



Is Community Integration Understood by Those Charged with Facilitating It?

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Abstract

A survey of licensed out-of-home care facilities for adults was conducted to ascertain whether there was an understanding of community integration and if the facilities provided opportunities toward that end. Additionally, we wondered about how the state that licenses them would view these integration activities. The providers surveyed stated they felt as if they provided ample opportunities for community integration even though the data regarding the activities they provided did not support their claim that their activities were actually integrated. This information leads to a discussion of understanding the definition of community integration used by the facilities and the agencies that regulate them. We are left with the question, “Can the state and its agents facilitate community integration when it is arguable that they do not know what it actually is?”

Keywords: *community integration, disabilities, personal rights, group homes*

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Is Community Integration Understood by Those Charged with Facilitating It?

The idea of integration of persons with disabilities into our communities, after they reach legal age, is something that representatives of adult service agencies would likely claim as a significant priority. Among these agencies endeavoring to provide community integration is the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This agency is the big brother agency of many sub-departments assigned with the oversight of various supportive and social services in the community integration process. Among these sub-departments falls the Department of Social Services (DSS). This department is responsible for the supervision of out-of-home care facilities where many adult individuals with disabilities reside. In May 2013, across the State of California there were approximately 5,165 Adult Residential Homes licensed to provide care and supervision to approximately 39,930 residents (according to the Department of Social Services-Community Care Licensing Division [CCLD] website).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it unlawful to discriminate against any person on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex/gender, national origin, religious belief(s) and or affiliation. Title VII of this legislation further extends this to include persons with disabilities. This action preceded the deinstitutionalization movement. At that time, persons with disabilities were being housed in large institutions where they were segregated from their communities. Deinstitutionalization began to occur in the 1970s (Scheerenberger, 1987). However, it was not until June 22, 1999, that the Supreme Court, ruling under Title II of the American Disabilities Act in *Olmstead v. L.C. and E.W.*, dictated that persons with disabilities had the right to be placed in housing in their communities whenever possible. It was considered no longer appropriate to be segregated into large institutions. This ruling, referred to as the *Olmstead Act*, was the catalyst for the residential facilities movement (Wituk, Pearson, Bomhoff, Hinde, & Meissen, 2007). Whether with or apart from their families, more and more people with disabilities were placed in their communities. The Developmental Disabilities Bill of Rights and Assistance Act of 2000 followed shortly thereafter to assist in providing support and funding for accessing community-based support services for transition into a more integrated community life.

Merriam-Webster (2014) defines “integration” as “incorporation as equals into society or an organization of individuals of different groups (as races).” Today, there are more homes for adults with disabilities in the

community and ostensibly there are agencies and support providers to assist people to be successfully integrated into their new communities. But are people being integrated?

The regulatory enforcement agency that oversees homes, and therefore the integration process, is the Department of Social Services–Community Care Licensing Agency (DSS–CCLD). This agency licenses and monitors these homes. According to the DSS–CCLD website, there are approximately 40,000 residents living in adult residential facilities in California. DSS–CCLD documents their mission as encouraging “personal responsibility, and foster(ing) independence.” To do this, various regulations were put in place through the Health and Safety Code and the California Code of Regulations. Included in these regulations is a section entitled *Personal Rights*. These regulations indicate that each client will be accorded personal rights including but not limited to the following:

- To be accorded dignity in his/her personal relationships with staff and other persons.
- To have visitors, including advocacy representatives, visit privately during waking hours, provided that such visitations do not infringe upon the rights of other clients.
- To be free to attend religious services or activities of his/her choice and to have visits from the spiritual advisor of his/her choice.
- To leave or depart the facility at any time (State of California, 2012).

Although these appear to support the stated mission, upon further review, flaws are observed. The first is that in the latter subsection there is an addendum that reads, “This provision shall not apply to minors and other clients for whom a guardian, conservator, or other legal authority has been appointed” (State of California, 2012). This caveat clearly could create issues for adult clients living in out-of-home care.

Ferguson and Ferguson (as quoted in Heward, 2006) states that “adulthood is expressed through autonomy, membership, and change” and that adults “experience and enjoy membership in the form of a connectedness with their community, citizenship activities, and affiliations” (p. 596). It is essential for all adults to have independent choice and opportunities for participation in the communities in which they live. Clearly, community involvement includes both physical and social integration. Additionally, “it is generally assumed that the more frequently people experience such (physical) integration (of the general community) the better their lives will be” (Cummins & Lau, 2003, p. 145).

It may be, however, that this is not as obvious to care providers as Cummins and Lau imply. A study into the quality of life of people with intellectual disabilities who moved from a hospital to live in community-based homes was conducted in hopes of looking at life quality. Dagnon, Look, Ruddick, and Jones (1995) found that there was some increase in the quality of life, including living in houses that did not differ from others, having a wider range of leisure activities, an increase in resident skills, as well as improvements in staff/resident relationships. However, in areas of “access to the community” and “integration” the change was insignificant. It was also found that there was little to no change in the number of interactions between residents and people in their neighborhoods and or communities. This finding was supported by Baca and McNair (2013), who found that the majority of persons living in out-of-home care do not have typical peer friendships. Rather, they coined the phrase “almost friends” as people paid to be in relationship. Wolfensberger (2004) described these relationships as “artificial” or “boughten” and referred to them as one of the 18 wounds suffered as part of the social consequences of disability. It is believed that this is due, at least in part, to their isolation from the community and what Baca and McNair (2013) describe as a lack of understanding about friendship in the human services providers; one cannot assume human services providers are attempting to facilitate the development of unpaid relationships, i.e., friendships.

In a study into quality of life issues for those with intellectual disabilities, Verdugo, Navas, Gomez, and Schalock (2012) concluded that though there were changes in societal views of persons with disabilities, a tool was needed to measure these changes. What was ultimately developed were recommendations to use “person-centered planning, publish provider profiles and implement a system of support” (pp. 1041-1042) to help increase quality of life opportunities.

Social inclusion was also discussed in response to the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: “The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity” (United Nations, 2006). Other articles shared the general obligations of states to promote “the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities.” To do this, instruction was given to adopt, implement, and take appropriate measures—including modifying or abolishing “existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices” that may be considered discriminatory. Additionally, states are to promote training to service professionals so that they are better able to assist with services. Finally, Article 19, entitled *Living*

Independently and Being Included in the Community, requires states to “take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community.” This includes choosing where they will live, having access to supports that assist with inclusion, and preventing isolation or segregation from their community.

Cobigo, Oulette-Kuntz, Lysaght, and Martin (2012) found that what was typically missing from efforts at social inclusion was an understanding of what it should look like. They lamented a vision that “moves beyond theoretical discourse,” that abandons a “moralistic perspective,” and that allows for an approach that includes the individuals’ developmental perspective, expectations, choices, and needs in community opportunities for inclusion (p. 82).

Statement of the Problem

Best intentions with wrong models or definitions will lead to outcomes far different from that which might have been imagined. The above coupled with personal experiences caused the authors to desire to investigate community integration access for clients in out-of-home care. Although the Department of Social Services claimed that their oversight supported community integration, what appeared to be happening on the ground was quite different. The DSS website states, “The mission of the California Department of Social Services is to serve, aid, and protect needy and vulnerable children and adults in ways that strengthen and preserve families, encourage personal responsibility, and foster independence” (www.dss.cahwnet.gov). This department oversees the Community Care Licensing Division, the regulatory enforcement agency that monitors out-of-home care facilities and that holds the authority to issue citations when facilities are not in compliance with the California Health and Safety Code and or Title 22 Regulations.

Yet many persons with disabilities appear to be lacking the supports necessary to be integrated members of their communities. These individuals either do not receive the needed support or are provided with limited opportunities to access their communities by restrictions placed upon them by those controlling their environment(s). As Zola (1988) has stated, “rights without opportunity is meaningless” (p. 1). Some of these restrictions impact the ability to receive visits from friends in their residence without supervision or go to community events and/or gatherings with friends or acquaintances who may be lacking fingerprint clearance(s) from the Department of Social Services, thus inhibiting their ability to participate in opportunities for community integration. The “unregulated” nature of community members may cause agents of state programs to fear litigation if something happens to a client to whom

they do provide opportunities reflecting the client’s rights. But this is only part of the issue. A first question to answer is whether community support providers truly understand what community integration is. Assuming the best about the intentions of service providers, they may be facilitating undesirable outcomes because they do not understand what desirable outcomes are, do not choose to facilitate desirable outcomes, or are prohibited from facilitating truly integrated lives for their residents/clients. In an attempt to flesh out these questions, a survey was undertaken.

Method

A survey was conducted to determine if adults in out-of-home care and or adult residential facilities are provided the opportunity to participate in community activities in the same manner as a typical adult would. To explore this issue, a list of 101 licensed facilities was obtained from the DSS-CCLD website. The survey was conducted within a single county. Licensees, care managers and providers of thirty facilities agreed to respond. Most responses received were from the licensee(s) of those facilities. The survey consisted of twelve questions developed by professionals in the fields of Disability Studies and Social Services. Those questions included open-ended questions, questions with multiple responses, and questions with rating-scaled responses. The same questions were asked of all facility personnel interviewed. Interviews were conducted both in person and by telephone. The questions and responses are provided in Table 1.

Table 1:
Survey questions and responses

#	Question:	#	%
1.	Define Community Integration:	-	-
	a. No isolation;	1	03
	b. See what others do;	4	13
	c. Community activities;	2	06
	d. Trips;	3	10
	e. Part of community;	7	23
	f. What others do;	10	33
	g. Day programs;	1	03
	h. Required services;	1	03
	i. Intro to community.	1	03

Table 1 Continued:
Survey questions and responses

#	Question:	#	%
2.	Provide community integration?	-	-
	Yes	29	.97
	No	1	.03
3.	Activities part of community integration?	-	-
	a. Volunteer work;	8	27
	b. Going shopping;	21	70
	c. Movies;	15	50
	d. Go out to eat;	9	30
	e. Bowling;	8	27
	f. Church;	15	50
	g. Gym;	2	06
	h. Library;	2	06
	i. Beach;	1	03
	j. Attending plays;	2	06
	k. Attending concerts;	1	03
	l. Special events;	9	30
	m. Theme parks;	10	33
	n. Summer camps;	1	03
	o. Vacations;	8	27
	p. Dances;	11	37
q. Parties;	5	17	
r. Baseball games;	3	10	
s. Visiting relatives.	1	03	
4.	How important is community integration?	-	-
	a. Extremely important	13	43
	b. Very important	12	40
	c. Important	2	06
	d. Somewhat important	1	03
	e. Not important	1	03
5.	Possible barriers?	-	-
	a. Location	7	23
	b. Regulatory Agencies	3	10
	c. Community opportunities	14	47
	d. None of the above	6	20

Continued on page 48.

Table 1 Continued:
Survey questions and responses

#	Question:	#	%
6.	Program activities provided as per documented Facility Program?	-	-
	a. Day programs	6	20
	b. Movie nights	9	30
	c. Game nights	6	20
	d. Library	1	03
	e. Church	6	20
	f. Bowling	3	10
	g. Gardening	1	03
	h. Dinner Out	4	13
	i. Parks	2	06
	j. Shopping	11	37
	k. House chores	3	10
	l. Arts & Crafts	3	10
	m. Exercise	6	20
	n. Vacations	4	13
o. Dances	2	06	
p. Pizza/Ice Cream Socials	1	03	
7.	Have members of community attempted relationships with residents?	-	-
	a. Yes	9	30
	b. No	18	60
	c. Unknown	3	10
8.	Resident with (unpaid) friends?	-	-
	a. Yes	16	50
	b. No	11	40
	c. Unknown	3	10
9.	Difficulty providing community integration opportunities?	-	-
	a. Yes	5	17
	b. No	24	80
	c. Unknown	1	03
10.	Possible prohibition to community integration opportunities?	-	-
	a. Supervision/Staffing	8	27
	b. Cost	6	20
	c. Possible citations	1	03
	d. Transportation	6	20
	e. None of the above	11	37

Table 1 Continued:
Survey questions and responses

#	Question:	#	%
11.	Citations received?	-	-
	a. Yes	0	0
	b. No	25	83
	c. Unknown	5	17
12.	Any further information?	-	-
	a. Some behaviors are too severe to provide integration opportunities;	n/a	n/a
	b. Behaviors were an issue but it's better now;		
	c. Communities still lacking understanding of special needs so more education is needed;		
	d. Being active and thinking of everyone as family helps make everyone successful;		
	e. Resource fairs and websites available;		
	f. When we love them and teach them, they have a normal life.		

Results and Discussion

The results will be discussed in three ways. First, responses to questions will be discussed. This discussion will simply review the findings in Table 1. Second, results will be discussed from a community integration perspective. That is, we will examine what the responses reveal about respondents' understanding of community integration. Third, we will discuss the implications of the findings on future efforts at community integration of adults living in the facilities surveyed.

Nearly all, 29 of 30, out-of-home care facilities surveyed are providing activities for their residents and 83% shared that they believed providing these opportunities for residents was "Very important" to "Extremely important." Although there were a variety of responses overall, respondents considered "doing what others do" to be community integration in over 33% of responses. Additionally, respondents defined activities of integration as taking trips, participating in required services, and attending day programs. Further probing revealed 19 possible activities characterized as providing integration opportunities, which included but were not limited to going shopping, going out to eat, bowling, dances, summer camps, attending plays and concerts, as well as going to parties. Community integration was

characterized as “Very important” to “Extremely important” by 25 of 29 respondents. The greatest barrier(s) to integration appeared to be opportunities in the community. Eighteen of 30 respondents indicated they have not been approached by community members wanting to develop relationships with residents. Sixteen respondents indicated that residents had unpaid relationships with community members, and only five respondents indicated that they had difficulty finding community integration opportunities. Staffing (8), transportation (6), and costs associated with supervision (6) were the main reasons prohibiting integration opportunities. Twenty-five of the respondents indicated they had not received citations from a regulatory agency (5 were “Unsure”). The respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional information they deemed relevant, or not, in response to question 12, “Would you like to add any further information that has not been asked?” Respondents made statements that included “Some behaviors are too severe” (to provide integration opportunities); “Behaviors were more of an issue before but it’s better now”; “Communities are still lacking an understanding (of special needs and behaviors) so more education is needed”; “Being active” and thinking of everyone as “Our Family” helps make everyone successful; and “When we love them and teach them they have a normal life.” More than one provider shared, “Resource Fairs are available through Regional Centers and City websites” to help provide opportunities. Together, at face value, these responses imply solid efforts by the agencies at community integration; however, let us take a deeper look at the responses.

Understanding of community integration

Based on the above, it appears that those polled may not truly understand integration as it is not only physical presence in the community, but also becoming a part of that community socially, through presence, participation, and socialization. In short, it is the perception of those providing services that mere physical access to ones’ environment means integration has occurred.

Respondents identified most community integration activities as groups of adults with disabilities participating with other adults with disabilities such as those living in the same home/facility or “friends (with disabilities) from their day programs.” Of these, only two activities, volunteer work and going to church, were identified as activities in which participants were blended into their communities with unpaid, typical adults/peers. Still, if not facilitated appropriately, these activities may themselves be segregated.

Data bringing the false perception of successful integration to the forefront included respondents claiming that 50% of residents in their care enjoy

the company of “unpaid friends” or those not contracted to spend time with the resident. When asked to clarify, it was stated that 69% of those residents were actually spending their time with individuals they have contact with through their segregated small work groups or leisure activity clubs all exclusively for persons with disabilities. Additionally, only 3% of the residents had been approached by people from the community in attempts to build relationships. These included neighbors inquiring about gardening opportunities and barbeque fun. The data further indicated that the perception that integration attempts have been successful was false, or more likely based on the misunderstanding of what true integration is.

A few respondents commented that behaviors, sufficient staffing, and transportation issues were sometimes an issue of concern when venturing out. When specifically asked what barriers may be an issue, 47% identified a lack of community opportunities as an area of concern, even though 80% stated they had not had difficulty in providing community integration opportunities for their residents, while again demonstrating a misunderstanding of the term “community integration.” Sixty percent of respondents said no community members attempted to have relationships with residents.

Finally, 1 of 30 respondents shared a concern for regulatory agency involvement as a possible barrier to providing community integration opportunities. When asked questions regarding regulations and or requirements placed upon them by regulatory enforcement agencies, 83% of those polled denied ever being cited under Personal Rights or Criminal Record Clearance sections in relation to providing or attempting to provide community integration opportunities, while 17% stated they did not believe any citations had been received. This finding causes one to question not only if the respondent/provider understands integration but also whether the regulatory agency understands that community integration is true integration when it allows an adult with disabilities to spend unsupervised time with a person in the community—even those lacking proper criminal record clearance. If respondents were “pushing the envelope” of community integration, they would likely receive citations, including those related to supervision, personal rights, and criminal record clearance violations. However, if they are not receiving citations for the work they are currently doing in the area of community integration, then they are doing what is expected of them: they are reflecting the current policy of the regulating agency. This policy clearly is not supporting community, social integration among adults with and without disabilities. Baca and McNair’s (2013) respondents reported that they were not evaluated on client friendship development and indicated

confusion about many aspects of friendship one might think would be clearly understood. The same appears to be the case relative to the concept of community integration. The concept is not understood and therefore if there are evaluative procedures in place, they are not evaluating a true notion of community. Arguably, the procedures may actually frustrate service provider efforts at community integration.

Implication for Further Efforts at Community Integration

After a review of information and surveyed responses, using the understanding/perception of the provider/respondent criteria, it is unclear whether the DSS-CCLD is supporting efforts to achieve community integration. However, the out-of-home care community does appear to need further education in order to understand integration concepts/ideals. Additionally, they need to facilitate individuals' expression, "of needs and desires, self-advocacy, and building opportunities to learn independent skills in the community" (Heward, 2006). One must wonder in this regard how widespread this lack of understanding runs. Is the misunderstanding of community integration something that is simply a misunderstanding by a particular group of residential service providers in a particular region, or is this a misunderstanding that goes much broader? It is troubling to think that this is the actual policy position of a state-level agency providing services. As stated above, the "integration" activities described appear in line with the policies of regulating agencies as evidenced by a lack of citations. There is clearly a disagreement between human services/state perceptions of community integration and that which connects persons with disabilities by both physical presence and especially social relationships to community members who are not exclusively those who are paid or have a disability.

Some respondents, though they believed the residents in their homes to be participating in community integration, clearly stated that those residents usually spend their time with others who have disabilities, who reside in other residential care homes, who are peers in their work groups, who participate in the same social clubs, or who are staff paid to be with them. The respondents shared that they take groups of residents from their homes out into the community. This quasi-physical integration, unfortunately, is not true community integration. Wolfensberger (2004) explains that when individuals with disabilities are grouped together then taken into the community, and the community is not educated, that group is typically received negatively. Truly integrating any group requires they be a valued participant of a valued activity and not merely present in a setting. This may be a place

to start when pondering the issue of true community integration for all. All persons must be afforded the opportunity to participate in and provide services that are valued to be truly a part of that community.

Conclusions

Kim and Fox (2004) state that “our poor understanding...leads to difficulties...in order to successfully participate in society” (p. 96). The information obtained during the course of this survey further supports that without an accurate, greater understanding and acceptance of what community integration is by professionals tasked with providing it, it cannot be achieved.

The authors have often wondered at the lack of both community integration of persons living in residential facilities as well as efforts to facilitate social integration into the community. Our results seem to indicate that both the facilities providing residential services and the agencies that regulate those facilities have a foundational misunderstanding of what community integration is. The ADA improved physical access to a great extent for persons whose impairments had limited their access in the past. The ADA, taken by itself, could confuse someone into thinking that the ultimate goal of community access is exclusively physical in nature. This appears to be the understanding of many who provide and regulate residential services. However, although physical access is important, it is mostly important because of the potential it provides for social integration between people who have been segregated from each other by governmental regulations, rules of impersonal social behavior, or a lack of caring on the part of the community. The adage “Walking into a barn does not make you a horse” is very appropriate here. Simply being taken into a community, often with a group of other segregated, devalued people, does not make you an integrated community member. It appears that both regulations and practice are not taking the next steps leading to relationships, friendship and the other benefits of true community integration for people living in regulated residential services.

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A Life Well Lived:

Compassion, Altruism, and Satisfaction in L'Arche Community Homes

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to closely examine the motivations and experienced rewards of those who *practice* a life dedicated to compassionate, vocational service. This was not a study of incidental acts of kindness or the efficacy of compassionate effort. The study centered on those who have found compassion as an organizing and fundamental personal ideal—a lens through which they view the world—and demonstrate that commitment in their career choices.

The focus of this study was the directors of L'Arche communities. L'Arche is an international, faith-based network of homes comprised of people with developmental disabilities who live in community with those who provide care. Jean Vanier began L'Arche in 1964 when he invited two men with disabilities into his home with the expressed purpose to show “Christ-like” compassion. Since its inception, L'Arche has attracted those who purpose to live deep, rich, and connected lives, forming communities with those for whom care is necessary. Since L'Arche is a faith-based community, founded upon principles taught in the Christian Scriptures, biblical concepts and structures inform much of the study.

Primarily, individuals act in ways that bring about personal satisfaction. Many theorists suggest that any altruistic act, then, simply provides a cover for the self-serving motivation that lies behind it. Yet, there is evidence of individual acts of altruism throughout human history. This study concludes that individuals can, and indeed often do, act with “no thought for their own lives.” From acts of heroism in war to everyday acts of self-sacrifice performed daily by everyday people, humankind provides ample evidence of selfless behavior.

The surprising and often unintended consequence of altruistic activity is a rich, rewarding life. The lives of L'Arche Leaders illustrate a line of ethical teaching that the way to a satisfying life is to follow this biblical injunction: Those who seek to save their lives will lose them, those who lose their lives will find them (Luke 17:33).

Keywords: *compassion, altruism, vocation, faith integration*

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A Life Well Lived: Compassion, Altruism, and Satisfaction in L'Arche Community Homes

The purpose of this qualitative study was to closely examine the motivations of those who choose careers dedicated to compassionate, vocational service, focusing on the motivation to select and stay in such professions. This is not a study of individuals who commit to incidental acts of kindness. The study centers on those who have found compassion as an organizing and fundamental personal ideal—a lens through which they view the world—and demonstrate that commitment in their career choices. What makes these choices problematic is the very nature of what we commonly believe about compassion as a wholly other-directed activity versus making career choices based on one's self-interest. Are people who give themselves to compassionate vocation truly interested in the plight of others—even to the extent of limiting their own well-being or happiness? Or, to put it another way, are people ever altruistic?

Whether from an evolutionary biological, psychological, or religious perspective, it is a challenge to think through how, or why, one person might act kindly toward another with no thought for his or her own interests (Browning, 2002). Sober (2002) calls it the “puzzle” of altruism—in that this appears to be a trait or characteristic that natural selection should eradicate. The observation of nature “red in tooth and claw” seems to work against the view that there could exist some kind of behavior that should survive evolutionary selection that privileges self-preserving, self-advancing behavior (Wilson & Sober, 2002).

Yet, humans do act kindly toward each other, even at their own physical or psychological expense. Multiple theories have been offered to account for this cooperative impulse, all of which center on how individuals might act in a way that disadvantages the self, but promotes either close kin or a larger social group (see Nowak & Highfield, 2011, for a detailed summary of these theories). Centering on the idea of Multilevel Selection Theory (MLS), modern evolutionary theory seems to accept an altruistic motive to advantage the other at the expense of the self, but only if the biological group as a whole is summatively advantaged (Wilson & Wilson, 2008). Examples abound in all species of how organisms within a group sacrifice the self, from the suicidal stinging bumblebee who sacrifices its life to ward off an intruding threat to the soldier launching himself upon a grenade to save his comrades. This, then, is the extent of biological altruism, that one instinctively “lays down one's life” for kin, neighbor, or fellow species-member, but only if the group as a whole is advantaged.

Similar questions emerge among psychological theorists (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Elliott Sober, 2013). Is someone who acts on behalf of others truly interested in the other, or merely satisfying some internal psychological or existential need? Is what is proffered as “psychological altruism” truly such? That is, do we act toward someone with “no thought of the self” or do we truly have our own happiness as the ultimate goal and the other is simply a means to an end? Sober (2002) notes that the technical term for this instrumental behavior, “psychological egoism,” allows no quarter for any other motivation as fundamental—the individual only acts on behalf of the self.

The answer to these challenges may lie in what Batson and Shaw (1991) called “motivational pluralism,” that is, individuals would be able to act, authentically, out of several motivational sets simultaneously, without violating the internal integrity of any one motivation. So, a person could quite genuinely act for another’s well-being completely independent of the benefit or cost to the self.

It is against this background that the author conducted this study. It was an investigation into what motivates individuals to seek out careers in service to others and, specifically, how we are to view those motivations. Are these impressive individuals altruistic in any classic sense of the word—engaging in activity that benefits the other with no thought of the self—or is there another understanding of their motivational set that better explains why they choose this line of work?

To answer this question, a study of the directors of L’Arche communities was undertaken. L’Arche is an international, faith-based network of homes comprised of people with developmental disabilities who live in community with those who provide care (L’Arche, 2007). Since its inception, L’Arche has attracted those who purpose to live out lives dedicated to compassionate, vocational service. Since L’Arche is a faith-based community, founded upon principles taught in the Christian Scriptures, biblical concepts and structures inform much of the study. This would seem an appropriate context for this study, since *agape* love—wholly other-centered care and concern—would represent the purest form of an altruistic act and provide a test case for whether a popular understanding of altruism can exist.

Statement of the Problem

In the broadest sense, the study was a specific investigation into a broader question: Does anyone act for reasons other than their own self-interest? Batson (1991) framed the discussion most pointedly: Does altruism even exist? In order to investigate the problem, Batson posed operational definitions

of the terms “egoism” and “altruism” as the two polar-opposite ends of the motivational spectrum. Altruism is a “motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another’s welfare” (p. 8), and egoism is similarly defined as an ultimate goal but the terminus is to increase the welfare of the self. Batson assists the discussion by emphasizing “ultimate” motivations of each term, thereby dismissing as inconsequential any secondary benefit that might occur, especially to the altruist. It would not matter that individuals might feel good about themselves for helping others if their ultimate goal was other-centered behavior and they would have performed the act regardless of whether they benefitted psychologically in the end. This differentiation became an important distinction in the conclusion of this study.

Individual vocational choice traditionally is viewed as driven by what benefits the job seeker. When applicants search for positions, employers list those perks of the position that benefit the applicant: location, salary, health insurance, to name but a few (Zunker, 2011). Choosing, and staying involved in, compassionate, vocational work, however, seems to be driven by a different motivational set: disadvantaging the self to advantage the other. This motivation seems to run contrary to an evolutionary-based understanding of human behavior—in order for a species to survive, each individual in that species must act in a way to advantage itself, or at least the group. Yet, in line with a Christian understanding of love and compassion: “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13 New International Version).

The challenge addressed in this study was as follows: How are we to understand the motivation to seek out and sustain a career in compassionate, vocational work? Are those who do such work altruists or enlightened egoists? A common, popular, and biblical definition of individuals’ motivation for this kind of work is that there seems to be present a nobility of intent and purpose, something akin to altruism—a true and undiluted concern for the other. Yet, the challenge from evolutionary biology, psychology, and others suggests that no such motivation exists or may even be possible.

In addressing this challenge, the controlling question that drove this study was, Why do people become involved, and subsequently stay involved, in compassionate, vocational work? The study asked those who enter care-giving professions: “Why do you do it; why do you sacrifice the normal paths to success and satisfaction to pursue a life devoid of the usual forms of social and financial reward?”

The purpose of this study, then, was to explore the motivations of individuals who have chosen to pursue and maintain careers in compassionate,

vocational service—specifically individuals who purpose to serve in L’Arche communities. By answering these questions, the author proposes to satisfy the purpose of this study: to determine the motivations that the focus population group brings with them as they serve the disabled community.

Methodology

The study used grounded theory as its conceptual and methodological framework. Grounded theory is a general research method developed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1998) and involves the systemic collection and analysis of qualitative data usually derived from interviews, observations, documents, and video or audio recordings. The researcher, then, systematically codes this data and develops themes that help explain the phenomena being studied (for a more complete discussion of grounded theory, see Creswell, 2012).

Interviews

An interview protocol was prepared that directed the interview, and the appropriate IRB approval was granted through Claremont Graduate University. All the interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded on a computer file. Each interviewee was told that the interview was being recorded and a signal was given when the recording started and stopped. The file was sent to a transcriber who provided a verbatim transcript of the interview. The audio file of the interview was destroyed upon completion of the dissertation process. Although most interviewees gave permission for their names to be used in this study, several did not. It seemed appropriate, therefore, to use pseudonyms throughout the study.

Setting

The focus of this research was the stated motivations for vocational service, and the experienced rewards for that service, among L’Arche Community Leaders. L’Arche is an international, faith-based network of homes comprised of people with developmental disabilities who live in community with those who provide care for them. Since its inception, L’Arche has grown to 130 such communities on five continents.

L’Arche communities are organized around providing care for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Each community is led by a Community Leader whose responsibility is to provide administrative and pastoral support. Assistants provide the immediate care for the Core Members, who are so named because the philosophy of the organization is to make individuals with disabilities the central part of each community.

The Community Leaders were the focus of this study. They were chosen because the very nature of this position would arguably draw those interested in compassionate, vocational service and because the L'Arche organization has a well-earned reputation for providing compassionate care to those with intellectual disabilities (L'Arche, 2007). Additionally, the selection process for Leaders is rigorous and the decision-makers are quite careful about whom they select—making these individuals good candidates for a study with this focus.

Twelve L'Arche Leaders responded to the initial request for an interview. A second email was sent with a similar request and five more Leaders agreed to be interviewed. Finally, Leaders were asked to nominate current or former Leaders who they thought would respond favorably to a request for interviews; three Leaders responded to this request for a total of 20 Leaders. Each Leader was sent a consent form that was signed before the interview was scheduled.

Findings

The focus of this study now turns to answering this specific question: Do Leaders at L'Arche truly engage in altruistic behavior? This analysis is broken into two categories: (1) What were the motivations for choosing a life of vocational service, and (2) What rewards and benefits did the individual receive for that service? For the purpose of this examination, only six themes are presented and only a fraction of the supporting detail is provided (for a full examination of each of these themes, see: *For the joy set before them: Compassion, altruism, and satisfaction in L'Arche community homes*, Gramenz, 2007).

Motivations for choosing L'Arche. Attention is turned now to a closer examination of the initial motivation to become involved in this community; that is, did the L'Arche Leaders demonstrate altruistic motivations prior to their employment at L'Arche? L'Arche Leaders mentioned two reasons for becoming involved in L'Arche: (1) a search for meaning, and (2) a specific desire to serve the disabled community.

Theme One: A search for meaning. Mark succinctly summarized the motivation for many who came to leadership at L'Arche: “I was in a searching mode. I kind of stumbled into L'Arche.” Rita stated that she “was kind of searching for truth, if you will; some sort of understanding of what my role is in life, and what it's intended to be” (for a description of how other Leaders described this motivational set, see Gramenz, 2007). There are several ways in which to evaluate this “searching for meaning” theme. First, this search is

common to all humankind; it's an attempt to make sense of one's lifetime, to make sure that one's life is lived well and lived purposefully. It is what Plato encouraged all humans to do and suggested that to fail to do so is to live a life "not worth living."

The question raised is this: If those who sought out L'Arche were primarily driven to achieve satisfaction out of an inner drive or deficiency—in this case to find meaning and purpose in life—how is their involvement with L'Arche to be viewed? To ask the question in its most stark form: Is the pursuit of meaning and purpose in life primarily a self-centered motivation? Even if the motivation appears quite noble, especially in comparison to other motivations for action, is "the search for meaning" still not a self-serving, self-saving motivation? An equally stark answer could be: If L'Arche employment is nothing more than a means to some self-focused end—even a noble end—then those for whom the person cares are simply no more than an *instrument*; they are being used for the person's personal satisfaction project and are not valuable in and of themselves.

This analysis may seem overly harsh, but it's entirely plausible. Compassionate vocational work, this particular form of altruistic behavior, could be construed as nothing more than self-interest—enlightened self-interest, to take some of the edge off—but ultimately the purpose of the action is to benefit the self. Even in the noblest of pursuits, the question can be asked: *Cui bono?* Who benefits? If the individuals are primarily trying to "find themselves," then the effort is self-serving, no matter how many layers are added on top. This is the nature of the sharpest criticism of altruistic behavior: that ultimately *nobody* does *anything* for *anybody* that does not benefit the self even more.

The second motivation provided little improvement. For several in L'Arche, the primary motive for involvement was a search for a place to belong, a community that would accept them, care for them, and allow them to care for others. This is what Hal stated so forcefully: "What led me into my current role was my own longing for home and family." Sarah noted that, although she was not able to articulate the motivation at the time, it was "something that now I name as a sense of belonging. I didn't know it at the time. It was a sense of wanting to be part of something bigger and to feel a common mission." And, again, we are left with the same question: Is this simply just a more advanced, albeit more noble, form of self-interest?

Theme Two: Mission-oriented motivations. Many interviewees stated that they came to L'Arche because they were "on a mission"; that is, they wanted to live a life of service, were motivated by their faith, or had experiences with

disadvantaged individuals that caused them to develop an interest in serving that population. For others, they felt that they wanted to “give something back” to society, to bring about social justice. Hal stated, “I was always the defender of whoever was being bullied, which was an interesting analogy for where I am now, ’cause it also seems to be the situation here.” Yvonne declared that her desire to give was grounded in her sense of being “extraordinarily blessed” and that out of that sense of advantage she wanted to “give some of that back.” Again, what are the reasons for wanting to give away an advantage that you have received or acquired?

There is a wide range of possibilities for philanthropy: genuine gratitude for good fortune, guilt, a desire to atone for some inappropriate gain, a desire for social justice, *noblesse oblige*, and more. Yvonne gives no specific explanation as to why she wanted to “give something back.” For purposes of this analysis, and with no good reason not to, two of the better motivations will be investigated: Yvonne could have wanted to give back either out of a sense of genuine gratitude or a desire to “even the scales” of social justice. The question for this analysis is this: Does either one qualify as an act of altruism—a genuine act of compassionate behavior?

A Swedish proverb states that “A shared joy is a double joy,” and this is often what happens in these situations. The person’s sense of happiness, their joy, is “doubled” as they share their good fortune with another. The “reward,” as it were, is quite internal—no repayment is allowed—but there is most decidedly a reward: the joy of sharing good fortune.

The questions related to altruism and compassion then come into sharper focus: If someone benefits—even if the benefit is simply a greater sense of fulfillment, joy, and satisfaction—is that altruistic behavior? If someone *enjoys* helping another, is that altruism?

This same analysis is applied here as the “search for meaning” theme mentioned earlier. This motivation is not “other-centered” behavior—a seeking of what is best for another, a desire to give of the self for the benefit of another. In fact, there is little that is ultimately sacrificial in either of the two motivations. Each is primarily grounded in a desire to make something of one’s *own* life, not to contribute something to another’s. If the intention is to find self-meaning by helping others, then the motivation is to find meaning and helping others is purely instrumental.

The only conclusions that seem to be reasonable, so far, from the statements of the L’Arche Leaders is that they were drawn to compassionate, vocational work either to find meaning in their lives or to serve a particular disadvantaged community. There is no clear indication as to whether their

motivations were altruistic or if they benefited from their efforts. Before finalizing any conclusions, however, it is worth examining what the L'Arche Leaders identify as the *rewards* and *benefits* of vocational service. Motivations are completed by their satisfactions; if the Leaders were looking for something, it will tell us something of their motivational set to describe what it was that satisfied their longing.

Rewards for Service at a L'Arche Community

The second research focus of this study examines the benefits Leaders experience for their efforts at L'Arche and attempts to answer these questions: What, specifically, do the Leaders find so satisfying, so compelling about their association with L'Arche? Why, even in the face of such daunting challenges, do most Leaders say that they “wouldn't trade their time at L'Arche for the world”?

Theme Three: The intoxicating joy of community. Leaders used terms like “community,” “family,” “belonging” to describe the most valuable rewards for service at L'Arche. Leaders said that “The community gives me life” (Rita); “Community was this incredible affinity that I had never felt before in my life” (Norm); “It is being in community that is responsible for people's life being changed” (Mark); “It's a community so full, so vibrant that it is impossible to say no to” (Kim); “L'Arche is not so much an organization, it is a lifestyle” (Gina); “The relationships in L'Arche are mutually transforming relationships” (Amy); and “the feeling is so strong, that desiring it is like a hunger” (Paul).

L'Arche communities are a place where people are *loved and learn to love*. Moreover, according to the Charter of L'Arche (2007), it is *because* of the unique population of these communities that love is such a featured quality:

People with learning disabilities often possess qualities of welcome, wonderment, spontaneity and directness. They are able to touch hearts and to call others to unity through their simplicity and vulnerability. In this way they are a living reminder to the wider world of the essential values of the heart without which knowledge, power and action lose their meaning and purpose (Fundamental Principle II.3).

The Charter, then, outlines what Leaders find so compelling about L'Arche. There is no attempt to glorify community life; it is comprised of “flawed people” who are welcomed into community with all their weaknesses,

liabilities, limitations, and sins. L'Arche communities thrive because they have discovered how to handle the “worst” that life throws at individuals. L'Arche seems to be a “wonderful,” healing, and satisfying place; who would not want to live with such acceptance, such warmth?

It is not improper to wonder, then, if these Leaders offer their sacrificial, compassionate service as an “exchange” for this kind of community life. Is the care offered nothing more than the “coin” that purchases the commodity so many of the Leaders yearn for? Obviously, this is the most cynical interpretation of the motivations of Community Leaders; yet, it is one that needs to be considered in light of the topic of this investigation. To counter the cynical interpretation of the Leaders' motivations, many Leaders spoke about their deep love for their community members, especially the Core Members—Hal talked about “falling in love” with one in particular. Others talked about how much they cared for the Core Members, how they keep in touch with them, call from time to time, how they look forward to spending time with them.

It is common, however, for people to find groups that they enjoy equally as well; any fraternity or sorority can evoke the same affection. What must be remembered, though, is that the love these Leaders have for the members of this community is a love that includes love for the *marginalized* individual, the one that others have found unworthy of inclusion in society because they have *nothing to exchange*. In order to function in this community, then, in order to experience the joy of communal life, the Leader must love those whom *the rest of society has arguably chosen not to love*.

Theme Four: Brokenness, the point of entry to community. Authentic community life is founded on mutuality. Each member of a community, in order for there to be a community, must feel as if they contribute to the common good as well as benefit from association with others. It would be hard to imagine that community could exist where one group within that community always was giving, extending themselves to the other. This is not to say that such an arrangement would be impossible; there are many situations in which compassionate involvement is the only kind of interaction—the Missionaries of Charity, for example—but L'Arche is not one of them.

What makes L'Arche different from other compassion-oriented work is the shift that is made in the community's self-identity from a group in which the “healthy” ones care for the “broken ones” into a community in which all members unite in a common understanding of the unique giftedness of each member *and* the awareness that each member is “broken.” This critical distinction separates L'Arche from similar communities, and

what makes this community possible is their *unique* understanding of the nature of brokenness and its place in healing communities. It is safe to say that in L'Arche's self-understanding, a proper understanding of the nature of brokenness is the *sine qua non* of L'Arche community life.

When each member understands and owns their brokenness, the foundation of community life is formed. Hal noted that brokenness is where “grace and community begin.” It is becoming clear why that is the case: Not only does the realization of brokenness make community possible, but also the absence of that realization actually makes growth in that community impossible. L'Arche Leaders view brokenness as a universal human condition. Not only are Core Members broken, but also *all* humans are broken. Not only is the brokenness of the Core Members untreatable, but also the brokenness of all humans is, in some ways, untreatable.

What is important here is the place that brokenness plays in the development of a community like L'Arche, a community founded on compassion yet sustained by mutuality. It is this commonly held “theology of brokenness” that makes a L'Arche community possible, achievable, and sustainable. Because L'Arche communities embrace brokenness—as Carol says, “We run to brokenness, not away from it”—there can be both compassion and a community of equals. All humans are broken, some just more obviously so. Because all are broken, all are united in a common humanity; that is, no social hierarchy is possible because all humans are fundamentally flawed. “Wholeness” is an illusion, perpetrated by the accumulation of wealth, power, and prestige that deludes a person into believing that they are different, better than the rest. This understanding of a common brokenness becomes an important part in understanding the nature of altruistic behavior as it places any “benevolent one” on common footing with the one receiving the benefit.

Theme Five: The sacrifice of lesser things. As mentioned above, each L'Arche Leader was asked if they felt they had to make sacrifices in order to do their work. The Leaders identified a number of areas where they sacrificed in order to begin or continue their work at L'Arche: low pay, compromised family time, and lost opportunities were some of the sacrifices that each made. Yet, universally, they all talked about how much they had gained, how much they had benefited from their association with L'Arche. In the end, they did not feel as if it were a sacrifice at all. Perhaps Larry put it best: “If you're going to get wounded—and we're all going to be wounded; it doesn't matter who you are or what you do—try to get wounded for a good reason, and not for a bad reason, or a silly reason, or an unthinking reason.”

Everyone makes sacrifices of one sort or another to achieve something. Any person who has achieved anything of significance in life makes sacrifices; in fact, sacrifices are made every day: getting up with the alarm instead of sleeping in is the first such sacrifice most Americans make. The question is not whether sacrifices are made; the question is the nature of the sacrifice and the cause for which the sacrifice is made. There is obviously a difference between the sacrifice made to acknowledge the alarm in the morning and the one made by the mom who takes a second job cleaning gas station toilets so that her child can attend Stanford. Two things measure the quality of the sacrifice: (1) the nature of the thing given up, and (2) the end result. In these two choices, much is revealed about the nature of the one sacrificing.

Sacrifice is one part of what defines an altruistic act—one person gives up something of value for another person’s benefit. Yet, for L’Arche Leaders, their sacrifices actually were more like “investments,” partial payments for a more satisfying life. The question now becomes this: If the person giving up something is actually receiving more than what he or she gives, then what is the fundamental nature of the “sacrifice”? This seemingly paradoxical move—that sacrificing can actually result in receiving—is at the heart of resolving the altruism/self-satisfaction conflict and is developed further below.

Theme Six: Meaning and a life lived for others. As noted above, the search for meaning was among the strongest reasons for going to L’Arche, and finding meaning in the work and the community was the most satisfying. Yvonne said that “not every minute of every day—and there are some tasks that I find downright onerous—but overall, the bigger picture is that this is work that is meaningful to me.” Hal spoke of finding great purpose in “contributing to God’s work in the world, of bringing the world into a different kind of relationship, all creation coming into a unity, and this being one teeny, little piece of that work and being a part of it.” The question of meaning is independent of the questions of ease, satisfaction, and comfort. Just because something is meaningful does not mean that it won’t at times be painful, simple, or boring. Vanier writes (1996a):

This is not to say that life at L’Arche is easy and straightforward. Far from it! It is sometimes tough and demanding. We must not be idealistic about people with mental handicaps...Anger and depression remain with certain people with a mental handicap for the whole of their lives. At L’Arche, there are moments of elation, but there are also moments of great pain and anguish (p. xii).

Kim put it this way:

Often people say, “Oh, you live in L’Arche and you do the work; you must be special people.” And some of that is special. Sometimes people come to L’Arche and they think that L’Arche is going to be a special place. Then they find that it’s a place made up of people trying to do their best...But when you come expecting specialness, and you find ordinariness, you have to make a decision to appreciate the ordinariness.

Our life is just very ordinary. We’re no more special than anyone else. We’re just trying to live life in a way that takes into account being kind to each other, and I think that’s one of the things Jean talks more and more of now—this question of kindness. The importance of being kind to each other and tender to each other.... Anyway, we’re not special. *We do some things differently, but don’t put L’Arche on a pedestal.*

As remarkable as this statement may be, the same questions can be asked regarding the reward for involvement at L’Arche as were asked of the others: Is this why Leaders work at L’Arche? If so, then is this the real reason why individuals sacrifice, why they put up with the long hours and low pay? If this is indeed the case, then, again, the essential nature of altruistic work is challenged. If the reason for the effort lies in the nature of the reward, then the individual is acting out of self-interest and concern—even if the concern is an enlightened one.

Is this, then, the fundamental nature of altruism? Is this the conclusion that the evidence forces: that there is really nothing altruistic about the care that Leaders exhibit toward the recipient of their acts of sacrifice? Is all altruistic behavior simply another form of psychological algebra where the sacrifice is weighed on one side and the potential benefit on the other?

Discussion

L’Arche is not a typical compassion-based community in which relationships are permanently defined on the basis of those who *need* care and those who *provide* care. Although L’Arche certainly retains many of the common characteristics of compassion-based community life, its appeal and uniqueness lie in its self-identity as a healing-community, where the distinction between the ones who are “broken” and the ones who are “whole” is radically challenged. It is also a place where compassionate,

vocational work yields deep satisfaction for those who offer themselves in service. It is the conclusion toward which this study moves. That is, that individuals can, at once, be both altruistic *and* deeply satisfied by the same activity. Drawing on the work of Batson and Shaw (1991), we offer a solution that involves multiple concurrent motivations, held together in tension as Leaders negotiate their decisions and day-to-day activities. This “motivational pluralism” is posited, in this instance, with the conflating of two distinct motivations:

1. All humans have deep and profound needs, chief among them are the needs to be loved, to find meaning and purpose in life, and to engage in a number of activities in order to meet those needs (*self-satisfaction* motive);
2. Loving well is one of the ways in which needs are met, providing deep satisfaction to those who truly love with “no thought of themselves” (*altruistic* motive).

The challenge, then, is to resolve these seemingly contrary and conflicting motivations without violating the integrity of each, that is, to resolve the tension between the individual’s search for meaning, significance, and satisfaction in life, and sacrificial, other-centered living.

Sober (2013) notes that a singular drive to be happy, that is, to place personal happiness at the center of one’s existential project, carries with it its own paradox:

Individuals who focus exclusively on attaining pleasure or happiness inevitably fail to get what they want. They are stockbrokers who think only that they should buy low and sell high. People who have an end in view but never consider what means they should use to pursue their goal surely will fail to get what they want (p. 155).

Sober labels this the “paradox of hedonism and its irrationality” in that, it appears, for individuals to be happy, they must act in ways that take into account the other, that anyone who acts only in their own interests winds up alone, in front of a fireplace whispering the name of their childhood toys.

An ancient resolution to this tension is found in Christ’s teaching on almsgiving. There were those who made a show of their giving and made sure everyone knew of their generosity. Here are his words of correction:

Be careful not to do your “acts of righteousness” before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, *do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing*, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you (Matthew 6:1-4, italics added).

Christ did not chastise those who seek to find fulfillment through sacrificial giving, just that the process hangs on *authentic* sacrificial giving. At the moment of engagement *with the other*, the concern is *for* the other, and not how the action makes the giver look. This is the meaning of imagery of the left and right hand: keeping *ultimate* motivations separate from *current* motivation and practice.

The reward for self-forgetfulness and self-denial is “finding” the self in relationship with others. Those who were searching for meaning and purpose in life found it in L’Arche by abandoning their own concerns, by “dying to themselves” in some important ways, and living for others. By “taking no thought for themselves,” or at least lessening the hold that selfish and self-centered thinking had on them, by giving of themselves sacrificially, the compassionate ones found a life worth living. They proved the words of Christ:

Those who seek to save their lives will lose them;
Those who lose their lives will find them (Luke 17:33).

L’Arche Leaders are examples of those who find the resolution to this paradox. All L’Arche Leaders gave up something that often goes along with “saving” a life—lucrative careers, independence—and genuinely “lost” themselves in the care of something more important to them: the care and concern of others. In so doing, they found life; they found a level of deep satisfaction that at least rivals, if not outstrips, those who have spent their lives in pursuit of self-interest and self-promotion. They found life in the least likely of places: in relationship with those who live outside the edges of society. Although humans are designed to seek their own satisfaction, altruistic behavior actually increases their sense of purpose, meaning, and deep satisfaction. This seemingly paradoxical resolution of the altruism/

self-satisfaction debate is built on a solution offered thousands of years ago in the Christian Scriptures: People find their lives when they lose them; the first will be last, the last first; if anyone is to be a disciple of Christ they must deny themselves, pick up their cross, and follow. In fact, the central Christian theme is “the cross”—dying to self—as the pathway to a profoundly satisfying life. The theory suggests that humans have this ability to live in altruistic moments and actually build altruistic values and constructs. The “puzzle of altruism” is resolved, then, in the existence of apparent selfless acts by individuals in light of all that is thought to be true of human behavior. Not only do individuals assist those who are “less fit,” but also they find great joy and profound satisfaction in their efforts.

A Final Note

This study concludes by suggesting that the motives of self-fulfillment and altruism, rather than opposing each other, actually find a most satisfactory solution in each other, provided that “love must be genuine” (Romans 12:9). This is the critical distinction of those who find their lives by losing them. The loved one can, almost intuitively, sense when love is self-serving, when they are truly not the objects of the lovers concern. If love is not genuine, then the whole construct falls apart; the one essential element is missing and therefore none of the above is true—the loved one does not feel cared for and the deep satisfaction for the lover is gone.

The individual may be aware that a “life lived for others” will bring more satisfaction and a deeper sense of purpose and meaning, but the “trick,” as it were, is for the act of giving to be unconnected to the personal sense of satisfaction that awaits. The model for this is Christ, who “for the joy set before him, endured the Cross” (Hebrews 12:2); yet his death on the cross was an expression of “him emptying himself,” an expression of “his great love for us.” This is what is behind the biblical injunction that “love be genuine,” the author knowing that there is a kind of “love” that has all the appearance of being for the other but is centered solely in the individual’s own existential project. It is what Peck (1983) observed in *People of the Lie*: people whose mien is that of serving others but who disguise a selfish heart that is, ultimately, not only self-centered but also often other-destructive.

Humans have a deep, insatiable desire to find fulfillment in life, yet they are also deeply moved by the plight of those suffering and find themselves giving to causes beyond themselves. It is in being self-forgetful and self-giving where purpose and deep satisfaction are found. Compassion motivates individuals to move toward those who are suffering, often with little or no

regard for the self. This is not always the case; obviously, not everyone who feels the tug of compassion acts on those urgings, and not all those who act become entirely self-abnegating. Yet, the move toward a person in need often requires sacrificing the self in order to meet those needs, as evidenced by the subjects of this study.

This solution appears to be worth considering in the altruism/self-serving debate and an affirmation of Batson and Shaw's (1991) motivational pluralism theory. The self certainly appears capable of authentic altruism: to truly value the other, to seek the good of the other with zero, or at least reduced, thought of the self. It is this move—the separation of care for the self from reward, and reciprocity—that is the essence of altruism and the key to the nature of its beneficence. The experience of reward is often of great surprise to the altruist—self-sacrifice actually gives life; it does not take it away. Reward is not the reason altruists act, as is often demonstrated in cases in which individuals turn down rewards for acts of heroism.

As noted in this study, those who extended themselves, who gave up something of their lives, were richly rewarded for their efforts. This does not mean that the sting of the sacrifice went away; many in this study experienced losses that have stayed with them to this day. It is that the gains far surpassed the losses, often to their great surprise. This being “surprised by joy,” to use the C. S. Lewis phrase, only furthers our understanding of the self-sacrificing nature of these compassionate ones.

Altruism and self-fulfillment, then, far from being antithetical, are actually joined together. This understanding of the relationship between these two dynamics removes the need to invalidate one in favor of the other. In a “life well lived,” there is no need to dismiss the altruistic impulse in humankind: Individuals from all walks of life, and in all times, have acted compassionately and nobly; there is no need to try to diminish or discredit their actions. So strong is this motivation that humans will often even give up their lives for others, both literally and figuratively. Additionally, there is no need to invalidate the drive to find deep satisfaction in life through sacrificial service. In this instance, the other is not an instrument for the satisfaction of the self, since the only way the self is satisfied in this calculus is for love to be genuine, without regard to the repayment.

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