overlap or congruence between the two; in the latter case, there will be much less overlap.

Important work in the area of moral development advances our understanding of how individuals develop their moral thinking but, unfortunately, it provides less assistance in understanding what determines moral action. In terms of our model, the moral development research provides us with considerable insight into how people develop the Moral Self, but it
does little to explain how this then becomes integrated into the Actual Self, and how it is then expressed in action in the Outer Self. Acknowledging this limitation, it is still helpful to understand each part of the overall process as fully as possible. The development of commitment to the common good is sufficiently complex that we appreciate any relevant insights, in spite of the fact that no particular study or body of literature, alone, provides us with a complete understanding of the complex processes involved.

Initially, we might naively believe that most people would have a similar view of what constituted the Moral Self. This does not appear to be the case. Here again, the literature on moral development is helpful, for the research has separated out various different conceptions of morality, and has also indicated that many of the differences are strongly associated with gender (Darling-Smith, 1993; Garrod, 1993).

An important complement to the more theoretical research on moral development is the study by Sharon Daloz Parks (Piper, Gentile, and Parks, 1993) of students at the Harvard Business School. As part of the development of a new program in *Leadership, Ethics, and Corporate Responsibility*, Parks (one of the co-authors of the *Common Fire* study) was engaged to develop a profile of the students entering the Harvard Master of Business Administration program. Parks comments:

In sum, we found that these talented, highly motivated students have a strong sense of interpersonal accountability—of being trustworthy—in immediate face-to-face situations with colleagues and superiors. Yet perhaps because many of them have been insulated from diversity and failure, and have not heretofore been encouraged to critically reflect upon some of the important issues before them and their societies, they only have a limited consciousness of systemic harm and injustice, only a limited sense of what is at stake. As a consequence, most do not yet articulate a vision by which they believe they could positively affect our collective life—signalling an absence of worthy myths and dreams. Unless they are effectively initiated into the public purposes and ethical norms of their profession, they will be ill-prepared to provide managerial leadership capable of engaging complex relationships among conflicting loyalties within a vision of the common good. They will not be able to provide ethical leadership in public life. (p. 19)
Parsons describes a situation in which the individuals themselves are well developed, but their moral understanding—their Moral Self—is not. The Leadership, Ethics, and Corporate Responsibility program developed at the Harvard Business School, in effect, attempted to develop the Moral Self so it would be more in balance with the Actual Self.

The Desired Self: Who I Want to be

Most of us are not fully content with who we are—at present. Instead, we wish that we were different in certain ways. We may wish we were more physically fit, had more friends, a more successful career—or we may wish that we were able to do something more meaningful with our life. Many of our wishes are simply that: something that we idly think about, but do little to achieve. Our sense of the Desired Self goes beyond that. It is not simply something we hope could happen to us some day; it is the Self which we are actively striving to become. We are committed to it, and we are investing our time and energy in trying to realize it.

In some cases, our image of the Moral Self and our image of the Desired Self may be very similar. An individual, for example, may imagine their Moral Self as one who strictly limits their consumption and is actively campaigning on environmental issues. This individual may well not have fully achieved this in their own life, but may be actively striving to become more like the Moral Self they see in their mind. In such a case, the individual's Moral Self and their Desired Self are almost indistinguishable.

A second individual may well have a similar view of how they would behave if they were truly a "responsible citizen," but have little inclination to pursue such a lifestyle. Instead, this individual may seek to acquire as many possessions as possible, and have no inclination to pursue environmental issues. In this case, the Moral Self (the individual's image of ethical,
moral, responsible behaviour) is markedly different from the Desired Self (the person they strive to become). Both are quite different from the Actual Self—who the person is at the moment.

The Dynamic Tension

The dynamic tension among these three images of our Self produces much of our intriguing personal growth. If our three “Selves” are closely aligned—if who we are, who we believe we ought to be, and who we strive to be, are all quite similar—we can visualize the three selves as largely overlapping one another. We would expect the individual to be reasonably “content.” Their actual life would be very close to their image both of the Moral Self and of the Desired Self. If, on the other hand, the three are not closely aligned, various internal tensions may develop. We will explore these in terms of three characteristics of the dynamic relationship among the Selves.

Strength

The first aspect of the dynamic tension within the Inner Self is related to the relative strength of each of the three “Selves.” The strength could be represented visually in the model by the size of each circle. As each Self develops and increases in strength, the size of the corresponding circle increases.

We are reminded of the issue of “strength” in recalling Parks’ assessment of the students beginning their MBA program at Harvard Business School. In that case, the students’ moral development—their Moral Selves—was still at a very immature, underdeveloped level, in spite of their excellence in other areas. Here too then, regardless of other factors, a minimum level of strength or development is necessary. In a similar way, a strong vision of what may be possible—represented in our model by the Desired Self—is exceedingly important.
The "Strength" characteristic, then, reflects the fact that in the various aspects of the individual's Inner Self, there is absolute growth and development which is a prerequisite to effective functioning in a complex modern world. Without this development, individuals may be limited in their ability to work toward a better world.

**Balance**

The notion of Balance is closely related to that of Strength, since the balance among the three Selves simply reflects their relative strength. Nevertheless, it is helpful to focus separately on Balance since it is the factor which is apt to alert us to areas in which development work might be particularly helpful. At the Harvard Business School, the incoming students had strength in their Actual Selves, but lacked equivalent strength in their Moral Selves.

There was every reason, therefore, to develop the kind of program on which Parks was working: a program in leadership, ethics and corporate responsibility. If the program was successful—and there is every reason to believe that it was (Piper et al., 1993)—then it would result in the students developing a much fuller understanding of what constituted moral behaviour. The program would have resulted in the students developing stronger Moral Selves. What the program did not—and could not be expected to—accomplish directly was a change in the students' Desired Selves. A change in moral development and thus in the image of the Moral Self does not necessarily bring about any change in the Desired Self or in the individual's moral behaviour. In the case of the Harvard students, then, the Actual Self predominated, and the Moral Self grew in strength as a result of the program on ethical development, but the Desired Self—the Self which the individuals strove to become—may or may not have been affected by the process.
Among the 23 participants in this study, the most common situation was that the image of the Moral Self and the image of the Desired Self were very close: people had a very strong desire to become the Moral Self. The significant gap was between their Actual Self and this ideal. As we have noted earlier, this desire to live completely responsibly, but the failure to live up to their own standards and expectations, was the source of considerable guilt, on the one hand, and of various coping measures on the other. The primary coping measure was to constrain the development of the Moral Self—to figuratively tie a rope around it to prevent it from getting too far ahead. In this way, the individual consciously took measures to prevent the gap between their Actual Self and their image of the Moral Self from growing any further, thus avoiding an even greater feeling of guilt.

**Congruence**

The extent to which the three Selves “were equal in all respects,” or occupied the same space can be thought of as their congruence. If an individual’s Actual Self is lived in keeping with the image of the Moral Self and both are also very close to the Desired Self, then the individual’s life is very much in tune with their ethical values and their desires. This is the situation which Colby and Damon (1992) describe as being prevalent among the moral exemplars they studied:

Most people connect self and moral goals to some degree—as when, for example, they act altruistically toward their children or other loved ones. But most people also experience some degree of conflict between what they most want to do and what they feel would be best to do from the moral point of view. Although they may want to do the right thing, they also want things that clash with their moral goals. Unity between self and morality is far from typical, although it can be approached. Moral exemplars do so, and this is the key to the extraordinary range and depth of their moral commitments. (p. 304)

Moreover, the extent of unity is an aspect of personality growth that derives more from a person’s sense of self than from the nature of the person’s moral beliefs.... In the end, moral behavior depends on something beyond the moral beliefs in and of themselves. It
depends on how and to what extent the moral concerns of individuals are important to their sense of themselves as people. For some strongly committed people, these concerns are of absolute and undeniable importance to their sense of who they are. (p. 306, 307)

**Future Research**

This research study benefits tremendously from the excellent on-going work in several inter-related areas, including the study of lives of commitment, constructive-developmental psychology, transformative learning, moral development, and global education. Each of those areas—and others which are, in turn, closely related—have their own evolving directions which will continue to shed additional light on the questions underlying this study.

Two particular research directions emerge more specifically from this study itself. First, research which explored and tested the Model of the Committed Individual, developed in this Chapter—or which explored and developed alternative models—would be very helpful in expanding our understanding of the internal dynamics of the development of commitment.

Second, the world is not only becoming more complex but is also (as is obvious to us all) changing rapidly. One of the implications of this is that there is an urgent need to pursue parallel research in this new environment. For youth in contemporary society, for example, the Internet would seem to have dramatically altered the definition of “community.” The implications of globalization, changes in information technology, and of humankind becoming a single planetary community are profound—but not well understood. Continued exploration of how commitment to the common good is best fostered in our evolving global community is urgently needed.

A large and potentially very fruitful area of further investigation involves the linkages between the inter-related areas of transformative learning, the development of commitment (to any cause), and the development of commitment (specifically) to the common good. The intersection of these areas of investigation raise a great many stimulating and important
questions. Can one, for example, develop within Kegan's framework to the fourth or fifth level, and yet do so pursuing ends which are counter to the common good? If so, what differences in the learning process distinguish between those who pursue the common good and those who pursue contrary objectives? What is the relationship between transformative learning and our understanding of the processes which contribute to the development of commitment to the common good? What are the practical implications for university continuing education programs, or for other areas of adult education? And, the list could go on!

Observations and Implications

This work has many implications—perhaps especially that if we are to meet the challenges of a world in the throes of fundamental transition, much more exploration of these issues will be warranted. Nevertheless, I will conclude this current study with a list of a few of the many implications which, I believe, have relevance in our evolving world.

1. No “Gandhi Pill” but endless opportunities to “make a difference”

The findings of this study support the conclusion of Daloz and his associates (1996, p. 17) that, “No single event can ensure that a person will or will not live a life of commitment to the common good. It is a mix of key ingredients that matters.” Indeed, the mix of key ingredients is almost endless! The Model of the Committed Individual, and the insights into the relevant elements and clusters of the Inner Self provide us with a framework for exploring the range of activities which can contribute to the development of a life of commitment.

The Outer Self

The Outer Self constitutes the pool of experiences from which we draw, through the Learning Process, to incorporate knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes into our Inner Self.
While it is in the Inner Self that real change and personal development take place, the "raw material" on which the learning is based is to be found in the Outer Self. Thus, if we can enrich an individual's pool of experience, we are creating greater learning opportunities. Through the observations of this study and the study by Daloz et al (1996), in particular, we see many of the types of experiences which seem most likely to lead to the growth of commitment within the Inner Self. The family, community, church, education, experiences with nature, and contacts with other individuals are but a few of the locations where enriching and influential activities frequently take place—ultimately contributing to the growth of the individual's commitment to the common good. To the extent that we expand the range of enriching experiences—for ourselves or for others—we are expanding the possibilities for the development of individual commitment.

The ultimate impact of an individual's experiences appears to be dependent on several factors, including the nature of the experiences themselves (Common Fire documents a wide range of experiences which were frequently associated with the development of commitment to the common good); the frequency of such experiences; and the extent to which several experiences combine to reinforce one another (as has been noted, for example, in cases where the family, church, community and school all reinforce one another by embracing similar values).

*The Learning Process*

Although two individuals may have similar experiences, they do not necessarily draw the same learning from those experiences. As Gordon noted earlier in commenting on the individual who had recently addressed his class concerning his year working as an agriculturalist in Africa, "I don't know whether that [experience of working in Africa] has entered his soul" (Interview 5, 766, 767). In a somewhat similar fashion, we often see siblings developing quite differently
from one another—including the development of quite different values. Barry, for example, has commented on the fact that his parents and sisters do not share his commitment to global issues but rather, “have quite opposite views about one’s responsibility beyond your own "kith and kin”” (Interview 21, 477-479).

I certainly would not claim that it is only the Learning Process which determines the impact of external experiences; we noted above the impact, as well, of genetic inheritance and of individual will. Nevertheless, learning is a key process through which we draw from our experience in incorporating new knowledge, values, skills and attitudes into the essence of our Inner Self. Thus, if there are ways in which we can strengthen the learning process, we will also increase the likelihood that we will more fully draw the richness from our experiences. We will explore this more fully below.

The Elements of the Inner Self

The seven elements of the Inner Self provide the primary focus and set of criteria for determining which activities and processes are likely to contribute to the development of individuals' commitment to the common good. Activities which promote the development of relevant values, the capacity for empathy, our understanding of issues, our sense of self and community, our passion for the common good, our vision of positive possibilities, and our commitment to taking action on our convictions, all make a positive contribution. Some experiences will affect only one of the elements. A book that we read, or a discussion in which we engage, or a course we take may assist us in deepening our understanding of a particular issue. Not surprisingly, however, experiences which simultaneously have an impact on several of the elements are likely to have a correspondingly significant impact on the individual. A youth workcamp in a foreign country, for example, may well stimulate an individual to examine
their personal values, it may provide a deeply meaningful encounter with otherness, assist the individual in their analysis of issues, help to clarify their sense of self and of community, arouse their passion for justice, and provide a concrete avenue for them to express their commitment.

It will be best if we remember that, based on our model, there are a great many ways in which we can contribute toward the development of citizens who are committed to the common good. It is a long-term undertaking. There are as many paths as there are individuals travelling them. Our range of experiences provides a smorgasbord of food for the soul: it is from this that our Inner Self draws its sustenance. Adding enriching experiences expands our menu of nourishing choices—though the selection of french fries or yogourt is still a matter of personal choice.

The Clusters of the Inner Self: The Actual, Moral, and Desired Selves

While our primary focus may be on developing each of the elements within the Inner Self, it is also helpful to focus on the clusters within, especially as a way of identifying areas where particular attention may be required. The Harvard Business School Program on Leadership, Ethics and Corporate Responsibility has been cited as the kind of program which may be helpful in developing the Moral Self. The moral development literature also provides sound guidance in this area—though as noted earlier, its primary emphasis is on moral reflection, not on moral action. Damon and Colby (1996), for example, point out that if schools wish to have a far-reaching impact on young people's moral conduct, they “must join with other institutions, including families, churches, youth programs and other community organizations to provide a clear and coherent set of expectations for young people” (p. 31).

In a similar fashion, various global education and environmental education programs—as well as programs on other social issues—may be particularly helpful in developing the Moral
Self. Once again, however, the programs by themselves may not be sufficient to ensure that the Moral Self becomes integrated with the Desired Self and the Actual Self. We must remember, however, based on the experience of the participants in this study, that even when such integration does occur, a significant time gap often occurs between the development of consciousness (through the development of the Moral and Desired Selves) and the changes in action and behaviour (reflected in the Actual Self).

2. **Childhood: Where it all begins**

   Early in my research, the irony dawned on me. I worked in adult education, was enrolled in a graduate program in adult education, was devoting myself to a major research project on adult learning, and as I pursued that research, what was I discovering? The crucial significance of the early childhood years! The conclusion was inescapable!

   The Daloz team, in *Common Fire* (1996), draws out some fascinating examples of the ways in which the actions of parents, in particular, impact children—from “listening from the stairway,” to the role of the “public parent,” to developing the combined sense of trust and agency which is so crucial as a foundation for citizenship.

   Colby and Damon clarify for us, in developmental psychology terminology, why early upbringing is so important. They identify the importance of cumulative and interactional continuity, referred to earlier in this chapter. The significance of these to early childhood development is that once a child begins developing along a certain path, they are likely to begin making choices of their own, and interacting with others, in ways which serve to reinforce this path.
The early years of childhood development are thus far more crucial than we may sometimes recognize. In a "tongue-in-cheek" look at our widespread practice of contracting others to carry out, on our behalf, many of life's essential tasks, Margaret Wente writes:

In a world where everything's become professional, no one dares to be an amateur....

We've even contracted out parenting and friendship. A huge service industry of child-care professionals is on hand to supply your kids with proper stimulation, keep them entertained at birthday parties, give them lessons of all kinds, even teach them character development.

If you fail to subcontract these experts, your neighbours and your kids will surely disapprove. (2001, April 28, p. A11)

While Wente is poking fun at the "dumbing down of the middle class," she touches on a very serious concern. There appears to be an increasing tendency to delegate much of our raising of children to others: the school system, sports coaches, arts programs, television, the Internet. All of these may be appropriate in their own right, but whether it is reasonable to expect any of them to provide a foundation in values—clearly so important for the participants in this study—is highly questionable.

It is not that the early home influence—or any other single factor—is essential for the development of committed lives. But, it does appear frequently as the foundation on which committed lives are built. Certainly, when this foundation has been carefully put in place, it heightens the chances of a life of commitment following. The point is reinforced once again in an article (Johnson, 2001) tracing the background of Naomi Klein, "Canadian author, journalist and activist [who] is one of the brightest stars of a protest movement that ... represents the most dramatic development on the left since the Sixties." Klein is a third-generation activist. Her mother is Bonnie Sherr Klein, Director of both Speaking our peace (Klein, 1985) and Not a love story (Hénault, 1981)—the two films which had been so influential for Eleanor, within this study. Naomi Klein's father was a draft dodger and now, as professor of family medicine,
crusades for more humanized medicine. His father had been a Marxist animator in the Disney studios and was blacklisted for his role in organizing an animators' strike in 1941. Klein's husband, Avi Lewis, is the son of former Ontario New Democratic Party leader Stephen Lewis and journalist Michele Landsberg, and the grandson of David Lewis, former federal leader of the NDP.

3. Youth: Discovering "otherness" and building commitment

As we have noted, the Common Fire study (Daloz et al., 1996) is very clear about the importance of individuals' "constructive engagement with otherness" (p. 67). While this can happen at any time, it is particularly likely to happen in youth or young adulthood since this is typically a time when individuals are actively exploring the larger world, beyond the boundaries of their own community. Youth are frequently engaged in conferences, workcamps, and youth exchange programs, as well as travelling on their own. Each experience of this sort is likely to involve travel to an unfamiliar environment, and extensive personal contact with individuals whose background and worldview is markedly different from one's own. All of this, of course, is occurring at a time when young people are building their own values, worldview, and life goals. Meaningful encounters with otherness are thus particularly significant at this time.

Youth is also a time when individuals are often called upon to demonstrate their commitment. For a great many, the commitment to consumerism, reinforced by constant advertising, by their peers, and by the popular culture is really "cemented in place" during this period. On the other hand, youth is also a time when individuals are called upon to demonstrate their commitment to social causes. Much of the commitment to the environment, to combatting racism, and to other social justice issues is formed at this stage of life. Since taking action on one's beliefs in itself tends to reinforce those beliefs, it is very important that youth see
meaningful opportunities to take action in support of a better world. If such opportunities are present, and are taken advantage of, it significantly increases the likelihood that individuals will form a deeper commitment to the common good.

Finally, we should note that the path through youth is often not a “straight line” from childhood to adulthood. As we have noted already, several of the participants in this study reported adopting values and behaviours which their parents may have seen as a departure from the parental values—even though, to us as outside observers, the similarities may be more striking than the differences. In addition, we will recall that in some cases the participants noted that for a time their children seemed to adopt values with which they, as parents, disapproved. After a time, however, these youth came to adopt values which their parents saw as reflecting concern for the future of society. A particularly striking example of this phenomenon is to be found in Naomi Klein’s background. Although a “third-generation activist”, Klein “did not exactly rush to embrace her radical roots. As a teenager in Montreal, she was a delinquent mall rat, appalled by her parents’ values and infatuated with consumer culture” (Johnson, 2001, p. 27). Johnson continues:

Her parents tried to impart their political values, “but it completely backfired,” she says. “When I was 10, my mother took me to an anti-nuke march in New York and I came back and said I would never, ever go to a march with her again, and that I was not a political prop. (p. 29)

In Klein’s case, two events triggered her transformation. For six years she did not talk to her parents, relating instead to “a fearsome clique of eight girls who bonded through drugs, alcohol and designer fashions” (Johnson, p. 29). Her wild years ended abruptly when she was 17 and her mother suffered a life-threatening stroke. The reconciliation with the family occurred “literally overnight.” Two years later, another shock—the 1989 massacre of 14 female students
at the University of Montreal—caused her to reshape her political views, and she got involved in politics.

The path through adolescence and young adulthood to a life committed to the common good is unpredictable and often circuitous. Youth is, however, a very significant stage in each individual’s developmental process. It is a time which presents opportunities for meaningful engagement with others whose background, values, and worldview are very different. It is also a time which often provides significant opportunities to demonstrate clear commitment to others beyond one’s self. To the extent that we can enlarge the pool of such opportunities for youth, we will be providing them with experiences which may become very important in the development of their commitment and their lives.

4. Adulthood: Growth to new levels

One of the significant characteristics which Colby and Damon (1992) identified in the moral exemplars whom they studied was their continuing capacity for growth and development throughout their lives—based on a foundation of long-term moral commitment:

We have identified three enduring patterns in the lives of our exemplars. The first involves adamantly maintaining a moral commitment over long periods of time, even in the face of frustration and hardship.... Yet even more powerful, in a developmental sense, is the second pattern: invigorating the commitment through processes of cumulative continuity. By repeatedly re-creating situations that stimulate their moral concerns, exemplars expand their goals, sharpen their commitments, and acquire greater effectiveness in pursuing them. The third pattern is more dynamic still and lies at the heart of the developmental paradox to which we have referred. Through interpersonal interactions that regularly subject one’s ideas to the tests of challenge and criticism, the exemplar’s ideas become transformed and improved all throughout life....

Some people will be more disposed than others to lifelong goal transformations. We propose that it is people with the following sorts of interpersonal styles who will expand their goals and capacities throughout their life:

- a manner that encourages collaborative activity with others
- a determination to find colleagues that share one’s most fundamental moral goals
• a toleration of, and interest in, the alternative perspectives of colleagues who share one's fundamental goals
• an eagerness to communicate with colleagues and others about values
• an active seeking of new knowledge and strategic skills from others
• an ability to take on aspects of the other while not losing the integrity of one's own long-standing commitments. (p. 198, 199)

Colby and Damon point out that, ironically, the kinds of interactional styles and moral standards that create the capacity for lifelong development also contribute to personal stability over time.

While Colby and Damon identify the fact that continuing to question, inquire, and learn were essential characteristics of the moral exemplars they studied, and also identify many of the characteristics and processes which are essential components of this quality, Kegan (1994) both outlines the qualitatively different levels of learning in which we may engage, and identifies the necessity of reaching particular levels in order to deal adequately with different kinds of problems. Thus, rather than something which occurs mainly in our youth, learning becomes something that must be continued throughout life if we are to have any hope of dealing competently with the challenges which face us—even on a personal level, even apart from the complex challenges at the community, national, and global levels.

5. **The Power of One: Never underestimate a single individual**

One of the fascinating observations which we are able to make, on the basis of the stories of the participants in this study, is that individuals frequently have far more influence over others than they realize. We see this at many points in the interviews. Would the teacher who encouraged June to enter the public speaking contest have dreamed that over 50 years later June would be describing that as one of the formative experiences in shaping her life? Did Joseph’s social problems teacher have any idea that decades later he would be identified as an important influence for Joseph, or did Raymond’s camp counsellor have any sense of the impact he had
had? Even for those with a higher profile, the same questions apply. Would Linus Pauling, or Helen Caldicott, or Ursula Franklin have had any idea of the long-term significance of their brief public sessions in Halifax for some of those in attendance? Would Bonnie Sheer Klein have had any sense of the impact of her films on a teacher such as Eleanor? In a similar fashion, in addition to the somewhat more visible effects of our individual actions, each of us may well have had a significant—perhaps even profound—impact on one or more of the individuals with whom we come in contact. We shouldn’t underestimate the potential impact of any individual’s life—our own or those with whom we come in contact.

Frequently the influence develops through a mentoring relationship. Daloz (1999) has written extensively on the value of mentoring and in Learning as Transformation (2000, p. 115, 116) identifies a mentoring community as one of four conditions of transformation.

6. **The Power of Community: We can’t do it alone**

Margaret Mead has commented, “Never doubt that small groups of committed people can change the world. In fact, it’s the only thing that ever has” (Whole Systems Associates, n.d.). The theme of developing and acting in community with others runs strongly through my own research and that of others. As noted previously, in this study, all participants but one participated in organizations which had a major focus on global issues—and the sole exception wished to be involved but was prevented from doing so by her work schedule. Many commented at length about the support which they received from others.

Colby and Damon (1992), for example, examine the phenomenon of how the exemplars in their study kept open to personal growth throughout their lives, while at the same time preserving their moral commitments. They note that all of this was done in communication with “intimate associates who challenged, prodded, supplied information, asked questions, gave
feedback, and otherwise supported the exemplar's movement toward an expanded moral vision.”

They note that:

Contemporary developmental theory has convincingly established [that] social influence is a necessary ingredient in all psychological growth, even the growth of those who venture into realms of the untried and the unknown. All creative people—artists, scientists, charismatic moral leaders—put together collegial groups with which they exchange their most revolutionary ideas. (p. 295)

In fact, this reliance on others led Colby and Damon to identify as one of their developmental paradoxes the fact that "the exemplars, at critical junctures in their development, were led by their followers” (p. 294).

7. Learning: To nourish mind, heart, and spirit

A full understanding of the complexities and power of adults' learning goes well beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, from the experiences of the participants in this study in learning about global issues, and from the rich literature in the field, we can make several observations concerning the role of learning in the development of commitment to the common good.

- The participants in this study were very clear that their learning was integrated into the fabric of their lives, not something which was contained within a separate compartment. Learning and action were thus merged, and the learning process spanned their full lives.

- Martha Rogers reminds us that our minds, hearts, and spirits all require nourishment—and effective learning addresses the needs of all three.

- In this sense, our learning includes nourishment by the arts, by nature, and by human emotion—not just by “education,” narrowly defined. Mezirow (2000, p. 6) reminds us that “art, music, and dance are alternative languages. Intuition, imagination, and dreams
are other ways of making meaning. Inspiration, empathy, and transcendence are central to self-knowledge and to drawing attention to the affective quality and poetry of human experience.”

- The role of global education in the classroom, and various curricular approaches are well documented (Brock-Utne, 1985; Fisk & Schellenberg, 2000; Lyons & Sullivan, 1992; Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999; Reardon, 1988a, 1988b; Reed, 1996; Thomas & Klare, 1989). Global education addresses the needs of the mind, heart, and soul, and promotes the kind of transformation in ways of knowing or frames of reference to which Kegan and Mezirow refer. There are excellent resources available; we need to find greater ways to promote their use.

8. **Challenge: Question the unquestioned, build the future**

Many of the points that we have made focus on the individual, and in particular the individual’s Inner Self. This is quite deliberate, since it is within the Inner Self that commitment to the common good is rooted. Nevertheless, commitment which remains within the Inner Self is neither able to develop fully, nor is it able to contribute appropriately to the betterment of society. We are constantly reminded of the increased complexity of our contemporary world. In the face of this complexity, the individual concerned about the common good must be constantly seeking a deeper understanding of society, in effect questioning the unquestioned and, in addition, must be actively designing and building a positive future.

The need to understand our selves, and our world, is reinforced at every turn. Within this study, Edward, at age 75, comments on his joy in constantly discovering new insights. Colby and Damon (1992) observed among the moral exemplars they studied, the deep and searching honesty and continuing intellectual quest stretching into individuals’ advanced years. Mezirow
(2000, p. 3) observes that "a defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know." In the case of those committed to the common good, this characteristic goes far beyond intellectual curiosity and becomes a driving passion to understand the complexity of modern society and, in particular, to try to work with others to fashion appropriate strategies to respond to the many obstacles to a positive planetary future. This process involves challenging and questioning situations and actions which previously may not have been questioned. The impacts of globalization and of technology, for example, are now being more visibly challenged in the major demonstrations at Seattle, Quebec City, and elsewhere. Moreover, in a major new study, Ray and Anderson (2000) report on a large and growing subculture which values deeply the environment, peace, social justice, relationships, self-actualization, and spirituality.

Daloz (2000) has identified individual action as an essential element in the development of commitment to the common good:

Although transformative discourse and the presence of a mentoring community are essential to the formation of durable commitment to the common good, the opportunity to act on one's evolving commitments, to test and ground one's growing convictions in action, is vital. (p. 116, 117)

9. **Support: Be gentle on ourselves and others**

As we reflect on the experience of the participants in this study, we are struck by the fact that they are struggling with their own fallibility: struggling to meet their own expectations of themselves, yet aware that they often fall short. Overall, this is a group for whom the Moral Self and the Desired Self are very similar; there is a high degree of overlap. But, there is also, typically, a gap between these two parts of the Inner Self, and the Actual Self. The individuals place high expectations and demands on themselves—in terms of their contribution to the common good—but often are not able to fully meet those expectations. There is often a gap
between what individuals believed they *should* do and what they *actually* do. One of the factors involved, for several of the participants, was the need for a period of mental adjustment: time to become accustomed to the notion of changing one's behaviour or lifestyle, before actually implementing the change. In other cases, however, short of abandoning the society of which they are a part and living the life of a hermit, many of the participant were not sure *how.* realistically, they can meet the expectations they set for themselves. Berating these individuals for not doing more in support of the common good hardly seems like a helpful strategy! It is likely to increase their guilt and lower their sense of self, making it much *less* likely that they can take effective action. Instead, a *supportive* community of peers and mentors is likely to be much more helpful in assisting individuals to come as close as they can to their combined image of the Moral and Desired Selves.

This point is also borne out in both the theory and empirical findings of others. We see for example:

- Daloz and associates (1996) explore in depth the "struggle with fallibility," concluding that effective, committed individuals "live the struggles well" by adopting two practices, "an ability to acknowledge, reflect upon, and give voice to all parts of one's inner conversation, and a capacity to forgive. (p. 190). The ability to listen to one's internalized voices, including the "taboo motivations" with patience and respect parallels one's ability to listen to the mixed motivations of others in the same way. Indeed, the inability to listen to the range of internal voices and motivations is tied to both burnout and destructive behaviour. In contrast, being forgiving of one's self, and of others, is closely linked to individual's staying power in pursuing their commitment for the long-term. Daloz and associates comment:
In the ritual of forgiveness, confession comes first. These people acknowledge that they do trip, do become snagged in their own stuff. They know that listening well to all the voices is a hard discipline.... They know also that they cannot do it alone. Forgiveness is a public as well as a private act, an important consequence of systemic thought, and a feature of the practice of citizenship in the twenty-first century. Committed citizens seem to know that forgiveness and transformation are one and the same, and you can't be about the work of transforming society without a robust capacity to forgive—both yourself and others. (p. 192)

- Colby and Damon (1992) reinforce the point, noting that all of the exemplars whom they studied, except two had been very forgiving. The two who were not carried considerable bitterness concerning individuals who were “on their side” of a particular struggle but, in their estimation, did not “measure up.” Colby and Damon also noted that although the moral exemplars they were studying were dealing with situations and challenges that the vast majority of the population would consider to be discouraging and depressing, the exemplars typically were grateful for the opportunity to be able to be involved, and enjoyed their involvement. Interestingly, the only two who did not fit this image were the two who seemed unable to forgive.

- Finally, Kegan (2000) provides us with a theoretical basis for determining that it is support that learners need. He warns us, as adult educators, about the folly of trying to rush transformation. His constructive-developmental perspective on transformational learning suggests an image to him of each of the transformations to a new way of knowing,

as the gradual traversing of a succession of increasingly more elaborate bridges. Three injunctions follow from this image. First, we need to know which bridge we are on. Second, we need to know how far along the learner is in traversing that particular bridge. Third, we need to know that, if it is to be a bridge that is safe to walk across, it must be well anchored on both sides, not just the culminating side. We cannot overattend to where we want the student to be—the far side of the bridge—and ignore where the student is. (p. 60, 61)
In the final analysis, it is who we see ourselves to be—however that develops within us—that determines the extent of our commitment to the common good, and the action that we are prepared to take toward a positive future for our planet. Daloz and his associates (1996) refer to this as “the power of the double negative”—individuals’ conviction that they cannot not act; Colby and Damon (1992) describe it as the “unifying of self and morality.”

However described, the key point is this: at least for those in the Colby and Damon study, as well as for those in the Common Fire study, and for those in this study, action in support of the common good did not spring primarily from an abstract sense of “duty.” Rather, it sprang from individuals’ sense of who they were as people. These people saw themselves as individuals who were committed to the common good. Thus, the action they took was as much an expression of who they were as of what they believed in—whether their action was learning more about global issues, appreciating the beauty of nature, participating in a protest action, or adjusting their lifestyle so that it placed less strain on their planetary home. Those who demonstrated the greatest commitment where those who had achieved the greatest integration between their Actual Self, Moral Self, and Desired Self.

What pulls the three selves together? While we can identify a variety of specific influences, I believe Colby and Damon have identified the key factor of this integration at the conclusion of their study:

The final paradox of our study is that the exemplars’ unity of self was realized through their faith in a meaning greater than the self.

It is this faith, this hope, this meaning that provides the glue joining all the self’s systems of action and reflection. This is what held the exemplars together during the trials, the successes and failures, the “times at 2:30 in the morning” … that would test the strength and endurance of their commitments. This is what kept them moving toward the progressive fulfillment of their commitments without digressing, as others might, toward other, more personal desires—or away from other, more personal fears. It is what kept
them on target through all the changes and challenges that distract most people. It is, in short, what made the center hold throughout all the decades of the exemplars’ uniquely consequential lives. (p. 311)

Daloz (2000), reflecting on what it is that causes people to come to feel that they have no choice but to work for the common good, concludes:

In a world that ruthlessly offers great material incentives and a bombardment of encouragement to place one’s own welfare before that of the larger community, to care for the larger good seems almost an act of civil disobedience. And yet the lessons are right before us. Deep change takes time, strategic care, patience, the conviction that we are not working alone, and the faith that there is something in the universe, as Robert Frost said, “that doesn’t love a wall.” It calls us as teachers and as citizens to seek out and encourage engagement with those different from ourselves, to foster critical reflection on the meaning of our differences, to create mentoring communities where socially responsible commitments can be formed and sustained, and to make available opportunities to practice these emerging and vital commitments. These are small steps, but each one makes another possible.
References


Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

An Invitation to Participate in a Research Study on Adults’ Learning about Global Issues

Within the past couple of years, have you been learning about one or more major global issues—like peace, the environment, human rights, or Third World poverty? If so, you may be able to help!

Organizations with a global perspective have been trying to help Canadians learn about such topics. The media and public education institutions have naturally played a role as well. Articles have appeared in newspapers and magazines; documentaries have been aired on radio and TV; meetings, lectures and conferences have been held; films have been shown; and courses have been offered by some of our schools and universities.

Yet, in spite of all that has been done, we know surprisingly little about why some adults choose to learn about global issues, what they decide to learn, how they go about the learning process, and what effect the learning has on them.

Adults’ learning about significant global issues is the focus of a research study in which I am currently engaged. If you have been involved in deliberate learning about such issues within the last two years and your age is between 22 and 102, I’d like to hear from you! I will interview about 30 participants from Nova Scotia for the study. Although my home is in Halifax, I am currently living in London while working on this study. I expect to be conducting interviews in Nova Scotia during the latter part of November. If you are willing to participate, I would like to arrange with you a time when you would be available for about an hour or two. Your anonymity will be protected, of course.

The study will be submitted to the University of Toronto (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) in partial fulfilment of requirements of the Doctor of Education program in which I am currently enrolled. A summary of the results of the study will be made available to participants, to educators, to organizations concerned with global issues, and to others interested.

If you are willing to participate, please call me (collect) or complete the form below and mail it (today!) to:

Lloyd Fraser
96 Hawthorne Rd.
London, Ontario N6G 2W8
Phone: (519) 472-8139 (day or evening)

Thank You!!!
I am interested in participating in the research study on adults' learning on global issues.

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address _________________________________________________________

Phone (Daytime) ______________________ (Evening) _______________________

Please mail to Lloyd Fraser, 96 Hawthorne Rd., London, ON N6G 2W8

Printed on recycled paper
Appendix B: Information Letter

96 Hawthorne Rd.
London, ON N6G 2W8
November, 1990

Dear

Thank you for responding to the invitation to participate in the research study on adults’ learning on global issues! Through this letter I would like to outline some additional information and formally seek your consent to be interviewed as part of the study.

As I outlined in the invitation, the focus of the study is adults’ deliberate learning about major global issues—like peace, the environment, human rights and Third World poverty. The learning need not be through courses and formal programs, but can include reading, watching films or television, attending meetings or conferences, or learning pursued in any other way—as long as you were choosing to learn about one or more of these issues.

The study will help us to understand why some adults choose to learn about significant global issues, what they decide to learn, how they go about the learning process, what role emotions play in aiding or hindering their learning experience, and ultimately, what effect the learning has had on them. It is hoped that, in addition to contributing to our understanding of adult learning, the results of the study will be particularly helpful in identifying ways in which educators and others can provide greater assistance to those seeking to learn about these issues.

The information on which the study will be based will be gathered through personal interviews of individuals aged 22 and over who have been engaged in deliberate learning about at least one major global issue within the past two years. The interviews will focus on the aspects of the learning process indicated above. The interviews will be quite informal and naturally will vary in length, but will last approximately one to two hours. In order to be sure that I have gathered all the information accurately, I will be tape-recording and transcribing the interviews. In my final research report and in articles or presentations which enable me to share the results of the study, I will be quoting from the interviews.

In reporting on the study, I will seek to protect individuals' confidentiality. Specifically, this will be done in two ways. First, the only individuals other than myself who will have access to the tapes of our discussion are those working directly on this study with me: the members of my Thesis Committee (three faculty members from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) and a typist who transcribes the tapes. Secondly, in reporting the results of the study, I will be using pseudonyms rather than individuals' actual names, and will be altering enough details of each person’s situation to attempt to prevent identification on the basis of such information. You should also know that any person interviewed is free to decline to answer any question, or to withdraw from the interview at any time if they so desire.
It is an important condition of any academic research involving the gathering of information from individuals that participants should be fully informed about the nature and purpose of the research and, on that basis, give their formal consent. To indicate such consent, I would ask you to sign a copy of this letter and bring it along with you to the interview. I have enclosed an extra copy for that purpose.

If you have any questions which I have not answered, or you wish to reach me for any other reason, please give me a call. Until November 30, I can be reached at (902) 435-1863; for the remainder of the academic year I'll be in London--call me there collect at (519) 472-8139. Thank you very much for your interest in this study!

Sincerely,

Lloyd Fraser

I agree to be interviewed as part of the Research Study on Adults' Learning on Global Issues as outlined in this letter.

Name (please print): ___________________________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________________
Appendix C: Interview Guide

Adult learning about global issues

Interview Guide

Lloyd Fraser
October 1990

[Introduce myself. Obtain informed consent form, if not returned earlier. Set up tape recorder.]

Content of Learning

1. You will recall from our discussion and from the material which I sent you that the research study in which I am engaged is focusing on adults' learning about major global issues—such as peace, the environment, human rights, and Third World poverty.

To begin with, I'm interested in listing the things you have tried to learn during the past two years that fall into that category.

[Pause and make notes to assist in framing specific probes later in the interview. When the responses are very general (e.g. "world events") probe to gain an understanding of the basic content of the learning. A sentence or two would normally be adequate, or a more precise list (e.g. the threat posed by nuclear weapons, reform in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, arms control agreements).]

Possible Probes:

a. Although I mentioned some specific issues, what I am most interested in is what you see as any major global issue or issues about which you have been learning within the past couple of years. Are there any other issues which you haven't mentioned that you have been learning something about? [Pause and record.]

b. When I say "learn" I don't mean just learning through formal programs in schools and universities. I mean any sort of deliberate effort at all to learn something or to learn how to do something in this area. Your learning may have been through reading newspapers and magazines, watching TV, attending meetings of church or community groups, or through talking with others. Can you think of any efforts like this that you have made during the past two years to learn more about global issues? [Pause and record.]
c. We want to get as complete a list as possible. Perhaps you have tried to get some information or increase your understanding of the issues; perhaps you have tried to learn how to help children or others develop their appreciation of global issues, or maybe you have tried to figure out how to change your personal behaviour or lifestyle. We can include any sort of information, knowledge, skill or understanding you tried to gain relating to significant global issues—just as long as you spent at least a few hours at it sometime during the past two years. Do you recall anything else? [Pause and record.]

Thank you! That gives us a fairly complete list. If you suddenly think of something else you have learned in this area, though, please just let me know.

Motivation for Learning

2. You have identified (one or) a number of global topics and issues which you have been learning about within the past couple of years. I would like to look with you at why you pursued this learning, but first, it may be helpful to choose one of the issues about which you were learning on which to focus. If you can select one, we can concentrate on that issue for the next few minutes in looking at some of the reasons for your learning. Is there one of these issues that you would say you considered the most significant for you?

[Alternatively, focus on their total global learning as identified in 1. above if the individual has identified only one issue, or if they indicate that for them, the issues are sufficiently intertwined to make separation of a single issue unhelpful.]

3. This learning will certainly have taken a considerable amount of time and no doubt a good deal of energy as well. You obviously had some reasons for investing that time and energy, but a great many people don’t choose to learn about significant, long-term global issues. As you think over the learning that we have been talking about, can you tell me why you think you have pursued such learning?

Possible Probes:

a. Do you recall any specific event or experience that was decisive in prompting you to begin learning about the issue(s)? Can you tell me about it?

b. Are there other influences or experiences before this event (these events) which you would say contributed to your decision to want to learn more about ____ (the issue)?

c. Would you say that your recent learning on global issues is an extension of learning that you were engaged in earlier, or is it a significant departure from any learning you did previously?

d. In one research study on adult learning (Tough, 1968) four ways in which individuals might use their learning were identified. They might use the knowledge or skill they gained:
i. to understand something better in the future
ii. in an examination
iii. to impart the knowledge or skill to others, or
iv. to take some action.

Did a desire to use your learning in any of these ways contribute significantly to your desire to learn?

e. Once you started learning about global issues, what sustained you?

f. Have there been times when you experienced particularly strong emotions concerning these issues? If so, did these emotions contribute in any way to you wanting to learn more about the issue(s) you identified?

g. Have you been involved in any personal or group action on any of these issues—participating in protests or demonstrations, for example, or writing letters? If so, would you say that your involvement in such action was a significant factor in prompting you to learn more about global issues?

h. We have talked a good deal about some of the factors which may have prompted you to want to learn about the global issues which we identified earlier. There may, however, have been factors which tended to work against your pursuing such learning. These could be either factors outside yourself—or they could be factors within yourself. As you think back, were there things which tended to prevent you from pursuing your learning about the global issues we have identified?

**Learning Process**

4. Now I would like to turn our attention to the way in which you proceeded to learn more about the issues we have been discussing.

a. As you think back over the educational resources you have used, what groups, books, events, or other resources were of greatest assistance to you in your learning? Can you tell me how each was helpful to you (e.g. in providing content, emotional support, encouragement)?

b. Were particular individuals of special assistance? You needn't identify anyone by name, but I'd be interested in the sort of person they were—for example, very close friend, co-worker, educator, religious or community leader—and how they were able to be of assistance to you.

c. On this sheet, I'd like you to check off the types of resources which you have used over the past two years in learning about the global issue we identified. Please indicate whether your use of each was low (quite limited), medium, or high (relatively extensive). [Hand interviewee Sheet A.]
5. I would like to get some idea of the total amount of time you spent on all aspects of your learning about major global issues during the past two years.

Please include the time you spent reading, listening, observing, or learning in some other way—if your main purpose during that activity was to gain and retain certain knowledge or skill. In other words, we will include all the times during which at least half of your total motivation was to gain certain knowledge or skill, and to retain it until at least two days later.

In addition to the actual time you spent at the learning itself, please include all the hours that you spent at deciding about the learning, planning the learning, and preparing and arranging for it. This can include any time spent at deciding whether to proceed with the learning; deciding what to learn; deciding how to learn; deciding where to get help; seeking advice about these decisions (from other people or from printed materials); travelling to some of the learning activities, such as a meeting or practice session or library; arranging appropriate conditions for learning; choosing the right book or person for the actual learning; and obtaining that book or reaching that person.

a. Of course, you cannot remember exactly how many hours, so just give your best guess. It may be helpful to think of this in terms of the average number of hours per month (over the past two years).

b. As you think back over the past couple of years, was your learning on these issues relatively constant over that time, or were there major peaks and valleys?

6. Often in learning about significant issues, individuals report that they have encountered problems or difficulties at certain stages. Sometimes these difficulties arise in the individual's surroundings; in other cases, the difficulties may come from within. As you reflect back over your learning on global issues in the last couple of years, what were the greatest problems, obstacles or difficulties in your learning project?

Possible Probes:

a. Were there particular people who created obstacles?

b. Were there any factors within yourself which you think of as obstacles to pursuing your learning on these issues?

c. Did your emotions play any role in deterring you from your learning on global issues?

7. Now I'd like to turn from some of the obstacles you faced to some of the assistance which you might have found helpful.

a. Suppose that your learning situation had been perfect: everyone around you was completely helpful. What sorts of assistance would you have liked?
8. As you look ahead to the next ten years, what resources, educational programs, groups, TV programs or other services would be most helpful to you as you pursue further learning on fundamental global issues?

Outcomes:

9. Now I would like to turn our attention to the effects, if any, of the learning in which you engaged. Once again, I would like to ask you several specific questions, but let me begin with a very general one:

a. Do you feel any different as a result of the learning in which you engaged? If so, what would you say is the most significant difference?

b. Do you feel more knowledgeable now than you did two years ago on the issues that we have been talking about?

c. Do you sense that your views and attitudes have changed in any significant way, or that they have become either more strongly held or more tentative in your mind?

d. Has your analysis of our global situation been influenced in any way by the learning which you have done? Can you elaborate?

e. Do you feel a greater sense of empowerment or helplessness ... or is there any difference?

f. What about your emotions ... have they changed in any significant way as a result of the learning in which you engaged? Do you have a heightened or diminished feeling of fear, hope, anger, encouragement, sadness, excitement, or whatever...?

g. How do you feel about engaging in personal action relating to global issues? As a result of your learning, are you more or less likely to take specific action which you feel will contribute toward bringing about a more secure planetary future? In what ways do you see yourself becoming more or less active?

h. Are there any ways in which you feel your basic lifestyle or your relations with others have been influenced by your learning on these issues?

10. In one of the articles which I have read I came across a description of several categories of personal involvement. I would appreciate it if you would take a couple of minutes to read over the categories which are described. [Give individual Sheet C]
a. Is there one in particular which would seem to describe your position at the moment and, in thinking back two years to the beginning of the period we have been looking at, would you have placed yourself in the same category at that time?

b. In reflecting on your experience, do you see in the list a sequence of stages that you would say you have gone through, or does the list spark any other insights you have not mentioned?

Personal Information:

11. We are almost finished! I would appreciate it if you would take a couple of minutes to fill in this sheet [Give individual Sheet D] which is intended to gather some information to assist in the analysis of the responses.

[Record the interview number, the interviewee's gender and city/town of residence, and the date of the interview. Once they have completed the personal information sheet, thank them very much for their participation!]
Please indicate the extent to which you used each of the following types of resources in your learning about global issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources Used</th>
<th>High Use</th>
<th>Medium Use</th>
<th>Low Use</th>
<th>Not Used</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
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<tr>
<td>Film</td>
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<td>Radio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Books</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other printed materials</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>University Credit Course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-credit Continuing Education Course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop or conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting or study group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion with 2 or 3 people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Sheet B**  
Assistance which would have been helpful

1. assistance in providing or clarifying information or analysis concerning the issues
2. assistance in clarifying learning goals
3. assistance in locating resources
4. assistance in the learning process itself
5. assistance in evaluating your learning
6. assistance in dealing with emotions concerning these issues
7. assistance in translating learning into action
8. assistance in dealing with personal relationships directly related to these issues
9. other assistance
The following list of categories of involvement in the change process.

A. **Becoming Aware** — Simply moving from NO awareness of the problem/issue to becoming aware that there IS a problem. There is as yet no particular concern or personal involvement.

B. **Becoming Interested/Concerned** — Here the problem becomes the focus of some attention, for one reason or another, but has little or no PERSONAL relevance and has not yet assumed a special importance to you.

C. **Taking a Special Interest** — Here you have made some personal connection with the problem and are beginning to feel that it IS important to you. Thoughts about it may be starting to take on the character of calls to conscience, the beginnings of a felt need to take some action.

D. **Period of Turmoil** — A period of time during which you experience a good deal of inner conflict with regard to the problem and your concern; perhaps about whether or not you SHOULD take action, or about changes in your values or priorities, or maybe about whether or not or in what way you might be RESPONSIBLE for the problem, or it could be about WHAT you should now do or how you should do it.

E. **Taking Action** — Some sort of barrier is crossed that is significant for you. It may not be the first thing you’ve done about the problem, but it has a special importance. You feel “over the hump” in some way, and more firmly committed.

F. **Feeling Personally Responsible** — Here you are beginning to see that you are, in fact, by virtue of your lifestyle, your nationality, your work, or whatever, in some measure RESPONSIBLE (whether intentionally or not) FOR the EXISTENCE of the problem.

G. **Increasing Commitment/Changing Priorities** — Now you no longer consider your activities that relate to this problem as being of equal importance with many others. They are now taking on an importance that sets them apart. They are moving much higher on your list of priorities.

(Extra Categories) ________________________________________________________________

1. Age range:  
   - 22 - 29  
   - 30 - 39  
   - 40 - 49  
   - 50 - 59  
   - 60 - 69  
   - 70+  

2. Do you currently work outside the home?  
   Yes: ___  
   No: ___  

   If yes, current occupation: ____________________________ 

3. a. Do you participate in the meetings or activities of any environmental, peace or other organizations which focus on major global issues?  
   Yes: ___  
   No: ___  

   If yes, please list them: ____________________________________________  
   ____________________________________________  
   ____________________________________________  

   b. How active are you in these organizations?  
   - Not very active in any of them  
   - Moderately active in at least one of them  
   - Very active in at least one of them  

   c. How long have you been involved in these or other organizations which focus on major global issues?  
   - Less than 2 years  
   - 2 - 5 years  
   - Over 5 years  

4. What is the highest educational qualification you have completed? ____________________________  

5. If you have children younger than age 20 living at home with you, 
   how many? ___  
   what age range? ____________
Appendix D: Resources Used by Learners

The relative importance of various learning resources

Interviewees were asked to complete a checklist indicating the extent of their use of various types of resources in pursuing their learning about global issues. The tabulation of responses is displayed below.

While data from this checklist provide only limited information, they do suggest a pattern of use of resources which we will explore in greater depth as we examine the interview transcripts.

In examining these data, in combination with the information gleaned from the interviews, it is clear that the participants in the study relied particularly heavily on print resources (books, magazines, and newspapers); other individuals; and the radio. In contrast, formal education (credit and non-credit courses) and video resources (TV, film, and video) were used in a much more limited way. Workshops, conferences, meetings, and study groups—which may be thought of as falling between the informal personal discussions and the more formal courses—fell in the mid-range of resource use.

Several themes emerge in relation to this learning. We will examine these in greater depth as we address each of the types of learning resources in turn, but even from the limited data presented in Table 6, we get a sense of the learning being primarily self-directed and intensive.
Table 6

Importance of various learning resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Learning Resource</th>
<th>Participants Indicating High Use</th>
<th>Average Weighted Score*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion with 2 or 3 people</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop or conference</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting or study group</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other printed materials</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film/ video</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University credit course</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-credit continuing education course</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Weighted score (across all participants): 5 = high use; 3 = medium use; 1 = low use

Reading and print resources

The importance of reading

Clearly, reading was extremely important to the participants in the study. On Sheet A (Appendix C) individuals were asked about their use of a wide range of different learning resources, including four types of print resources (books, magazines, newspapers, and other printed materials). Two-thirds of the participants indicated that they made heavy use of at least two different types of print resources, and all but one participant indicated heavy use of at least one type of print resource. This individual did not indicate heavy use of any other learning resource.
At what stages did people engage in reading?

Reading during childhood and youth

Interestingly, reading was not only important to participants as adults. Three of the participants commented at some length about their reading as children and youth, and the ways in which this assisted in developing their interest in global issues. June, for example, now retired, described how she received early encouragement in reading about global issues from her neighbours. Although she grew up in a small Nova Scotia community prior to World War II, she nevertheless had access to good reading materials:

Ida and Gary lived next door and I remember as a kid having conversations with them or listening to them and being influenced—and Gary at that stage was communist and Ida always had such a bright mind, an inquiring mind, and was doing a lot of reading, so I absorbed from them. (Interview 17, 36-82)

Early and extensive reading was very significant for Joseph and for Jeff as well. Joseph, like June, was encouraged in his reading by an early role model, his high school civics teacher who inspired him and encouraged him, “to really do a lot of reading with some direction on world politics, on what was going on then … I used to read at least 100 books a year” (Interview 12, 75-78, 124).

Jeff, too, grew up doing a lot of reading, especially biographies and books by “people who had had a significant influence on the world” (Interview 3, 1364, 1365). He still remembers quotations from the speeches of Winston Churchill and John F. Kennedy, and still follows with interest, commentary written about them. Because of a disability, he spent two years of his childhood at home in bed. He comments:

So my teachers became my mother and my father. They bought a set of encyclopaedias; they put these in my room…. So for two years I spent literally all my time reading, and the one thing my older brother would do for me is, every night, he would carry me downstairs … to watch The National. And I would sit there, and then I would discuss it with my father and my mother.
And whenever something came up on the news that I didn’t know, my brother would carry me back upstairs, and immediately I would go to the books, and read, and because I wasn’t in school, I’d stay up reading until 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning, sometimes. But those things are the things that have an influence on the perspectives you develop through life. (Interview 3, 1667-1696)

Each of these individuals—June, Joseph, and Jeff—did a great deal of reading in their youth. It was challenging reading which provided information, inspiration, and analysis. In each case it is clear that they grappled with the ideas involved. Jeff, for instance, comments that his parents encouraged him to read books with differing viewpoints so that he could form his own opinions on issues. Thus, for these three at least, early extensive reading, encouraged by those close to them, provided a solid foundation for a lifelong interest in global issues.

Reading in relation to courses and educational programs

As noted earlier, the group of participants included a heavy representation of educators, with eight teachers in the public school system, three university faculty members, and four others in educational roles. All participants had completed university, a post-secondary professional programme, or the equivalent. Given this background, it is perhaps not surprising that about half of the participants related at least a portion of their reading to courses or other educational programs in which they were participating—either as learners or as facilitators. This is not to suggest that their reading on global issues was simply to satisfy course requirements. On the contrary, Laura, for example, wished to study international development but a program was not offered at the university she attended. She describes how, whenever possible, she would try to do papers on some of the global issues that were of particular interest to her, so that she could dovetail the reading she wished to do with the requirements of the courses she was taking. In a somewhat similar fashion, Raymond combined some of his reading with preparation for a non-credit course on “Caring for the Earth” which he offered to a group of seniors. In several cases,
then, individuals were able to integrate their reading on global issues with other activities in their lives.

*What did participants read?*

**Non-fiction**

As people discussed the reading they did in relation to global issues, it is fascinating to observe the wide range of areas covered! Some, as one would expect, read material which directly addressed issues of concern to them. Edward, for example, talks about reading material on disarmament as part of his personal preparation in order to participate actively in the peace organization of which he was a member, Veterans Against Nuclear Arms. Others, in pursuing their interest in global issues, read material on a wide range of specific issues; on education; on social, economic and political theory; and on world history and worldviews. What was highly valued by one person might well be of little interest to another.

**Fiction**

The differing attitudes to fiction are a particular case in point. Eleanor had recently returned from Mexico, where she participated in an intensive two-week inter-cultural program on development. Though she had been concerned about global issues for several years, this particular program made a great impression on her. She returned to her role as a elementary school teacher, but described some of her frustration, including her frustration with reading fiction:

> We have an interesting reading program [in school], I think—they can really read anything they want to ... so they were talking to me about *my* reading, since I was talking to them about theirs. They were asking me about novels that I read and I said, "I can't read novels, I simply can't read novels. If I'm not reading something non-fiction that's informing me on something I care about, it frustrates me within seconds—I just can't read it! ... There's no sense at all for me to pick up a novel—which in one way frustrates me, because it would be really nice to be able to sit back and relax.... I feel very impatient! (Interview 14, 673-701)
In contrast, both Sharon and Gordon indicated that they were particularly attracted to fiction. Sharon finds novels related to issues she is concerned about both more interesting, and finds that they incorporate more of the emotional dimension of the issue, than is the case with strictly factual and analytical accounts. Gordon, too, has found novels particularly helpful:

Until I went to Zambia—I guess this is hardly surprising—African novels, or even African novels written by the English (people like Joyce Carey and others)—I wasn’t aware of that possibility. I was poorly served by newspapers here, and by magazines ... so if someone does grow up without getting interested in the rest of the world, or getting a fairly good sense of how it works, it’s probably understandable, because a lot of good material won’t come their way. One of the things I try to do in my courses is use novels and use good newspaper reporting on different countries because there’s very little good information to be had by listening to CBC or reading (local) papers so you really have to go out of your way to buy a publication that’s going to have much in it, that will allow people to have that sort of moment I had when I read E. P. Thompson [The making of the English working class]—where you’d see other possibilities, where you’d really get involved in other countries. A book that I’ve been using in my Global Issues course is Son of the revolution which is a fascinating account of growing up in China during the cultural revolution, and I think unanimously the teachers and students in my course have found it a good resource, because for all of us, China was something that you really couldn’t penetrate, let alone, understand. (Interview 5, 551-592)

Newspapers and magazines

As indicated previously, participants were asked what resources were of greatest assistance in their learning, but they were not asked to name the specific books, magazines, or newspapers they had been reading, except within this more general context. Nevertheless, the list of magazines and newspapers which people named and commented on is very enlightening.

**BREADTH OF THE MATERIAL READ**

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the newspapers and magazines people mentioned is the depth and breadth of the range covered. Newspapers included: The Christian Science Monitor, The Globe and Mail, The Manchester Guardian, and The Tribune (Communist Party Newspaper) in addition to the local newspapers. In total, people mentioned about 20 different magazines, but since each was mentioned by only one or two individuals, it is the
breadth of the reading which is striking, rather than its concentration either in specific resources or even in certain types of resources. Predictably, newsmagazines (*Macleans, Time, Newsweek*) were included on the list, but, as with the other magazines, with only one or two individuals mentioning them. One also found resources specifically oriented to peace and development issues (*The New Internationalist, Peace Magazine, Peace Education News*), environmental issues (*The Environmental Magazine, Harrowsmith, The Organic Gardener*), new age publications (*New Age Magazine, Equinox*), publications on the political left (*This Magazine, Ramparts, I. F. Stone Weekly*), as well as other long-established and highly respected publications (*Atlantic Monthly, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist, Harpers, Scientific American*).

**USE OF LOCAL NEWSPAPERS**

The comments on use—or lack of use—of the local newspapers are fascinating. Again, one has to keep in mind that the participants were making their comments in 1990, so their observations might well have been rather different a decade later—or a decade earlier. In any case, 9 of the participants, without being prompted, made comments about the local newspapers. Of those, the only semi-positive comments came from Laura who indicated that she liked specific columnists in *The Daily News*, Joseph who “devours” the newspapers, including the local ones; and Gary who, in expressing his general frustration with newspapers for dealing with personalities in the news rather than issues, conceded “the [Halifax Chronicle] Herald is better than The [Cape Breton] Post” (Interview 19, 1543-1544). Much more typical was dismissive laughter, comments such as Gordon’s “we’re obviously poorly served by newspapers here” (Interview 5, 557-558), or Eleanor’s comment, “We used to try the newspaper but we don’t any more—we don’t even get it any more!” (Interview 14, 967-969).

While most people likely simply turned to magazines or books, or other sources which they felt were more helpful, Henry adopted an interesting approach:
The thing I do to keep myself current, in a way—a couple of years ago I subscribed to *The Tribune*, which is the Communist Party newspaper. And I find that by reading that, and by reading *The Globe and Mail*, and by reading *The Mail Star* [laughter] ... that's a good way to get as accurate a view as possible. You get the extreme views, and the truth is probably somewhere in the middle. (Interview 7, 552-571)

**USE OF NEWSLETTERS**

Finally, it is worth noting that several participants found organizational newsletters or other printed information from organizations to be particularly helpful. *The Ploughshares Monitor* was singled out by three of the participants; others mentioned materials from Greenpeace and from other organizations. Laura commented specifically on the value of newsletters:

Things like *The Free Trade Dossier*, and *Peace Education News* ... they aren't expensive, and they really keep you in touch with things. I used to think that was so hokey when I was at university—how can a newsletter keep you in touch? But now that I'm out of that whole atmosphere where it's so easy to be involved, and in a whole other atmosphere at school [where she is teaching], that sometimes is very isolating from these issues. So newsletters really do help ... they have events with people's names and numbers as contacts, they have resources, and they have articles. (Interview 13, 379-405)

June comments specifically on the value of *The Ploughshares Monitor*, a publication sent to members and supporters of Project Ploughshares:

I suppose when I think of periodicals, now, I think of *The Ploughshares Monitor*. I don't always read that from cover to cover, but my heavens there's some very valuable information in that—I just think that all the research that's gone into that is very, very valuable. (Interview 17, 646-653)

**Sources of reading material**

Participants reported that it was often a challenge to identify books and other resources that provided the information or analysis they desired. In part, this reflected the fact that the participants often were looking for books which presented information and analysis which was out of the "mainstream"—it ran counter to the prevailing views in government and society.

Thus, paired with the reading was also a process of identifying the resources themselves.
Sharon commented on the problem:

I consider that I’m fairly aware of many issues, but there are still things that come up that, for whatever reason, and I think often it’s intentional—for example, the low level flying over Labrador—I just became aware of that I guess … through contacts, not through news media. That was a really hush-hushed thing. And how do you become aware of it, if nobody’s talking about it and the media isn’t addressing it? Often you have to rely on “lefty” literature, and then you get labelled “a communist” and all the rest of it, but that’s who’s covering it. That’s what you have to rely on. So again, the way I became aware of that issue was through Mary [a social-justice activist with whom she kept in close contact] and she was really involved in that and once I did become aware of it I was very interested and took action and so on. So, I’m sure I could wake up tomorrow and something could come to my attention that’s perhaps been going on for years…. I think, though, that by going to conferences and by meeting people you find out about all kinds of things. (Interview 18, 785-830)

Again, in Catherine’s case, one of the main functions of workshops and conferences was to identify resources. Once she had become concerned about an issue she tried to get to a conference or some gathering with others who were interested. She then tried to identify a couple of good books; she then felt she could pursue the issue on her own.

Another source of books was, not surprisingly, libraries. While clearly many of the participants made extensive use of university libraries in relation to courses they were either taking or teaching, it is interesting that it is the public libraries which come in for particular commendation. Much of this relates to a community role played by public libraries. This will be examined in a later section. Kim, however, notes a particularly valuable role which her public library played:

The library is an interesting phenomenon all on its own…. The [Public] Library, I have to say, is a wonderful, flexible, learning institute, because you can go there and you can say, “Would you order this book, please” and give them a list of books to order and they will order them … the university libraries are so locked in their regimes that you cannot, even as a teacher—I was teaching this May and June and even as a teacher I couldn’t get one book bought! I couldn’t buck the system to figure out how to get the book bought. But I could go to the library in Halifax and say, “If I could have these books….” And I can do that every year. I can bring them a new list at the library and they’ll order 75% of them. And they love that kind of information. So that’s, I think, very good use of resources. (Interview 6, 672-674, 764-798)
What impact did the reading have on participants?

A significant influence on how individuals understood the world

From the interviews, we see clearly the impact of reading on the interviewees' minds, hearts and spirits. We have already noted the impact that extensive reading in childhood had on the development of interest, awareness and commitment on the part of June, Jeff, and Joseph. Several others comment on the impact of reading done in adulthood. Gordon comments on his delight:

I was away from academia for a long time and I bought a second-hand copy of *The making of the English working class*. And that was a marvellous moment because I saw ... I sensed the possibility of talking about politics, of talking about economics outside the orbit of "the state," outside the way it's usually institutionalized and monopolized—commandeered, the way politics and economics are. That was a wonderful time.... And I would recommend the book and when people would see that it was 800 – 900 pages long—well that was fine, but that [book] influenced the way I thought. (Interview 5, 335-353)

We have already seen with both William and Raymond that, although they grew up in very conservative environments, once they were exposed to "the world of ideas, the wider world" through reading and contact with others with a broader perspective, their views changed quite dramatically. Raymond comments, "It all happened rather quickly, actually, in a period of two years. That sounds like a long time, but there was a big change in my life from about, say '66 to '68" (Interview 10, 271-273).

Connecting individuals with others with similar views

Several participants commented, in various ways, about the feeling of "being alone" holding the views and concerns which they did. Reading was an important way of dealing with and overcoming this feeling—and thus of the individuals providing themselves with the personal strength to voice, and act on, their concerns. Catherine, for example, comments:

There was an excellent article in *Equinox*—so magazines have really helped me—certain types of magazines. Nature magazines and ones on the environment, or new age
magazines ... they just gave me hope, because I was feeling things that nobody else around here talked about but it was this magazine that finally made me realize that I wasn’t just completely weird. I was starting to feel here that I was right out of step with everybody else ... or a lot of people. So that connected me up with a group of people who were thinking along the same lines. (Interview 11, 652-669)

Although they dealt with them in different ways, similar feelings of “being alone” were expressed by several interviewees. For Marguerite, who chose to live alone in a remote cottage overlooking the ocean, the ability to read about global issues—every day—was tremendously important. In many ways, the authors of the books and articles she read became her friends and her peer group:

Right now, each day, when I come back [from teaching school], I put in an hour to two hours of reading. I feel I have to do that ... because it’s overwhelming what’s happening.

It’s a good thing that writing exists because [otherwise] I would feel even more isolated. At least I say, “Well I can’t communicate with people on a three-dimensional plane, but at least I can, through the reading.” I hold onto that. (Interview 9, 34-47, 937-944)

Challenges associated with reading

While there were not any major problems associated with reading, participants identified several challenges. The first, identifying resources, has already been addressed. A second was that the resources became quickly out-dated. This was equally true for individuals seeking resources for their own use, but Lorne comments on it in the context of preparing for a course on the peace issue which he was about to teach—and had taught several times previously:

Very recently—and this relates to my planning for the course next year—everything I look at is outdated. There are all these great books, but they’re just no use.

I kept looking at the old stuff and thinking well gee, you know, at least there’s Johan Galtung’s There are alternatives, that should work. And [I was] looking at it ... and oh gee this stuff is outdated ... it sounds as if someone is talking from another world. (Interview 1, 51-55, 93-100)

For some, a second problem was added to the first: the challenge of finding the time to do the reading they desired. Jonathan comments:
Finding time to be active, or to do the reading, or just meet with people, or whatever, is a big problem, I find. I’ve got a stack of books I haven’t read, and when I’m considering buying a book, most of the time rather than whether or not I can afford the money to pay for it, [the issue is] whether I can afford the time to read it. I bought a book on Southern Africa and I was so pleased because it had just been released, and it was perfectly up-to-date—and that was two years ago [laughter] ... so much has changed since then! (Interview 15, 1092-1108)

Several individuals commented on the fact that during particular periods they lacked the time to read. While this is hardly surprising for a group of people as active as these individuals, we should note two things: first, that this accounted for a considerable variation in time devoted to reading at various points in their lives, and second, that the inability to devote time to reading about global issues was a significant source of frustration.

The media: Audio and video resources

Radio

With 11 of the participants indicating extensive use of the radio for learning about global issues, it was more heavily used than the other audio-visual media. By comparison, 6 indicated extensive use of films and video, and 5 heavy use of television. All 23 participants indicated some use of radio.

What did people listen to?

Laura’s comment is interesting. She—and everyone else who commented about radio—seemed to equate “radio” with CBC Radio. As was the case with other resources, individuals were not asked about specific radio stations or programs, except through a general question about the resources they had found most helpful. In spite of that, of the 11 who commented on radio, 9 specifically mentioned CBC radio, and no one mentioned any other radio station. The specific program references are also both interesting and revealing. Four individuals mentioned the Ideas program, and one each commented on Morningside and a series by David Suzuki.
Joseph, for example, found Morningside with Peter Gzowski (host at that time), "excellent because he does get very good interviews with people, and I think they clarify issues." Joseph goes on to indicate that he considers the Morningside interviews far superior to those on CBC-TV's The National and The Journal.

Radio's usefulness as a learning resource

As we noted earlier, Gordon felt, "there's very little good information to be had by listening to CBC or reading papers" (Interview 5, 570-572). Otherwise, anyone who spoke about radio did so in very positive terms. Catherine comments, for example:

Radio I think is an incredible source. I find it an intimate medium. And I find it personal ... like when people are talking on the radio they're so ... their voice is even normal, whereas on TV it's very hyper, high pitched, sort of. There's this real, almost salesman type stuff. I find it hard to relate to, but ... I heard someone speak on the radio this morning and it was just incredible how relaxed his voice was and how it was just like we're talking now. And so you feel like you're really getting a true picture of something. For me, radio is like truth and television is like hype. Television is glossy advertising. (Interview 11, 842-867)

Laura, after being highly critical of TV news, is very complimentary to radio:

On the other hand ... I really enjoy listening to radio. I can do things while I'm listening, but even if I'm not doing anything, I find it's a lot clearer. I can think about it. I can think ... my response is while they are talking, and for some reason, I just find the CBC, on radio, a lot more on the ball, a lot more sensitive to issues—there's a lot less bias, there's a lot less cracks for things to filter through—I think I hear a lot more quality to my ears on radio than on the [TV] news, in this country, anyway. (Interview 13, 341-356)

Television

Use of TV

Because participants in this study relied much less on television than radio for learning about global issues, one should not assume that they had little to say about it! Although only 5 indicated that they used TV extensively, 15 made comments about their use of, and views on, television! While participants who were radio listeners were relatively consistent both in their
listening habits and in their response, TV usage was much more varied, and the responses were as well.

What did people watch?

Since television provided a much greater range of options than radio, it is not surprising that there was considerably more variation in people’s usage. Several mentioned regularly watching CBC-TV (specifically The National and The Journal, and programs by David Suzuki), several too were regular viewers of PBS (the U.S. Public Broadcasting System), with mention as well of News on CNN and CTV, and programming on Vision TV.

TV’s usefulness as a learning resource

The reactions to TV are fascinating! Some loved it! Gary described himself as a “news junkie” and added:

If the Newscasts are on ... I’d go from The National to The Journal to Nightline [Atlantic Television System News] ... sometimes being up very late, into the morning, just watching things that are of interest to me ... or PBS sometimes, there are excellent specials [on PBS]. (Interview 19, 1511-1518)

On the other hand, TV also elicited some rather strong negative reactions! Marguerite commented at length:

I do not have a television, because I’ve come to a point where I feel that to watch an hour or two hours of good television programming, I have to watch three or four of garbage to find something good. Commercials, och [in disgust], commercials! ... I don’t have a television because of this. If I could have something just like PBS where you can filter all the rest out, I would have it—it’s an excellent tool for learning, but otherwise, no. And I think it’s damaging more people than anything else, television. I observed this in my students. I’ll ask them what they’re watching—even the honours kids, they watch some horrifying things, some emptying things, and I find that our system is not forming students to be critical thinkers, and I wonder if that’s not ... I may be paranoid ... to me, it seems to be masterminded—that way you keep people dormant, really. (Interview 9, 948-984)

She was not alone. Laura, who thought radio was wonderful had this to say about TV news:
Television, I just abhor the News. I think it does worse educating people—I think it doesn’t educate, I think it distorts. So [in filling in Sheet A] I would say “not used” on this, by choice. (Interview 13, 334-338)

Roy remarked, “you cannot watch anything enlightening on television because they just don’t put anything enlightening on…. TV is something we can do very nicely without” (Interview 20, 642-649). Janie, his partner, added that she considered TV “the most ill-used educational tool in our generation” (Interview 21, 2133-2135).

Some others may not have had as strong feelings, but were happy to ignore television. Catherine, for instance, observed, “I probably never watch TV very much unless I know something is going to be on and someone recommends it” (Interview 11, 57-59). And Raymond, who had lived the past year, until very recently, in a cottage in the country observed:

Well, I’ve been without television for the last year, which has been really interesting. Oh, it’s wonderful! [laughter] It was great. I was living in the woods. I was just listening to the birds. It was really nice to be without it. (Interview 10, 791-808)

Although several of the participants obviously had little use for TV, others used it extensively. Gary, Jean, and Jeff all of whom are teachers, reported regularly taping material from TV for use in class. This was particularly helpful in cases where the situation was constantly changing and they required up-to-date material, but TV was also very useful in cases where programs provided a more in-depth exploration of issues. In such cases, the program often presented an effective overview of varying perspectives on an issue. Jeff commented on the value of the programs making connections between issues:

Something I always like to focus on is how one particular thing connects to another. Looking at interrelationships. When I see that the relationship is one that I understand and have seen, I immediately tune out. But for instance, that one specific series, “Race to Save the Planet,” drew some particular interrelationships that I had never seen before, which were intriguing. (Interview 3, 479-491)
Participants commented on the value of television in two additional ways. Gary, in talking about his personal involvement in global issues observed that at the time of the Ethiopian famine, it was television reporting that had triggered his involvement:

I remember back in '85, I guess it was, when the first news was coming out of Ethiopia—or the first news on television, at least ... but it was one of the few times in watching something I felt that I personally should be doing something. I don't know what it is or anything, but I should be doing something. And so I came back, and actually we got the school organized ... and we ended up with a fundraising concert in the school as well as a Tag Day at shopping malls. And I don't know—it was something like $1500 that they had raised here, which made me feel very good. (Interview 19, 2086-2123)

Finally, two of the participants in the study reported instances in which TV had been helpful in prompting others to become more concerned about global issues. Sharon, recently graduated from university, described how the previous winter she had gone to Banff to work for the winter. She ended up sharing an apartment with another young woman, an acquaintance from her home town whom she didn't know well. Sharon, who earlier in the interview had commented that "the media really ticks me off" (Interview 18, 418, 419) nevertheless related the following:

I really wanted to get a television, because I don't watch a lot of television, but I like seeing The National—I mean, I was really missing that, so I said, "Let's just get a junky television." So we picked up this old black and white TV for a few dollars, and I would come home from work and the first thing I would do if it was 10:00, I would put that on. And my roommate would say, "Oh, God! We're watching this again!" It was an effort to sit there, for her, and then finally, gradually, she started asking me questions because she realized that I wasn't going to budge on this, so she was going to have to either get into it or just totally ignore it, so she finally just started asking questions. And this woman who has a BSc, she's 23 or 24 years old, and one night during the news she said, "What is apartheid?" And my first reaction was to throw a tantrum and shake her and say, "How could you possibly live this long not knowing what it was", but I squashed that and I just answered the question and she was saying, "You mean to tell me that there are more black people in South Africa than white people and this is how they are treated?" "Well, yeat!" [laughter]

So that started off a whole discussion—the issues she was unaware of! If I told you some of the things, you'd fall down ... I couldn't believe it. But that would have been me if I hadn't become interested in these issues. Again, I have no answer (about) why people turn out the way they do. I don't know. Because the opportunities are there.... Yet this
particular individual, there wasn’t a biased bone in her body … she wasn’t prejudiced, it wasn’t that, it was just true and total ignorance—of facts! I mean, she led a good life and all the rest of it, but … I can’t explain it! (Interview 18, 882-954)

Perhaps Sharon’s roommate, left on her own, ultimately would have come to the same position of beginning to show at least a basic interest in becoming informed about the world situation, and perhaps the television would have been instrumental in that process. It is interesting, however, that in this situation Sharon’s deep interest in global issues, through the (unwelcome) medium of the TV news, made her roommate’s getting a basic exposure to current events inescapable. The combination of Sharon’s interest, along with information, and possibly the credibility provided by the TV news, enabled her roommate to get engaged in global issues, presumably for the first time in her life.

Jeff’s story is different, but again underlines the credibility which is associated with TV reporting, which is often not accorded to individuals, regardless of the depth of their personal knowledge. Jeff reported how, around 1980 he was studying the greenhouse effect in university, before it became widely discussed in the media. Such issues often led to very animated discussions with his father who felt that there was nothing to be concerned about, as the scientists would simply create technology to take care of it. Then, Jeff reports a significant change:

So what happened recently, after about three years of teaching, I’d go home and I wasn’t talking about these things to my father, and all of a sudden he was saying, “Well, what should we do?” And it immediately dawned upon me that if the most arrogant stubborn person in the world I know can change his mind in a very short period of time, then obviously something good was happening!

I relate that to my students, whenever they say, “Oh, there’s no sense in doing this,” I say, “But wait, I’ve seen it happen before my very eyes.” (Interview 3, 607-665)

Jeff attributed the change in his father’s views to a combination of several factors, including Jeff’s constantly raising the global warming issue; the fact that a sceptical, inquiring
stance was encouraged within the family; and ultimately, the exposure which the issue began receiving in the media, in effect, gave legitimacy to the points which Jeff, all along, had been raising.

*Film and video*

*Use of film and video*

As one reviews the interview comments on the use, and usefulness, of film and video, one is immediately reminded of some rather significant changes in learning technology in the decade following the interviews. In 1990, 16mm films were still shown extensively, especially in meetings of organizations and in schools and educational programs. New films were being produced regularly by the National Film Board (NFB)—on peace, the environment, women’s issues, and other related subjects. Films were also being produced by various Non-Governmental Organizations. By 1990, videocassettes were replacing the 16mm films, though in many cases, the same production was available in both formats.

The pattern of usage for film and video was similar to that for television, with 6 participants indicating heavy use and 8 medium use. On an individual level, in about half of the cases, participants indicated the same level of usage for films and videos as for TV, but in the other half of the cases, people’s usage level varied from one to the other.

*What did people watch? What was the impact?*

With the exception of TV programs which people videotaped, and which are covered above, the use of film and video fell into two categories. By far the greater use was of NFB productions, with more limited use of full-length movies. Regardless of the format, the productions were used both as an important part of individuals’ learning, and were used in teaching or other educational programs designed for others.
There are a number of aspects of the use of the NFB productions which are particularly noteworthy. First, for several, the films themselves were a very important source of learning and influence. Eleanor, a teacher, recounts how it was not until she was 28, about 10 years before the interview, that she had started to become involved in global issues. Though she had grown up in rural Nova Scotia, she was teaching at that time in the interior of British Columbia. As no one else was willing to serve on the teachers’ Status of Women Committee, she agreed to do so—and quickly found out the basis for the reticence. She was in a very conservative area of the province, where anything related to women’s issues came under heavy attack. As part of her new role on the Status of Women committee, Eleanor attended several weekend workshops and “began to have my eyes so wide opened and saw, Speaking our peace (Klein, Pettigrew, & Shannon, 1985) there and that really was a major turning point for me” (Interview 14, 89-93). She continues:

I’m sure the connection won’t be strong for anyone but me, but I also saw that film, what was it called, on pornography—Not a love story (Hénaut & Shannon, 1981). And for some reason, that triggered every possible outrage that I could possibly have over injustice and suddenly I just saw more, and was more open to things, and began to think how really unfair [things were]. (Interview 14, 112-122)

In Eleanor’s case, it was within the context of a larger experience which had a profound effect on her, but the triggering role of the two films which she saw was nevertheless very significant. Others also commented on film.

Sharon, too, found film to be very helpful. Recently graduated from university, she commented, “I don’t know, maybe it’s my generation, but I find I learn more from a film. That’s probably one of my best ways of learning. I tend to retain information better if I see it” (Interview 18, 654-659). In reflecting on why she finds film to be such an effective medium, she comments:
I would say that the best way of learning is interacting with people. The second best for me personally is a visual medium—and I think it's definitely related to the emotional side of things. Print is cut and dried. It really is, and it's not as real. (Interview 18, 680-687)

Laura, who had little good to say about TV, commented that film “can teach me a lot, especially when I don’t have a lot of time right now,” (Interview 13, 321-323) and added that particular films which she had seen had prompted her to do a lot of follow-up reading when she was able to find the time to do so.

Another of Laura’s comments reveals a good deal about learning moments which have a lasting impact. Laura was asked whether there were any particular events or experiences that stand out for her as particularly significant. She responded, “Not conferences. I don’t know why. Conferences always end up not living up to my expectations” (Interview 13, 782-804). She proceeded to explain, however, in a passage quoted earlier, that Ursula Franklin, a conference speaker and one of the women featured in the film Speaking our peace had been invited to her home by her parents, and had made a lasting impression on her.

Several years later, Laura could still remember specific things which Ursula Franklin said in the film. These comments of Laura’s reveal a good deal more, however. In this brief passage we see the intersection of several different sources of learning and of influence on Laura. The backdrop is obviously a home situation in which the parents were personally very committed to the peace movement, and we know from the rest of Laura’s interview that she had, herself, developed a deep concern about peace and justice. Laura’s mother had been instrumental in organizing a conference on women in the peace movement, and they had invited one of the main speakers home for dinner. Laura had an opportunity to talk with her at some length, one-on-one. Laura also attended the conference, and while conferences were not “her thing,” nevertheless she still remembers things from Ursula Franklin’s speech, so it obviously had an impact. Within this
overall context, Laura had an opportunity to view the film and to speak with one of the main participants in it. Both activities seemed to be significant for her.

Interestingly, there were other instances of participants having personal involvement with those involved in films. In addition to her contact with Ursula Franklin, Laura also attended a workshop led by Donna Read, director of *Burning times*. Catherine had a personal involvement with those who produced *Broken circle*, a film on native suicide. And William was directly affiliated with National Film Board, so was always on the lookout for ways to incorporate NFB films into educational programming that was taking place around the region.

Before leaving films as a resource, we should note that in a couple of cases individuals commented on the impact of feature-length movies. When asked about an event or experience that was particularly significant for his learning, Henry, mentioned the movie *Hiroshima, mon amour*, which he had seen back in the 1960s. "I have strong images from that one," he comments (Interview 7, 365-367). In addition, Gary mentions his use, in his classes, of *Cry Freedom*, which focused on the apartheid situation in South Africa. Gary raises an interesting point, from an educator's perspective:

> I find that if you have a film such as that ... you get a sense of what they're living through, and you're getting views being presented, and they're not academic views—he goes to talk to the police inspector, so he [the police inspector] gives you the Afrikaner line. Now it's not, "Here are the 5 reasons that Afrikaners think that," but you get the feel of it. (Interview 19, 1224-1235)

The use of film, then, enables the educator to present the conflicting views on a subject, coming directly from those who espouse them, rather than through an intermediary. As such, it brings the viewer closer to experiencing the actual situation—and thus is a more powerful learning experience, both in terms of gaining knowledge, and in terms of feeling the power of the emotions involved.
As one reviews the comments which participants made about their use of film, we see that people found that it often provided an effective, and very time-efficient, overview of the issues; that it was useful in presenting a variety of perspectives; and that it could convey the emotion associated with an issue, as well as "the facts." In several cases, individuals had personal contact with people associated with the films and, not surprisingly, that seemed to increase the overall impact.

**People resources: Conferences, workshops, meetings, courses, and more**

*Conferences and workshops*

*Range and scope*

Conferences and workshops were certainly extensively used by the participants in the study. Sixteen of the 23 indicated medium or heavy use. There are other indications, as well, that several of the participants took conferences very seriously. Kim, for example, spoke of three major conferences she had attended over the previous couple of years. Although Kim did not have a permanent job and it was clear that her finances were very tight, she nevertheless managed to get to Chicago to attend one of the conferences and to San Francisco for another. In both cases, these were international conferences on the environment and the future of the planet, drawing both speakers and participants from many countries. The one in Chicago, for example, was attended by participants from 43 countries and was, for Kim, "one of those peak experiences" (Interview 6, 377-378).

Kim was not alone in travelling a considerable distance to attend conferences. Lorne attended a conference on peace and security at the University of Guelph; Raymond attended a peace education conference at the University of Alberta; Catherine attended the conference on positive global futures in California that Kim also attended; June, now retired, in 1950 had
attended a conference of the World Student Christian Federation in Berlin; Sharon, recently graduated, had attended various local, national and international conferences of the Student Pugwash Movement, including one in Boston at which Andrei Sakharov was a speaker; Gary, through his involvement in international teachers' organizations, spent a week at meetings in Washington with IMF and World Bank officials, examining the impact of their policies on developing countries; and Barry was sent by his church to Indiana for a week-long international conference on peace education.

Since one of the sources of participants for this study was a conference, *Educating for a peaceful world*, which had been held at Dalhousie University in 1989, several of the participants mentioned that conference, and other local conferences. Generally the response to these was very positive, though we are reminded that Laura had indicated that she usually did not find conferences particularly helpful. In addition, while both Marguerite and Jean felt positively about the Dalhousie conference, both received some negative feedback from others. In Marguerite's case, she had encouraged some of her better students to attend, but was quite disheartened when they appeared to be "fed up" with what they saw as her preoccupation with such issues. The negative response which Jean received was from her Principal, who didn't share any of her enthusiasm for the new resources to which she was introduced at the conference. This probably was not surprising, as she and a couple of other teachers always seemed to need to support one another in the face of an administration which did not encourage their involvement in environmental and social issues.

Even for local conferences, registration fees could be an obstacle, but Joseph had an innovative solution to that. He and his spouse were volunteers with Red Herring, an alternative
bookstore which operated in Halifax for many years. They often volunteered to staff a book
table at conferences, enabling them to attend many of the sessions without charge.

**Functions and impacts**

For several, conferences seemed to provide a strong dose of positive energy. A good deal
of this seems to come from the fact that on a day-to-day basis, many seemed to feel quite alone
in the midst of others who did not share their perspectives or concerns on global issues.
Catherine referred to conferences as providing a “group energy.” Roy certainly felt that, at the
peace education conference at Dalhousie:

> Well the conference was a pivotal thing for me ... in that I met so many interesting
people, but the empowering thing for me was—the first thing was that there were 300
other people there, and I knew—I went there feeling that I was the only one in my whole
School Board—and I said, look there’s at least 300 people here who feel as strongly
about this as I do! That was number one. But the other was that the young guy from out
west, Rob MacIntosh, whose message was ... you’ve got to empower kids, you’ve got to
empower them! And ... if I’m not going to do it, if I’m not going to at least take a stab at
it in my [School] Board, who’s going to? I’m the only one here representing my Board,
for one thing. (Interview 20, 2802-2833)

In Roy’s brief comment we see several crucially important ways in which conferences
provided that key group energy that Catherine referred to. First, as Roy expressed, those who
were struggling on global issues such as peace and the environment often felt very much alone
and unsupported within their normal environment. In contrast, at a conference they might
immediately become part of a new, albeit temporary, “peer group”: the participants at the
conference who often tended to share very similar concerns. This feeling of being part of a
larger movement rather than being a lone, and perhaps unpopular, voice was very empowering
for Roy. Victoria echoed a similar sentiment:

> I think there are events, and if you are involved in “doing” in any way there can be a kind
of empowerment—that’s what the conferences do. That’s what meeting together with
other people who are concerned about the same issue does. That’s the effect that that has.
(Interview 4, 900-911)
A second way in which conferences served as a powerful experience was through the resource people. In his comments above, Roy noted in particular the impact of a peace and environmental educator, Rob MacIntosh, who provided concrete curriculum and resource suggestions, but even more so, served as both a role model and an inspiration. Finally, because of the conference, Roy came away with a new mission—one which he could pursue on his own, back home. Now, instead of bemoaning the fact that others do not share his concern, he is able to see that the kids he deals with themselves need to feel empowered—and if he is not going to help them become empowered, who is? So, for Roy the conference provided a temporary peer support group, resulting in personal empowerment. It then provided him with a strong role model and concrete suggestions concerning curriculum and resources. And, finally, it gave him a mission to which he could commit himself. This is not to say that the conference alone—or any single event—is sufficient to sustain Roy over the long term, but it certainly can provide a very helpful “shot in the arm” to help him pursue his concerns.

Although in the case of each individual a host of events and influences came together to help shape their values, their views, and their commitment, certainly conferences were a significant element in that mix for some. Barry, as a regional staff person for his church denomination, had responsibility for much of the mission study, which led to his attending a peace education conference. This helped to equip him to become more directly involved in peace education work:

It was designed to give us some training so that we could go back and do peace education.... It was all quite readily applicable and I used it quite a bit over the next two or three years. (Interview 21, 112-144)

In June’s case, 40 years afterwards, she recounts details of a World Student Christian Federation conference she attended in 1950, shortly after she graduated from university:
That was held in what was then West Berlin. The Wall wasn’t up, but as it turned out, there were about 400 Germans there and only about half a dozen of us that came from other places. I didn’t speak French—I only spoke English. Anyway, there were a lot of East Germans there—at that point they could still come into West Berlin, but they couldn’t get any further than that. But they were there and many of them kept saying they’d be marked when they got back home. And they likely would lose their government stipend, and they expected they would really have to pay for being there. But again, I had so many great conversations with them and I really became very much attached to Germans and I saw the devastation in Berlin—it was just terrible. Travelling about in Germany you could see the devastation of the war. We travelled by train in Third Class—that was all we could afford. So we really mixed with the local people. And I’m sure that that—well I really didn’t have hatred in my heart for the Germans after the war—but that experience, it really cemented my experience of being a citizen of the world. So that was a very, very rich experience! (Interview 17, 375-412)

Residential programs

We will examine participants’ involvement in “residential programs” separately from conferences, though the two types of programming are similar in many regards, with residential programs being longer and including the experience of living and studying together. The programming typically had much in common with conferences, but usually involved both resource persons and field trips, which provided a mix of practical and theoretical learning. Typically, there was ample opportunity for discussion and joint problem-solving.

Given the length of the programs and the distance that one might need to travel, it is not surprising that fewer of the participants attended residential programs than was the case for conferences. Nevertheless, for those who did, the experience was often a very powerful one.

Kim and Catherine, who were friends, had both attended a program at the Center for Holistic Resource Management in New Mexico, and Eleanor attended a program at the Centre for Intercultural Dialogue and Development in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

The decision to go

The process which led to the decision to participate in such a program is, itself, worth examining. Catherine, for example, describes a chain of events and influences which led to her
going to the program in New Mexico. The process started with her getting involved in peace and environment issues, about five years prior to the interview. Catherine describes the chain of events and influences:

I would say it was about five years ago that I was actually overtly looking for more information ... personally I had always had certain values but in terms of going further and learning more and getting more involved, it was right around that time....

I think it was basically when the Junior High School students were so worried.... When I'd get them to write, this was a big thing that kept coming up: the possibility of being annihilated—the whole world. Why are we so stupid? Why aren't adults doing something about this? ... I was quite amazed at how widespread the feeling was—that they were being abandoned by the adult world and their future was very "if-y" and nobody seemed to be doing anything about it. I think that was actually what prompted me to get involved in all of these things—that feeling that they were being left in the lurch and nobody really was doing anything....

[Then] I focused in on it. It had always been there, but I didn’t zoom in on it. That’s the way, basically, I do deal with these things—when I get enough messages, then I feel on an intuitive level that I have to do something about it. (Interview 11, 144-235)

The program and its impact

The program Eleanor attended in Cuernavaca had a major impact on her. She describes her experience in some detail:

It was two really intensive weeks and we had lots of people in to talk to us—the analytical experts ... and then we went out into the Mexican community and talked to lots of people there, through translators, of course, about the poverty and the way they saw it, at many different levels. Some saw absolutely no way out of it, and really had no understanding of why it was that way, they just knew that ... they didn’t have milk for their babies and they ate tortillas and if they were lucky they ate beans once a month....

Just incredible people, really—the head of the non-governmental unions, we spoke with him, and at the end of that experience we also spoke with people from El Salvador and Guatemala who came in. Those were generally refugees [who] had escaped for one reason or another—like one of the Mothers of the Disappeared. It was really a very moving experience.... Because we had two weeks absolutely together we had lots of time to reflect on it and to discuss how we could make it more personal. It was just marvellous—really good people there! (Interview 14, 380-430)
After the program

One of the difficulties associated with intense emotional experiences, especially those involving being immersed in a different environment or culture, is that it may be difficult to readjust to one's normal environment. Paul McGinnis (1975) noted this pattern with the returned CUSO volunteers whom he studied. Eleanor comments on a similar experience when she returned from Cuernavaca. We observed earlier Eleanor's feeling that she needs to be reading non-fiction instead of fiction. We see some of the difficulty she felt—after just two weeks in the program in Mexico—re-adjusting to Canadian life:

I feel very impatient with idle conversation. I want to get on with it! I can't sit in the staff room and listen to people talk about wallpaper and minutia—I just can't do it. And in one way I get disgusted with myself, because I think I'm also losing opportunities here to develop other relationships, but if it can't get beyond that very quickly, to talk about something that's important, something that you have to deal with emotionally, really, because the whole world is personal and political and emotional at the same time, I feel [very frustrated.] So ... coming back from Cuernavaca, dipping back into the North American way of life, is very ... traumatic. And [as soon as we got home] we left for two weeks. We took off with the children and went to Ontario to visit some very empathetic friends and that was a really wise decision on our part, because it did take at least that long to kind of "come back," ... with my husband and kids and friends. But at least there [with them], there was always meaningful conversation....

I think I can feel exactly as much joy on this end of the spectrum as I can as much sorrow on the other end. So yes, I do feel things more deeply, in a sorrowful way, but on the other hand, I don't think anybody has half as much fun as I do. (Interview 14, 709-767)

Meetings, public events, study groups, discussions

Just as conferences and longer intensive educational programs constituted significant learning experiences for participants in this study, so too did public meetings, lectures and events. Several participants mentioned the visit to Halifax in the Spring of 1988 of Helen Caldicott, the Australian Doctor who had spoken and written widely, advocating nuclear disarmament. In addition, Joseph mentioned similar public lectures by Susan George and Noam
Chomski, and Beatrice mentioned the lecture given some years earlier by double Nobel prize
winner and peace activist, Linus Pauling.

Public lectures: A stimulus for increased involvement

Public lectures certainly had the ability to trigger greater involvement in global issues.

The Pauling lecture was a significant turning point for Beatrice. Years before, as a young adult
beginning work in England, Beatrice had been involved in doing some local fundraising and
organizing for international relief and development. More recently, after coming to Canada, she
had been very involved with her church, and small local community, hosting a Vietnam refugee
family, but she had not previously been involved in the peace issue. She comments on the
sequence of events that Pauling’s lecture initiated:

We went to hear him at Saint Mary’s [University]: this friend of mine who was involved
with me in the Vietnamese thing and her husband and my husband and myself.... And he
was speaking about the Peace Movement. On the way back to the Bay I said to [the other
woman], “We have to do something” and she said to me, “We do, Beatrice. What can we
do?” So the next Sunday morning …—we had a very nice student minister—I said,
could we have 5 minutes of the announcement time to make some announcements? So
when I walked in on that Sunday morning he said I have given you the sermon time.
[laughter]

So here I was, never having stood up in a pulpit before—workshops and things were
different, but never having stood in the pulpit before, without having thought through too
much myself, because it was all very new, but I think I sort of babbled on a bit about
nuclear weapons and women still walking 5 miles a day to get water and, you know, all
kinds of strange things. And it was so funny, because it was the combined service and all
the small churches, the four points, were all at one place, and as I was going out—I had a
petition for people to sign—all those petitions in those days—and I asked if anybody
would be interested in getting Patty [who was active in the local peace movement] to
come and speak to us, and they all knew her, you see. They trusted me so they thought it
must be all right. [laughter] (Interview 22, 239-287)

Beatrice goes on to describe how the meeting took place the following week, how a peace
group based in the church and the community then formed, and how in turn she became actively
involved in her church’s peace work, first in the Halifax area, and then on a Maritime basis.
Public lectures: A key link in a chain of activities

What seems particularly striking about the public meetings such as this one with Linus Pauling which Beatrice tells us about, is that while they may also have had a direct impact on people in their own right, they seemed to function frequently as part of a series of events or a chain of events and influences. In Beatrice’s case, for example, the Pauling meeting was highly significant in stimulating her involvement in the peace movement, but many influences, dating back over the more than 30 years since she first became involved with Save the Children in England, had created the readiness. Through her various involvements over that time, she had developed a considerable knowledge of global issues, a considerable concern for those affected by these issues, and considerable self-confidence in approaching others to assist in the task at hand. These no doubt contributed to her decision to attend Pauling’s lecture and following it, to determine with her friend that they must take some action. Her involvement in organizing and speaking presumably gave her the confidence to seize the opportunity granted by her minister, and thus to organize the follow-up meeting, to launch the community peace group, and ultimately to become involved with her church’s peace movement on a wider level.

Although public events may not have played the same “trigger” role for others, nevertheless in several other cases they did seem to be seen as part of a continuing chain or sequence of activities related to global issues. Both Kim and Catherine, for example, attended the Helen Caldicott session and then became involved in the Peace Pledge Campaign which followed her visit and led up to the 1988 federal election. Jonathan, though he missed Caldicott’s visit, nevertheless joined in on the Peace Pledge Campaign, even though he was really looking for ways of pursuing his interest in South Africa:

So a couple of weeks after graduation I was at a party with some friends from high school and they mentioned that Helen Caldicott had just been in town and a week or so later there was a meeting for people—mostly people who had been at that one, which I hadn’t
been. There was interest in starting up a peace group focusing around the Peace Pledge Campaign for the [federal] election. So anyway, I went to that meeting, so that's really where my involvement started. I must confess that one of the main reasons for going to that was I was interested in getting involved in anti-apartheid work and thought, where better to meet like-minded people than a peace group. And I did—I met someone at that meeting who's now a really good friend of mine who was involved in the local coalition against apartheid, and I asked him about that, so I've been involved in both the peace and the anti-apartheid movements since then. (Interview 15, 67-93)

From the comments of the participants in this study, we do not know the extent to which such public events may have attracted folks who were completely uninvolved. It is clear, however, that in the cases of Kim, Catherine, Jonathan and Beatrice, although each of them was involved in global issues prior to the event, it nevertheless stimulated an increase in their level of involvement. When we examine the public events, we can see many reasons why this may have been the case.

For each of these four, the public lecture did not stand alone as a single event, but was integrated into a much larger series of events. The Caldicott lecture was planned this way: it was intended to be, in part, the lead-off for organizing the Peace Pledge Campaign. A follow-up meeting was therefore planned from the outset, with the hope that this would result in the formation of a group willing to organize the Peace Pledge Campaign. That, in fact, did happen, and both Kim and Catherine became part of that ongoing group. As we saw from Jonathan's comments, he became involved as well, even though he had missed the original session with Helen Caldicott. In the case of the Linus Pauling lecture, there was no planned direct follow-up of which we are aware, but Beatrice initiated her own, in her own surroundings, which was no doubt very much in keeping with the purpose of the session, even if not initiated directly by those who planned the Pauling meeting.
Why were public lectures significant learning experiences?

Noting that the public lectures were part of a larger process is not intended in any way to diminish them. On the contrary, they became the focal point which, in many ways, enabled the other events to occur. Other factors making public meetings important influences may have included:

- Just as we observed with conferences, the presence of a large number of people together at such an event helped to dispel the isolation which individuals often felt otherwise. The presence of several hundred people together, sharing similar concerns, was itself empowering.

- The speaker was a high-profile internationally recognised individual. This lent credibility to views which were often discounted by mainstream society with which individuals normally interacted.

- The speakers shared their great depth of knowledge, their passion, and their commitment. Thus, in the terms used by Martha Rogers (1994), the sessions stimulated patterns of the mind, of the heart, and of the soul.

- The speakers provided both inspiration and a role model for those attending.

- The sessions, directly or indirectly, urged people to take concrete follow-up action.

The role of organizations’ meetings

Large public meetings with high profile speakers were relatively infrequent compared with the regular meetings of peace and other globally focused organizations. Most of the comments on organizations focused on people’s involvement in action, rather than on learning, but Henry had an interesting observation about his own learning. It relates in part to meetings of
Educators for Social Responsibility which he attended, and in part to other structured activities, whether they be meetings or action:

I found that ... Educators for Social Responsibility was a good way of structuring, so that so many hours every month at least would be devoted to that.... I guess I found that what gave me the impetus for increased learning in this area were those kind of opportunities, like the meetings of the ESR group, like the mural painting project, like the shadow project, like the meetings of my Social Theory class, like the Conference, so I guess what I needed then were outside influences—things that would help me with reminders, or encouragement or structures and events ... I guess being driven by timetables, something that I could slot into my timetable and say, "Well, I've got this that I have to go to, this that I have to think about, this that I have to prepare for" ... those kind of things would be what I would think of [as being particularly helpful in translating learning into action.]

(Interview 7, 582-654)

Overview: Group meetings and activities

In the various comments about group meetings and activities—ranging from the large public meetings with internationally recognised speakers, to the informal discussions among a few friends—several key functions come to light:

- The large number of people gathered together at high-profile public functions helped individuals to feel part of a much larger group or movement and thus to feel greater empowerment, that their contribution mattered.

- The large public meetings could constitute a significant stimulus to prompt people to become more actively involved in the issues.

- Public meetings often functioned as part of a chain of events and influences. In some cases, as with the Helen Caldicott session as part of launching the Peace Pledge Campaign, this series of events was at least partially structured by the organizers. In other cases, the chains of events was unique to each individual.

- People's involvement in events where global issues were being addressed—whether the large public events, the regular meetings of small peace or environment organizations,
or even the informal discussions of global issues among friends—tended to stimulate some people to do more learning so they would be better able to participate in the discussions and the action.

Other resources

University courses

As indicated in Chapter 3, many of the participants spoke positively about their university education. In most cases, however, they were referring to courses or to a program which they had taken as a young adult, immediately following high school. At that stage, only Laura indicated that she had wanted to take a program related to global issues (International Development Studies), and she had been unable to do so because it was not offered at the university she was attending. Apart from that, none of the participants indicated that they sought out particular university credit courses in order to learn about global issues—either during their original undergraduate program, if they took one, or later on returning to university on a part-time or full-time basis.

Teaching and one's own students

In contrast, several of the participants sought out opportunities to teach courses which related to global issues, and used these teaching opportunities as a time to further their own learning. Both Catherine and Raymond, independently, proposed teaching a course on environmental or global issues through a local university continuing education program, but in both cases there was an insufficient number of students to proceed. Raymond did, however, offer a course on the environment within a local Elderhostel program and Kim, who taught in an English as a Second Language program, oriented her teaching one year around resource management issues.
Networking

Among the list of resources that people had found useful were some surprising ones.

Catherine talked about how valuable she found the Farmers' Market, and both Catherine and Kim found bulletin boards very helpful. The point of raising these here is not so much to dwell on the particular value of those two resources, as to note the wide range of functions or sources that may, for some, be useful sites for learning. In discussing the resources that have been helpful to her, Catherine comments:

There's another interesting thing I forgot about.... Grapevine is important, but specifically—this is funny—the Saturday morning Farmers' Market. It's much like the old coffee houses. It seems to me that there's not a Saturday that goes by when I don't either learn something or find out about something ... it seems to be where there's a buzz. So when I said meetings or activities ... I thought of that activity—going to the Farmers' Market every Saturday morning because I know I'm going to learn something there.... A very interesting group of people down there. (Interview 11, 1628-1699)

Summary

The nature of the resources available to individuals has changed quite dramatically, even in the time span between the interviews and the completion of this thesis. When one considers that many of the folks interviewed were reflecting back on their use of resources over a lifetime, one is aware of much more variation still. Nevertheless, there are a number of general observations one can make:

- The interviewees were heavy users of learning resources.
- Individuals gravitated toward the types of resources which provided greater depth of coverage and analysis. This meant a tendency to opt for print resources over audio-visual ones; within print resources, to concentrate on books and "serious" newspapers and magazines; and within audio-visual resources, to concentrate more on radio than other media.
• For several, the link with learning resources was crucial in validating their perspective and their concerns, and thus was very important to their self-esteem and their sense of self. The learning resources linked them with others who shared similar views and concerns, in a context where they may have found it difficult to find such concern among their peers.

• Identifying resources was a challenge in itself. While this did not seem to present insurmountable difficulties, it nevertheless required use of a variety of strategies which included networking with other individuals, attending conferences, participating in specialized organizations, and using alternative bookstores.

• Individuals' use of resources varied significantly over time, depending on the other demands within their lives.