THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALTRUIISTIC PERSONALITY

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Social scientists from several theoretical orientations have adduced evidence that some individuals possess an "altruistic personality"—a pervasive disposition to help others ("alters"), more or less as an end in itself. We will open this chapter with a critique of these approaches, then outline a model we feel counteracts their limitations. We will propose that individuals normally acquire the capacity to perform increasingly adequate types of altruism as they develop, and that individual differences in altruism stem from the interaction between the stage structures individuals have acquired and the opportunities and demands of the social contexts they create and encounter. In contrast to approaches that assume that the amount of altruism in an individual is a function of the frequency of helping behaviors he or she displays, we will argue that there are different types of altruistic personality. Everybody possesses the capacity to engage in some forms of altruism, but individuals who have acquired the competencies intrinsic to advanced stages of development possess the potential to perform a broader array of more altruistic acts than individuals who have not acquired these competencies.

THE BEHAVIORAL CONSISTENCY APPROACH

The most prevalent psychological approach to altruistic personality is based on the assumption that individuals who consistently display a relatively high incidence of prosocial behavior across
different situations possess an internal personality trait of altruism. A major proponent of this approach, Rushton (1982), argues that because many studies have found significant positive correlations between two or more “behavioral indicies of altruism,” such as donating to charity and picking up “accidentally” spilled index cards, we should conclude that “some people are more consistently altruistic than others” (432), and therefore that they possess an “altruistic personality.”

As pointed out by Krebs (1982) and Krebs and Miller (1985), however, evidence of cross-situational consistency in prosocial behavior does not constitute sufficient evidence of altruism. There are four basic problems with the behavioral consistency approach, two conceptual and two methodological. The conceptual problems stem from the tendency of behaviorally oriented researchers to define altruism phenotypically, in terms of its external form or consequences (benefit to another), rather than in terms of its underlying motives, goals, and purposes. The assumption that behaviors that have the consequence of helping others stem from altruistic motives is gratuitous. Even if, with behaviorally oriented theorists, one is willing to assume that a behavior may be characterized as altruistic by its consequences, surely the only basis on which to characterize a person as altruistic—to say he or she has an altruistic personality—is in terms of an internal, intrinsically altruistic, person-defining source of behavior.

The behavioral approach also defines consistency from the outside, in terms of the external form and consequences of a behavior. For example, a child who helps an experimenter pick up spilled index cards in one situation and donates to charity in another is assumed to have behaved consistently because he or she performed two acts of helping. Imagine, however, that the reason why a young girl picked up spilled index cards was because she wanted to please the experimenter, and the reason why she donated to charity was because she felt sorry for poor children. Though consistent phenotypically—the subject helped others in both cases—the behaviors are inconsistent genotypically—they stem from different motives (ingratiation and sympathy), and are guided by different purposes (see Krebs 1982).

Turning to the methodological problems with the behavioral approach, experimental research on altruistic personality rarely assesses ecologically valid samples of altruistic behavior (see Krebs and Miller 1985). Experimenters select measures of altruism pri-
fpmarily for their convenience in measurement, not for their ability to represent the forms of altruism subjects display naturally. Of what relevance is the amount of money children donate to charity or the number of "accidentally spilled" index cards they pick up to the type of helping behavior they display in their everyday lives?

Finally, most evidence for altruistic personality stems from research on children. Can children possess an altruistic personality, or is altruism a quality restricted to mature adults? With Poplawski (1986, 204), we will argue that the types of helping behavior typically displayed by children are significantly less altruistic than the types of helping behavior typically displayed by mature adults.

**THE PSYCHOMETRIC APPROACH**

Another popular approach to altruistic personality is based on the assumption that if altruism is a personality trait, psychometricians should be able to develop a test to assess it. Investigators such as Rushton, Chrisjohn, and Fekken (1981) and Romer, Gruder, and Lizzadro (1986) have developed pencil-and-paper tests that purport to assess the personality trait of altruism. The Rushton, Chrisjohn, and Fekken test invites respondents to endorse or reject statements such as "I have helped push a stranger’s car out of the snow," and the Romer, Gruder, and Lizzadro test asks respondents to complete hypothetical statements such as "A child riding his or her tricycle past your house appears to be lost. You..."

The psychometric approach is equipped to assess a much larger sample of ecologically valid prosocial behaviors than the behavioral consistency approach; however, it too is limited conceptually and methodologically. Altruism is defined phenotypically and quantitatively in self-report tests as the number of different incidents of helping selected by the test maker that respondents say they have emitted or would emit. Though the range of behaviors assessed in self-report tests tends to be broader than the range of behaviors assessed in lab-based research (it is easier to ask people what they would do or what they have done in various situations than to expose them to the situations and see what they actually do), they nonetheless fail to constitute a representative sample of the types of helping behavior engaged in by the different types of people (e.g., males and females, young people and old people) who take the test. Each incident of helping is given the same weight—that is, all are considered equally altruistic. Self-report
measures fail to assess the motives guiding the helping behaviors subjects report, and they fail to distinguish between the quality of altruism intrinsic to different acts. Was the stranger in need an unattractive member of the same sex or an attractive member of the opposite sex? Whose needs were fulfilled by the prosocial overture?

Methodologically, the psychometric approach suffers from the well-known limitations of self-report measures. Unfortunately, people are not very dependable sources of information about themselves (see Gelfand and Hartmann 1982; Krebs et al. 1989). Thus, it is not really surprising that pencil-and-paper tests of altruism fare poorly on accepted criteria of validity. For example, the Rushton, Chrisjohn and Fekker test correlated only .21 with peer ratings (.33 when corrected for attenuation), and there is no evidence that individuals to whom altruistic personalities are attributed on the basis of behavioral consistency also are defined as altruistic on the basis of scores on personality tests.

In a variation of the psychometric approach, Staub (1974) gave subjects a set of conventional (validated) personality tests, and extracted a factor consisting of high scores on prosocial personality traits and values such as “responsibility,” “helpful,” and “equality,” and low scores on personality traits and values such as “Machiavellianism,” “comfortable life,” and “ambition.” Scores on this factor correlated between .40 and .50 with behavioral measures of helping across four situations.

Staub’s approach goes further than those based on self-report tests in assessing an underlying personality structure that relates to actual samples of helping behavior. The results of Staub’s research, however, do not support the notion that some individuals possess personality traits that induce them to behave “consistently” altruistically across different situations. In Staub’s (1974) words, “the relationships [between personality traits and altruistic behaviors] were affected by the surrounding conditions (treatments), the exact nature of the personality characteristics, and the nature of the help needed” (329).

In order to establish that a test assesses a personality trait of altruism, investigators must demonstrate that the trait in question gives rise to altruistic motives. To date, no study has met this criterion. (Staub [1974] does not claim to have developed a measure of altruistic personality; rather, he characterizes the personality factor he assessed as a “prosocial orientation.”) In an article
entitled "Where Is the Altruism in the Altruistic Personality?" Batson et al. (1986) contend that the prosocial behavior of individuals who score high on the personality traits assessed by investigators such as Staub is not truly altruistic. Batson et al. show that although high-scoring individuals are more likely than low-scoring individuals to help a victim in distress when escape from the distressful situation is difficult, these "altruists" are not more likely to help when escape is easy. Batson et al. conclude,

the prosocial motivation was directed toward increasing the helper's own welfare rather than the welfare of the person in need. When it was relatively difficult to escape self-censure for failing to live up to one's self-image as a good, responsible, concerned person if one did not help, scores on these scales were positively correlated with helping. But when escape was relatively easy, the positive correlations vanished. (219)

Note that the validity of Batson et al.'s conclusion hinges on their definition of altruism. Batson et al. consider helping behaviors motivated by the avoidance of self-censure egoistic. Other investigators, (for example, Bar-Tal and Raviv 1982, 202) consider behaviors reinforced by such self-rewards to be altruistic.

THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

A third approach to altruism involves case studies of individuals who have engaged in apparent acts of altruism. Investigators typically interview alleged altruists, and, in addition, may give them psychological tests and do background research on their lives. Case studies may involve single-act heroes (Blake 1978; Huston, Geis, and Wright 1976) or individuals who have devoted significant portions of their lives to helping others (McWilliams 1984; Oliner and Oliner 1988; Rosenhan 1970).

Case studies tend to be heavy on theoretical inference and light on empirical support. For example, Blake (1978) interprets the "altruistic suicide" of soldiers who smothered grenades in terms of Durkheim's conception of group cohesion. McWilliams (1984) interprets the altruism of five individuals who devoted their lives to humanitarian causes in terms of defenses such as identification with the victim and "dynamics" such as "the management of unconscious guilt and shame about hostility and greed" (193). Psychoanalysts tend to interpret altruistic personality in terms of the defense mechanism "altruistic surrender" (Kaplan 1984).
To support the contention that an individual possesses an altruistic personality, an investigator must establish that the motives underlying the prosocial behaviors the alleged altruist displays are genuinely altruistic. Let us examine the most comprehensive study on altruistic personality in the literature—a study based on the analysis of cases and other data—and determine how close it comes to meeting this condition.

Assisted by an international team of researchers, Oliner and Oliner (1988) sought out more than four hundred individuals who sheltered Jews in Europe during World War II ("rescuers"), and compared them to a group of 126 "nonrescuers," divided into those who actively resisted the Nazis and those who did not. Subjects were interviewed extensively about the circumstances surrounding their rescue behavior, and were asked to complete personality tests of social responsibility, internal-external orientation, self-esteem, and empathy. Finally, subjects were asked, in an altruism-checklist type of format, to identify the types of prosocial behavior they currently practiced. The self-reports of a substantial portion of the sample were checked against the reports of those they had rescued.

The Oliner and Oliner study improves on other approaches to altruistic personality in several ways. First, it employs a psychologically significant measure of altruism—a measure that occurred in a natural environment, usually involved considerable self-sacrifice and risk, rendered considerable gain to the recipient, was often repeated over many occasions, was characteristic of a lifestyle, and was directed toward members of a minority ethnic group. How different from making a phone call for a stranger, returning a lost wallet, giving a panhandler a quarter, or picking up spilled index cards! Second, the measure of altruism was buttressed by personality tests, background information, and a survey of current helping behavior. Third, the investigators were attentive to both personal and situational influences on helping.

On the basis of various quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data they collected, the Oliners conclude that different rescuers were guided by different types of motive. Although the most frequently attributed motive—an ethic of care or universal care—seems intrinsically altruistic, other self-attributed motives—external approval, hatred of the Nazis, and in some cases religion—do not seem to meet the Oliners' criteria for altruism. It is reassuring to note that the survivors who were interviewed also attributed
their rescuers' behavior predominantly to care and universal care, though to a somewhat lower extent than the rescuers themselves.

Perhaps the major limitation of the Oliner and Oliner study was that both rescuers and survivors reported on events that occurred some four decades ago, yet the personality tests they took and the other types of helping behavior they reported were contemporary. Although the authors offer a wealth of data to support their conclusion that rescuers possessed altruistic personalities, virtually all the data involve inferences about what motivated behavior some forty years ago. Memory is notoriously reconstructive (Loftus 1979), and self-attributions of altruism tend to be self-serving (Gelfand and Hartmann 1982). Though the Jewish survivors tended to attribute the help they received to altruistic motives, these attributions may have been enhanced by the gratitude they felt. How ungrateful to attribute the behavior of someone who saved your life to a selfish motive! Finally, as acknowledged by the authors, it is difficult to draw causal inferences from their correlational data.

Case studies of lifestyle altruists counteract many of the problems with the behavioral consistency and psychometric approaches, but what they gain in qualitative assessment, they tend to lose in experimental control. Like the behavioral and psychometric approaches, most case studies fail to establish why helpers help—the source of the behavior and its underlying motives—and therefore the extent to which the help qualifies as altruistic.

LIMITATIONS OF PAST APPROACHES TO ALTRUISTIC PERSONALITY: A SUMMARY

To summarize, we believe past approaches to altruistic personality are more or less limited conceptually for failing

1. to define altruism genotypically, in terms of an intrinsically altruistic internal motivational source that qualifies as a defining aspect of personality;
2. to supply a systematic basis for distinguishing among the different forms prosocial behavior or altruism may assume among people of the same and different ages;
3. to supply a basis for determining the adequacy of different forms of altruism; and
4. to account for the interaction between characteristics of people
and characteristics of situations in the determination of altruism.

In addition, past approaches tend to be limited methodologically for failing

1. to derive evidence of altruistic personality from naturally occurring, ecologically valid, and representative lifestyle patterns of behavior, and
2. to assess behavioral consistency in terms of its internal source.

A DEVELOPMENTAL-INTERACTIONAL APPROACH TO ALTRUISTIC PERSONALITY

We turn now to an approach that, we submit, counteracts the limitations of the approaches we have reviewed—a developmental-interactional approach to altruistic personality. This approach is based on the assumption that the overriding cognitive orientations individuals acquire with development structure the patterns of altruistic behavior they display. Viewed developmentally, individuals' capacity for altruism, like, for example, their capacity to take the perspective of others or to behave morally (but unlike, for example, their activity level or level of introversion) undergoes a set of qualitative changes. The cognitive and affective structures and associated motivational orientations that define stages of development are the genotypic factors that give rise to different forms of altruism, and, indeed, to different conceptions of its nature and value. Although all forms of altruism have in common the goal or purpose of enhancing the welfare of another, the key components of altruism—self, other, cost, welfare—assume different meanings when conceptualized in terms of different cognitive structures. True or "pure" altruism is viewed as an ideal associated with the final stages of personal and social development.

The developmental-interactional approach to altruism we will advance builds upon the following fundamental assumptions of cognitive-developmental theory:

1. People's ways of understanding their physical and social worlds are organized in terms of cognitive structures that define stages of development. Cognitive structures provide overriding perspectives on events, interpretive frameworks, and modes of meaning making that guide information processing and organize behavior.
2. People normally pass through several stages of development during their lives in an invariant sequence, acquiring cognitive structures that enable them to interpret events in qualitatively different ways.

3. Each succeeding stage structure (overriding way of interpreting events) has a greater range of applicability and is more cognitively complex, more highly organized, and more adaptive than its predecessors.

These assumptions are not controversial in their general form. A spate of studies have documented developmental changes in conceptions of the physical world (Piaget 1971), the self (Loevinger 1976; Kegan 1982), social relations (Selman 1980), and morality (Colby and Kohlberg 1987). Such studies demonstrate that people not only acquire increasing quantities of knowledge with development—that adults know more things than children—but also that adults view the world in qualitatively different ways from children. For example, in Piaget's famous conservation task, young children think the quantity of liquid increases when poured from a short, fat container into a tall, thin container because it looks bigger, but older children understand that the quantity remains the same.

A central reason why advanced cognitive structures are more adequate (better organized and more adaptive) than less advanced cognitive structures is because they are more highly differentiated and integrated. For example, in conservation tasks, young children fail to differentiate the concept of tall from the concept of amount (in their world, things are "big" or "little"; "a lot" or "a little"); and they fail to maintain an integrated conception of amount across irrelevant changes in form. In addition, as emphasized by Piaget, young children fail to understand the integrative notion of reversibility (one could pour the liquid from the tall, thin beaker back to the short, fat beaker and see that the quantity was the same).

Our application of cognitive-developmental theory to altruism is based on the following five propositions:

1. The patterns of altruistic behavior displayed by people stem from and are shaped by the developmental stage structures they have acquired: the ways in which people construe themselves, others, and the social and moral relations between them give rise to the forms of altruism they display.
2. Different stage structures give rise to qualitatively different forms of altruism.

3. Each succeeding form of altruism meets the criterion of ideal or "pure" altruism—enhancing the welfare of others as an end in itself—more fully, exclusively, precisely, and effectively than its predecessors.

4. In contrast to highly constructivistic cognitive-developmental theorists such as Piaget and Kohlberg who assume people are "in" structurally homogeneous stages of development and therefore process all forms of information in a structurally equivalent way, we assume that individuals may process different types of information in different ways. In particular, we assume individuals retain old stage structures after new ones are acquired, and invoke them in certain circumstances.

5. The forms of altruism people display result from an interaction between the stage structures available to them and the demands and opportunities in the social and cultural contexts they create and encounter.

We turn now to an elaboration of each of these five propositions.

From Stages of Development to Ideal Types of Altruism

The first proposition of the model, clearly central, states that stages structure altruism. But what stages? As pointed out by Snarey, Kohlberg, and Noam (1983), "nearly all structural theorists, to a greater or lesser degree, have suggested parallels between their own theory and the theories of others" (327). Several writers have aligned the stages of different theorists on the basis of parallels suggested by the theorists, age norms, empirically observed associations, and logical connections (see Daniels 1984; Fowler, 1984; Green and Haymes 1977; Kohlberg 1981, 1984; Loevinger 1976; Simpson 1976; Snarey 1986; Snarey, Kohlberg, and Noam 1983; Wilber 1981). Guided by this work, we aligned the stages we considered most relevant to altruism, and derived prototypic forms of altruism from the commonalities in their structure. Space does not permit a full explication of these commonalities (for that, see Krebs and Van Hesteren, in preparation), but the parallels among the stage descriptions of different theorists can be exemplified by considering the selected characterizations of Stage 3 summarized in table 6.1.
Table 6.1  
Parallels in Different Theorists’ Descriptions of Stage 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Hard,&quot; Structure-based Parallels</th>
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| **Piaget:** Early Formal Operations  
Formation of the inverse of the reciprocal; capacity to see relationships as simultaneously reciprocal; capacity to order triads of propositions or relations; beginning of reorientation from real to ideal. |
| **Selman:** Third-person and Mutual Perspective Taking  
Individual realizes that both self and other can view each other mutually and simultaneously as subjects. Individual can step outside the two-person dyad and view the interaction from a third-person perspective. |
| **Kohlberg:** Interpersonally Normative Morality  
The separate perspectives of individuals are coordinated into a third-person perspective, that of mutually trusting relationships among people. The justice operations are most clearly represented in Golden Rule role taking, which involves a second-order operation whereby concretely reciprocal exchanges are subjected to evaluation by reference to a superordinate or shared norm against which their fairness can be judged. |
| **Haan:** Interactional-Interpersonal Morality  
Assimilation of self’s interest to others’ interests as the common interest; formulation of the self as a good, cooperating person among other good, cooperating persons. |
| **Kegan:** The Interpersonal Self  
The capacity to coordinate one need system with another; enhanced empathic capacity and orientation to reciprocal obligation; others construed as being required to bring into being and to complete the self. |

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<th>&quot;Soft,&quot; More Content-based Parallels</th>
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| **Selman:** Intimate and Mutually Shared Friendships  
Friendships are seen as a basic means of developing mutual intimacy and mutual support. |
| **Kohlberg:** Interpersonal Normative Morality  
Emphasis on being a good, altruistic, or prosocial role occupant and on good or bad motives as indicative of general personal morality; particularly concerned with maintaining interpersonal trust and social approval. |
| **Loevinger:** Conformist Stage  
Perceiving self and other as conforming to external, socially approved norms, valuing of niceness, helpfulness, and cooperation. |
| **Gilligan:** Goodness as Self-Sacrifice  
Moral judgment comes to rely on shared norms and expectations; survival is seen to depend on acceptance by others. |
Table 6.1
Parallels in Different Theorists’ Descriptions of Stage 3 (cont.)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eisenberg</td>
<td>Approval and Interpersonal Orientation</td>
<td>Stereotyped images of good and bad persons and behaviors and/or considerations of others’ approval and acceptance in justifying prosocial or nonhelping behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maslow</td>
<td>Love, Affection, and Belonging Orientation</td>
<td>Strong need for affectionate relations with people in general.</td>
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When considering the relationships among the stages described by different theorists, it is important to distinguish between the conceptual parallels among them based on similar cognitive operations and orienting concerns and the empirical tendency for people actually to be in isomorphic stages of development. Ideal types of altruism may be derived logically from structural commonalities among parallel stages of development without implying that people actually reach the parallel stages at the same time. We will return to this issue when we discuss the fourth proposition of our model.

From Cognitive Structures to Altruistic Behavior. The primary functions of the cognitive structures that define stages of development are to process information, interpret events, and endow phenomena with meaning. How do such meaning-making processes give rise to altruistic behaviors? In our model, there are three main routes. First, certain cognitive acquisitions are necessary, but not sufficient, for certain forms of behavior. Second, interpretations of events generate and structure affective states, which, in turn, give rise to corresponding motives. Finally, people are motivated to behave in ways that are consistent with their values and conceptions of themselves.

Space permits only a brief elaboration of this very complex issue. First, you must know someone needs help before you will feel motivated to help him or her. As elaborated by Krebs and Russell (1981), perspective taking is an important means of acquiring knowledge about others’ needs. Although perspective taking may not be sufficient to induce altruism—an individual may perceive that another needs help, yet not feel like helping—“the salient recognition that a person needs help evokes in most people an
uncomfortable state akin to a lack of closure or a sense of cognitive inconsistency that presses for resolution. Helping is one way to resolve this type of cognitive discomfort" (Krebs and Russell 1981, 161).

Second, as elaborated by Hoffman (1982), stages of perspective taking structure the affective reactions intrinsic to empathy, which constitute motives for behavior. Knowing another person feels bad (or good) may make an observer feel bad (or good). Psychologists have no difficulty explaining people's tendency to enhance their own state of well-being (Wallach and Wallach 1983). As shown by Aronfreed (1968), Krebs (1975), and others, one way to make yourself feel good is to help someone with whom you are identified, and experience his or her pleasure or relief from pain vicariously.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the value people place on their conceptions of themselves as moral and altruistic people may induce behaviors that support these self-conceptions. Awareness of another's need and the sense that another should be helped are relatively impotent sources of action when dissociated from the self. We all know that millions of people are starving, and virtually everyone agrees that starving people should be helped, but this knowledge does not impel most of us to action because most of us do not feel responsible either for the plight of starving people or for alleviating it.

Theorists from different orientations have developed the general idea that behavior is structured by conceptions of self and ideal self. For example, from an information-processing approach, Markus (1983) suggests that self-schema contain motivational dispositions and behavioral strategies. More cognitive-developmentally, Blasi (1980, 1983, 1984) and Blasi and Oresick (1986) suggest that people behave morally in order to be true to their essential definitions of themselves. Cialdini et al. (1987) have shown that the affirmation of oneself as an altruistic person induces positive affect, and other researchers (e.g., Grusec 1982) have shown that inducing individuals to attribute their behavior to altruistic motives (i.e., to believe they are altruistic people) increases the probability of future altruistic behavior.

**A Developmental Typology of Altruism**

The second proposition of our model asserts that different stage structures give rise to qualitatively different forms of altruism. The
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ideal types of altruism we derived from the aligned stages of relevant developmental theorists are outlined in table 6.2.

In presenting this typology of altruism, we must acknowledge a controversy surrounding the final stage—the pinnacle of the scheme. Strictly speaking, the principles of justice that define Stage 6 in schemes such as that of Kohlberg direct people to treat others fairly, not altruistically. For example, in distributing resources, principles of justice do not direct individuals to give others more than their share; they direct them to give others what they deserve (see Krebs 1982). Kohlberg and Power (1981) acknowledge this point, and suggest that some individuals may develop a Stage 7 orientation that is, in a sense, "beyond justice"—an "ethic of responsible universal love, service, or sacrifice—an ethic of supererogation" (349). In this sense, the apogee of altruism would seem to lie beyond Stage 6.

The general correspondence between our typology and those derived from other theoretical perspectives (see, for example, Bar-Tal and Raviv 1982; Oliner and Oliner 1988; Reykowski 1982) supplies a certain measure of concurrent validity for the scheme. However, our typology differs from those of other theorists in several important respects. Such differences should serve as the basis for research designed to evaluate the predictive ability of each typology. With this overview, we turn to the third proposition of our model, to a justification of the assumption that each form of altruism is more altruistic than its predecessor.

Why the Types of Altruism That Stem from Advanced Stages Are More Altruistic Than the Types That Stem from Less Advanced Stages

What makes one form of prosocial behavior more altruistic than another form? Our answer to this question is, the extent to which it is (a) directed toward enhancing the welfare of others, and (b) performed as an end in itself. All behaviors produce a complex array of costs and benefits for self and others. The amount of altruism effectively engendered in an act can be viewed as a ratio between the net benefits (benefits minus costs) it produces for others and the net benefits it produces for self. As pointed out earlier, most psychological research on altruism defines benefit quantitatively and phenotypically—the amount of money donated, the number of index cards picked up, the time elapsed before inter-
Undifferentiated Affective Responsiveness (Stage 0)

Survival-maintaining prosocial behaviors such as smiling and cooing are emitted reflexively in response to stimuli associated with the satisfaction of basic physiological needs. The self is undifferentiated from others. A global, undifferentiated tendency to feel overt signs of affect in others mediates primitive empathic reactions.

Egocentric Accommodation (Stage 1)

Egocentric accommodation is oriented mainly to fulfilling safety and effectance needs. This form of behavior is responsive to external, situational demands, especially the demands of authorities, and to overt signs of distress in others (e.g., crying); it tends to be accommodating, physical, material, superficial, inappropriate, and egocentric (the individual gives others what he or she would want). Fulfilling requests, imitating adults, and behaving in ways that evoke positive reactions from others are prominent forms. Empathic responsiveness to the distress of others is aimed at relieving the self’s discomfort. The central goals of egocentric accommodation are to do what one is supposed to, to ingratiate oneself to those in power, and to foster feelings of security.

Instrumental Cooperation (Stage 2)

Instrumental cooperation is directed toward doing one’s share in concrete exchanges with others. The currency is mainly material, and exchanges tend to be situationally specific and temporally constrained. This form of prosocial behavior is attentive to the subjective needs, intentions, and motives of others, but mainly as factors to be considered in exchanges. Instrumental cooperation may be compromising and cooperative. Tit for tat reciprocity is the prototypic form. The orientation is individualistic and pragmatic, but rule-governed and fair, accepting others’ reciprocal right to maximize their gains. The central goal of instrumental cooperation is to give in order to get.

Mutual Altruism (Stage 3)

Mutual altruism is sensitive to the audience of “generalized others” and aimed at fulfilling shared role obligations, avoiding social disapproval, sustaining a good reputation, upholding bonds of friendship, securing one’s place in one’s reference groups, conforming, and behaving in a socially acceptable manner. A consciousness of "we" overrides the sense of "me": self-interest is assimilated in shared interests and relationships. Mutual altruism tends to be idealistic and is guided by values such as trust, care, friendship, altruism, cooperation, loyalty, solidarity, intimacy, and a sense of belonging. It is oriented toward fulfilling the ongoing subjective needs of those to whom one is attached, within the bonds of propriety. A driving force behind mutual altruism is to sustain one’s conception of oneself as a good person in the eyes of those with whom one identifies.
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Table 6.2
Forms of Altruism (cont.)

Conscientious Altruism (Stage 4)

Conscientious altruism is oriented toward fulfilling internalized, self-defining obligations to assist in maintaining the institutions of one’s society even when such obligations violate the expectations of reference groups. This form of prosocial behavior is guided by an internal sense of social responsibility and conscience. Conscientious altruism is mediated by the desire to uphold the norms that guide self and others in doing their fair share to maintain the social system that fosters the welfare of its members (including oneself). It upholds the values of conscientiousness, responsibility, honor, and good citizenship, and is based on a realistic recognition of the complexity of self, others, and social relations. The central goal of conscientious altruism is to fulfill internalized social responsibilities.

Autonomous Altruism (Stage 5)

The source of autonomous altruism is more internal than the sources of previous forms, based more in high order principles than in external laws, norms, or social conventions. This form of altruism is guided by internally held values such as upholding human dignity and equal rights, and maximizing benefits for all. It is based on a deep appreciation of individual differences, which mediates enhanced tolerance, and extends principles such as liberty, equality, and justice to all. Autonomous altruism is both more discriminating than earlier forms—proffered only when it upholds internalized values—and more universal, rendered impartially to others regardless of ethnic origin, nationality, and so on. The central goal of autonomous altruism is to uphold self-chosen, internalized utilitarian values.

Integrated Altruism (Stage 6)

Because the self-other dichotomy is transcended when individuals’ sense of self becomes fully integrated with their sense of humanity, the self’s interests become integrated with the interests of others. Upholding the rights and ultimate welfare of all people, including oneself, entails upholding the principles underlying these values. Altruism is proactive and directed toward service to humanity (of which the self is a significant, yet relatively small aspect). Altruism is guided by humanitarian principles that prescribe that individuals give in accordance with their abilities and receive in accordance with their need. The inevitability of conflicts is recognized. Decisions are guided by self-consciously applied, procedurally oriented, just principles of mutual respect, impartiality, and fairness. The central goal of integrated altruism is to foster perfectly balanced and integrated social relations.
Table 6.2
Forms of Altruism (cont.)

Universal Love (Stage 7)

Altruism stems from a cosmic feeling of oneness with the universe, identification with the species and with the Ultimate, active compassion for a commonwealth of beings, a full sense of responsibility for the welfare and development of all people, especially the disadvantaged. "Stage 7" altruism is selfless, stemming from agape, an ethic of responsible universal love, service, and sacrifice that is extended to others without regard for merit. "Stage 7" altruism upholds the dignity of its recipients, freely giving up, perhaps not even considering, the self's just claims. The central goal of universal love is to mesh with an ultimately transformed and coordinated nonviolent world.

vening in an emergency—and it focuses exclusively on the welfare of the recipient. But the net benefits of an act also are a function of its quality and "purity." We propose that, relative to earlier stage structures, advanced stage structures give rise to the capacity and motivation to engage in (a) greater quantities of altruism, (b) forms of altruism that contribute more fully to the welfare of others, and (c) altruistic acts more purely directed toward the enhancement of the welfare of others.

Individuals motivated to behave altruistically can be viewed as facing a complex set of problems. Such individuals must determine whether others need or want help, whether potential recipients deserve to be helped, and who should render the assistance. When there is more than one person who needs help—and in the broadest sense there always is— aspiring altruists must decide how to allocate their altruism. After the decision to help is made, the altruist must decide what kind of help to render—which act or acts will enhance the welfare of recipients most fully. Finally, the altruist must be honest with himself or herself about the motivational pulls of various alternatives—what's in it for me?

We argue that the types of stage structure individuals invoke in altruism-evoking situations determine how they solve these problems. Individuals who possess sophisticated cognitive abilities (advanced stage structures) are better able to understand others' needs, to determine who deserves to be helped, to decide who is responsible for helping, and to figure out the most effective ways of helping than those with less sophisticated abilities; thus, they end up engaging in more altruistic forms of helping.
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The general reason why advanced stages give rise to more adequate forms of altruism than earlier stages is because they are more highly differentiated and integrated. The processes of differentiation and integration act on individuals' conceptions of themselves, others, welfare, rights, and duties in ways that shape the quantity and quality of altruism. Indeed, the concept of quality implies exactness, fine tuning, and intricacy (differentiation), coordinated into meaningful and balanced forms (integration). More specifically, we contend that advanced (more highly differentiated and integrated) stage structures give rise to more altruistic motives and behaviors than earlier stage structures in six interrelated ways: (1) they enable individuals to understand the needs of others more fully, precisely, and deeply, (2) they mediate the distinction between self and other necessary for individuals to direct their altruism exclusively toward the needs of others, (3) they mediate an orientation toward an increasingly broad range of recipients, (4) they give rise to the insight necessary to enhance the welfare of others most fully and effectively, (5) they enable individuals to allocate their altruism most fairly to those who deserve it, and (6) they mitigate against denial and evasion of responsibility. These points are elaborated by Krebs and Van Hesteren (in preparation).

On the Definition of Altruism. Trivers (1971) considers Stage 2 reciprocity altruistic, but most psychologists consider such behavior “instrumental.” Bar-Tal and Raviv allow that altruists may “experience self-satisfaction or raised self-esteem as a result of the performance of the act” (1982, 202), but Batson et al. (1986) and Cialdini and Kenrick (1976) consider helping behavior that makes people feel good (about themselves) intrinsically egoistic, and Rykowski and Karylowski suggest that true altruism must spring from exocentric motives.

Viewing altruistic behavior developmentally supplies a basis for resolving such definitional differences. From a developmental perspective, egoism and altruism are not mutually exclusive traits, but two poles of a continuum marked on one end by an ideal conception of pure selfishness, and on the other by an ideal conception of pure altruism, neither of which may actually exist. Pure egoism entails behaving in a manner that serves only the self. Pure altruism entails voluntarily behaving in a manner exclusively directed toward the maximum enhancement of the welfare of others as an end in itself. The types of altruism outlined in table 6.2 all
fall within the domain of altruistic behavior in the sense that they are all directed toward enhancing the welfare of another; however, each type is more altruistic than its predecessor because it meets the ideal of altruism more adequately. From our developmental perspective, helping in order to maintain a positive self-image (Stage 3) is more altruistic than helping in order to reciprocate a favor (Stage 2), but it is less altruistic than helping to uphold high-level moral principles (Stage 6).

This is not to say that the source of altruistic behavior is the only factor that needs be weighed in the calculus of altruism. Individuals who engage in large quantities of low-stage altruism might be said to behave more altruistically than individuals who engage in occasional acts of high-stage altruism. The net altruism displayed by an individual might best be viewed as some multiplicative function of the quantity and quality of the helping behaviors he or she displays (with quality defined by the stage structures from which the altruism stems).

The Structural Consistency of Altruistic Behavior

In the fourth proposition, we turn to the interactional aspect of our model. To what extent do individuals actually manifest the ideal types of altruism outlined in table 6.2? For the sake of the theoretical elegance of our model, it would be nice if people developed as highly integrated wholes, and therefore displayed highly consistent patterns of behavior across social and cultural contexts, but with theorists such as Snarey, Kohlberg, and Noam (1983), we do not believe the evidence supports such an assumption.

This issue, of course, has been investigated empirically. Some investigators have reported significant disparity between development in different domains (see Turiel 1983); other investigators have observed a great deal of homogeneity across domains (see Lambert 1972); and still others have found that cognitive development is necessary but not sufficient for the development of perspective-taking skills, which in turn is necessary but not sufficient for moral development (see Walker 1986). Flavell (1982) reviews the evidence on the homogeneity of cognitive development, and concludes that there are some senses in which it is homogeneous and other senses in which it is heterogeneous.

Clearly, people do not change in every way all at once, but
equally clearly, people do not develop independently in every domain. Individuals may differ in the shape of the distribution of the stages they have acquired, both between and within domains. Those with constricted distributions may display considerable consistency in their behavior, whereas the behavior of those with flatter distributions may be significantly more variable (see Krebs et al. 1991).

**Person-Situation Interactions**

The issue of between- and within-stage homogeneity is closely related to the question of the nature of the interaction between stage structures and situational factors in the determination of altruistic behavior. Strongly constructivistic theorists such as Kohlberg argue that individuals interpret virtually all issues in terms of their current developmental level. Other theorists (e.g., Damon 1977; Fischer 1983; Levine 1979; Rest 1983) advance more interactional positions. For example, Levine (1979) suggests that old stage structures are retained by individuals, and employed in situations that "pull" for them.

Evidence from our own research program and that of others gives rise to the final proposition of our model, that altruism results from an interaction between the stage structures available to people and the demands of the social and cultural contexts to which they are exposed (see Krebs et al. 1991, for a review of the evidence). The highest stages acquired by individuals set an upper limit on the stages available to them, and although abilities within and between domains tend to consolidate around a modal stage structure, individuals may "regress" to lower stages in situations that pull for lower-stage behavior. Altruism is both "pushed" out of people by internal stage structures and "pulled" out of people by altruism-evoking situations. In this sense, cross-situational consistency is in part defined by consistencies in the "pull" exerted by situations on cognitive structures (see Fredericksen 1972).

Situations differ in their power to elicit uniform behavior. In strong situations such as suddenly encountering someone who needs immediate, low-cost help, virtually everyone helps (see Piliavin et al. 1981). In weaker situations, more variance is controlled by between-person factors such as stages of development (see Snyder and Ickes 1985). Similarly, stage structures differ in
their power to "construct" situations, with higher stages containing more constructive power than lower stages. In general, the behavior of individuals at low stages of development is more situational than the behavior of individuals at higher stages (see Kohlberg 1984); indeed an external, situational orientation is one of the defining characteristics of low stages of development.

To summarize, deriving ideal types of altruism logically from commonalities among equivalent stages in different developmental domains does not imply that development is highly homogeneous psychologically—that is, that individuals tend to be in isomorphic stages across domains—or that individuals will display only one type of altruism. Individuals differ in the homogeneity of their structural development, and altruism stems from an interaction between the stage structures available to people and the situations evoking them. Although it is unrealistic to expect a high degree of behavioral consistency across small samples of situations, individuals' dominant stage structures should determine the general form of their helping behavior across the wide ranges of situations they encounter in their everyday lives, especially those they choose or fashion. As shown by Epstein and O'Brien (1985), behavior tends to be "situationally specific and unstable at an individual-item level," but "general and stable at the aggregate level" (533) (see also Zeldin, Savin-Williams, and Small 1984).

THE VALUE OF A DEVELOPMENTAL-INTERACTIONAL APPROACH

If a developmental-interactional approach to the study of altruistic personality has merit, it should be equipped to counteract the limitations of past approaches. We conclude by suggesting ways in which this is the case.

In a developmental approach, altruism is defined genotypically, in terms of the structures that define stages of development, not in terms of its phenotypic consequences. Prosocial behaviors that look identical from the outside—for example, inserting coins in a donation can—mean quite different things when they stem from different stage structures. A person who donates to charity out of a (Stage 4) sense of social responsibility is viewed as behaving more altruistically than a person who engages in exactly the same behavior to conform to the (Stage 3) expectations of an experimenter
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in a psychological experiment. Similarly, the criteria of consistency for stage-based altruism lie in the defining characteristics of stages, not in the frequency of helping across different situations. For example, at Stage 1, behavioral consistency would be defined in terms of avoiding punishment and obeying authority, at Stage 2 in terms of instrumental exchange, and so on.

The genotypic sources of altruism emphasized in our approach—cognitive structures—are more broadly based and person defining than personality traits. Unlike personality traits, which are assumed to compete with one another or to combine quantitatively for control over behavior, cognitive structures organize and integrate experience qualitatively. They determine the meaning and value individuals assign to events, and are integrally tied to individuals’ views of themselves and others. Stages give rise to overriding motives and guiding orientations; traits supply more situationally specific refinements. For example, the personality trait need for approval would be expected to buttress altruism at Stage 3, whose defining structure places a positive value on meeting the expectations of others, but to oppose it at Stage 5 in situations where it is necessary to defy the expectations of a reference group to uphold the rights of an outsider.

As implied in the discussion of other issues, the developmental approach supplies a basis for distinguishing among different types of altruism, namely, in terms of the structures that define stages of cognitive, personal, social, and moral development. From this perspective, children are expected to display different types of altruism from adults, and immature adults are expected to display the forms of altruism characteristic of children. (See Poplawski [1986] for a typology of “adult altruism” that corresponds quite closely to the developmental types in table 6.2.)

The heart of the model advanced here lies in the proposition that the forms of altruism that stem from relatively high stages of development are more adequate (more altruistic) than the forms of altruism that stem from lower stage structures. In addition to the arguments advanced earlier, evidence of hierarchical inclusion, increasing differentiation and integration, the longitudinal tendency for people to go through stages in order, and other evidence advanced by stage theorists for their stage schemes constitute evidence for the increasing adequacy of the behaviors to which they give rise.

Finally, the developmental-interactional approach is attentive to
the dynamic interaction between stage structures and situations. Individuals are not expected to display highly homogeneous, “pure” types of altruism; everyday experience demonstrates that they don’t. Rather, the forms of altruism people display are expected to result from the interaction between the stage structures available to them and the types of situations they encounter and create.

The proper place to look for the behavioral manifestations of broadly based internal dispositions such as those reflected in stages of development is across comparably broadly based samples of behavior, not in specific responses to specific situations (especially situations unrepresentative of those people customarily encounter). This point is exemplified persuasively by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) in their research on the relationship between attitudes and behavior. It is people’s behavior in the situations they create, select, and define, not their forced-choice behavior in unnatural laboratory contexts, that reflect their cognitive structures, values, and orientations toward altruism.

Of course, it is more difficult to obtain ecologically valid samples of naturally occurring helping behavior than to assess isolated acts in a lab. Self-report measures are convenient, and they can be employed to assess lifestyle patterns of behavior, but, from a structural perspective, they should be more open ended and they should probe more deeply the motives that give rise to behaviors than the self-report tests customarily employed in research on altruism. In addition, self-reports should be validated against more objective measures such as ratings by friends, acquaintances, and colleagues, and naturalistic observations of behavior.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have argued that altruism is a product of the interaction between the ways in which individuals process information and the information they process. Individuals at all stages of development may perform altruistic acts, but they tend to do so for different reasons. One individual might rescue Jews because an authority tells him to; a second because she anticipates some payoff; a third because he empathizes with the Jews’ plight; a sixth because she believes all people have a moral obligation to care for others in need. Although each of these acts may produce the same basic result, they vary in the extent to which they meet the ideal of altruism. To determine the degree of altruism in an act, we must
identify its source and purpose. In the right place and the right time, everyone may engage in some form of altruism, but across places and across times, we would expect only those who have reached high stages of cognitive, affective, personal, and social development to display consistently the patterns of behavior others would consider truly altruistic.

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