

The development of altruism



The development of Altruism. Altruism is a term that derived from the Latin language, means “ to others” and “ of others”. It served as an antonym for “ egoism” that refers to other-regarding behaviors. According to the literature, the definition of altruism contains many facets. Author of “ The Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a Common Humanity”, Kristen Renwick Monroe, defines altruism as “ entailing action, with no conditions or reward-seeking, that is intended to benefit another without regards to the personal diminution that may occur.” Intentions count more than consequences, says Monroe.

The definition of perception of a common humanity can be attributed to Monroe as the belief that we are all “ of the same human family.” She puts forth that this perception is necessary for altruism to exist. She says that perception of a common humanity is the very heart of altruism. In her essay, “ Explicating Altruism,” Monroe further explains the concept by describing the altruists whom she interviewed. She asserts that they all believed they were an inextricable part of a shared humanity. They were unable to think of themselves as separate from those individuals who needed their aid. Thus, when they were asked why they chose to act altruistically and potentially put themselves at risk, they responded, “ What else was I to do? They were human beings, like you and me!” This response showed that “ identity trumps or severely constrains (the altruist’s) choice.” Monroe summarizes the theory, “ A (perception of a common humanity) constitutes such a strong core that (the actor) has no choice in their behavior towards others. . .”

Altruism is rooted in genetics (Rushton 1991) and could be the cause of family favoritism and the selection of marriage partners. It includes “ a

motivational state (where)" (Batson and Shaw 1991) " actions are meant to benefit another person" (Batson 1992), " at a cost to themselves" (Batson 1992; Darlington 1978), "(that are) voluntarily done" (Batson 1992) " and requires a group of two, at least" (Darlington 1978; Masters and Pizarowisc 1975) "(with participation) without coercion" (Kennett, 1980). One author quoted the Oxford English Dictionary for his definition: " Altruism -Devotion to the well-being of others as a principle of action" (Kennett 1980). Another broke altruism down into its components to define it: the parts are arousal, where the giver's attention is drawn to someone's need; perception, where the giver evaluates the situation to determine what should be done and by whom; and, finally, action, where the giver commits to his response (Losco, 1986).

The features of altruism are varied. They include one-way and reciprocal altruism (Darlington 1978); (Masters and Pizarowisc 1975; Tulberg and Tulberg 1996), profitability (Darlington 1978), empathic (Batson 1982; Losco 1986), kin altruism (Tulberg and Tulberg 1996; Kotikoff, Razin, and Rosenthal 1990; Darlington 1978), and competing altruism (Kotikoff, Razin, and Rosenthal 1990). It is not self-sacrificing and may be both altruistic and egoistical at the same time (Batson 1992).

There may be gender differences in when and how altruistic behavior occurs. A test for this, using the modified dictator game, asked the question, " Which is the fair sex?" The test focused on the " cost" of altruism. The findings suggest that men are more likely to be perfectly selfless or perfectly selfish, while woman are more likely to share equally (Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001).

Reciprocal altruism is the type of altruism where the giver provides service to protect the relationship that he has with the receiver. He is motivated or compelled to serve to insure that the relationship is protected and to insure that when/if he is in need of service there is someone to whom he can reach out (Batson and Shaw 1991). There may be an “altruistic personality.” Citing a “Character Education Inquiry” carried out in the 1920s with findings published through the 1930s, Rushton suggested that some children were consistently altruistic, but not always. The findings also suggested that a person could be altruistic in one situation, and egoistical in another (Rushton, 1982). Further, Rushton found that there is a significant increase in altruistic behavior in a child if those around him model such behavior (Rushton 1982). The usefulness of character education and opportunities to serve others made available to students in schools grade K-12 were examined (Batson and Shaw 1991).

Not surprisingly, there are dissenters. One might ask why there is a need for altruistic behavior to benefit another at a cost to the giver with no thought of reward or benefit. Is it not possible to render service to another in distress because seeing that distress is distressful to us? Must altruism and its good-works behavior be a part of human nature? Could the behavior not be attributable to our socialization (Mook 1991)? In her book, *The Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a Common Humanity*, Monroe argues that the perception of another individual’s humanity is a critical explanatory variable in all altruists. They recognize that they are “strongly linked to others through a shared humanity.” She argues that it is truly the “heart of altruism.” This supersedes all other triggers from genetic predisposition to

altruism, to parental exhortation to act altruistically, to a situation where another's needs are apparent. Without the perception that we are all a part of the same humanity, altruism would cease to exist.

Theoretical Framework

Many theories try to explain about helping behaviours (Baron & Bynne, 2000). The theoretical perspectives included kin selection theory, reciprocal altruism, negative state relief model, social exchange theory and the empathy-altruism hypothesis. Kin selection theory argued the nature of inheritance of helping behaviour, but other theories (reciprocal altruism, negative state relief model, social exchange theory) are more based on behaviours that are learned through a system of incentives or rewards from the environment. Even the empathy-altruism hypothesis was not immune from calculation of gains and losses that arise in the concept of social exchange concerns. Kin selection theory explained altruism in terms of evolutionary perspectives (Bell, 2001; McAndrew, 2002). Natural selection occurs to filter out species that do not have the ability to adapt changing environment. Good nature and superiority of genes inheritance is important for future generations' survival. Kin selection refers to the tendency to perform behaviours that can improve the survival chances of people with the same genetic basis. Experiments conducted in the UK support this kin selection theory. Results show that person is more willing to provide assistance to others with higher relationship, and this happens to both sexes and various cultures. The results also showed gender differences in kin selection, where male are more affected on the basis of genetic similarity than women.

Kin selection is an evolutionary theory that proposes that people are more likely to help those who are blood relatives because it will increase the odds of gene transmission to future generations. The theory suggests that altruism towards close relatives occurs in order to ensure the continuation of shared genes. The more closely the individuals are related, the more likely people are to help.

Reciprocal altruism is the incentive ideas for individuals to help someone when it is based on the expectation of the things that are potentially acceptable in the future. Trivers (2002) believed that it would be beneficial for living things to suffer losses in her life for other creatures that are not related, if it is paid back, only if the benefits gained can cover any losses incurred. Pattern of frequent helping improves productivity and social position.

Three interactional (rationalistic) theories

“ Interactional theories (such as neoclassical economics and behavioral psychology), based on rationalistic accounts, explain action mainly in terms of environmental incentives. “ There are three major interactional (rationalistic) theories of altruism, viz., “ ego-istic,” “ egocentric,” and “ altercentric.” I call them “ interactional” because, despite their differences, they model action after the standard economic approach, viz., as the outcome of optimization (see Khalil, 2003b). The egoistic perspective, best expressed in the work of Robert Axelrod, maintains that altruistic assistance would be offered if one expects future benefit. The “ egocentric” view, affiliated with Gary Becker, argues that the donor’s utility function includes

the utility of potential recipients. That is, the donor would give if the enjoyment of watching the pleasure of others exceeds his satisfaction of consuming the said commodity. The "altercentric" approach ("alter" after the Latin "other") can be surmised from the works of Robert Frank and Herbert Simon. It views the benefactor's action as stemming from a personality trait that arises from artificial selection."

Three self-actional (normative) theories

Self-actional theories (dominant in sociology, anthropology, and Freudian psychology), based on normative accounts, explain action mainly in terms of inner or external norms or structures of the mind, culture, society, psyche, and so on. Thus, according to self-actional accounts, given that action springs from norms, action is inflexible in the face of environmental stimuli or incentives." (Khalil, 2004)

There are no gender differences in altruistic behavior within the sixth-grade students (Johnson, 2000). In High school classes, the boys are consistently giving more than girls regardless of cost (Johnson, 2000). However in college, the girls give a great deal than boys do when the costs are low, while the cost are high, both gender a giving comparable amount (Johnson, 2000). In the study of Johnson (2000), there are no gender differences in grade school students and high school students. However, women in college are more altruistic regardless of cost.

Motivation of Altruism

Negative-state relief model stated that people help each others are actually based on egoism (Cialdini, 1991). Egoistic motivation help to encourage someone else to reduce the personal distress suffered from the knowledge of the situation of people who are in such bad circumstances. Helping behaviors are only occurs if the personal distress cannot be alleviated by the measures. Thus, this model explains why people have avoided people in need, because it arose as another way to reduce distress. People who have negative feelings of guilt are more motivated to help than having a neutral emotion. However, once a negative mood decreased with a compliment, people are not highly motivated in helping.

According to social-exchange theory, people help because they want something better from the people they helped (Zavirovski, 2005). People calculate costs and rewards from helping others, and aims to maximize profits and minimize loses, known as the minimax strategy. The rewards are a form of incentives, which could be material objects, social recognitions, which can improve the image and reputation (e. g, praise) or self-esteem. Benefits can be either external or internal. External rewards are the things that got from others when help them, such as friendship or gratitude. People are happier to help interesting or more important people that theirs approval are expected. Internal rewards generated by themselves when they help, such as better feeling or complacency. Before helping, people will consciously calculate cost and rewards from helpful or not helpful, and they are generally will provide help if they can gain greater profits.

Based on empathy-altruism hypothesis from Batson (1991), helping behaviors will be initiated when the empathy levels of a person is high.

People with high level of empathy can easily identify other's feelings and understands the situations of others. The decision to help or not are depends mainly on whether a person feels empathy for others, and then only on the costs and rewards (social exchange concerns). This hypothesis was supported by previous studies. For example, the participants in a research which divided into high empathy level and low empathy level, the high empathy level groups of people will spent more time with the people in need, even though their help is anonymous with lower social appreciation. This showed that the people with high empathy will assist without thinking costs and rewards, and this is in accordance with empathy-altruism hypothesis.

Evolutionary Psychology: Instincts and Genes

Kin selection is the idea that behaviors that help a genetic relative are favored by natural selection. People can increase the chances that their genes will be passed along not only by themselves, but also ensuring their relatives have the children. In the study of Burnstein, Crandall, & Kitayama (1994), both American and Japanese are most likely to help genetic relatives than nonrelatives in life-threatening situations. An anecdotal evidence from real emergencies showed that, the survivors of a fire were more likely to search for family members than search for friends before they escaped from the fire building.

Gratitude

Gratitude, which means emotion describing a person's appreciation for having the things which are perceived as valuable and meaningful, has received a great deal of attention among the positive psychologist today.

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Gratitude is being viewed as a part of positive emotions and it was further explained by linking to the broaden and build theory created by Fredrickson.

Gratitude is originally derived from the Latin gratia which means grace, graciousness or gratefulness. In positive psychology, gratitude refers to a state of emotion which tells a person's appreciation or thankfulness for having the things which are perceived as valuable and meaningful to him or herself in life (Emmons & Shelton, n. d.; Schenck, 2011; Psychology Today, n. d.).

Several typical gratitude exercises which are mostly practiced by people could be implemented such as gratitude letter, keeping gratitude journal, and thank everyone for everything practiced (Positive Psychology Reflection, 2007). These gratitude exercises are beneficial to us by promoting a higher level of gratitude and hence providing a positive impact on our personal and social development, individual health and well-being, and community strength and harmony (Fredrickson, n. d.).

Gratitude is related to positive psychology in which it improves psychopathology disorders, health, positive relationships, subjective and eudemonic well-being and human functioning (Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). Gratitude, joy, happiness, pride, desire and others make up the component of positive emotions. Therefore theories like broaden and build theory can help explain the positive emotions of gratitude.

The broaden and build theory by Fredrickson suggests that all positive emotions are unique and have evolutionary purposes and its separate functions (Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). Negative emotions such as fear,
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anger and sadness have the tendency to narrow attention, cognition and behaviour to facilitate in dealing with specific problems. In a situation where there is a fire, one will experience fear which then narrows his attention to focus on the presenting situation. His cognition will be all about the fire and ways to escape and this led to his quick and automated response to escape from that dangerous risky situation. In contrast, positive emotions such as gratitude, motivation and pride have the tendency to broaden thought that then support cognitive and behavioural activities that will build resources that can be utilized for the next stressful period.

Helping Attitude

Helping pertained something that is expected to be voluntary (Batson, 1991). Helping behaviour itself can be categorized into helpful behaviours that do not expect rewards in return (Hasan, 2010). This means that the not all helping behaviour is based on sincerity. People helped frequently to get desired response, such as materials or social rewards. In fact, the not-expecting-reward helping behaviour or altruism has tremendous power, as shown by Mother Theresa (1910-1997) (Hasan, 2010).

Helping attitude is predisposition of helping behaviour. Helping behaviour can be defined as voluntary actions to help other people, with or without expectation of rewards (Hasan, 2010). Helping behaviour is part of prosocial behaviour (voluntary actions that are intended to assist or provide benefits to other people, such as sharing, comforting, rescuing and helping) (Hasan, 2010).

Nickel (1998) developed theories that argued the attitude of helping as a multidimensional scale, which consists of beliefs, feelings and behaviours. This division seems to be derived from the theory of attitudes that see attitude as the assessment of like or dislike the object of certain attitude, which saw the attitude in the ABC model (affect, behaviour, cognition). Affective response is an emotional response that expresses the level of individual preferences towards helping behaviours. Behavioural intention is an indication of verbal or behavioural tendencies of individuals to help others. Cognitive response is evaluation in human thought that govern beliefs of individuals helping behaviours. The attitude is generally a result of direct experience or learning through observation of the environment, a view that is positive or negative. People can also experience conflict or ambivalent in attitude, where they simultaneously have positive and negative attitudes on a particular object.

Forgiveness

Although theorists have clarified the distinction between forgiveness and related constructs, the exact definition of what constitutes forgiveness and how to measure it is still open to debate. No agreed upon definition of forgiveness exists (Worthington, 2005), but most researchers now con-cur with Enright and Coyle (1998) that forgiveness is different from closely related constructs such as pardoning, condoning, excusing, and reconciliation. McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen (2000) defined forgiveness as " intraindividual, prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor that is situated within a specific interpersonal context" (p. 9).

Readers will note the definition focuses on individual change within a specific context. Forgiveness can be considered on multiple

levels, from those interpersonal incidents that are contextualized to a dispositional, trait form that transcends individual injustices.

The dispositional forgiveness, sometimes called forgivingness, is the capacity to consistently act in a fully forgiving way (Roberts, 1995). Three aspects of forgivingness have recently been put forward by Mullet et al. (2003): (a) enduring resentment, that is, the difficulty to escape the unforgiving state, by avenging or forgiving or choosing another path; (b) sensitivity to the circumstances, that is, reactivity to others' pressure to forgive or not to forgive or to the offender's apologies; and (c) overall tendency to forgive or to avenge (see also Neto & Mullet, 2004). Mullet et al. (2003) have argued to be essential to differentiate these concepts and measure the impact of different personality measures on each component.

Several sociodemographic predictors of forgiveness have been established through empirical re-search, such as gender, age, and religion. In several previous studies, gender effect on forgiveness has been assessed. The usual finding is that gender plays a very limited role (McCullough et al., 2000). Moreover, its role tends to disappear when religious involvement is taken into account (Mullet et al., 2003). Gender has, however, been shown to moderate some forgiveness-personality traits relationships (e. g., self-esteem, interdependence, and loneliness, Neto & Mullet, 2004). Age effect on forgiveness has also been assessed. For example, Girard and Mullet (1997) have shown that propensity to forgive increases as from adolescence

to old age. Research has shown that religious involvement is positively correlated with self-reported tendency to forgive and negatively correlated with a tendency to seek revenge (Poloma & Gallup, 1991). More recently Mullet et al. (2003) examined the interrelationship between religious involvement and forgiveness. A positive link was evidenced between religious involvement and two forgivingness factors: enduring resentment and overall tendency to forgive.

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