

Similarities in moral concerns and obligations to the environment were found in the moral reasoning of African American children in Houston and Brazilian children in a large city and in a small river village.

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Bayous and Jungle Rivers: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Children's Environmental Moral Reasoning

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Two men were fighting over a piece of land. Each claimed ownership and bolstered his claim with apparent proof. To resolve their differences, they agreed to put the case before the rabbi. The rabbi listened but could not come to a decision because both seemed to be right. Finally he said, "Since I cannot decide to whom this land belongs, let us ask the land." He put his ear to the ground and, after a moment, straightened up. "Gentlemen, the land says it belongs to neither of you—but that you belong to it."

This Talmudic story motivates several questions. It is well known that children have complex moral judgments and values about acts that involve people, both positive such as helping other people in need and negative such as causing other people physical or psychological harm (for example, Arsenio, 1988; Damon, 1977; Eisenberg, 1982; Helwig, 1995; Kahn, 1992; Killen, 1990; Kohlberg, 1984; Laupa, 1991; Miller, 1994; Nucci, 1981; Piaget, [1932] 1969; Smetana, 1995; Tisak, 1995; Turiel, 1983; Wainryb, 1995). But is it also possible that children have moral judgments about nature? about animals? trees? water? landscapes? the earth? If so, is such reasoning structured (mentally organized), and do such structures develop so that our societal discourse on environmental issues has its genesis in childhood? Moreover, how are we to understand the particular and universal aspects of children's environmental reasoning and values?

I take up these questions by bringing together three empirical studies colleagues and I have recently conducted on the development of environmental moral reasoning and values. Two studies involved a black population in an economically impoverished community of Houston, Texas.¹ In the first study (which is referred to as the "Houston developmental study"), seventy-two children were interviewed, evenly divided across grades one, three, and five (Kahn and Friedman, 1995). In the second study ("the Houston parent study"), twenty-four parents were interviewed from the school that participated in the first study (Kahn and Friedman, in press). In the third study ("the Brazil study"), we modified the methods from the Houston developmental study and interviewed forty-four fifth-grade Brazilian children in urban and rural parts of the Amazon Jungle (Howe, Kahn, and Friedman, 1996). Our interview methodology is in line with the "clinical" method pioneered by Piaget and elaborated upon by a wide range of current researchers, including those in this current volume. Many of the interview questions in the Houston developmental study and the Brazil study focused on the pollution of a local waterway: in Houston, pollution of a local bayou; in the Amazon, of the nearby Rio Negro. Other questions across all three studies focused on participants' environmental commitments and practices, and their moral understandings of such everyday natural phenomena as birds, water, plants, insects, open spaces, and air.

Results from the Houston developmental study showed that human violence was often close at hand in children's environmental reasoning. To illustrate this point, consider first some qualitative data. In one interview, a first grade boy talked about how much fun he had playing with his dog. The interviewer then probed further on the initial question:

INTERVIEWER: Are there any other sorts of things that you think about when you think about nature and the natural environment?

BOY: My mom.

INTERVIEWER: Your mom? Tell me, why do you think of your mom?

BOY: Because one day she went into the store and she left me and my sisters here and she took too long. I thought somebody had raped her.

INTERVIEWER: In the store? Were you left sitting in the car waiting for her? Or you were at school? Or . . . ?

BOY: I was in the car.

INTERVIEWER: Did anything happen to her?

BOY: No.

INTERVIEWER: She was all right?

BOY: Yes.

For anyone, let alone a first grader, that is an awfully quick leap from playing with dogs to rape. Similarly, consider the perspective of a third grade girl, Tanya. In response to one of our standard questions ("Are animals an important part of your life? If so, how?"), Tanya says that animals are important because "sometimes they can keep you safe, like dogs, when somebody tries

to break in your house." Tanya has good reason for such concern, for she quickly moves to the following description:

TANYA: That's why momma say she going to move out the neighborhood, she say it's too many young people around there . . . too many crack heads, and they do crack and they want to kill somebody. And my uncle, he own the crack, they killed him, but he, he not dead, he's still in the hospital. . . . That's why I always, my momma tell me to stay in the house.

Later, the interviewer asks Tanya if her family ever talks about the natural environment. In the course of responding, she says:

TANYA: That's why we have a little gun in the house, but nobody know where it's at but my grandpa, and he won't tell nobody. He say, it's not to be killing people, it's just to keep this house safe. Well, he not going to kill nobody if they break in, he just going to scare 'em. . . .

INTERVIEWER: So I guess that makes it kind of scary for you sometimes.

TANYA: Yes, and I always go in the bed with my grandmother cause I really scared in the room when my mom, cause my momma by the window and people be staring up in there, and they be making all the noise, they be shooting up in there, for nothing, just to be shooting.

It is one thing to say—as our data support—that inner-city black Americans face harsh living in urban poverty. It is another thing to say—as the data do not—that black Americans have little interest in and affiliation with nature. Rather, consider some of the other results. Of the children we interviewed, the majority (84 percent) said that animals played an important part in their lives, as did plants (87 percent) and parks and open spaces (70 percent). The majority of children (72 percent) talked about environmental issues (such as pollution) with their family and did things to help the environment, such as recycling (74 percent) or picking up garbage (25 percent). Children judged that polluting a bayou would have harmful effects on birds (94 percent), water (91 percent), insects (77 percent), and the view (93 percent). Moreover, children said that it would matter to them if such harm occurred to birds (89 percent), water (91 percent), insects (77 percent), and the view (93 percent).

We also analyzed whether children judged the act of throwing garbage in their local bayou as a violation of a moral obligation. We drew here on the domain literature of Turiel (1983, in press), Nucci (1981, 1996), Smetana (1983, 1989), and others, where assessment of a moral obligation is based in part on the criterion judgments of prescriptivity (for example, throwing garbage in a bayou is not all right), rule contingency (the act is not all right to do even if the law says it is), and generalizability (the act is not all right for people in another country, even if people in that country do it). Based on these and three other criterion judgments, and in consort with children's moral justifications, results showed that the majority of the children believed it was morally obligatory not to throw garbage in a bayou. From a developmental viewpoint,

fewer children in grade one (68 percent) compared to grades three (91 percent) and five (100 percent) provided such morally obligatory judgments.

In this study, we also began to characterize children's environmental moral reasoning. In the broadest perspective, two main forms of environmental reasoning emerged from the data: anthropocentric and biocentric. Anthropocentric reasoning appeals to how effects to the environment affect human beings. Justification categories include appeals to (1) personal interests (responses such as "animals matter to me a little bit because we need more pets and different animals to play with"); (2) aesthetics ("because I'd get to see all the colors of the plants and the beauty of the whole—of the whole natural plants"); and (3) the physical, material, and psychological welfare of self and others ("air pollution goes by and people get sick, it really bothers me because that could be another person's life").

In addition to anthropocentric forms of reasoning, different forms of biocentric environmental reasoning emerged from the data. Biocentric reasoning appeals to a larger ecological community of which humans may be a part. The Talmudic injunction opening this chapter is of this form ("Gentlemen, the land says it belongs to neither of you—but that you belong to it"). Biocentric justification categories included appeals to the intrinsic value of nature ("if nature made birds, nature does not want to see birds die") and to the rights of nature. In particular, the data revealed two ways in which children established biocentric-rights reasoning. In one, natural entities (usually animals) were compared directly with humans. For example, one child said: "Fishes, they want to live freely, just like we live freely. . . . They have to live in freedom, because they don't like living in an environment where there is [so] much pollution that they die every day." Thus an animal's desire ("to live freely") is viewed to be equivalent to that of a human's desire, and because of this direct equivalency children reason that animals merit the same moral consideration as do humans.

A second way occurred through establishing indirect compensatory relationships. Here is an example from a fifth grade boy, Arnold: "Fish need the same respect as we need. . . . Fishes don't have the same things we have. But they do the same things. They don't have noses, but they have scales to breathe, and they have mouths like we have mouths. And they have eyes like we have eyes. And they have the same co-ordinates we have. . . . A co-ordinate is something like, if you have something different, then I'm going to have something, but it's going to be the same. Just going to be different."

I find this a marvelous passage, as one can feel the constructivist process at work within Arnold. He chooses a word—*coordinate*—that is at once incongruous and precise. It is incongruous because people do not usually use this word in this way. But it is precise because a coordinate can refer to two intersecting index terms that, taken together, refer to a single point. Similarly, Arnold seeks to coordinate two disparate ideas into a unitary position. That is, Arnold appears to draw on a word he encountered in some other context to help him explain that although fish are in some respects not the same as people (they don't have noses as people do), in important functions (such as

breathing and seeing) they are the same. Thus, Arnold moves beyond a reciprocity based on directly perceivable and salient characteristics to be able to establish moral equivalence based on functional properties.

The percentages for the comparative use of anthropocentric and biocentric reasoning have been reported elsewhere (Kahn and Friedman, 1995). Strikingly, biocentric reasons accounted for no more than 7 percent of children's justifications, and usually much less, depending on the question. Moreover, intrinsic value or rights-based biocentric justifications were used by only the older children (third and fifth graders). I come back to these findings shortly, when comparing the relevant data from Brazil.

Two explanations are typically provided to support the belief that black Americans have little interest in environmental issues. (See Mohai, 1990, and Taylor, 1989, for an overview.) One explanation, based on Maslow's theory, is referred to as the "hierarchy of needs" explanation: people will not have concern about higher-level environmental concerns if their basic needs for food, shelter, and physical security are barely met. A second explanation is referred to as the "subculture" explanation: distinct qualities of the black experience—such as a history of slavery—have led blacks to ignore, if not oppose, nature. In the words of political activist Eldridge Cleaver, "black people learned to hate the land . . . [and] have come to measure their own value according to the number of degrees they are away from the soil" (1969, pp. 57–58). However, the results from the Houston developmental study point in a different direction, suggesting that the serious constraints of living in an inner-city community cannot easily squelch black children's diverse and rich appreciation for nature or their moral responsiveness to its preservation (Bryant and Mohai, 1992; Bullard, 1990).

Similar results emerged from the Houston parent study. Given space limitations, I merely highlight two findings. First, the majority (88 percent) of the parents said that they had conversations with their children about environmental issues, such as water pollution, garbage, harm to plants, air pollution, harm to animals, recycling, and chemicals in food. These family conversations were started in a variety of ways: from observing and interacting with nature directly (47 percent), TV and movies (47 percent), school discussions (27 percent), and newspapers or other media (7 percent). These conversations were often poignant:

PARENT: Yesterday, as my son and I were walking to the store and we were walking down Alabama [Street] and for some reason, I think they're getting ready to widen the street. And it's a section of Alabama that I thought was so beautiful because of the trees and they've cut down all the trees. And you know it hurts me every time I walk that way and I hadn't realized that my son had paid attention to it, too. So, he asked me, he said, "Mama, why are these, why have they cut down all the trees?" And then he asked me, "Well, if they cut down all the trees everywhere, would that have an effect on how we breathe?"

A DIFFERENT PARENT: The water we drink just comes out of the faucet and sometimes he'll say something like "this water doesn't look right." You know, it could have something in it that could be detrimental to us. [My son asks] "Could it hurt me? How do we know what's in this water?" And to some of his questions I have no answer because I mean, I cannot tell him what's in the water 'cause I don't know. I wonder some things myself.

Such conversations point to an appreciation for nature (of trees), environmental concerns arising through direct experience of environmental degradation (cutting of trees and water pollution), and perhaps some sense of powerlessness in not being able to preserve what exists of their community's natural beauty and in not knowing about the safety of their environment.

Second, on a scale of one to ten (with 1 the least important and 10 the most important), we asked parents to rank the importance of drug education for their children. Results showed a mean rank of 8.5 (SD 3.3). On the same scale, parents ranked the importance of environmental science education for their children; the results had a mean rank of 8.7 (SD 2.4). Matched-pair t-tests showed no statistical difference between parents' rankings for the importance of drug education versus environmental education. In comparison to environmental education, 57 percent of the parents ranked drug education as equally important, 29 percent as more important, and 14 percent as less important. Of parents who equated the importance of drug education and environmental education, their reasoning often focused on the physical ramifications of both problems:

PARENT: With the drugs, we're nothing. Without the environment, we're nothing. And drugs is something I see every day. There are dealers across the street from me. So, I see this every day and it's just killing us. I mean, it really is killing us and with the drugs, we're not going to have any youth. . . . With the drugs, you're not going to have a future and without any environment we're not going to have a future.

A DIFFERENT PARENT: Well let's put it like this here. If you don't take care of one [drugs], it's going to kill you. If you don't take care of the other [the environment] it's going to kill you.

Gates and West (1996) recently wrote: "We [the black communities] need something we don't yet have: a way of speaking about black poverty that doesn't falsify the reality of black advancement; a way of speaking about black advancement that doesn't distort the enduring realities of black poverty" (p. B7). Indeed, through our interviews, black children and parents gave voice to both realities. They described the harsh living of urban poverty while articulating—sometimes eloquently—their environmental awareness, values, and sensibilities, and guarded hopefulness for their future.

Without losing sight of particularistic effects, we find that an important question remains unanswered, namely, might important aspects of the results from the Houston developmental study reflect universal features of children's

development? We began to address this question in the Brazil study, choosing two locations of particular interest. One location was Manaus, the largest Brazilian city within the vast Amazon rain forest. This city, with nearly one million inhabitants, is located thirteen miles above the junction of the Rio Negro and the Amazon River, and it is at this junction that the Amazon River is said to begin. Manaus serves a growing ecotourist trade from North America and Europe. The city is also considered the center of the region's electronics industry, and it enjoys tax-free imports due to the government's efforts to spur international development in the region. Yet even given this economic development, a great deal of poverty exists within Manaus, as do poor educational opportunities, jobs, and medical care. In some sections of the city, refuse and litter are readily apparent and sickness is manifest (cholera, malaria, and yellow fever). In contrast, Novo Ayrão is a small village with approximately four thousand inhabitants. The village can only be reached by means of an eight-hour boat ride up the Rio Negro from Manaus. The villagers' primary economic activities include fishing and extraction of forest products, most notably lumber. The landscape is largely pristine with only small areas cleared for housing, commerce, and dirt roads. There is little visible litter or garbage; according to some inhabitants neither crime nor drugs are present in the community. The children who were interviewed attended one of the village's two schools.

The results surprised us in several ways. First, it was expected that since Brazilian children, particularly in Novo Ayrão, lived closer to nature than their Houston cohorts, more biocentric reasoning—which embeds humans in a larger ecological moral community—would emerge. This hypothesis was not supported. Three explanations are possible. One explanation, recently offered informally by Roger Hart at the Graduate School of the City University of New York, is that although the village is accessible only by boat, it is still heavily influenced by the missionary culture. Indeed, because the children were interviewed in Portuguese (instead of an indigenous language), it could be said that the interview was weighted toward eliciting responses imbued with the missionary culture. Hart contends that had an indigenous population of Amazonian children been interviewed, biocentrism might have been present. A second explanation is that biocentric reasoning may have a cultural basis and does not emerge in every culture that lives close to the land. Diamond (1993), for example, provides anecdotal evidence that indigenous populations in New Guinea, although extremely knowledgeable about nature, demonstrate virtually no biocentric considerations. Third, I have suggested (Kahn 1997, in press) that it is possible that biocentric reasoning emerges more fully in older adolescents and adults, and that such reasoning might have been found with an older population in the village where we conducted our research.

Part of what is at stake in this developmental analysis is one's very conception of young children's relationship with nature. Often two competing conceptions are offered. One suggests—almost in the tradition of Rousseau—that young children have a deep connection to the natural world that in time

becomes largely severed by modern society. A second conception suggests that people only develop a deep connection to the natural world in adolescence or later, if at all.

Indeed, both conceptions may be right. As the above results suggest, young children do not appear to demonstrate biocentric concepts, particularly those drawing on rights, reciprocity, compensatory relationships, and a moral telos. On this point, our results are in agreement with those of Kellert (1996), who found that in adolescence there is a sharp increase in abstract and conceptual reasoning about the natural world. But Kellert also says that only at adolescence does ethical reasoning about nature emerge, and that it "seems pointless to focus on teaching very young children ecology and ethical responsibilities for conserving nature at a time when they are incapable of internalizing this type of abstract and compassionate thinking" (p. 49). On the contrary, our results show that young children (at least by age six or eight) have moral commitments to nature, albeit often framed in anthropocentric terms. Moreover, young children (though less often than older children) view harm to nature as a violation of a moral obligation, based, as defined earlier, on the criteria of prescriptivity, rule contingency, and generalizability.

Yet it is a difficult issue, to be sure. Young children as "deep ecologists"? Maybe yes, maybe no. Part of what makes for such ambivalence is that the problem cuts across two major areas of development: reasoning and values, or more broadly, cognition and affect. Often the structural-developmental project is framed in terms of cognition. Yet, even for Piaget, affect was never divorced from structure. This means more than that emotions can stimulate or retard the development of intellectual operations, though they can. In addition, children reflect on emotions, and through such reflections, emotions provide the "raw material" for the construction of knowledge and principled reasoning (Arsenio and Lover, 1995). As DeVries and Kohlberg (1990) write, "For Piaget, objects are simultaneously cognitive and affective. An object disappearing behind a screen is at the same time an object of knowledge and a source of interest, amusement, satisfaction, or disappointment" (p. 33). If this is true for physical objects, like a ball, how much more so for the animate world. For a child, a dog can be a source of knowledge (both the dog and the child need to eat to live) and a source of pleasure, comfort, security, playfulness, and companionship.

The lack of biocentric reasoning in the Brazilian data was not the only surprising finding. Contrary to our expectations, across twenty-six questions (forming a large body of both studies), there were only two statistical differences between the fifth-grade black children in the inner city of the United States and Brazilian children in urban and rural parts of the Amazon. Moreover, in a comparative analysis of the data from both studies, there was no statistical difference across cultures in children's environmental orientation, as measured by a composite score. In addition, the coding system that was used to code the Brazilian children's environmental moral reasoning virtually replicated the system developed in the Houston developmental study, and this sys-

tem proved robust enough for the task. Indeed, the structure of children's reasonings sometimes almost echoed one another. For illustrative purposes, consider just four pairs of matched examples:

[It is not all right to throw garbage in the river] because it causes pollution that is dangerous for us. Because we now have cholera, a very dangerous disease and there are others attacking us like the malaria. (Brazilian child)

Because some people that don't have homes, they go and drink out of the rivers and stuff and they could die because they get all of that dirt and stuff inside of their bodies. (Houston child)

Both of these children reason that is wrong to throw garbage in the local waterway because people might drink from polluted water and get sick ("now we have cholera, a very dangerous disease"; "they could die").

Because the river was not made to have trash thrown in it, because the river belongs to nature. (Brazilian child)

Because water is what nature made; nature didn't make water to be purple and stuff like that, just one color. When you're dealing with what nature made, you need not destroy it. (Houston child)

Both children base their environmental judgments on the view that nature has its own purposes ("the river was not made to have trash thrown in it"; "nature didn't make water to be purple and stuff").

Because animals have to have their chance. They also must have to live. We should not mistreat them, because if it happens to us, we don't like it. (Brazilian child)

Some people don't like to be dirty. And when they throw trash on the animals, they probably don't like it. So why should the water be dirty and they don't want to be dirty. (Houston child)

These children judge as wrong the mistreatment of animals based on considering whether humans would like to be treated similarly ("because if it happens to us, we don't like it"; "some people don't like to be dirty . . . [so the animals] probably don't like it").

Even if the animals are not human beings, for them they are the same as we are, they think like we do. (Brazilian child)

Fish don't have the same things we have. But they do the same things. They don't have noses, but they have scales to breathe, and they have mouths like we

have mouths. And they have eyes like we have eyes. (Arnold, Houston child quoted earlier)

Both children recognize that although animals are not identical to human beings ("animals are not human beings"; "fish don't have the same things we have"), both animals and people have significant functional equivalences (animals "think like we do"; fish "don't have noses, but they have scales to breathe").

Taken together, our studies extend recent research in the moral developmental literature that suggests how in important ways individuals' moral reasoning across cultures is similarly structured by concerns for human welfare, fairness, and rights. This research includes studies conducted in India (Madden, 1992), Nigeria (Hollos, Leis, and Turiel, 1986), Brazil (Biaggio, 1994), the Virgin Islands (Nucci, Turiel, and Encarnacion-Gawrych, 1983), and Korea (Song, Smetana, and Kim, 1987), to name but a few. This is not to say that moral differences between cultures do not exist; rather, one needs to be careful in understanding such differences, for often they are not differences in morality per se but in personal interests, conventional practices, and factual and metaphysical beliefs (Kahn, 1991, 1994, 1995; Nucci and Turiel, 1993; Smetana, 1995; Turiel, in press; Turiel, Hildebrandt, and Wainryb, 1991; Turiel, Killen, and Helwig, 1987; Wainryb, 1991, 1993, 1995).

To better convey this idea and its relation to environmental reasoning, consider Huebner and Garrod's claim that Tibetan Buddhism "presents profound challenges to those who argue for general applicability of moral reasoning theories originating in Western culture" (1991, p. 341). They illustrate their point by providing a passage (p. 345) from one of their interviews with a Tibetan monk, which I quote in its entirety:

MONK: He [the bug] went under my feet, but he did not die. Now he was suffering, wasn't he? Suffering. I figured that if I left him like that, he would suffer forever, because there was no medicine for him as there is for a human being. So I prayed . . . And then I killed him with my hand, the suffering one. Why did I kill him? He was suffering. If I left him, he would suffer. So it was better for him not to suffer any longer. That's why I killed him. And I prayed . . . that one day in the next life, he would become a man like me, who can understand Buddhism and who will be a great philosopher in Tibet.

Huebner and Garrod say that "such sensitivity to the nonhuman world leads to moral dilemmas not likely considered in Western culture" (p. 345). But surely they are mistaken. Have not many of us experienced moral qualms very similar to those of this Buddhist monk: stepping by mistake on ants or caterpillars, or perhaps accidentally driving over a dog or cat and killing it, and feeling remorse? More formally, Western rights-based environmental philosophers routinely trouble over the moral status of animals (Spiegel, 1988; Stone, 1972; Taylor, 1996). Consider, for example, a short passage from an analytic

rights-based philosopher, Tom Regan (1986): "There are times, and these are not infrequent, when tears come to my eyes when I see, or read, or hear of the wretched plight of animals in the hands of humans. Their pain, their suffering, their loneliness, their innocence, their death. Anger. Rage. Pity. Sorrow. Disgust. . . . It is our heart, not just our head, that calls for an end, that demands of us that we overcome, for them, the habits and forces behind their systematic oppression" (p. 39).

Regan's sensitivity to the nonhuman world leads him and many other Westerners to difficult moral dilemmas. If one accepts, for example, that animals feel pain and thereby have moral standing, if not rights, are people never justified in causing animals harm? How about to advance medical knowledge? Cannot indigenous people justifiably hunt to eat? Can we not justifiably eat meat?

I submit that such thorny questions are considered not just by eminent Western philosophers and not just by most adults, but by children, too. Recall Kohlberg's amusing anecdotal evidence from his young son who became a vegetarian because he believed that it was wrong to kill animals. Kohlberg then read his son a book about Eskimo life that involved a seal-killing expedition. "He [the son] got angry during the story and said, 'You know, there is one kind of meat I would eat, Eskimo meat. It's bad to kill animals, so it's all right to eat them'" (1971, p. 192).

Or consider a further dialogue from our interview with Arnold (the fifth grader from the Houston developmental study). He says that "we really never should kill animals." The interview then asks him whether he eats meat, and Arnold says "not that much" and "only when there's rough times and we really need it." Thus, there is a bit of a tension in Arnold's reasoning: he first categorically objects to killing animals, but then allows for exceptions. Later in the interview, Arnold says:

ARNOLD: I love animals. . . . Animals are important to me because I don't like seeing animals being mistreated because every animal needs respect. . . . No matter what life form they're from, no matter how shaped or sized they are.

The interviewer then pushes with another potential dilemma:

INTERVIEWER: Do you have the same feeling about mosquitoes?

ARNOLD: Well, not really. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Tell me how that's different.

ARNOLD: Because mosquitoes they begin to get on your nerves a little bit. And they make little bumps on you. I don't really like mosquitoes. But it's still wrong to kill 'em though. Because they really need to live freely too, just like every insect, every bear, any kind of, type of human.

Thus Arnold faces a dilemma like that of the Buddhist monk: both have sensitivity to the suffering of animals, and both need to find their way in a world where animals, like humans, sometimes suffer tremendously.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have drawn on structural-developmental theory to convey the particular, textured voices of individuals as they reason, often morally, about the environment and environmental degradation. I have also sought to highlight that which may be universal. Both go hand in hand, the particular and the universal. Yet I have a worry. Many cultural and sociohistorical psychologists, hermeneuticists, activity theorists, postmodern theorists, and others of similar bent have increasingly focused on articulating cultural variation, what Shweder (1990) calls "ethnic divergences in mind, self, and emotion" (p. 1). Thus we often hear, for example, about local and contextual knowledge, and local culturally constituted functional systems. Such analyses are important. But my concern is that such theories do not readily have within them the means to recognize—when encountered—not only the particular but the universal. If that is true, it is unfortunate. By not paying adequate attention to universal aspects of development in general, and morality in particular, we miss many of the essential ways of being human and underestimate our common humanity.

Note

1. Based on our conversations with teachers, administrators, and parents, it appeared that for the most part people in this community preferred to distinguish themselves as *black Americans* as opposed to *African Americans*. Thus throughout this chapter, I follow their preference.

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