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# PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL TOWARD MEN: ALTRUISM OF LONG TERM VOLUNTEERS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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# Abstract

A grounded theory approach was taken to formulating a new theoretical framework of altruism based on twelve in-depth interviews with a heterogenous group of long term volunteers from a single community. Interviews were first analyzed separately to construct a clear sense of each individuals' motivations for volunteering, then commonalities were identified and integrated with past research on both volunteer motivations and altruism. The emergent motives from interviews largely aligned with core psychological needs as described by Self Determination Theory, motives to volunteer as identified by work on the Volunteer Functions Inventory, or role identification in accordance with Social Identity Theory. An integrated framework was formulated by integrating these three elements along with other relevant observations from the interview responses. Most volunteers interviewed saw their own actions as having a self-centered motivation. This observation along with the integrated framework of Self Determination theory is used to highlight that the emotional or regulatory processes which volunteers rely upon to maintain their volunteering may be self focused while the overall behavioral patten may still be altruistic, or other serving.

# Acknowledgments

Behavior is multiply determined and just as it is not always possible to accurately identify each factor causing a behavior, it is unfair to many to identify but a few individuals in acknowledging their contribution. Moreover, sometimes what does not kill us makes us stronger, and indeed it is perhaps our rivals and enemies which make our successes. Nonetheless I strive to do what I can.

Without my brother George Gruschow and his wife Catherine, I would have been forced to quit for financial reasons. Saryu Dahra lit the candles on my terrace and helped me keep my head up and my feet moving forward through the last eight months of writing. Shwayta Kukreti gave me back a dime I found on Diwali 2009 and told me what this degree might mean in my life outside of academia. Chris Hutchens has been one of my best friends and may have saved me. Margot Finn was far away, but was there when I needed it most. Roopali Malhotra let me be normal when nothing was normal. Urmitapa Dutta and Shaheen Rana helped me realize that whatever I was doing was probably not Social Psychology and to understand a bit about qualitative methods. Nicola Dach shaped ten years of my life, she took Africa and Europe, I took America and Asia. Laura Koritz is an amazing woman and a weird poet. Sonal Mithal gave me support, paranthas, photos, poems, and the most abstract conversations and pointless fights, and maybe the best lessons of acceptance. Sridevi often lights my face by just being Sri. No one else is Sun No.

My mother gave her heart, soul, and too often her health to a nonprofit for nearly twenty years. She never earned more than I made as a graduate student. My father took about six years to get his BA from Weber State but somehow taught me more about critical thinking by the age of ten than the twenty years of education that came afterwards. A teacher and nonprofit worker gave me the world from a little farming village.

This thesis was written in MultiMarkDown using Scrivener for Mac along with Papers. It was then exported to LaTeX and typeset using the UIUC thesis class created by various physics students. Being able to use such brilliant software often kept me going for the long months without feedback, when the isolation, anger, and confusion kept me from being able to concentrate for more than paragraphs at a time.

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# Chapter 1

# Introduction and Methodology

Volunteering presents an interesting case for psychological research. Though definitions of volunteering vary (Wilson, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1997) , it is generally accepted that volunteers receive little or no direct compensation for their work, moreover the work is typically prosocial in nature, i.e. intends to benefit others. Because volunteering does not provide obvious, direct benefits for the individual volunteer and often provides benefit for others, it meets the basic criteria of altruistic behavior. (Unger, 1991; Smith, 1981) The present thesis focuses on examining altruism via narrative case studies of long term volunteers, using a grounded theory approach to build new theory from the data.

The primary motivation for this inquiry is simply that this population and the experiences of this group are largely absent from the literature in psychology, either in the conceptualization of altruism (e.g. The famous Batson-Cialdini debate over altruism Cialdini, 1991; Batson & Shaw, 1991) or the literature on volunteering (Snyder & Omoto, 1992; Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992; L. Penner, Fritzsche, Craiger, & Freifeld, 1995; Finkelstein, Penner, & Brannick, 2005) .

Because the prior literature on altruism has largely not examined volunteers, this thesis is relatively unique in terms of its sample population as well as methodology. Moreover, prior theories of altruism did not focus on long term behaviors, such as volunteering, and as such, the current inquiry is not intended as a direct answer to the better known literature such as the specifics of the Batson - Cialdini debate (e.g. Batson & Shaw, 1991; Cialdini, 1991) . Likewise, while the work on volunteering has not wholly neglected long term volunteering (c.f. L. A. Penner, 2002) , that literature provides relatively little interview data, and as such the present work only seeks to expand and supplement that work, not challenge it.

Batson, his colleagues, and his critics have produced a substantial body of literature providing evidence regarding whether or not altruism (which they define as interest in helping others in absence of self interest) exists as a pure motive in humans, i.e. do individuals ever help each other with no expectation of direct or indirect reward. There are however many conceptualizations of altruism, a fact which has led numerous authors to describe taxonomies of altruism. Notably within those taxonomies, irrespective of field, the definition of altruism used in Batson-Cialdini debate most closely resembles what other disciplines see as

the evolutionary biological definition of altruism (from the perspective of political science: Monroe, 1994 , evolutionary biology: West, Griffin, & Gardner, 2007 ), economics: Fehr & Fischbacher, 2003 , and philosophy: Kitcher, 1993 ).

This leaves the Batson - Cialdini debate in an interesting position. On the one hand, it dominates textbook space and literature searches for altruism within social psychology, on the other it relies on a very constrained definition of altruism that is incongruent with others within psychology (Unger, 1991; Colby & Damon, 1994; Haski-Leventhal, 2009) as well as outside of psychology but within the social sciences (Walker, 2004; Khalil, 1990) . Notably, Comte's original definition of altruism was more holistic in nature, with altruism being the overall act of living for others within his proposed positivistic "natural religion".

That Batson and Cialdini adopted a more constrained was likely related to both sides of the debate relying on controlled experiments in laboratory settings. By adopting this definition of altruism, helping behaviors in the laboratory could be excluded as egoistic or altruistic as the case may be, without relying on participants' self report (see Krebs, 1991) . Consequently, those studies are very strong in internal validity, but questionable in generalizability outside of the laboratory setting or in their ability to inform the wider discussion of altruism.

The result is that much of what is considered 'altruism' by laity (e.g. other helping self-sacrifice, Osmun, 1999 ), and indeed altruistic within academia (c.f Unger, 1991; Snyder, Omoto, & Crain, 1999) has not been explored fully in the context of altruism. The work of Batson and colleagues investigating altruism is specifically limited in that it focuses on one time decisions, whereas many human behaviors that seem altruistic, e.g. volunteering, exist as long term commitments over the scope of years. Clary and colleagues on the other hand have examined volunteering directly, but have done so using survey methods, losing a great deal of context pertaining to how individuals are led to volunteer and decide to commit long term (e.g. Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996) .

Clary and colleagues have generally not commented on whether or not an altruistic motive exists, though they have commented that it can be baffling that people volunteer large amounts of time to helping others in spite of individual costs. (A. Omoto & Snyder, 1995) They have however documented a diverse set of functional motives that do exist for volunteers (termed the Voluntary Functions Inventory, or VFI). As the sample has largely been AIDS/HIV volunteers (Snyder et al., 1999; Snyder & Omoto, 1992; A. Omoto & Snyder, 1995; A. M. Omoto & Snyder, 2002) , particularly during the formative empirical inquiries, there may however have been a bias towards the factors strongest with HIV volunteers, a situation where the helping task and outcomes may be relatively well defined.

In terms of target population, methodology, and theoretical focus, the work of Colby and Damon (1994)

is most similar to the present inquiry. In their work the altruistic motive is examined through case studies of exceptional altruists as identified by a nomination/selection process of those who had garnered public accolades. However, the individuals in their sample were inherently extreme outliers, those who had made sacrifices towards achieving prosocial goals and had sufficient success to gain national attention. The present study examines individuals who have at best a local reputation for their volunteer work, and in that sense inherently less exceptional as compared to the norm.

In summary, while there has been work on altruism as well as volunteering within psychology, and indeed comments that volunteering is likely altruistic, the altruism of volunteers has not been used to inform theories of altruism. The present study focuses on documenting and examining the perspective of those long term volunteers own their own sustained acts of volunteering and helping, building theory from the ground up (see Glaser, Strauss, & Paul, 2008) .

## 1.1 Goal of Inquiry

This inquiry examines motivations of volunteering as a potential example of real world altruism, and as a means to informing theory. As the definition adopted in the traditional literature is constrained, a theory building approach was adopted, emphasizing a fresh look at participants' viewpoints in their own words and identifying themes and trends in participant responses before examining prior theory. In short, the goal of this inquiry is to build a theoretical framework of altruism that is grounded in the narratives of long-term volunteers firstly, and prior literature secondarily.

## 1.2 Grounded Theory and the Structure of Document

Social psychology generally relies on a strict hypothesis testing paradigm which starts with theory, uses theory to make predictions/hypotheses, and then finds a method (usually survey or experiment) to collect empirical observations allowing some conclusion about the hypothesis (Greenwald, Pratkanis, Leippe, & Baumgardner, 1986) . While this paradigm is both dominant and productive, it has faced strong critiques as well. Besides concern over confirmation bias (1986) , Feyerabend's work on the philosophy of science (1981) has criticized the limits of theories to be tested against each other objectively, due to the inherent differences in the semantic definitions of key constructs (e.g. Altruism).

In response to some of these concerns, other methods of empirical research have been developed. The present inquiry adapts one of those methodologies, Glaser's grounded theory approach (2008) . The rationale behind this choice of methods is to distance the present work from the constrained definition prominent in

the Batson-Cialdini debate as well as the practical motive of maximizing the utility of new data that is distinct from prior data in terms of sample and methodology.

Reflecting this emphasis of documenting and examining the experience of the interviewees, this document starts with the interview data and analyzes participant responses within their own context before making an attempt to relate to prior theory. Notably, this means that literature is handled differently than is common in typical reports within social psychology (particularly journal articles). Instead of approaching literature as means to generate a hypothesis (and alternate hypotheses) from the perspective of prior conceptions of specific constructs (e.g. altruism, motivations for volunteering), data is first collected and analyzed and then literature is searched to determine which if any, prior theory is congruent with the patterns emergent from the data. Therefore literature reviews follows the data collection and analysis, both actually and conceptually, and in the reporting of case studies. For the sake of clear presentation, direct links to prior works that were apperent during interviews are made explicit throughout.

## 1.3 Interview Methodology

The aim of the present study is to capture a richer view of volunteer motivations than past research in order to form some conclusion about the construct of altruism. The bulk of past research on volunteer motivations has been that of Clary, Snyder and colleagues and has focused on AIDS volunteers (Clary & Snyder, 1995) and survey methods (Clary et al., 1996) . Additionally, prior research focused on levels of commitment that were relatively small in terms of time per week, as well as length of commitment (Ryan, Kaplan, & Grese, 2001) , though not necessarily less in terms of emotional intensity/social stigma (Snyder et al., 1999) .

In order to collect a richer set of data than those prior works (as well as other authors using similar methods: L. Penner et al., 1995; Finkelstein et al., 2005) , the present study adopted the method of semi-structured interviews with long term volunteers. Inherent in this choice is the assumption that past works were generally accurate in their descriptions of short term volunteers.

### 1.3.1 Recruitment

The present study consisted of semi-structured interviews with volunteers for local nonprofit organizations. Participants were recruited by sending a brief e-mail and postal letter to volunteer coordinators at several local nonprofits in December 2009. Nonprofits were selected on basis of consulting a local nonprofit that maintains a directory of volunteering opportunities and following their recommendations. The intent was to make the study known amongst volunteer coordinators throughout the community. The letter stated that

the researcher sought to interview long term volunteers in the community about their experiences. A second letter was sent in late February 2010, affirming that the study was ongoing.

Long term volunteering was defined as being over a year, with priority on those who had volunteered longest (as judged by volunteer coordinators, who in most cases had worked in their job for a shorter time than the volunteers). Participation was limited to two volunteers per organization, and volunteers were reimbursed with $25 in cash or a $25 donation to their charity. This provided the volunteer coordinator incentive to forward the letter to those meeting the criteria. It was the case that at least one volunteer coordinator forwarded the invite to other volunteer coordinators in the community and presented it at a coordination meeting. The result was that only about half of respondents came from organizations that had been directly approached.

The intent of these limits was also to exclude most volunteers who volunteered via organized programs such as school programs, sororities, fraternities, etc. These individuals are also volunteers and form a large portion of the workforce in volunteer sector (Boraas, 2003) , however they are also have clear external reasons to work for no pay, have not volunteered as long, and are not necessarily likely to volunteer in the future (Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 1999) . For those reasons, short term volunteers would be a worse fit with the concept of altruism.

Essentially, the volunteer coordinators recommended their longest involved (and likely most liked/trusted) volunteers according to their own subjective judgement. This produced a non-random sample, but one that focused on those individuals most likely to be seen as dedicated 'altruists', I.e. Those who invested the most in helping/organizations for the least.

### 1.3.2 Sample and Scheduling

Response rates were mediocre, though it is unknown how many individuals were made aware of the study. Approximately 15 individuals contacted the researcher between January and April 2010, only 12 (including 2 as a couple) replied to requests to schedule and met for the interview. (One individual failed to meet the interviewer on two separate occasions. Two individuals were politely declined as two volunteers from their organization had already been interviewed. Several missed calls and/or unclear voicemails were given, leaving ambiguity about exactly how many attempted to schedule).

Interviewees chose the time and place of the interview according to their own preference, based on their own convenience and where they felt comfortable speaking freely. If volunteers did not have a preference for where to be interviewed, they were invited into the psychology department and an empty office was used. Allowing the interviewees to choose the context seemed most appropriate given the goal of capturing their

natural perspective on their experiences and motives.

Maximum practical confidentiality given the original research design was afforded to participants. Interviewees were informed their identity would be kept secret though the interview would be recorded. They were also informed that identifying information would be stripped and/or altered in any publication, that recordings and transcripts would only be available to the researcher and his research assistants, and only excerpts would be included in reports. Rough descriptions of locations and details of the interview are included within the interview report. All interviews were conducted by the primary investigator with only unknown bystanders present due to the interviewee's choice of location.

### 1.3.3 Structure of Interview

The interviews were semi-structured. An interview schedule of set questions existed (see Figure for the exact interviewer cues used), however the order was varied depending on the initial responses of the participant. Likewise numerous follow-ups were asked both to clarify previous answers and simply to encourage the participant to elaborate on topics that seemed important to them. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours, depending on the participants' schedule and interest in speaking.

Emphasis was placed on letting the participant share their perspective and delving into the logic of their own perspective, how their view on their volunteering was constituted, etc. This approach led to participants sharing substantially different amounts of information, particularly with regards to their own background. Specifically, some interviewees focused on past experiences in their family, whereas others made more reference to work settings or church settings. Questions that were likely to reveal the interviewer's purpose or theories were left until very late in the session (e.g. questions about their thoughts on altruism and selflessness).

### 1.3.4 Design Limitations

When the interviews were planned and interviewees recruited, the interviews were not intended to be a stand alone study, but to provide context and counterpoint to a large set of short answer data on lay theories of volunteer motivation. The fact that the interviews were not planned to be as in depth as they eventually were, meant that several highly desirable features were not included. This necessitates some mention of design limitations before presenting the data.

Firstly, the schedule did not include substantial biographical questions, while this information was generally revealed in follow up questions, the depth of biographical data is quite varied between interviewees as a result. Particularly with regards to employment, family background/upbringing, and social life.

Basic Interview Protocol

-->How did you start volunteering here?
  -->What is the purpose of the organization?
  --> How long?
  -->Why for you this organization?

--->What do you do with the organization?
   -->How has your role changed since you started?
  --> how has the organization changed?

--->How do you relate to other volunteers?
   -->can you recall an incident where you felt disappointed with/by other volunteers.
   --->when were you proud to be involved?

--> what motivates you to volunteer here?
   --> do you have any strong beliefs that motivate your involvement?

--> what do you find most rewarding about volunteering?
   --->can you think of a specific incident that meant a lot to you?

--> how much do you invest in terms of your time and energy
   --> what else do you do besides volunteering?

--> have you involved your family or friends in the organization

--> do you see yourself as controlling your role in the organization
   -->if yes, then: How do you control your role?, does this benefit
   -->if no, then: who does have the control?, does this concern you?

Second, given the present use of the data, it would have been highly desirable to recontact interviewees for a second interview of their opinion of the analysis provided, or perhaps to observe the interviewee while they volunteered. This would however be neither ethical or possible, as the terms of informed consents assured participants that identifying information would not be kept after the interview. Moreover, this was actually done. Specifically, the name only appeared on the informed consent form and the signatures on receipts of payment, neither was copied, and all contact information (phone, e-mail, etc) was deleted/destroyed after the interview was completed.

Some interviewees unexpectedly revealed information related to criminal activity, which was not anticipated in planning or ethical review proceedings. As such no follow ups were asked about the specifics of the crimes committed by or warrants against the interviewee, but the same is mentioned where appropriate in the interview analysis. It also seemed as if it were common knowledge in the community that those involved had been arrested, and that the arrests occurred in a different jurisdiction than the interviews. Given that, it is deemed highly unlikely that police where the arrests occurred could identify the individuals based on information reported here.

Finally, the interviews were conducted with anticipation of a somewhat different analysis alongside other data from other studies. This meant that data collection ceased early, in order to coincide with other logistical reasons, not for theoretical ones. Consequently there are fewer interviews than would be desirable for the present purposes. (Though from a strict grounded theory perspective, the research had ceased to bring new insights to the theoretical framework after a certain point, which will be clear to the reader.)

### 1.3.5 Analysis

Excepting the general knowledge of prior research leading to the conclusion that long term volunteers were under-examined in altruism literature, and existing research tended to rely on survey methodology, there was no extensive theory building or literature review prior to beginning the interviews. This was intentional and modeled after other qualitative methods, specifically the Grounded Theory Approach (Glaser et al., 2008) . This reflects the goal of inquiry being to firstly capture and understand what was apparent from these individuals' experiences and secondly to explain that within a basic theoretical framework.

The end result was a focus on first treating each interviewee as an individual case study, building theory via rehearing and noting the interviews after each interview and then later during writing. The structure of reporting the results follows mimics this process in part, as interviews are reported in order of collection. Interviews were transcribed primarily by research assistants with oversight by the researcher (same as interviewer). What follows is the reporting of each interview and the emergent themes that were reached while

interviewing, rehearing, and later reading transcripts. As part of analysis, attempts were made to diagram life events, values, and the interrelations. This was abandoned as some participants gave very little detail about their past, moreover several key themes were apparent without additional diagraming.

As mentioned, this method by and large follows Glaser's (2008) Grounded Theory Approach, in that a strong emphasis was put on first allowing theory that would come directly from each interview to stand on its own, before attempting to re-integrate it with existing theory. The major deviations are that recordings and transcripts were used extensively to re-assess interviews after collection. This step replaced Glaser's method of noting and sorting, but was similarly an iterative process of organizing and re-organizing observed data until a suitable framework for explaining the data was developed. Charmaz (2003) has previously commented that the Grounded Theory Approach is meant to be adaptable, such that the present method of analysis would still be classified as a grounded approach.

After initial noting/sorting, bridges to prior work were evident, so the presentation leads from interview directly to past work and revised theory. This is reflected in the discussion at the end of each interview chapter, where links between emergent themes and prior literature is made explicit, and in the concluding discussion where existing theories are merged based on the interview findings and further contemplation.

# Chapter 2

# Presentation of Interview Data

The interviews are reported in 11 chapters. Each chapter is structured in a set format reflecting the method of analysis used.

First, the context of the interview setting is given, as this may reveal biases in responding.

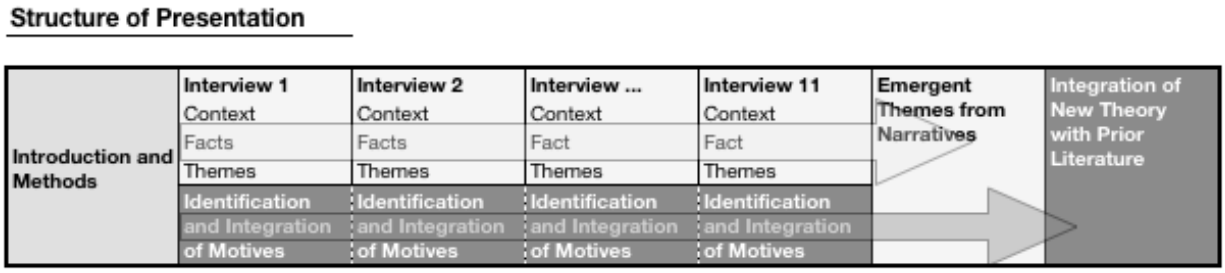
Second, the facts of the interview narrative are presented. This is an attempt to detail the basic factual information provided by the interviewees about their life and experience volunteering (e.g. significant life events such as retiring, illness, moving), with minimal interpretation.

Third, an in-depth interpretation of the participants motives according to their own statements is given. In analyzing the interviews, attempts were made to identify what concepts or schemes motivated the individuals. This involved a certain amount of deeper interpretation into how events interviewees mentioned fit together. Consistent with a grounded approach, focus was put on building from the interviewee's own statements and not identifying connections with prior theoretical constructs. While partly speculative, this provides a richer understanding of the individuals in the sample both for the benefit of the reader and for eventually expanding theory.

Fourthly, many themes that emerged from interviews mapped very directly with constructs from existing theories in the literature. In the conclusion of each interview chapter, each of these connections are made explicit. These will form the basis for review and integration of prior literature in the concluding chapters.

Chapters are numbered sequentially and entitled according to phrases or concepts mentioned by interviewees and/or central to their narrative. In some sense, the title is the motivation of the volunteer in a nutshell. This goes along with the theme of richly interpreting interviewees' narratives while staying close to their actual statements.

The diagram "Structure of Presentation" gives a graphical depiction of the flow of the document. As can be seen, each interview could be treated as an individual case study, where motives and themes are drawn out to create a minimal a theory of that individuals' motivations without imposing outside theoretical constructs. At the end of each chapter however, connections with past literature are made explicit. Unlike the interview/case studies, this end of chapter commentary is explicitly cumulative. In the final discussion and




concluding section, there will first be a unit summarizing what was observed in the case studies holistically before consulting prior theory. Thereafter the linkages to prior literature will be integrated into the new observations, and the emergent framework for conceptualizing altruism on basis of the present data and past literature will be presented.

## 2.1 James: Education

### 2.1.1 Context of Interview

James was a 65 year old Black man who walked with a slight stoop, but was quite energetic. I met with him in the social worker's office at the homeless shelter where he volunteers and used to stay. The staff all knew him very well. After a bit of discussion with staff, one of them agreed to let James and I into a closed office. I had worked at this homeless shelter ten years before, and I recognized several of the people staying there. James also did not seem to recall me, though he had been a volunteer then. We had not had extensive contact. Several people recognized me on the way out, so it is possible James had some sense of familiarity with me.

The setting was fairly chaotic, and some amount of confused yelling could be heard in the background of the interview. The shelter is not a safe place, and has a sign-in and sign-out for everyone entering/leaving the building. It is not uncommon for someone to walk in confused or angry and try and ignore those rules, even in the middle of the day.

### 2.1.2 Facts of Narrative

James was originally from Michigan where he had worked in the steel industry until he was laid off around 1983. At that point he left Michigan to come try and work while staying with his extended family in the region. This did not work out as he became an alcoholic, which in turn led to homelessness.

So by 1984, he was living at the shelter as a functioning alcoholic, and working 1–2 jobs at a time as

unskilled labor either in factories or social services (e.g. nursing home). While staying at the shelter, he began volunteering as a cook.

> **James**: I was working but I was drinking heavily, but I would manage to keep a job and so they didn't have no one to cook for 'em, and I heard one guy say "Don't nobody care about us."
>
> And I turned around and looked at him. So the man asked me, I was working, uh, I had two jobs at the time I was working at the KFC and Urbana Country club and uh, they say uh, well, we need somebody to cook. And at that time, you would get cereal in the morning, and soup, lunch, soup in the evening, unless a donation came. Sometimes the university would donate, every once so often. I said "It doesn't take talent to cook soup, I already done it." So he said "What can I get?" I say "Meat." He said "What kind?" I said "I can cook any kind of meat they got on this earth. And vegetables for salad, I need vegetables, I need lettuce to make salad."

Life continued like this for quite some time, living at the shelter, volunteering there, trying to keep other jobs on the side, and taking part in whatever courses the shelter offered. Eventually, after a particular incident, he came to a realization and quit drinking. After quitting alcohol though, he still remained at the shelter.

> **James**: Course in 1985 when I almost died from drinking alcohol, I said, "That's it." I haven't' tasted a drop. I guess the good Lord said "I'm just gonna see what he gonna do, I'm gonna give him one more chance." That was it. That was it.
>
> And I had to learn, and I'm still learning. And anybody saying that getting too old to learn, tell them _. No you don't. No you don't. When you get too old to learn, you're dead. That's the only time. It's a pleasure to um, keep giving and keep giving. Maybe this is what the good Lord was trying to show me all along. For me to give back, cause I've always been blessed.

About ten years before the interview, the men's shelter changed its structure substantially, moving out of a church and into its own building. More basic classes on budgeting, applying for jobs, and the like were added to the programs. It was apparent that James had completed nearly every course that had been offered.

Around 2004, James had moved back to Michigan after his mother died. In 2006 though, he had returned again to the homeless shelter, and stayed again until about 2008. In 2008, James became eligible for social security and moved into his own apartment in subsidized housing. He has been living there ever since, but still comes to the shelter everyday to volunteer and also go to classes.

### 2.1.3 Interpretation

In that he has worked as the cook for twenty years without being paid, James is a long term volunteer. At the same time, speaking with him, the discussion was as much about being homeless and living at the shelter as volunteering. His experience of these two parts of his life are intertwined and formed the basis of his life story for over twenty years.

#### Pride in his Education

James is exceedingly proud of his education. To him, education means all of the courses that he has completed at the shelter and the other things he has learned from volunteers and clients there along the way. He refers to the homeless shelter as "Junior University of Illinois ." He calls all the various certifications he has for completing what are often just 2–3 day workshops, diplomas. His pride is undeniable. I see two things in James' great pride in these basic accomplishments.

First, it is in part an effort to escape the shame of having been homeless for so long. This was a recurrent theme in the interview, which I saw as indication of James being a bit stuck on it, and it was clear that James had a great deal to say about this and had said this to other academics before.

> **James**: I went up, two months ago, I went up to Ann Arbor, Michigan. Professor Maxwell, I was talking to him and he kept talking and the audience, when the speaker were supposed to come in, so they got to, some of 'em got to talk about homelessness. They said "Uh look" I said "Professor, let me get up on stage." He said "Why?" I said "Let me get up on stage."
>
> And I mentioned two people, Al Pacino, Tyler Perry, I said I heard some of ya'll speaking about homelessness, maybe they did wanted to get some drugs or booze, maybe they didn't want to get nothing to eat, but they are still human. They said "What?" I said "What about Al Pacino? Tyler Perry? They're millionaires." They said "Yeah, we love them." Homeless. And then one student said "Yeah, that's the truth, they were."
>
> It doesn't make you less of a person, don't ever look down on anyone, cause God helps us all. I have a friend I tried to help, he been, oh let's see, I been volunteering twenty years, I been knowing him twenty-five. But he wanted to live on the street, he'll come back by here to get something to eat. I say "Come on by and get something to eat." Something to eat but you know, some, you know, God is watching over him cause he's awful cold out there.

Second, James actually had learned a great deal over those twenty years. In a very basic way, he was right. His talk of the "University of Illinois Junior" was out of place, because he did not have a university

education. Beyond this simple bit of exaggeration, there was a lesson that he had learned and tried to share with the other men at the shelter: His advice for others at the shelter was to not see being at the shelter as being homeless, something to avoid. Instead see it as an education and use the resources to get back on your feet. A recurring theme for James was people complaining that there was not any help, and he was very critical of that perspective, frustrated by it. He wanted people to take responsibility for themselves by taking advantage of whatever was available.

### A Life of Learning

From James' story as he told it, his life sounded good. It sounded simple, like he just appreciated that he could contribute at the shelter and what the shelter had done for him also. James seemed to want to say only good things about the shelter and its staff. He went to great lengths to talk about how some of other guys did not respect the spaces in the shelter.

> **James**: A lot of the guys get a little frustrated about being told what to do, but you gotta have some kind of rules at anywhere you go, you know. You know, they might expect this and expect that but then, you have a rule. Now I'll explain to a guy, now you gotta rule, you can't pick up two cups with your hand and you didn't wash it, I can't get a cup cause when I'm serving them I stand right in front of the door shut the window because that number you have, they have numbers and they, it's contaminate you hand and I say, when I count them at night I gotta re-wash my hands. Say now, could I go to your mother's house, open her box, get something out, take my shoes off, put 'em on the coffee table? No, I say that would be disrespectful, you gotta respect 'em here.
>
> You know, you try to talk to them if they get angry, I'll call staff, they can show you then, you know, wouldn't bother then, say ok yeah, I see what you mean. You know that has a lot to do with it, but you know, other than that, they always, the guys always respect rules, you know. You respect volunteers, you respect all females that come through here, you know, you don't want the place, uh, all out in the neighborhood where it's disrespectful guys here cause they are respectable, that's one thing they are, they are respectable, the guys here.
>
> **Interviewer**: *Why do you think the guys have trouble respecting this place as opposed to their parents, or whatever?*
>
> **James**: Um, well yeah, uh it's not like when we was kids, you being told what to do. At an age, they say, everyone over 21, that's hard to accept for some guys, well with me and some of the

other guys, you know, it wasn't hard. I know that I'm up under someone else's roof. Like when I first got laid off, in Gary, I didn't have no power. I went up under my mother's roof. I'll get up, no don't say I get in the house, she don't like no nasty house anyway. I get her up and cook, we didn't have any problem, you know. I know I'm up under somebody else's roof, but when you are in somebody else's domain, you have to follow their rules, or move out.

Inside these observations about others' actions, James is also revealing lessons that he himself has learned. The undeniable truth is that James was homeless for so long for a reason. For a very long time the shelter has had rules against various behaviors, i.e. drinking on the property, fighting. At least since 2000, the shelter has also had rules limiting how long someone could stay continuously before they had to leave. There were certain allowances in these limits, mostly related to having a specific plan in place to save money and find an apartment, etc. It is simply impossible that James could have stayed living at the center continuously, as such there were more details to his story of trying to leave the shelter, possibly at times having to leave the shelter, and nonetheless returning. He never mentioned any of these, maybe there wasn't time, but he did not emphasize them. It is possible to get a lifetime ban from the shelter however, particularly for repeat offenses of a hostile or illegal nature. That James could even still be on the property indicated that whatever happened, if it had ever been a severe violation of the rules, he did not repeat that mistake the way many of his peers did.

I asked James about what kept him volunteering at the shelter instead of somewhere else, and whether he would keep going.

**James**: ... uh why here? I think they would miss me and I would miss them if I did it somewhere else. I'm gonna tell you the truth. It'll be just like my son and my daughter. My son's 27 and my daughter 26. If somebody tried to take them away from me, and my little 8 year old boss, my granddaughter. You know it would, I would be strange because I been around them so long.

Later on he elaborated again on how much he *is* missed if he is not there.

**James**:... Because if I don't come through that door, phew!

And they say "It's James coming! It's James coming!" He forgot to tell 'em that I was gonna get here about 10:30 instead of 9:00. I saw about five guys on the corner, because of, you know, I stay in _____ Square, it's two and a half blocks from here,

I said, "Uh oh." And I come around the corner, I said "Oh my God." I thought something

happened, 20 guys at the light, you know, "Where you been? Where you been?" I say "Oh man, please."

I said I was just a bit late, I slept over, uh then I told them I'd be in a little later, 10:30 instead of 8:30 or 9. But all in all, it's very rewarding volunteering. A person might not think it, you can get a lot of rewards volunteering. You know, I know we need money, we know everybody do, but it's very rewarding for me.

**Interviewer**: *In what way? Just like, that you'd be missed, or?*

**James**: Yeah, being missed. Your help. Your main one is your help.

What I infer, is that James has been on a long term trajectory towards having a more stable and self sufficient life, and that his volunteering and involvement with the shelter has been a stabilizing force. He would have had to have left and returned multiple times. Still it is clear that he is really cared for by the staff, the other volunteers, and some of the other men at the shelter. It is also clear both in his story and in the *way* he speaks, that helping others, being needed, is a large part of that slow change for the better in his life.

Though he was in and out of the shelter, mostly in, for most of the 20 years that he has volunteered there, most recently he is living independently. Moreover he has maintained that independent living for some time now, and perhaps can be expected to continue in this way. Living nearby and volunteering at the shelter, with the positive regard he is held in there, helps him keep his life together. It is not entirely clear what goes wrong when he is away from the shelter, but it does seem that something does.

At the shelter however, he is seen as a bit of a model citizen, he is missed, he has taken the classes, he has valuable advice on how to get along. It is evident that he also takes a nurturing role with some of the other men.

**James**: Um, the, and then another good part is when new guys come here and sometimes the guys will try to show 'em, you know, if you just stay in front of the building you're not supposed to smoke in there, come on down, you're not supposed to smoke, I'm not your boss, but they'll write you up and put you out for 24 hours. You know, they all listen, you know, like that.

Uh, don't want no one to get in trouble if you can prevent it, but if you can't, then they have to talk to staff.

**Appreciation**

No small part of James' success within the shelter is his deference to its rules and genuine appreciation he has for the shelter. Whereas he talks about other people feeling depressed and homeless, at least in the interview, he speaks very highly of the shelter. Moreover, he seems to see it as foolish that so many of the other men take what they get at the shelter for granted. It is evident that he does see his volunteering as cook as reciprocity.

> **James**: So I cooked the first official meal from scratch for them, and I saw a need to help cause, at my time of need, they helped me. Everything was free. I looked at it not, I didn't even consider myself homeless, I had an address. Didn't have to pay no lights, no gas. So I continued to cook there and a lot of people said "Why are you working and they are not paying you?" I said "They are, they let me stay here. And you shouldn't feel that way"

Phrased this way, one might question the extent that James' volunteering is in fact volunteering. However, this is just James' perspective. From the perspective of the shelter, contributing to cleaning, etc is required, but not the extent that James went to. Moreover, James has continued to volunteer after moving out.

So, while it is clear that James sees volunteering as a cook as part reciprocity, that is really only a description of his own character. The overarching story seems to be that the life around the shelter has become incredibly central to James' life, it is his family. As part of that, while James talks at length about what he has learned, it is even more clear how much he revels in feeling important.

James had clearly been interviewed before, and when he saw the informed consent form, made the claim that he "already had got one of those at home". It was hardly necessary to even ask questions, he just spoke on and on about his life at the homeless shelter. Initially, I interpreted this as a sort of a rehearsed performance. Reinforcing this view was how he emphasized on various things in his story, that didn't seem to fit anywhere except to maybe tell me, a young educated White man, that he liked people like me. As an example, he brought up a story about quitting a group of Black friends because those quit listening to the Righteous Brothers after learning the Righteous Brothers were White. This and he seemed to be practiced in saying only nice things about the shelter, as if he were speaking to a potential donor.

Upon further reflection though, it seems that is just another part of his story. His narrative was free flowing and wandering. I cannot discount that he was motivated in part to seem a certain way to me, but that was his entire point about defying the stereotypes of homelessness. He wanted me to see him as knowledgable and wise. He wanted me to see him as an equal. His appreciation for the shelter was sincere, because his volunteering there, moreso than the classes he took, gave him the opportunity to be seen as

more than an old homeless man, to be seen as wise, to be listened to.

### 2.1.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

James's eagerness to please and say the "right thing" presents problems in analyzing his motivations. It brings into question the veracity of some of his statements and whether they are internally or externally motivated.

This question of whether behavior is motivated by internal versus external forces is both central to the question of whether or not his actions could ever be considered altruistic (altruism would presumably be motivated by inherent, internal concern for the other, and excluding external gains) and provides a connecting point to outside literature.

His apparent desire to please and perhaps defensiveness about issues of worth (e.g. his exaggeration of what he learned, his tying of his volunteering to his experience as a homeless person) are in and of themselves linked to two priorly unconnected pieces of literature, specifically the work on the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI Clary & Snyder, 1995) and Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) .

The first is the literature on motives for volunteering, specifically Clary et al's Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI 1995) . The VFI was established by surveying volunteers on the reasons for their volunteering, initially HIV/AIDS workers (Snyder & Omoto, 1992) , and then later validated with other groups (Clary et al., 1996) . Theoretically it is rooted in the functional approach to attitudes (Katz, 1960) and emphasizes that volunteering occurs for multiple reasons both within the same individual and across different individuals.

Within the VFI literature six basic functions or motives for volunteering have been identified: Career, (Ego) Enhancement, (Ego) Protection, Social, Understanding, and (Personal) Values (Clary & Snyder, 1995) . There motives are almost exactly in congruence with their names. In order to keep focus on James and the other interviewees, these constructs will be elaborated upon as they connect with the interview responses.

Within James' interview it is apperent that his volunteering is part motivated to protect his own sense of worth from the negative societal perceptions of homeless people. In the context of the VFI, it would seem he is clearly motivated by Protection.

Secondly, this aspect of James trying to assert and define his own role in life is highly reminiscent of work on Self Determination Theory (SDT Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) . Self Determination Theory is a theory of human motivation, which places motives on a continuum between extrinsic motives (e.g. compulsion on the most extreme, material gain on the lesser) and intrinsic motives (value consistency, personal growth, enjoyment). At its core, it posits that individuals possess three basic psychological needs: Competence, Autonomy, and Relatedness. Fulfilling these needs is then the core internal motivation of

individuals.

As the name would imply, individuals are motivated to determine their own role and destiny with the context of their social world in order to fulfill those basic needs. Moreover, within SDT Deci and Ryan (1985) posit the subtheory of organismic integration theory (OIT), which involves regulatory processes that manifest at different points along the continuum from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. Inherent within organismic integration theory is that motivation can change over time, and can become more intrinsic. This becomes a powerful lens for viewing James' responses and actions as one can observe how his volunteering could be motivated to preserve or regain feelings of competence (e.g. he provides food for others) and relatedness (e.g. he would be missed).

James may have started volunteering simply so that he could do something that was needed at the shelter at that time. At that point in his life, he was homeless, not stably employed, alcoholic and only a few years removed from a stable career in a different city. It seems plausible that he desired to do something that validated his ability to control his own life and show himself to have redeeming skills. I.e. He sought a sense of competence (and possibly autonomy).

Thirdly, James's narrative also made clear that he strongly identified with his role as a volunteer at the shelter. While this identification may have formed in an effort to protect his ego from threats such as seeing himself as homeless, it persisted even after James had moved out of the shelter into permanent housing. He clearly acknowledges the importance of being missed by others in that decision, and it follows that at present time, his volunteering has become much about relatedness (SDT) to others.

However, coming from his narrative it is hard to differentiate between seeing his being missed as his desire to interact with those who would miss him or as his having adopted a social role and identifying with that role. It can be argued that identifying with a role is already an aspect of the VFI's functional roles, but it is not clear which it would fit into. Social pressures (e.g. Role expectations) would fit into the Social function of the VFI, whereas if an individual valued their own adherence to a role it could be seen as part of the Value function. This suggests a limitation within the VFI to integrate role identification as a motive.

However, the aspect of Role adoption as a motive for volunteerism has already been documented by prior authors. Laverie and Mcdonald (2007) applied a Social Identity Theory perspective to volunteering and found that the importance of volunteering to one's social identity was a key predictor of frequent volunteering. Callero, Howard, and Piliavin (1987) reached essentially the same empirical conclusion by applying Mead's anthropological conception of role to blood donation , finding that those who merged the role of blood donor with their sense of the self predicted future blood donations. Finkelstein et al. (2005) found that adoption of a volunteer role identity related to longer volunteering, moreso than the VFI, where the sample was likewise

elderly people such as James.

Finally, James made mention that at his age he needed to stay active instead of sitting at home. This motive is highly overlapping with motives to relate to others, maintain role identity, sense of competence, etc. It is nonetheless a well documented phenomena that volunteering is both popular with older Americans (Chambré, 1993) as well as being beneficial in terms of health and well being (c.f. A. Omoto, Snyder, & Martino, 2006; Warburton, Paynter, & Petriwskyj, 2007) .

The chapter is entitled "An Education" as James seems to try and characterize himself as learning across his life, in this case he is not identifying as much with his role as a volunteer but as someone that learns and perseveres over time. This again reflects James' motivation to define his own role, assert his own competence (as being educated), and attain/preserve a sense of relatedness (he is inherently relating himself to his fellow volunteers, often local students).

At the same time, it is notable within the context of James' own words, what his education does not seem to be, namely a conscious effort at understanding or personal growth (e.g. another of the VFI's identified functions of volunteering). The instances of learning that he emphasized in his story were largely practical in nature and less about self-awareness or understanding the world and his role in it. This does not devalue that he did likely grow and learn, but it suggests that the learning may have been more motivated by ego involvement such as the validation he got from completing so many classes, and the diplomas it gave him. This in turn increasingly became his identity, reflecting a process of integrating his initial somewhat extrinsic motives, such as social appreciation, to more intrinsic motives such as role identification.

## 2.2 Kyle: Do No Evil

### 2.2.1 Context of Interview

Kyle was a young, tall and well dressed white man, he had a bit of a beard. The interview was conducted in the lobby of a community radio station, that is also a gathering place for some of the more liberal minded members of the community. He had just finished work for the day and it seemed he had chosen the place as a intermediate place between where he volunteered and the downtown bars and restaurants. He volunteered at a legal service agency for low income persons, and was particularly involved in a project trying to help people avoid foreclosure on their homes. Notably he was volunteering through a government program, which in fact offered a minimal living stipend. As such, Kyle did have some income but it was legally poverty level, providing only very basic sustenance, and he 'volunteered' full time.

### 2.2.2 Facts of Narrative

Kyle was from another state and had only come to the area two years ago to volunteer.

As a child he had attended church and participated in some "volunteer" projects, where he did not feel that he had had that much of a choice about participating. For high school he had attended a private boarding school, there he and his friends were heavily influenced by one of the more progressive teachers, whom they all admired, and Kyle and his friends had tried to change the school policies to reduce ecologic waste.

During college he had been dating someone who was part of the same government program he was now part of and became close with a circle of friends she had, most of whom were part of the same program. He had decided to join that program after graduation.

He came to the local community for two reasons. According to him, the primary motivation was the volunteering opportunity. Secondarily, his girlfriend at the time was studying in the community. Besides an overall desire for a similar experience to what his girlfriend had had, he was motivated by the fact he would be placed in a law firm, as he had interest in becoming a lawyer.

Kyle is no longer dating that woman and no longer interested in pursuing a law degree. He is not particularly interested in pursuing nonprofit work per se, but remains adamant that he just does not want to be "part of the problem"

### 2.2.3 Interpretation

#### Being Jaded

As best as could be told, Kyle seemed to be an intelligent young man with a good education, who had chosen to live at poverty level for two years working for a government program. He described himself as cynical, and expressed a great deal of doubt in nonprofit efforts to better the world. Fairly early in the interview he seemed to indicate that he was now more focused on not contributing to problems rather than solving them.

> **Kyle**: Yeah I'm a pretty cynical person I guess. It is definitely avoid evil as opposed to do good because I don't strongly agree with most of the work non-profits do but I feel like they're at least trying.
>
> **Interviewer**: What's your concern about non-profits then?
>
> **Kyle**: well you know you kind of get lost and you get lost in a maze of these philosophies. Its not that I feel that there are non-profits that are fraudulent or anything like that or that they have bad motivations, its just. Well for an example, the non-profit I work for, the board of directors is

largely home lenders, or city government people in grants management who don't make a profit off of say more home buyers, but feel that their work is going well when there's more homes being bought, properties values are going up. I don't think that anybody is self-interested or has a bad interest. But its not exactly, you know, rushing to disaster stricken Haiti to help people have water and food. There are those organizations out there but I feel that a lot of non-profits sound better on paper than what actually ends up happening at the end of the day.

He continued later on by elaborating that there might be a conflict between the money making motive and helping others.

**Kyle**: I don't really feel that non-profits don't do good work. But I suppose I feel like, I mean, when you make, the purpose of a job is to make money and what I'm realizing more and more is that people don't really pay you to go out and have fun. If it was profitable to help people, people would be helping people a lot more. There's always some kind of a sacrifice that's made to have a non-profit, if you want to call it a non-profit, you know, I shouldn't say non-profit as much as charity. So, maybe that's the hard one, maybe there's a conflict as soon as you're getting paid to work for a charity. It's like, there's money being exchanged here, it can't be too charitable.

It did not seem that Kyle was completely disillusioned by nonprofit or charitable work, rather he was skeptical about motivations and whether things helped. In particular, he was highly critical of his earliest volunteering experiences.

**Kyle**: Of course when I was younger I was involved with a church youth group that went on mission trips and things but that was not really entirely voluntary.

**Interviewer**: But did you find that work to be rewarding? Or?

**Kyle**: Um, No. Actually I found that work to be largely pointless. We would go, we would do things like go to a, like a, you know, an organization that is probably charity like a halfway home or something like that and then mow their lawn and paint their basement. Their lawn was getting mowed anyway, it was more just, you know, the idea was more I think to keep these kids busy doing something thats, you know, at least trying to be good. Keep us out of trouble, you know, was I think the idea. I don't think we ever actually made a difference anywhere. We were just a bunch of high school kids.

Many of Kyle's answers reflected his feeling that best efforts to better things are often thwarted by people's inability to follow through. At his boarding school, Kyle and his friends had convinced the school

administration to switch from disposables for the cafeteria to washing plates and silverware. The condition of the administration was that the students would have to ensure utensils would be returned and not broken. This effort almost immediately failed as students essentially stole or broke the dishes, costing the administration more. A compromise position was however found, where recyclables were used.

Most of Kyle's volunteer efforts focused on trying to helping individuals facing foreclosure. He felt that those efforts had not helped anyone to actually keep their house, but also felt that this failure was more so inherent to the issue of foreclosures.

> **Kyle**: If you want to be that simplistic about it, I don't know if we've actually saved anybody's house. One guy with our advice was able to reinstate the loan and it was clear that he wouldn't have been able to reinstate the loan if, or wouldn't have known how to, if he hadn't met with the attorney. And that guy actually called last, this was back in March, and then 10 months later he called me last week and said that he had been served with a summons a few months ago and he was losing the house. So, um, I mean that's just one example of, and I don't think that, you know, the attorney that I work with is one of the most competent and intelligent people that I've ever known, I mean she's extremely impressive, dedicated. Um, I've worked my butt off. The grant was well written.

Kyle concluded with a sardonic sort of laugh, saying:

> **Kyle**: but, if people don't pay their mortgage payments. They lose their house. You just can't really do a whole lot to stop it.

For Kyle this seemed to be an important principle, that the best program could be in place, but if others failed on their end, no progress would occur. He related the story of a lawyer who was trying for years to help a man gain custody of his kids, but then the father destroyed his chances because "something like the guy had been arrested, naked, on top of city hall, at 3 in the morning."

Kyle's statements at times expressed a sense of futility, but he also hinted that these problems were not only inherent in the work, but the reason for the work.

> **Kyle**: It's probably when you're working at a charity you're working against the current, you're working against the grain. You know, you're not just trying to help people, you're trying to change things, you're trying to have things go the direction that they're not going otherwise. And that kind of, I feel like encourages a pretty low success rate.

**Action and Experience**

Kyle's apparent criticism of the nature of charity work, was accompanied by a deep admiration for some of those who did it as well as their motivations for doing it. I asked him about the charity workers that had inspired him to join the volunteering program.

> **Kyle**:you know, that's interesting. Very different from the people that I've met here that work in charity. These were all younger people. Most of them were in their first year out of college, and very opinionated. I feel like the motivation had a lot to do with a person's identity, expressing what people felt. you know, there was an environmental program, it was like a water shed management program. It was one of the smaller parts of this. The guy who worked that was just very outspoken about environmentalism. That was kind of his personal cause. He studied environmental sciences in college. I got the impression that there was kind of a statement being made "I want to work with the environment, and that's what I want to do." And that doesn't seem all that remarkable except in juxtaposition with people I've worked with here, a lot of whom are more seasoned, you know, volunteers or charity workers and the motivation seems very different. It seems very more, I don't want to say selfless, but more, more simple, more basic. This is just a sense of, "I have a job that is to help people. I do my job."

What I find particularly insightful, is that for Kyle, it is the doing and not any particularly rewarding moment that has brought him to desire to help others.

> **Interviewer**: So what experiences.... Do you have any examples of something that sort of, brought this to light?
>
> **Kyle**: you know, I would almost just specifically say no. There isn't an "aha" moment for me anyway. There isn't some great story, some great event where I saved somebody's life, and it was great. It's a daily thing. And I think that if there was, I think that's something that I wouldn't have had to volunteer for a year to learn about myself. It's specifically waking up every day and doing this for a long time is the only way to learn how much you appreciate helping people.

These statements, along with the substantial lack of concrete successes that Kyle experienced, suggest something about how he saw his work and its motivations. Kyle seemed to have learned to value seeing helping others as a rewarding job, and rewarding in the doing, more so in looking for the world to change per se. This particularly came across in his answer to whether he wished that his current coworkers and organization had a more activist, heart-on-sleeve type of politics.

**Kyle**: There's pluses and minuses. I think as a younger person myself, probably I was looking for that and maybe that if I had got into a more radical organization with a little more anger, maybe not anger, but you know a little more buzz, a little more edge, um, I think that would have, I think I would maybe be motivated more strongly. Not that I'm not motivated very strongly by my own job, but I might bring some true passion to the job if I was probably, probably the difference is just being around people more like myself. But, yeah so I guess so, but I see value and in fact I think it's better not to be motivated by those reasons. I think that it's probably more sustainable and more effective in the long run too. And that might have to do with that fact that I'm comparing with, you know, in that older organization in Ohio, I mean not older in terms of seniority, but previous organization in my life, um, those were kids that were fresh out of college, and then here I'm looking at attorneys who have been working in the law for 10 years and its like, well, their system is almost certainly going to look better than this other system because they are very valuable people but, um, they, this, you know, I don't necessarily know that going out and being very opinionated and being very, um, you know, rocking the boat necessarily accomplishes a whole lot.

In this answer, Kyle says directly that not being motivated by strong, passionate political opinions or values may be more sustainable motivation and thus ultimately more effective at achieving change. Along with his prior statements that there was no epiphany or life changing experience, but rather that the dedication of day to day activity is motivating, paints a picture of a different sort of motivation. As Kyle said, "it's not exactly selfless, but more basic", a dedication to doing a job.

What I think Kyle is reacting to is that for his coworkers, and increasingly himself, the charitable work is not oriented by specific quantifiable goals, but rather is a long term life choice. I think an analogy might be someone who chooses to work outdoors because they value being closer to nature. Similarly, Kyle and his coworkers seem motivated to 'help', where help is defined by the actions they take, not the outcome. Just as working on a farm would teach one to appreciate working outdoors, Kyle seems to imply that doing charitable work leads one to appreciate doing charitable work, not because of clear incidents, but as a lifestyle.

### The Right Side

A pervasive theme for Kyle was his admiration for idealists who actually took action, his want to be working with those sorts of people, and his desire to be on the right side. This is clear in his conscious admiration of the volunteers he met while in college, his referring to several ecological activists whom he admired, and in admiring the lawyers he currently worked with. He articulated that being on the right side was what

emboldened him in no unclear terms.

> **Kyle**: So, I've been overwhelmed by it a little bit, I've been disillusioned by it a little bit, but, at the same time, you know, actually getting up every day I've kind of also fallen in love with feeling like I do good, and feeling like I'm on a team that's on the right, you know, that has, I'm not a religious person but you know, the old saying that "God is on our side", it's a good feeling.
>
> I go out and I meet people that are actually my age who make a lot more money than I do, actually targeting people with predatory loans and realize that that's what they do and they, and uh, I have a very strong feeling of I'm really genuinely glad that I don't do that. And I don't think that I would have known that a year and a half ago. I think I would have suspected as much, but I could have easily been lured into a job like that, and I think genuinely regretted it.

This gives some additional insight into what Kyle might be appreciating on a day to day basis, his appreciation of charity work.

> **Kyle**: And I feel like I've learned that even if, you know, if charity work isn't what I thought it would be, I've realized that you know, non-charitable or damaging or destructive work is that much worse. I realized, you know, there is a genuine value to being able to sleep at night and not feeling like you do something that's bad.

As a lifestyle, working benevolently allowed Kyle a peace of mind that he felt money literally could not buy. At the end of the interview, Kyle expressed an interest in going back to school to get a management degree. He mentioned either working for a nonprofit to help it run efficiently, or as an alternate working for a profitable organization that is good, whose values he agreed with.

### 2.2.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

Kyle started volunteering for two reasons, both of which map readily to the VFI. He was interested in possibly becoming a lawyer, clearly the career motive. Secondly, he desired experience similar to friends that he had admired, which has both aspects of understanding and social motives from the VFI. The career motive is a relatively clear external motive oriented towards a relatively concrete reward. Growth is a fairly internal motivation, though it is not directly oriented towards rendering others assistance either.

That only captures his rationale for volunteering when he began. One of the more fascinating things in Kyle's interview was that he described a shift in his motivations over time. Moreover, he associated this shift with the act of doing. As he described this, through being involved in helping on a day to day basis,

he learned to appreciate different aspects of the process and take real joy at simply being on the right side. This seems to reflect that as he ends his volunteering commitment, he is more motivated by values and enacting them. This is both reflective of the VFI values function as well as epitomizing intrinsic motivation and autonomy.

Within the VFI literature, the functions are not organized within a specific framework of say internal vs. external, action or thought oriented. There is no hypothesized progression between different motives over time. Admittedly, Kyle's change of motives is a retrospective self-report, however it does seem that he is progressing from one set of motives to another.

A sometimes overlooked aspect of SDT is organismic integration theory (OIT Deci & Ryan, 1985) , which describes how externally motivated behaviors are regulated, as well as how external motivations might shift to internal motivations. Considered a sub-theory of SDT, OIT describes a variety of regulatory processes relating external factors to emotions and social pressures (e.g. Congruence, social compliance, ego-involvement). These processes are summarized in Figure 1 from Deci and Ryan's (2000) review of their own work.

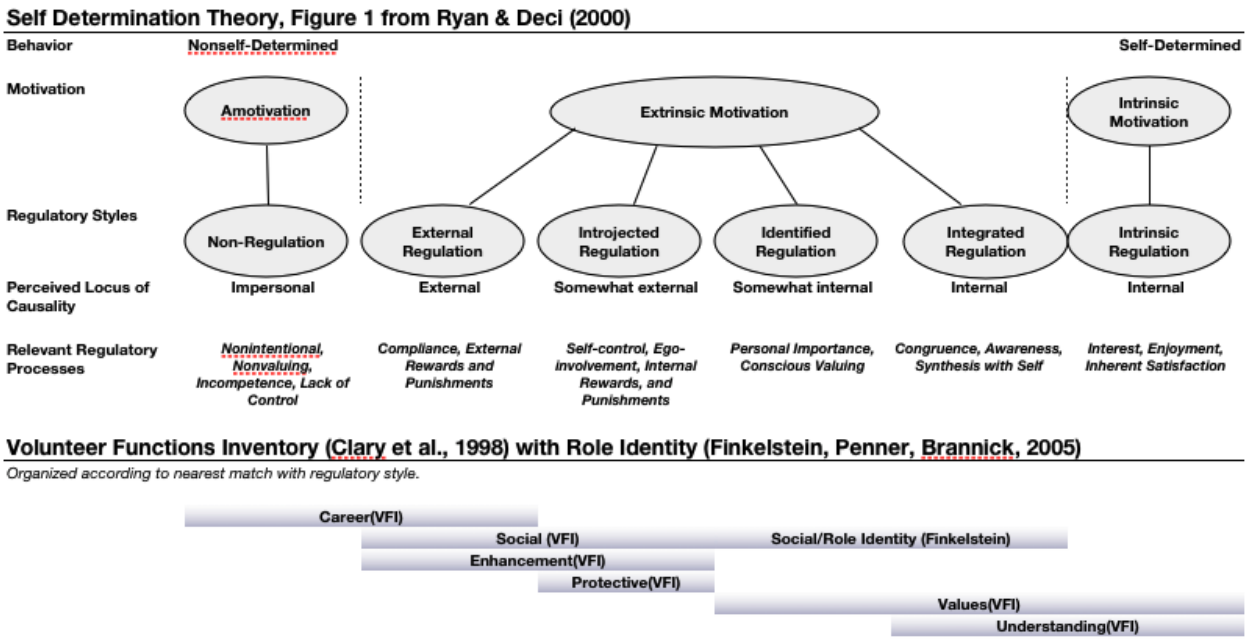
Perhaps supporting this, according to Kyle, his motivations have become more internal over time. By his own conceptualizations of his behavior/attitude in comparison to his coworkers this shift is necessary for longer term commitment to the sort of helping-oriented service work. More externally oriented motivations are less stable.

Notably, work on the VFI in longitudinal settings indicates that value motivated volunteers are more likely to be and stay committed (A. Omoto & Snyder, 1995) . Whereas a key aspect of OIT is that it provides a process whereby motivations for sustained behaviors can become progressively more internalized over time, particularly if the behavior fulfills the need for relatedness.

While by no means clear cut or definitive, there appears to be a certain congruence between VFI's motive and the different regulatory processes of OIT. This allows an admittedly clumsy, but provocative grafting of the VFI functions within the framework of SDT (as outlined in Ryan & Deci, 2000) .

Kyle modeling his actions after others' reflects an aspect of identification with that group and adopting its values as his own (role identification). It also seems to reflect a desire to learn more about himself at the same time. As such this motive seems to be somewhere on the spectrum of autonomy between identified and integrated regulation.

What is clearer however is that from his perspective, he has learned quite a bit about himself through the process of doing. In particular, he finds a sense of inherent satisfaction by being on the right side, indicating both a values orientation and an intrinsic regulation. Moreover it is clear that his career interests




have ceased to be a motivating factor in his volunteering, rather his experiences from volunteering have led him to value being able to work for a firm that fits his values. This seems to indicate that the process of doing has led to a greater internalization of his motives.

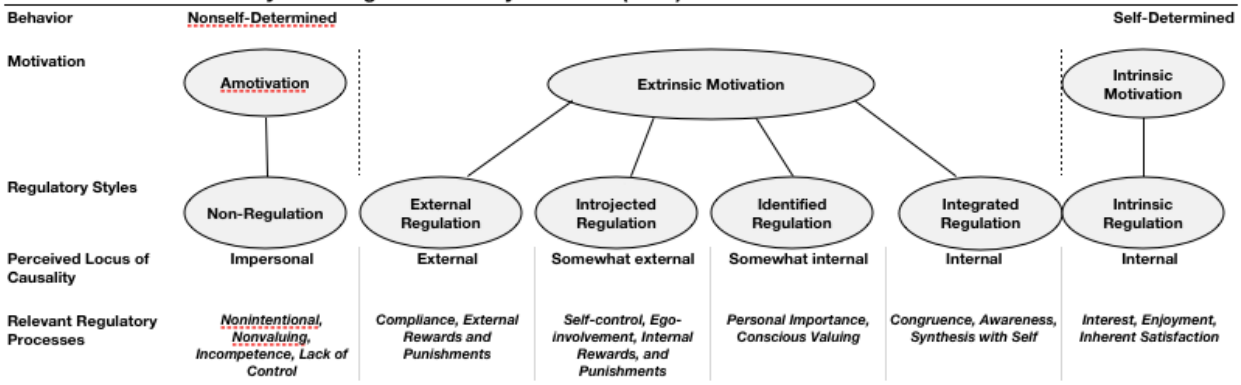
In the next graphic, Kyle's motives (as well as James') are plotted along the spectrum of VFI overlaid on SDT.

This framework seems compelling in conceptualizing motivations. This is not to say that all the pieces or aspects fit together precisely, but it is at least useful to map these constructs together for the time being. Returning briefly to James, his motivations can also be plotted on the spectrum.

What is most provocative about this framework is that SDT and OIT provide emotional aspects which roughly map to VFI functions. In turn these regulatory processes can be used to infer motivations. This point will be further explored throughout the remaining interviews.

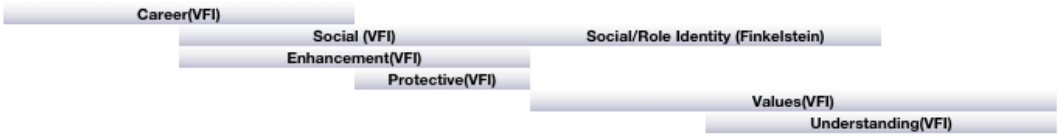
What is already not present however, is how exactly *doing* fits within the framework. Whereas OIT identifies satisfying the need for relatedness as an aspect of internalizing motivations (Ryan & Deci, 2000) , Kyle seems to suggest it is the doing itself achieves the same.

**Self Determination Theory from Figure 1 from Ryan & Deci (2000)**

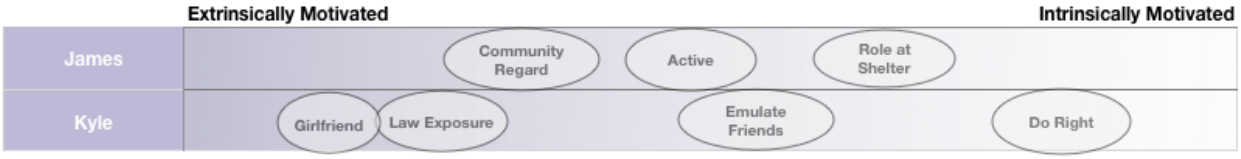



**Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1998) with Role Identity (Finkelstein, Penner, Brannick, 2005)**

*Organized according to nearest match with regulatory style.*




**Interviewees**



## 2.3 Shirley: Getting by on Faith

### 2.3.1 Context of Interview

Shirley was heavy set White woman, who appeared to be about 45 years old. I met her at a cafe on the outskirts of town. This was notable because it was a fairly middle class location. Most menu items cost more than $5 after tax and it wasn't easily reachable by anything other than driving a car. Prior to the interview she had been meeting her friends there for a few hours, it appeared that the friends remained nearby throughout the interview.

Reviewing the notes and transcript, it is clear that there were a few major details that were left out, which in retrospect it may have been helpful to know, largely about her personal life. Shirley knew the researcher's mother and was of similarly strong religious beliefs, as such, as the interviewee she assumed she was speaking to someone of her faith group and similar beliefs. That opened up discussions of what it meant to be Christian, but made candid discussion about other parts of her life difficult (e.g. being a single parent).

### 2.3.2 Facts of Narrative

Shirley grew up in east central Illinois in a town of about 500 people. She grew up Christian and the Church continues to play a very large role in her life. She explicitly sees her volunteerism as primarily a way to 'share (her) faith'. She identified getting to interact with people different than her as a secondary reason.

When she was still a teenager, she recalls her first experience with volunteering/helping as a trip her church youth group to work with poor people in the Appalachian mountains. The church group's activity involved selling toys to parents. Shirley explained that the people there were proud and wouldn't accept free toys, but they were comfortable buying them for a dime. Years later, Shirley arranged a trip for her son and other youth from her church to visit the same area. An act she also described in terms of nurturing the youths' spiritual lives.

Details were not entirely clear about Shirley's personal life, particularly with regards to her son. She mentions having really relied on her church as a source of belonging and support when her son was younger, about 16 years before the interview. In retelling, she described herself as a single mother, though she did not elaborate how she came to be a single mother, whether it was an unplanned out-of-wedlock pregnancy, divorce, or if she was widowed. During this phase of her life she had become very active in the church and was the youth director for five years, also a volunteer position.

A somewhat recent event in her life was brain cancer, which she saw as having cost her paying job. Her

volunteerism however had clearly started before the tumor and the loss of her job, she recalled one time when her boss had commented that she "shouldn't let work interfere with her social life" but actually she had been using down time at work to organize some of her volunteering. In any case from her own narrative it was clear that her involvement in the nonprofit community was her main activity these days, she no longer had any job and felt distanced from the church which had become too 'politically correct'. She had also volunteered at the local men's shelter in the 1990s when it was affiliated with a church.

It was clear that she was currently married and dependent on her husband. Much of her adult life she had worked as a car saleswoman. This had ended within the past year and she was currently unemployed, moreover she felt she was unable to work consistently. The result was that her family was entirely dependent on her husband's job. If he lost his job, they did not have substantial savings and would quickly find themselves in a dire economic situation.

From her telling, she lost her job as the long term consequence of having had a brain tumor in 2008. The onset and discovery of the brain tumor was abrupt in that she had a grand mal seizure and was operated on thereafter. After that incident, she missed three months of work, and returned. She tried to return full time, but after a year this was not working out well, she slowly phased down to half time and then stopped working altogether. Though she mentioned 'quitting', it was not clear which aspects of phasing out and ceasing to work where voluntary, her decision, or forced upon her. She mentioned feeling 'discriminated against' and that her inability to keep working was immensely frustrating. She stated she was able to cope with that frustration from not being able to work, in part by volunteering.

As her professional career was phasing out, she increased her involvement in social programs in the community substantially. As she described her involvement, she herself had a difficult time remembering all of the different agencies that she volunteered with. Her charitable involvement included a local Christian charity working with home maintenance, clothing and particularly food, working with a group of churches to organize overflow shelter space for homeless men, volunteering with a secular community partnership for homeless, sitting on the council for service providers for the homeless (an interagency council), and finally working at the crisis nursery.

### 2.3.3 Interpretation

During the interview, at several points Shirley laughed and at several other points she seemed a bit sad or forlorn.

She laughed once when retelling her former boss' comment about 'her social life' interfering with her work. She also laughed when retelling a story about delivering food to a man who was lying under a blanket

and she was unsure if he had any clothes on underneath the blanket. Likewise she chuckled at how her son and her fight often over 'political correctness', with him advocating it.

A common thread in these three incidents is that they are not so much humor as some manner of discomfort. With her boss, actually the teasing had some negative undertones. She was at work and working on something besides her job, even though she said that it was down time. Secondly, from her perspective this volunteer work she was doing was not her social life. As previously stated, towards the end of her job, she felt 'discriminated against'. While the employer may have understood that she was volunteering her time for a worthwhile cause, it probably was not the case that the employer was happy to have her work on these things in the office.

In the case of the gentleman she delivered food to, she gave the story as an example of how she enjoyed engaging with people she would not otherwise meet. He was quadriplegic and In this case she had a discussion with that gentleman about her Christian faith and also about his Jewish faith. Nonetheless, she interjected that detail I think because she found it to have been unexpected, and also because she was not comfortable with that man. This is not to say that she did not sincerely gain something from the conversation, but that there was some ambivalence.

The same is also true of her son, Shirley was very forthright about her desire to share her faith, be involved with her son's spiritual life, and her dislike of political correctness. While she mentioned her son several times in the interview, the only reference that she made to his life or opinions were his arguing against her viewpoint. Specifically, it seemed that the son did not approve entirely of her behavior, at least how she spoke about some faith related things.

### The Loneliness of Being Politically Correct

This leads to the one point in the interview where Shirley seemed most vulnerable. It was not talking about losing her job or the tumor, but about political correctness in her church.

> **Shirley**: I see some, how some people can feel, maybe it's hard to describe, feel very separated, because they belong to this one group where they thought that, well church, ok let's say church, because I'm to a great extent, a lot of churches are becoming politically correct, okay, and I, take, I'll just explain my situation, okay?
>
> **Interviewer**: Yeah, that's all I expect, explain your situation, I'll listen to other people's situations, great.
>
> **Shirley**: Ok. And ok, I'm, I've been going to this church for about sixteen years, and uh, it was me and my son that just went. I was a single mother and um, we loved it, we absolutely

love it, we got involved in things, I was involved in, uh became the youth director and uh, we felt embraced. Well, the slowly, the church kind of, like for example, they won't say the Lord's prayer because it might offend someone.

**Interviewer**: At the church?

**Shirley**: At the church. Believe it or not, it's at the church. I mean during the traditional service, yes, they always do it, during contemporary service, once in a while, we will, but a lot of the times we won't, because it might offend someone and they're very wary of having, you know, not having them feel well.

I'm talking about that. That makes me feel lonely, because that questions, makes me question why am I here? What is this about? Am I, have you, have I been a part of something that all of a sudden, it's showing it's true colors and stating that what we believed in all along has been a lie? So it's kind of a stretch, but it isn't to me. And that has created loneliness in my life.

What is evident in her view of political correctness is that Shirley felt that the church changing its ways threatened or invalidated her own viewpoints, and maybe even the meaning of her own past actions. Moreover, that loneliness is the result of these things changing, implies that the church had otherwise provided for her social needs of belongingness and perhaps validation of her beliefs.

I asked specifically whether volunteering helped with the loneliness and she affirmed that it did. At a different point, when asked, she said that she often felt more conflict from working with other Christian groups than with secular groups. She described this in terms of not always being able to understand how those groups could act the way they did, even though they supposedly believed the same things as her.

### Sharing of Faith

Shirley repeatedly stated that she desired to share her faith, when asked she was quite clear that this did not mean to proselytize. Rather to her, "sharing her faith " meant actions, doing what she believed Christ wanted for her, to help others. This allowed her the occasional opportunity to have discussions of her faith (as in her story of talking with the Jewish quadriplegic ) and meet people different from herself.

It is worth unpacking then, what sharing faith seems to mean in Shirley's life. Shirley felt lonely when her church stopped using the Lord's Prayer. She argued with her son about whether to be politically correct, felt less lonely when volunteering but working with the secular agencies. Her struggles with Christian agencies largely stemming from her feeling that they did not always act as they should as Christians. What is common in these different elements of her story is an underlying need to have her view of her identity as a Christian

validated.

She identifies herself strongly as Christian, and perhaps desires to be seen as loving and charitable as a Christian. Evidence that indicates that other Christians are not the same as her threatens this identity, evidence that others are offended by Christianity (presumably what her son is concerned about) threatens it, and seeing other Christians not act the way that she feels they must threatens it. Working with secular organizations however does not threaten it, in those contexts, for the most part she is able to be seen as a contributor and no one would have a reason to question her Christianity. Given that she is very quick to make mention of God and her take on political correctness, it is clear that she would be seen as a Christian in those settings.

This is not to imply that she does not take real joy and meaning from sharing her faith. It is rather to contextualize what that might actually mean in a practical sense. Sharing her faith seems to mean, to her, engaging with the poor and work to help the poor and having someone ask her about why she is doing it, and thus being able to talk about her faith within the context of those very actions. This was the case in her telling of the meeting with the Jewish quadriplegic man. Inherent in that narrative though, is that her actions are being recognized in some way first, and then linked to her faith. Such incidents offer a great deal of validation for that identity and her view of her faith, notably even if the efforts to help are ultimately in vain.

### Measuring Outcomes

Shirley also expressed faith of another sort, which I think may ultimately be linked into her motivations for her work. I asked her about whether it mattered if she saw change in the people's lives that she helped. Her response was very articulate in linking how she did *not* look at outcomes and how it related to her religious faith, and that bears further examination.

> **Interviewer**: It's like there are familiar faces from 10 years ago, so how do you.... do you... how I guess does that make you feel if you're spending all that time working with the low income? Do you feel you have impact? How do you measure your impact, because just cause somebody's not or still on the doesn't necessarily mean.... I guess how do you see that from your own perspective?
>
> **Shirley**: You know what? I don't. Personally I don't measure it that way. Um, because what anyone does, might not have an immediate response, you might not see an immediate reaction, um, from the person that you're helping. It might be 20 years down the road, it doesn't matter. Um, but I don't think anything that, you do in goodness, and in the name of Jesus is ever gonna

go unnoticed. Um, you know it might take a, you might not be just the only one that they listen to. Um, so I can't say that I make an impact on anything. Um, I don't think I do, now you talk to my husband and he thinks I do, but um, I just, I don't worry about it.

**Interviewer**: What do you worry about then?

**Shirley**: Sharing, sharing my faith with people, and not just through words, through more of my actions, and, and then,there have been some food deliveries that I've made, they could care less, or they appear that they could care less. Well, that's that's ok, that's up to them, but that's not going to stop me from doing what I feel I'm called to do.

**Interviewer**: So, I'm assuming when you say call, you mean in a sort of religious sense, you feel called?

**Shirley**:: Mmmmhmmm.

**Interviewer**: How have you felt called, like what is that experience for you?

**Shirley**: Well, uh, I'm sorry.... It's.... I keep praying every night and asking, um for, you know, for him to use me in whatever way he sees fit, and um, I'm still led to do volunteer work and um, to serve other people, and so I'm assuming that's what he wants me to do. I don't know, I don't know how to answer that, I really don't.

Her response about not measuring success by outcomes makes it very clear that she has a certain faith that good is occurring even if she can't see it. She essentially tries not to expect any result or appreciation from the people she is helping. It nonetheless seems that she roots some part of her emotional security in that belief in the inherent goodness in her religious faith. Within this context, what she may seek validation of, is not that she helps, but that she offers help, if she is seen as Christian in her role of trying to help, that is likely enough. Moreover and independently of the role of her Christian identity, this leads her to feel a sense of reward from the process of helping, rather than the outcome.

### Being Called to Volunteer

Shirley acknowledges God as the reason for her actions, and described it as her calling in life. It may be that I falsely assumed that she felt 'called' in the religious sense, and that she just passively agreed. I doubt that this is the case however, rather it seems that she was used to describing her volunteering in that way, and simply was not accustomed to explaining what that actually meant. Her answer seems to reveal that she on the one hand is seeking external validation, but on the other merely keeps on doing what she has been, and deems what she does to be her calling.

The term 'called' and a surrounding narrative about her actions being what God wanted from her, are certainly part of the Christian culture in the United States. In the interview, Shirley made very little mention of individuals at her church, she was however quicker to make mention of individuals outside of her church, that she knew through volunteering. In this sense, volunteering or sharing her faith may have actually been at the core of her spiritual life. Shirley herself never makes this proclamation however.

Rather what comes across is that Shirley's volunteering, her calling as it were, is largely the product on several convergent forces. Firstly, she was raised to value and more importantly do volunteer work through her church. Secondly, at a difficult time in her life (raising her son alone) the church provided solace to her, as such she invested more in the church, and that role began to take on greater meaning, as well as to be involved in the community efforts of the church. Thirdly, as the culture of the church has shifted, she seeks affirmation in that comforting role of being Christian through those works. Finally, with her tumor and subsequent loss of a job, it also becomes a way for her to feel productive.

For her as a person though, saying that she is called to do this work or it is God's will makes the most sense. The cliche saying that God works in mysterious ways describes her perspective, in that light it's surprising that she did not see the tumor as a sign to rededicate her life to something else. In any case within this belief system of seeking God's guidance, anything can be a sign back. As she roughly states, since this is what she has been doing, it is probably what God has intended for her. Said in that way, she herself does not know precisely why she does it. Simply describing her actions as a religious calling however, would be respected by her church, and seen as a sign of her Christian faith to those outside of her church.

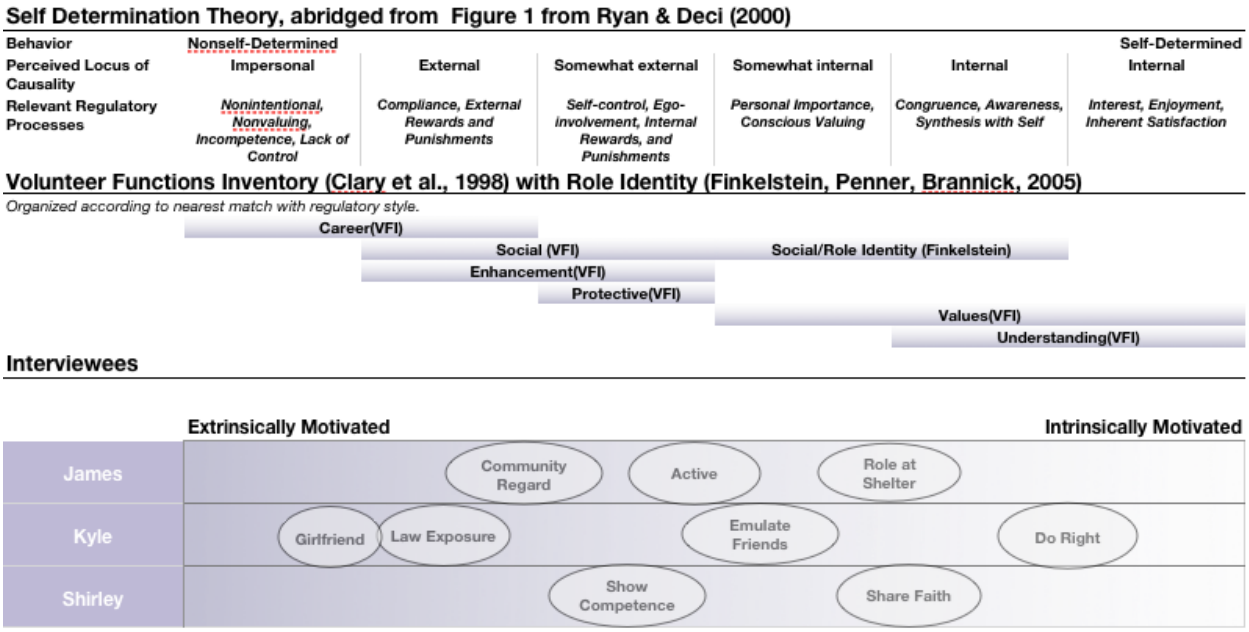
### 2.3.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

Shirley's overt stated motivation was to share her Christian faith through her service. On the surface this would seem like her motivation was related to values and self-expression. However, she was visibly emotional over other topics related to her work, her church, and times connected her volunteering to being something to do. Questioning whether religious motivation to volunteer indicates sincere prosocial motives or egoism is not a new question (Batson et al., 1989) , however it is easily categorizable as intermediate state when considering the SDT/VFI/OIT framework.

This is where the framework of SDT/VFI/OIT allows a certain inference that is compatible with the interpretation already given. From Shirley's emotionality, I infer a level of ego involvement, placing her dominant motives in the middle of external/internal spectrum, her VFI motivation as protective. Shirley's competence was threatened by losing her job, volunteering and being able to associate herself with the organizations she volunteered for gave her back some of this sense of competence. Her feelings of lacking

competence was only one aspect to this.

Shirley was also visibly upset about topics such as 'political correctness' creating loneliness. She had earlier in her life gotten a great deal of support and feelings of inclusion from the church, but now acknowledges that she sometimes feels distant from the church. Volunteering in order to share and express her faith then allows her to have some sense of relatedness to a larger group of Christians outside of the church itself.




## 2.4 Ed: A Hands-on Type of Guy

### 2.4.1 Context of Interview

Ed was an able bodied but elderly White man with glasses and white whiskers, I met him where he volunteered, amongst the furniture he'd repaired. Other volunteers and guests walked past throughout the interview, once or twice acknowledging him. At one point he drew in another volunteer just as away of greeting her.

### 2.4.2 Facts of Narrative

Ed had been a biology professor. He did not recall much formal volunteering before or during that career, but did recall a great deal of social activism.

He never stated explicitly where he had grown up, but from the context it seemed that he had likely lived

in the midwest most of his life. He recalled attending John Birch meetings in the 1950s, which was started in the midwest in the late late 1950s and he came to the community in 1964. Ed made several references to having done "church work" at various points in his life, and identified that influence as having led him to his social conscience.

Besides that church work, it was clear that Ed's prosocial activities before retirement were largely within his career and political activism. Ed stated that though he had started out being quite conservative as he learned and read more, he decided that movements such as John Birch were misinformed and wrong.

Within his career Ed had made a point to go present demonstrations of DNA experiments for example to poorer rural districts while he felt most (thought certainly not all) of his colleagues did not make the effort to reach out to the community. He had also given talks on the ecological impact of the Vietnam War during the war, combining his role as an academic with a role of an activist. He also was involved in marches and demonstrations against that war, as well as some anti-racist groups on campus and efforts to unionize labor negotiations.

After retiring, Ed initially started working with Red Cross by volunteering for emergency relief duties, though he became disillusioned with some of their decision making and quit. He has otherwise been volunteering for several years repairing furniture and helping with building projects at one charity and serving serving as ecological advisor for parks and forests in the community.

### 2.4.3 Interpretation

#### Satisfaction of Work

Ed was upfront in saying that his work was motivated both by a desire to help others, but he immediately linked that to the desire to continue being productive and a need to feel useful and needed by others.

> **Ed** Well the obvious one is you want to be involved with useful activities that provide assistance to people. That's the standard answer I guess. But more than that, there are a couple other reasons. First of all it gives you something to do. Who wants to retire, I've been an active person all my life and I have to have projects. Even sometimes when I'm around the house I've got to be doing something. I can't, this just keeps me active. Secondly, probably, it makes you feel that you still have a niche in the world after you retire. There's so many, a number of folks from the U of I, former colleagues, and the biggest problem that they have to wrestle with is they no longer feel important. They used to be in positions of leadership and now they're nothing. They're at home. Nobody depends on them any longer. No one even recognizes their

own existence other than their own families and relationships. And that's a great loss for people who have worked strenuously to develop careers. This gives you some small niche that you still feel you have something important to say and to do.

While this explanation clearly put his work in the context of replacing a feeling of importance or belonging he'd lost in retiring. He was also very clear that it fulfilled a need to socialize with other like minded people, as well as the people that came in for help with their homes or furniture. Other answers revealed that much of it was also a pleasure in simply doing the basic physical work, and the simple and clear benefits he saw coming from that work.

Explaining why he had joined this particular charity, he explained that "every house I've ever built, I've done major remodeling on it, so I've always been a hammer and nail kind of guy. So I thought [the charity] would be a natural fit."

**Ed** first of all, its a steady thing. I'm here as I said almost every day. So I've got something that I can do. Its a satisfying thing in the sense that when I put together that desk over there, and all they do is they give you piles of stuff, people don't give you instructions. Pile of wood there so I got to figure out what am I going to with this now. So these are nice little challenges that I face almost everyday in terms of trying to resurrect something from what people have donated to us. And when I see it done I think, you know that's pretty good, I feel pretty good about that. So there's that sense of satisfaction of saying, you know you've heard it said so many times, the way to avoid dementia in later life is stay active. I don't like crossword puzzles, I don't care to play bridge anymore, but this is something I'm doing that I think is keeping me active. Socially as well as mentally.

On another level, Ed felt a great deal of confidence that his work contributed to a greater good in concrete ways.

**Ed** I'm making a lot of money for this store, quite frankly. There are items here that would never sell were they not repaired. Who's gonna buy a piece of furniture that's broken? Some people might but most folks are coming here to buy furniture that they want to stock in their home. So I've probably made thousands of dollars for this store. So, to say what have I contributed? That's what I've contributed.

The profits from reselling items went into other housing programs. Notably Ed was also involved in those programs and the board of directors and was thus at least indirectly involved in some of the more community wide efforts.

**Ed** So that's money that's in the coffers that's going to be useful in terms of the major goal, providing housing for those who are ill equipped financially, economically to purchase a home.

**No CEO**

While Ed seemed to value the steady commitment of his volunteering and treated it as a job in terms of maintaining professionalism, reliability, etc, he also expressed a great deal of cynicism with charitable work as a job, and the role of money and business in charitable work.

**Ed** One of the reasons I got a little disappointed, disenchanted with the Red Cross, these were jobs for people. I mean they could just as well have been working for a CEO for Wells Fargo as people involved with this charitable outfit. And I think that's true with most charitable organizations. They're jobs.

In another part of the interview, Ed made it clear that he felt it was necessary to pay some people in a charity, because "the problem with depending volunteer help as we find out at this store, is a volunteer shows up when he wants to. You cant run an operation if you've got volunteers who say I don't feel like going in today."

While Ed acknowledged the basic reliability of paid staff, Ed seemed to see a direct albeit imperfect connection between being paid and not being fully focused on the cause.

**Ed** I saw a lot of folks in church work that were there because it was a position. It was a job. It wasn't the dedication that I had hoped to see: That they were there because they felt some strong compulsion. And that's why I appreciate for example some of these folks who are in Haiti right now. They're probably not getting paid to be there. And they're also putting their life on the line by being there.

Ed had himself gone to help in New Orleans after the Hurricane Katrina disaster and seen the chaos there, so he had some idea what Haiti would be like. This experience was a source of his cynicism though. Ed felt that the post-Katrina situation had never been properly resolved and there was a great deal of mismanagement. He described this as being the result of lack of focus on the goal, that lack of focus coming from the role of under-involved paid management.

**Ed** There just wasn't that kind of concern, we've got a big problem here, let's work on the problem. We would go into work and every day they'd change the rules. Well now you can do this, no now you can do this, now we've got to change that, now we can't, no we're going to do it this way now. Don't you guys know what's going on?

**Interviewer**: Where do you think that's coming from? That flux?

**Ed** CEOs! People who sit around desks like this and make decisions without knowing what the hell's going on in the real world.

Ed was quite angry at CEOs, but he was also able to articulate how CEOs doing the work as a job led to a sort of unsteady hand in some situations that was not conducive to effective work being accomplished in the field.

**Ed** well they find out, well the decision we made yesterday isn't working. We better change that and make a new decision today. When that decision didn't work let's make a new decision tomorrow. And instead of saying, what's the problem, how can we get at this problem and come up with concerted effort that joined at least some of the dots together. Use the old expression we use today. It didn't seem like they were joining any dots together. It was like each guy trying to save his job, it sounded like to me.

At the same time, it did not seem that Ed had an exact theory for when the professionalization of charitable activity was good or bad. He did describe himself and other having been paid at some point in the past.

**Ed** It depends on how much you're getting paid I guess. See, when I was in church work, we didn't get paid very much. We went there out of commitment. And it didn't make any difference, as long as we could pay our bills.

Ed's views seemed to suggest that it was on the one hand important that people had enough to get by, lest lack of money prevent them from being committed to a cause. It also suggested that on the other hand, being paid a large amount and having to worrying about keeping the job could either attract individuals less invested in the cause or cause people to make decisions based on keeping their job instead of doing their job.

### All you can do is try

Halfway through the interview, Ed provided what seems to be a very clear summary of his views on social change and the role of the individual from his perspective. In this, Ed expresses a deep caring if not anger about social justice and humanitarian issues, doubts about whether these things can be changed on a large scale, yet reaffirming throughout his strong belief in individuals doing what they can.

**Ed** Where are the real problems? The real problems are environmental, they're with health care, they're with economic deprivation. And you can pretend they're not there but they're not going to go away. Somebody's got to do these things. Or its going to be like Haiti. Its going to deteriorate into a medieval society. I mean I'm very distressed for example about the Supreme Court's decision of yesterday. I mean thats absurd to say that you can put all the money into corporate, there is no limit on the amount of money you can pour into a political campaign. We just destroyed democracy. We just destroyed democracy. What should I care about that? Like I was telling my wife, I'm going to be dead soon anyhow. It just bothers me to think that this is the direction this country is going.

**Interviewer**: How much do you think that people can actually affect things at that level?

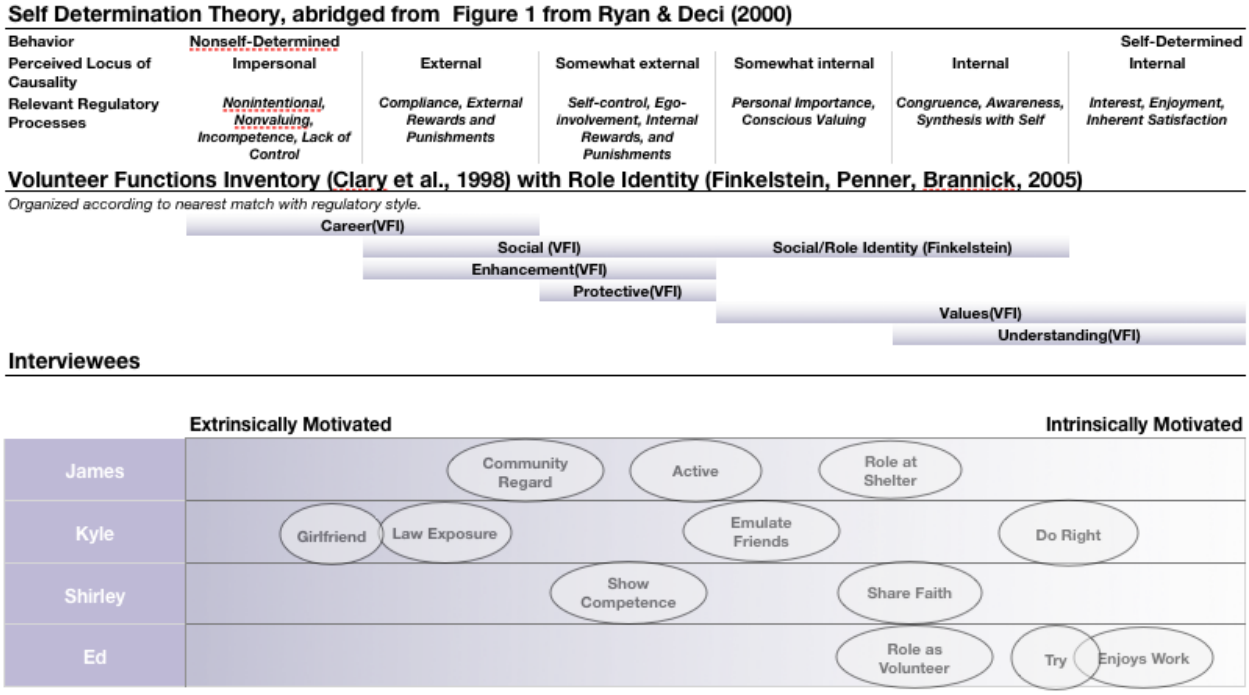
**Ed** All we can do is try. I don't think you can, I don't know if what Margaret Mead said makes any sense today. But she said that every social movement starts with individuals. And we used to think that in Vietnam, and it worked in Vietnam. It took a while but it worked. But would it work that this? I don't know. I don't know. We've been trying for a long time for example to get political campaign reform, now this happens. So that set everything back how many years. 100 years? 50 years? 20 years? I don't know. Set it back. So do we keep trying? I guess you have to. Can you change anything? I don't know if you can. All I can do is just do what I can.

**Ed** in 1964 there was a great deal of ferment to revolutionize, well education, higher education in general. Well there always is, but there was especially then. And I was going to help lead that revolution and that was going to change biological education. And I gained a little bit of notoriety not a great deal. Wrote some books. And it all went to naught. Well now the cycle is back again. Now they're trying to talk about what we were talking about 40 years ago. So do you change anything? I don't know. Right now thats why I, maybe that's a partial answer to one of your questions. Maybe why I do what I do is because that's the one small thing that I can do. And don't worry about whether or not you're changing the world. Just do what you can do. That's all. And if I fix a chair and they sell it for $50 and they were supposed to throw it in the trash, thats great. Thats something. And maybe thats all we can do. Maybe that's all you can do. Maybe we shouldn't have such grandiose visions of revolution. Maybe we're more evolution than revolution, right?

### 2.4.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

Perhaps moreso than James, Shirley, or Kyle, Ed took pleasure in the work that he did itself. The actual act of fixing furniture. At a basic level, the work was fulfilling his need to feel competent. It let him physically "try" to change the world for the better. For Ed though, his motivation and satisfaction was in this regard more intrinsic. He both believed that the furniture work that he did helped the organization and other people, as well as enjoying doing the work itself. He was a hands-on kind of guy and he got to work with his hands. It was also very clear that he was role identified with being a volunteer with his organization. He was outright proud of his role, both with repairs and on the board.

At the same time, Ed had a pretty deep seated cynicism about the world. Part of what he motivated his volunteering was the autonomy that he had to control his contributions. He valued social causes a great deal, and by being a volunteer he was able to do what he felt was right without being forced by external factors to operate in a certain way (as he had not been able to do with the Red Cross, due to the CEO). This seems to express a strong need for autonomy, a lack of satisfaction with merely doing what someone else would choose for him.



## 2.5 Mildred: Pay it Forward

### 2.5.1 Context of Interview

Mildred was not a member of the local community, but a director of a local charity recommended that I speak with her as response to my solicitation. Her place to interview was about 75 miles from the other interview sites. Mildred was a very thin, elderly White woman with a strong voice, we met at a public library about an hour south of the city where other interviews were conducted. Mildred also drove to reach the library and still held a part time job there. Mildred was very sharp and organized in her thoughts, which led to a very brief interview. Several of her answers gave the impression she had at least informally prepared ahead of time with answers to anticipated questions. She frequently answered to follow up questions in a way that simply reiterated a point she had already made, this did not seem avoidant but kept the interview short and direct.

### 2.5.2 Facts of Narrative

Mildred lived most if not all of her life in the midwest, though she had moved around at least a few times. She had attended college in Wisconsin and then moved to southern Illinois. After working for a while in one town, she went returned to school for her PhD in education. She studied that in Indiana, and then returned to a different town in Illinois. She also raised a family there, and one child is still living close by.

She retired from working in the public school system in 1996, and after a year of "wooling around", she started volunteering. She volunteers doing secretarial work at a pro-bono law office and givess free assistance with taxes via another program. She also holds a part time job at a public library.

### 2.5.3 Interpretation

#### They asked

Volunteering can have several different meanings, which often overlap but not always. Interestingly, though Mildred was definitely a volunteer in the sense of not being paid and working of her own free will, she was not a volunteer in the sense of having put herself forward as willing to work. This also played a role in her motivations, she really didn't look for any activity. She did say at one point that she was not the sort to not do anything and wanted to stave active until the day she died.

Nonetheless, Mildred volunteered because at some point a friend at her church (and former coworker) asked her to join a volunteering group for seniors, so Mildred did. That lead directly to the volunteering she now does and has done for years, because the friend approached her a year after her retirement.

*__Mildred__: Well, I retired in 1996 when I had been the coordinator of instructional materials for the Decatur public schools. Ah, I think maybe I spent the year off sort of wooling around. I've been, was approached by the gal who runs RSVP here in town. She asked first of all if I would be interested in working with the (the charity). I had absolutely no experience. I had a little bit of experience with both Word and Excel which both helped me. And when I went over to be interviewed, the managing attorney said, well, she would ask for a commitment of at least eight hours a week. And I said I felt comfortable with that so I've been there ever since. As a matter of fact, we were originally in (that town). Now we have a satellite office in (this town) and we have, unfortunately, lost all of our full time secretaries. And, they only recently hired a part time secretary. So, my workload there increased and it no longer dealt with making many, many copies. I draft pleadings and that kind of thing, which I really like and enjoy. Especially when they say this is a different one and you have to work around it.

Not long after, she was also asked to volunteer for taxes, she has been doing both for about 13 years. She did not profess any strong reasons why she chose this particular work other than that is what she was asked to do, it fit her skills, and she felt it helped.

**Uses Skills**

It was very clear that Mildred cared about using her abilities. Even if asked to volunteer in a more basic role, she would refuse because she just wanted to use her skills.

*__Mildred__: Ah, I was asked to specifically for those two. If asked. Well, another thing I did this fall as I moved into the new building, they had a small library collection and because I am a librarian by trade, if you wish in fact, my office is over yonder. I'm a part time employee here as well. I did offer to catalog their collection. But I do not wish to volunteer where I am licking on envelopes and posting on stamps. Showing people where the restroom is or whatever. I want to be doing something. Not only to occupy me but, in turn, do something that will benefit someone else directly.

Another time during the interview, she made it quite clear that staying active and productive was a big motivator for her.

*__Mildred__: I'm also one of those people. I never want to be without a job paid or unpaid. And I had just turned 79 and I am still physically active. And I intended to pursue some kind of work until I can't.

**Interviewer**: Ok. So, umm..I guess another big question that I like to ask people. Would you call your motivation for getting involved and volunteering selfish or more for the other people's benefit?

*__Mildred__: I suppose selfish. Not that I don't want to benefit other people. Something be I never really thought about it. But obviously my first response is probably the truest, right?

**Interviewer**: Perhaps, umm, but, why would you call it selfish?

*__Mildred__: Yea. I don't know. I, I can't answer that.

**Interviewer**: That's interesting in and of itself.

*__Mildred__: Well, I guess that,umm, the other alternative is for other peoples' benefit makes me sound like I've got a halo. And I don't. Ok. So, having to choose one or the other, I guess that I gravitated towards selfish.

At another point, I was caught off guard as the interviewer and asked if she would consider volunteering as a librarian, forgetting she had mentioned being paid part time still. Her response was that she would not, because she did not feel it would be appropriate for someone to do that sort of work merely as a volunteer. Nonetheless, she was only willing to volunteer in situations that used her computer and organization skills.

Taken in the additional context of her answer regarding selfishness, it seems that being productive and contributing is a large part of her motivation. She also made it quite clear that she does like her coworkers at the law offices and tax services, and would miss them. I also asked whether she would keep volunteering in the same places if the others changed.

It was also pretty clear from her other answers though, that gratitude from volunteers wasn't her primary motivation either.

**Interviewer**: And. See you've mentioned sort of two things. One is kind of the gratitude where the woman breaks down crying. And the other is just sort of the impact on your end. Just saying well it's like they aren't going to these other people. Umm, you know, what matters to you for motivation?

*__Mildred__: Umm, well just the satisfaction that I derive from having helped somebody.

**Interviewer**: So, it's the actual help itself that is that, umm, I mean you say, you started off by actually saying. What I like think is interesting that you've had some good things happen to you. And you're doing some good things and, you know, where does gratitude fall into that, I guess? Into that way of thinking.

*__Mildred__: There are days where gratitude don't enter into it at all. It's just another day's work, you know? It all depends on the individuals I see. Ah, I've been at it long enough that now, for instance, some people when they call to make an appointment ask for me. That's you know very flattering.

**Interviewer**: So is it then? Would you say that its about pride for you then? When you say.

*__Mildred__: Possibly

**Interviewer**: Yea, you know. It's just. There is also this idea out there that people put. That you want. That. Would you still do it if you didn't get the gratitude? I guess that's another way to say it.

*__Mildred__: Probably

Reaffirming this was that most of her volunteering was at a legal office where her only client contact was "if she had to open the door". She did notice in client cases that many people did seem very down on her luck. When I asked whether she would keep working in the same places with different coworkers, she said that she probably would, assuming she got along with the new people as well.

### Pay it Forward

Mildred was quite educated. Her world view I think could be fairly reduced to a simple ethic that people should be kind to each other. Kindness had helped her, she appreciated those, and simply felt it would be good to pay that kindness forward. Her desire to work and that others had asked her aside, she was grateful.

*__Mildred__: But as far as my motivation, consciously or unconsciously I realized a long time ago that my life has been pretty much tranquil. In fact, I couldn't ask for a better life. And after you contacted me I began thinking. Trying to think back. Obviously I have chosen to pay forward rather than pay back. But one of the earliest things that I remember that I needed to pay forward. When I was a young child my two front teeth grow in with pits in them which meant that they were constantly being filled and refilled. And out of the blue, I didn't ask, I didn't say I was unhappy with that situation. Our family dentist when I was sixteen said, "I would like to cap your front teeth for you and I will do it just for the cost of materials." What a deal. Of course, I said yes.

Later on when I began college. I attended the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. It was then what was known as the extension division. It was only two years. And the woman that I had for a, a English class' husband taught English at a local high school and she hired me to grade his

papers. She was remunerating me, very handsomely at that time. More recently, I went back to graduate school in the seventies pursuing a doctorate in education at Indiana University. And my advisor, who lived in Bloomington, but also had a home with his wife in Colorado asked me to housesit for him. And I did that for four consecutive summers. Never paid a cent.

**Interviewer**: So you got free housing? And?

*__Mildred__: I got free housing. All I had to do was take care of Tigger the cat. In addition, he provided me with a dissertation topic. Ah, and let's see what else did they do? Oh, before I ever took my oral he said,"give me a guest list we are going to have a party for you". So, those are the kinds of things that had happened to me that I , you know, that I need to return this to somebody.

I think this attitude is best described as gratitude. In saying these things, Mildred seemed happy, not guilty. I did not have any sense that she felt undeserving of kindness, rather she just felt lucky.

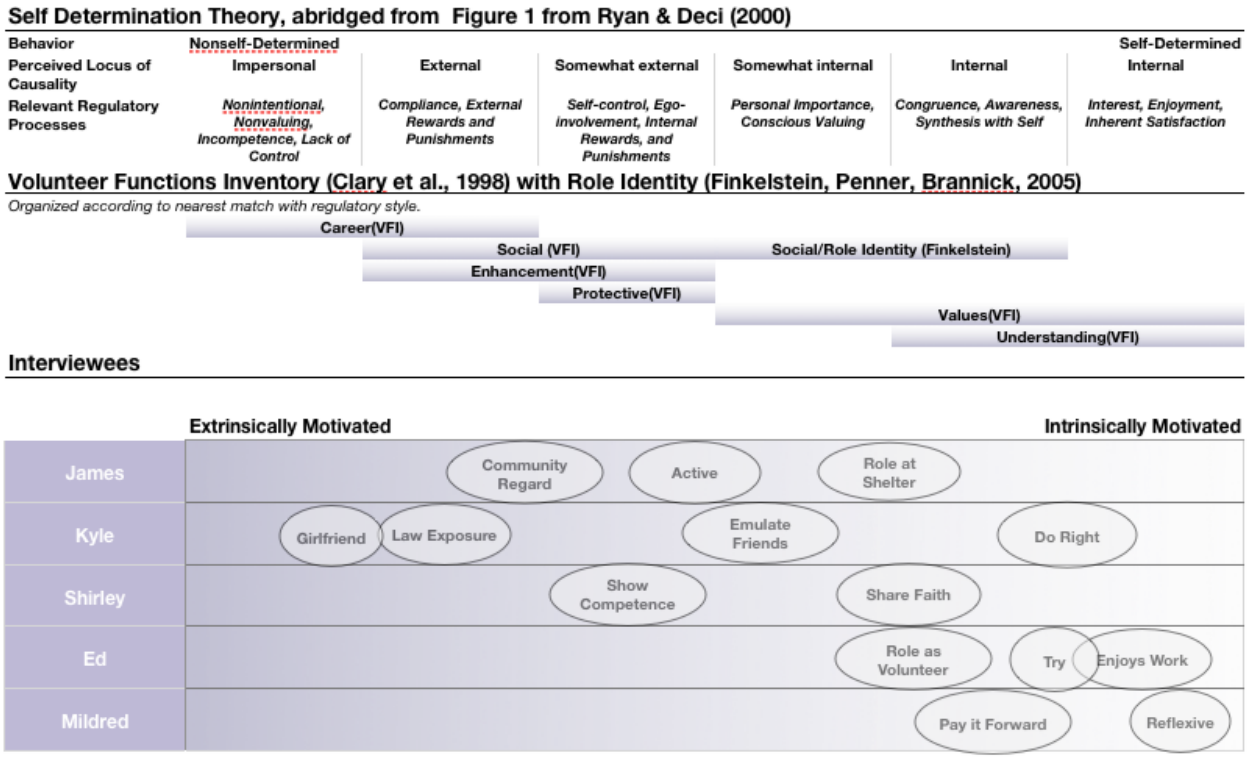
### 2.5.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

Mildred's responses showed no sense of doubt whatsoever in her actions or values. She acknowledged not having thought of her motives that much before. It was as if her value system was reflexive. This aspect of clarity, of seeing actions as nearly self-evident is one of the key traits Colby and Damon identified in their case studies of notable altruists. (Colby & Damon, 1994)

In accordance with SDT, this is indicative of intrinsic motivation, Mildred seems to have internalized the values related to her service activities to the extent that she acts without much thought about what the other options might be. Internalized however might be an overly strong inference, perhaps her worldview had been this way from an early age.

There are some hints that Mildred does act out of a sense of obligation or guilt for how she herself has benefitted, which within the VFI might indicate a protection motive. Her overall positivity about her acts of "paying it forward" and engaging other people however gives a different sense of this. It seems more likely that Mildred feels a very basic sense of satisfaction at being able to give back, particularly at using her skills productively. In this regard, as her core motivation to use her skills would indicate, she gets a sense of autonomy and competence by using her skills for others benefit.

What was most striking about Mildred however was the clarity and simplicity of her answers, in absence of strong emotional convictions. In some sense, her long history of service was evidence of commitment in terms of behavior. On the other hand, her answers belied a simple but almost circle logic. She did something




because it was what she did and it was good to do. This reflexive aspect does not fit entirely well with the existing SDT/VFI framework, suggesting a limit to both theories. Notably, the "reflexive" nature of some actions might be problematic to include in many methods, such as surveys, as the individual is not necessarily aware of what underlies their responses or behavior (Nisbett & Wilson, 2005) .

## 2.6 Cathy: Faery Forest

### 2.6.1 Context of Interview

Cathy was a approximately 23 year old white female. The interview was conducted in the psychology building in the researcher's lab by Cathy's choosing. She unofficially audited classes and talks, though she was not enrolled. Though she learned of the study independently from the connection, she had been my student in a class of about 50 students about 3 years prior to the interview. There had been no subsequent contact however. Cathy's thoughts were quite meandering, and she reported possibly having a fever towards the close of interview.

### 2.6.2 Facts of Narrative

Cathy was from a part of St. Louis that she described as being like a 'post-apocalyptic' wasteland, where people just wandered around on the streets after the industries moved out and left everyone poor. She herself came from one of those poor families.

She was nonetheless able to attend university and graduate. During her final year however, she started wanting to pursue a career that helped others. Her initial interest was work in a local children's home, essentially as a social worker to the children. She was able to work there for a basic salary, but found it 'overly institutional and almost prison like'.

She waited until a time that was convenient and resigned that position, and joined the current organization at the same time. The charity where she volunteered/lived defies classification. She was not paid in any way, but lived with others in a shared house. Some living in the house were homeless people seeking jobs and long term place to stay, childcare, etc. The volunteer workers are essentially in the same situation except that they have verbally committed to live/work there, serve others, and they have keys to the building.

She has been living and volunteering at the house since. This is itself self chosen poverty, as she describes occasionally scavenging food from dumpsters and that most of the volunteers also receive government food stamp benefits. She also has sometimes held a part time job to give her some money for her own. Outside of poverty itself, those living at the house have also had difficulty with the law. Over a year before the interview and while she was at the house, the house temporarily expanded it's capacity to allow a large number of homeless individuals to live on the property. This lead to a legal entanglement with the local governments. This and activist actions of the volunteers have lead her to be arrested on at least one occasion.

### 2.6.3 Interpretation

Cathy's style of answering was meandering and revealing, so it is sufficient to mostly let her words stay as she said them with little commentary.

#### Emptiness and Fulfillment

Cathy's recall of St. Louis as a sort of wasteland, an empty space where people are no longer attached, made me suspect she herself felt isolated or alone at times. She confirmed this, though we did not go into too much detail about that. It did lead into a discussion of what the charities' purpose was, and whether she her volunteering was selfish motivated or to help others.

**Cathy**: I mean it's definitely both. Like I wouldn't deny that I'm not there like for—to a gain

a sense of like spiritual enlightenment. 'Cuz it definitely really... there is, but that's... that's not a—I mean, that's more of a result, or like a by... like a by product than like a motivator. The motivator would be..like... I feel like I'm able... like the thing the thing that my abilities could be best used for to help other people in a... in a more direct like personal like way... and like having personal interaction and developing relationships with people that are like intimate. And feel like not... mediated by some weird thing likeI don't know like... I mean like, I've, I've had service industries jobs, where like, you know we've had regular customers come in everyday, and it's like 'Oh I know that person'. Like, I feel like I know that person so well because like they come in everyday,I know their name, and I get to hear about their day. But then like we're like separated by like this counter, and it just feels ... feels so like detached and isolating and... Like... I want to say like unreal, but it is real, I mean it's just that it's like a weird, empty kind of reality.

**Interviewer**: So... Would it be accurate to say that part of what motivate you to maybe work in someplace like the with some sense of connection with other people?

**Cathy**: Yeah... there's definitely, I mean that's a motivator it's like a sense of like feeling connected uhm... But also like wanting other people to feel connected, that would actually be like... 'Cuz I feel pretty connected, but I also like would like other people to feel—because I feel like, I feel like con—without a doubt the one thing that I can say is true of everyone that comes in to the house, they like... they just have this sense of detachment and isolation. And like their—their relationship with other people break down, due to different like factors in their lives and so just giving them a feeling of like... you know like you matter, you are like a valuable person, and like you're not alone in the world. 'Cuz I think that's thing, like many of our guests like just feel helpless and alone and like totally worthless. And so—yeah, there's like, that like—I get yeah I would say the biggest like motivator is to like help other people like recognize their worths.

It seemed Cathy had once, and perhaps still, felt isolated, and working in this type of setting allowed her to make reciprocal connections with others.

### Not a Job

Cathy had quit her paying job to work/live at the charity, likewise in talking about helping others, we discussed whether she felt obligated to help others. She said that she didn't not so much, but she did feel like it was something she should do. She mentioned not having thought about it that much, or at least it

was something she learned to do less of as she went on. In the same conversation, I asked her whether she saw it as a job.

> **Cathy**: No. Definitely not, like that's what's like so funny like—I never realized like how awkward kinda small talk... Uhm and I've come to like hate small talk because like you meet someone, and like what's the first couple of things they ask you, like 'where do you live?' 'what do you do? 'Are you a student?' 'what's your job?', and it's just like well,I don't even know where to begin to explain... like I don't have a job, I don't consider what I do a job. I... like where I live, like—Oh man, this is...
>
> **Interviewer**: But it does sound like you consider it your duty.
>
> **Cathy**: Hmm... Yeah, but that's different I think. I would... I would say there's a difference between a duty and a job. Like a job....I don't even know.
>
> **Interviewer**: Well... But you think of it is uh.... I guess like, if you say I am busy I gotta do work, what does work mean?
>
> **Cathy**: I usually... See I feel like I would probably explain like what it is rather than like... than just say I have to do work. Like... or I could say, like I mean yeah 'cuz I definitely don't consider work. Like, I feel like the term work like doesn't really ever like ever come into conversation. Or like—I have to do my job, or like I have work to do. Unless it's something like... I have work to do, like I'm maybe building something.
>
> But usually, I would just be very—I think I've come to be more specific about explaining—in terms of explaining to other people. Like I'll say like 'Oh... I have to go build this thing, or I have to take this person somewhere. Or I have to like meet this person, or I have a meeting' or something like that. Uhm... I definitely don't consider it a job, or even work more like a livelihood or, a lifestyle

The last words seem to be the most conclusive answer, for Cathy, her commitment was holistic one to a particular lifestyle. It was not just helping this or that person, or adding an aspect to her life, it was her life. She had chosen a different lifestyle altogether.

### Compulsion

At one point, we came directly to what her motivation was, she said it was just sort of a feeling, a compulsion.

> **Cathy**: Umm, umm... gosh, I guess just feeling. Having this feeling of. Or like compulsion to... just. Gosh, I don't know. I mean I don't know. Let me think about that for a second.

> Umm, I mean I feel like my most basic needs are met in life. I mean, like I have food. I'm very privileged and I don't think its like I'm driven out of white guilt or something like that. Or guilt. Or, umm the guilt associated with privilege. I, ah, I can acknowledge that I'm very privileged and I'm very grateful for everything that I have. And I feel like I have more than I need. And I have, umm, you know, a lot of energy. And I have... I, I just. I could share that with other people. And I feel like. I guess I have. I'm driven by this idea that you can better the environment or the world around you even if its just your immediate community around you. Like the little microcosm that you exist within that you can somehow improve the condition of that like microcosm.

I returned to ask about whether she felt that she was responsible for helping others, for whether or not others succeeded in their goals.

> Well, that's pretty complicated. I mean, yea there's so many factors that into every, I guess, in every negative situation there is so many factors that, that go into why that event or situation developed. Or why that occurred. And... really... I mean, yea. Part, you know, sometimes I could go the route of trying to like get this person to not go in that direction or not end up in that situation or help them out in some way. But generally, its not as simple as all of that. Umm, so I... and I used to feel a lot more guilty. Guilt is not a good word. A lot more responsible for like other people's umm, the situation that people were in. But then I realized that its really not my responsibility. I'm, umm placing too much umm responsibility on and not recognizing that there is like a whole other world. So it was like, I don't know, kind of self-centered in a way. Umm... but... so I've kind of come to this place where I realize like, ok I umm. Like some things will happen, to you know, some people and all I can do is you know be there for them. To support them in the way that they need, like in that time once the event happened or once they are like in that situation. Just to offer them support and, and assistance... from that point on and not to dwell too much on like what preventative measures.

So, it seemed Cathy had learned through her volunteer service, not to see herself as responsible for the person's actions. Rather she focused on being responsible to act a certain way, like that was what she was supposed to do. That was her compulsion, not to help but to create a space where one could grow.

**Values**

Cathy chose to live a certain lifestyle, in part out of 'compulsion', a search for spiritual growth. At the same time, she at several points she talked about the lifestyle that she had chosen in the context of larger society and where she saw herself.

> Both. I mean its like we're doing—I mean, like I think we're helping people, in a way that is also like slowly like doing our part to like—to kind of make this impact or to make this change. You know, so like, it's helping and redirecting.
>
> I mean just like, yeah, I think we're all kind of living our lives on a daily basis in a way that's trying to counter-act the giant cog that is like constantly trying to—or just like, trying to throw our little bodies in front of it to make it stop.
>
> No, I'm just kidding. Uhm... But yeah... so I mean like just around the house like we have uhm... so one thing like, here's one thing, so we're pretty into like finding ways around uhm like energy consumption and like how energy is used, and how other peoples—like how us using energy like could be like is like exploiting someone else's human energy like half way around the world that we don't even know and their just, you know, widdling themselves away. So we try to uh—And like... trying to counter-act like huge utility monopolies and like oil dynasties and stuff like that like. So we like to make changes around the house, to kind of disconnect us from those things, so we're not apart of those things. So, we have like composting toilets so that we don't have to use—toilets...

At another point in the interview, she stated that several members had been arrested in protests, etc. With the level of dedication that she and the others that volunteered there had shown to their lifestyle, it became relevant how the guests at the charity fit in.

> ... then our guest like take part in that, or like composting or like not—or like in recycling and stuff like that. But I mean a lot of people recycle so it's not a good example but uhm, and then it's something like that the guest can—that the guest living with us can 'oh man, this is something like I've never even thought about but it makes perfect sense'. And like maybe, maybe when they leave when they like have a place of their own or something, like they incorporate it into their house and then it starts like this domino effect and people...
>
> Because I think like people, I think there's like a weird—there's a lot of like negative connotation with a lot of those kinds of things, like a composting toilet for instances. It's like 'Eww, gross,

> you're like pooping in a bucket, and then like, with your own hands taking it outside and throwing it in the backyard.' And so like, from far away, it's just like that's so gross and so unsanitary and all this stuff, but it's like, getting people to like think like, is it really? Like why? Why do you think that? Like why, why do you think it's so gross to do this? And then like, when it's like—it's not creating waste and not taking energy other than our own like human energy, which we are all willing to give, and then like we're giving back by like fertilizing our garden for food that we make.
>
> And then guest are like "oh okay, that makes a lot of sense. I—I don't know why, it's not disgusting at all'. It's getting people's like... mentalities to change, which is good, even if it's in very small increments.

So her dedication to this certain lifestyle was also intertwined with trying to educate others about it. She wanted to live her values. It made her feel good about things when others followed her lead.

> I mean people are set up to like fall into like this depression, I feel like because like, there's this society or culture that's dictating that you need to have this to be like worthwhile. Like these are the things you need to accomplish, it's like you can't just be a person, or you can't just like... you know... you, you have to work for food, like you have to work to stay alive, and like, I don't know—just like that seems like so... I mean like ideally like my ideal vision of the world would be to like everybody just live in the woods, and like hunt for food, and like dance around all the time. [Laughs] But...

### 2.6.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

As with the other interviewees, several of the major themes that emerged from the interviews naturally fit with SDT's needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Cathy felt a sense of emptiness and lack of connection, both in her childhood and in her first job, she felt a lack of connection and meaning, a lack of relatedness. What she explicitly valued where she volunteered/lived was a connection with other people, some of them very different than her own (perhaps indicating the growth motive).

Her choice to work at the charity she chose was also motivated by autonomy. It was clear that acting in accordance to her own values, and not the policies of an employer or government, was important to her, as she quit a paying job to receive. Interestingly, this observation also indicates that authenticity is also critical: to be oneself (autonomy) while being accepted/connected with others (relatedness).

Going against this interpretation, it was also clear that she did feel a sense of compulsion, guilt, or

responsibility at times. She denied what she called 'White guilt', but still did acknowledge that she initially felt a bit too responsible for others. However, she also described that that was something that she learned to get over. Among other things, this is interesting as a point where empathy as a negative arousal is evident (Cialdini et al., 1987) . This is fascinating also, because it is uncommon that *any* mention of empathy came forward from the interviews. It may have been a result of the interview format, but possibly not, Kyle was asked specifically if there were any moments of insight or emotion, and his answer was that there was categorically none. This distances the current work from the entire Empathy-Altruism hypothesis of the Batson-Cialdini debates substantially (Batson & Shaw, 1991) .

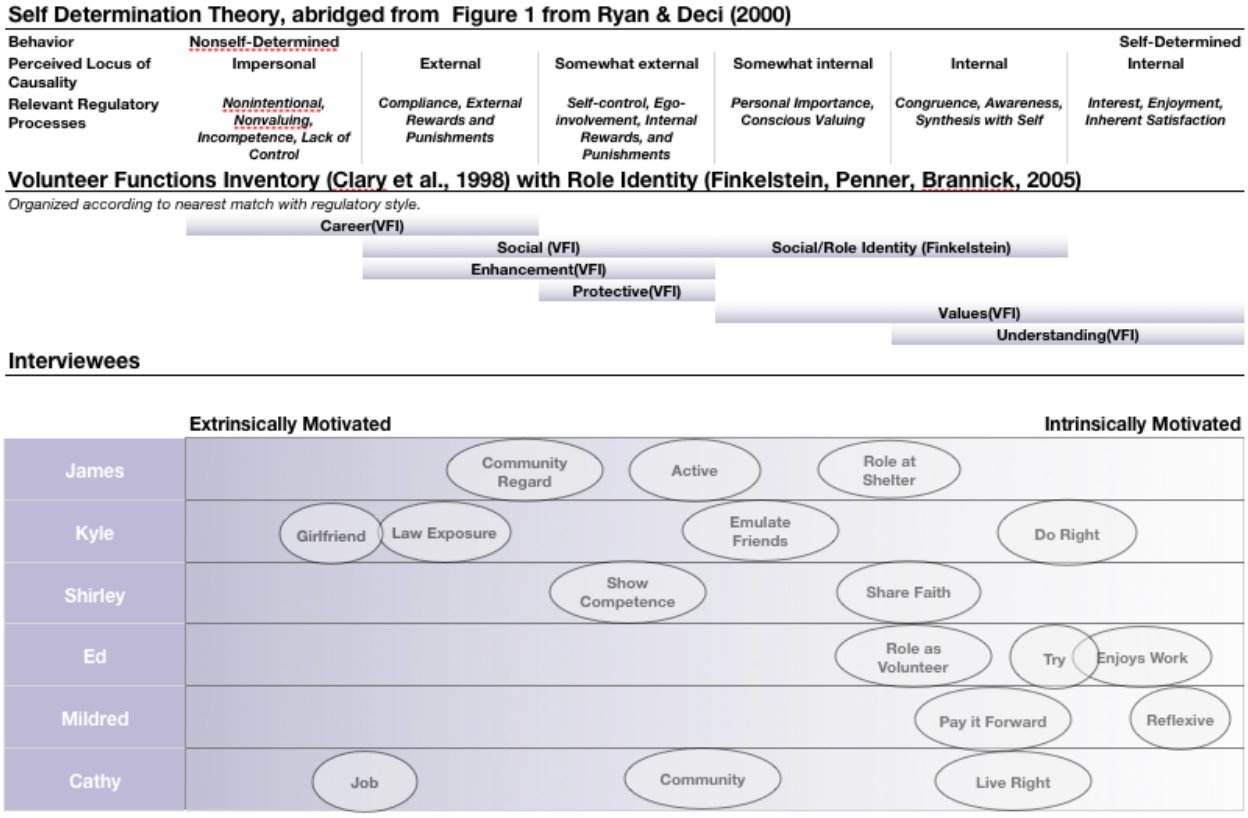
This is perhaps not surprising however, when one considers other human behaviors. When learning to drive a car or ride a bike, one experiences fear of crashing or falling, which is alarming and distracting from the task at hand. As one continues to do this activity, these emotional reactions subside as the individual becomes desensitized. As time goes by, most individuals take the entire activity for granted and cease to think about the activity consciously. Not to stretch the metaphor too far, but the same might be said of the pro-socially motivated. There is no doubt that almost all individuals experience empathy (Preston & Waal, 2002) , and this may well motivate unique and contrived experiences in the lab, and unfamiliar situations outside of the lab. However for those individuals who engage themselves in these situations repeatedly, is is likely they would adapt in some way, as Cathy describes.

Notably, Penner and colleagues have taken a personality perspective on altruism/prosocial behavior (L. Penner et al., 1995) . Within Penner's work, two personality traits are identified Helping and Other-Oriented Empathy. Helping is perhaps similar to compliance with prosocial norms, e.g. the likelihood of spontaneously helping someone who dropped what they were carrying. Other-Oriented Empathy (OOE) on the other hand is more or less the disposition to feel empathy or concern for others well being (e.g. Batson's original empathy-altruism hypothesis: Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, & Birch, 1981) However, empirically, OOE but not Helping is related to long term volunteering (L. A. Penner, 2002) .

This need not be seen as a contradiction at all, moreover a clear solution is suggested. Perhaps individuals with high trait OOE frequently experience concern for others, and therefore adapt their behavior, lifestyle, and value system to be congruent or responsive to their concern for others' well being. Once this occurs, the focus may cease to be on the feelings of empathy but rather on their own actions.

The process of adapting away from the emotional feeling of empathy/responsibility/guilt/obligation could be seen as a process of internalization within the SDT framework. Whereas initially the role of aversive guilt played a role in her decisions, over time, Cathy switched to focusing on the congruence between her actions and her values (integrated regulation), instead of the feelings of guilt or responsibility for the people she

was serving (introjected regulation). This shows Cathy taking control of her own actions. This could also be seen as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) in that she evidently changes her internal belief system to accommodate her actions. This is not to suggest insincerity, but rather another theoretical mechanism whereby doing would lead to internalization.




## 2.7 John: Passive Activism

### 2.7.1 Context of Interview

John was a tall thin elderly White man, in very good shape. He had worked as a professor at the University, though he had retired 6 years ago. Since then he has been spending much of his time volunteering with a variety of organizations in the community, as a mentor in an after school program, preparing and serving lunch at the mens' shelter, and on an ad hoc basis with a local Christian charity.

### 2.7.2 Facts of Narrative

With many interviewees, discussing volunteering or how they started naturally led to a discussion of their life narrative. With John, that was not the case. He was not in anyway evasive, but his responses led in other directions that were more about the present.

John was a retired professor, and lived in community for quite some time. He volunteered in three different organizations and his involvement with those came in part via his friends. Outside of his volunteering experiences and philosophies as such, John mentioned his friends, many of whom also volunteered. He was Christian and cared about those values also.

This had led him to volunteer in a big-brother type mentoring program for about five years, and he described feeling close to his mentee and the mentee's family. He also volunteered at a local homeless shelter serving free meals, which he had done for years as well. Finally, he would occasionally volunteer delivering free furniture to those who needed it, or home maintenance work, via a local christian charity.

### 2.7.3 Interpretation

#### Religion

John identified himself as Christian. I suspected he might be quite devote, because one of the charities where he volunteered was exclusively open to active Christian volunteers. Consequently I followed up on his views of faith and its role in his volunteering. It seems that for John, instead of wanting to spread belief in Christ, he seemed to sincerely want to spread fundamental optimism about human nature.

> **Interviewer**: You mentioned religion earlier, and it doesn't play a big role for everyone, but it sounds like it does a little bit for you. To what... How do you think your religious beliefs have guided you or have effected your volunteerism?
>
> **John**: Probably, maybe subtly in the background. At first but yet if I go back and look at kinda the basic tenants that I grew up with, or that... that I allegedly professed to believe, then how better to show these than ..than offering assistance to those less able to get along or be able to do things, and so forth that I've had good fortunate to have in my life. So... it has driven that in a..in a maybe a subtle way.
>
> **Interviewer**: Yeah but its not the explicitly way like I have talked with some people basically say... well this is the thing I'm doing is a way of sharing my faith.
>
> **John**: I'm not... It doesn't drive me that way. It's more... the tenants and the beliefs that I have the... and in sharing in the way I act and in the way I try to provide.

**Interviewer**: Can you be more specific about what sort of beliefs they are... It sounds like they are sort of values that you believe in... So what are those values?

**John**: The goodness of all humans .....being the core. That there is some goodness in all of us, and how we get that manifest and how they do... how they work with others. I think its that notion of ... being there to ....assist in what way we can from the talents that we have. I work in higher education for a number of years and I thought... well I helped some people along the way, have I specifically done something? And that was the thing that bothered me more than anything, was can I really set down and give a gram of those things... or I'll help this many people do this much, but where was the more tangible type of thing....

...I didn't invent something that everybody else is going to benefit from in the future. I haven't solved the hunger situation problem, I haven't done this or that. But... If I've done something to put in play some of those beliefs that are present and that is in sharing, and thinking about the goodness of others, and willingness of others to be understanding, compassionate, and forthright with each other about who we are, help build bridges rather than create chasms for groups, you know... nothing else. Uhm....They don't necessarily need to know what religious group I'm in. But if they looked at the way I've treated people, the way I've operated in my own codes and values, and the way I operate... then well I would hope they would say "that looks like a person that is caring and honest, you know... somebody that would uh be good to uh connect with at some point. Those are the kind of things, more of the global types of issues.

The last part of John's answer gives particular insight. He felt that he had done a good service in higher education, but it seemed to have fallen short of his own ideals for himself. It seemed that John's desire was for himself to live more consistently with his values. His words "allegedly professed" particularly indicate that he'd feel hypocritical or at least unfulfilled if he did not do so.. In speaking with him face to face, I never got the sense that he was at all emotionally upset or guilty. Quite the contrary, John's demeanor was exceedingly comfortable and friendly. As such, I interpret these words "allegedly professed" to indicate a proactive belief in not being a hypocrite and following his beliefs. Similarly, there was not the sense that he was unhappy with his career, rather he wanted to do things that he had not gotten through his career in his retirement.

Later in the interview, we were discussing whether John was motivated to just provide basic help or to change the system, as in some ways it seemed he wanted to really change people's beliefs about people. He elaborated that he focused more on the basic needs, but that this was an expression of his belief that people were better than others gave them credit for.

**John**: I guess mine is more the basi... basic.... What is this thing that I am doing here this day this week, doing to make a change in one two three, six ten.. whatever it is, that have meals there, that were participating there. And that you believe then in a broader perspective.

Because it's very disheartening to me to hear people to talk about, and you see on the television, and I don't know what your persuasion is but... these conservative talk people that you know... kinda want you to believe that they these are all worthless people that are... and that's why they are there. And that they are not driven.

This or that, and that's not the case at all that I have observed. So... Systematically, maybe in the back of my head I am hoping that changes occur down the road that that..that people observe of the goodness of these people, and what they have to offer as oppose to saying that 'this a foolish waste of money'

**Connection**

In John's statements about his volunteering, he seemed to have felt that he wanted in his life to connect with others in a deeper way than he had in higher education. I asked him how much his volunteering as a mentor and at the homeless shelter was about connecting with other people.

**John**: I'd say in both of those instances uh... it's fairly of high. Because you run into those folks, particularly at the [shelter], you may not see them again, or you may run into them. And I'll ask about people, that were there maybe when I first started, you know, "Hey, have you seen so and so? Where is so and so go? Did you saw them saw them saw them?"

And hopefully they got on to reconnecting, got back on their feet and stuff like that. It's important to kinda make those connections and um... and most of the folks that are around there, the staff, or people who have been there for some time, kinda know when I'm coming, what I'm gonna be doing, where I'm gonna be... you know... Maybe they kind of look for me, and I kinda hope that anyway... [Small laughs] .. And they'll say something, and make you feel like your welcomed and wanted. And that's always a good positive feeling right there with people.

This was an even larger aspect of his role as a mentor, where he worked with one child for six years.

**John**: As for the mentoring, I think it's definitely the uhm... what you see developing and growing in this young man. Where he... has evolved and grown and kinda feedback I get kinda

from maybe through his mom or through his teacher, and see him get on the Dean's list. Give him some feedback on it. You do this, you build this up. You know, I don't know would there been that if somebody had not come along, I don't know maybe it would but hopefully that little... that little connection in the research tend to show that that mentoring is so effective in doing the little things like that. So I'm certainly not patting myself on the back, but I see.. I see good things happening with this young man, and I hope it continues.

John implied that his work as an educator had touched people's lives, but in his comparison, it felt that this more personal involvement with people outside his background and family was of meaning to him. It seemed his interest was in not only meeting people, getting to know them, but in affecting their lives in positive way. It seemed less important whether the impact was great or small, so much that it was positive.

John: I didn't invent something that everybody else is going to benefit from in the future. I haven't solved the hunger situation problem, I haven't done this or that. But... If I've done something to put in play some of those beliefs that are present and that is in sharing, and thinking about the goodness of others, and willingness of others to be understanding, compassionate, and forthright with each other about who we are, help build bridges rather than create chasms for groups, you know... nothing else. Uhm....They don't necessarily need to know what religious group I'm in. But if they looked at the way I've treated people, the way I've operated in my own codes and values, and the way I operate... then well I would hope they would say "that looks like a person that is caring and honest, you know... somebody that would uh be good to uh connect with at some point. Those are the kind of things, more of the global types of issues.

**Circle of Friends**

John's charitable involvement was at least in part rooted in his faith and belief in the goodness and worthiness of people. Likewise he did have a desire to connect with others. It seemed that John's friends were for the most part likewise inclined to be involved in volunteering and charitable activities in the community.

**John**: it seems like most of the people that I am close to or closest to when I'm saying community, it'll be, my friends so forth and my wife and I am is... is ..... are engaged in similar types of things. Now, they might not be at the (shelter) ... but like I was saying the friend in the Appalachian program he's the one that invited me to go to the (shelter) work day and stuff like that... so I think each one of have those kinds of directionality that we want to at least try to use something back... so I guess..

> All of the people that I am familiar with that are in my age category or whatever, seem to feel that's an important element.. Now did we come through something when we were growing up, like a peace corp and stuff like that... that challenge us on the front side.. I wasn't in it myself but one of my... one of our friends has gone through that and some other have work in different capacities that way. So I'd say... there is a strong sense of wanting to give back within the group of people that I know....that that... once they've reached retirement age or whatever, they've become more actively involved in things it's not like... well..they got to retirement, they packed up and moved to palm springs and play golf everyday. You know... I think their uh... It's more of a commitment of doing these kinds of things

John's group of friends sounded instrumental to his volunteering, and as we discussed them further, I had somewhat the impression of sort of an activist community, like a group that existed to discuss and address social needs in the community. This turned out to be a somewhat wrong impression.

From John's description, the common thread was really a group that wanted to contribute as individuals and were caring folks. The dynamics were not driven by discussions of the need of inner city youth, but simply a process of recommending this thing or another that somebody had done and felt good about. This included volunteering, but also supporting local businesses. He mentioned that by volunteering, he had learned that one business in town gave steak dinners to the homeless shelter occasionally, not for tax benefits, and without advertising this, simply they would give away some surplus. So John and his friends would share those sort of things as well, or whether he liked volunteering. Then if one person liked something, he might do it too.

### 2.7.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

John was the most joyful of the interviewees and his face lit up when talking about his mentoring and the men at the shelter. It was clear that he took great joy in enacting his values (congruence with values, intrinsic motivation).

John did say that in his prior work as a professor, he did not feel like he was able to make as much of a connection as he wanted. He did not express this as a dissatisfaction though, but more as a desire to do something different in his retirement. This paired with his enjoyment of interacting with people such as his mentee and the people at the homeless shelter leads me to think that this is about personal growth as well as connection.

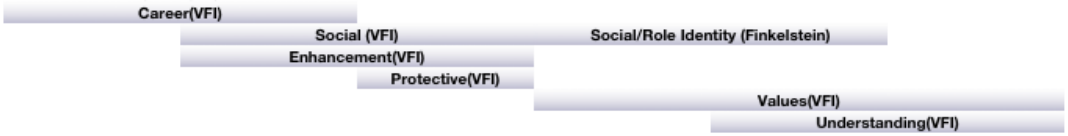
John also found a sense of relation and camaraderie through his friends who did similar activities. This is also evidence of a social motive for volunteering beyond the interactions while volunteering.

**Self Determination Theory, abridged from Figure 1 from Ryan & Deci (2000)**

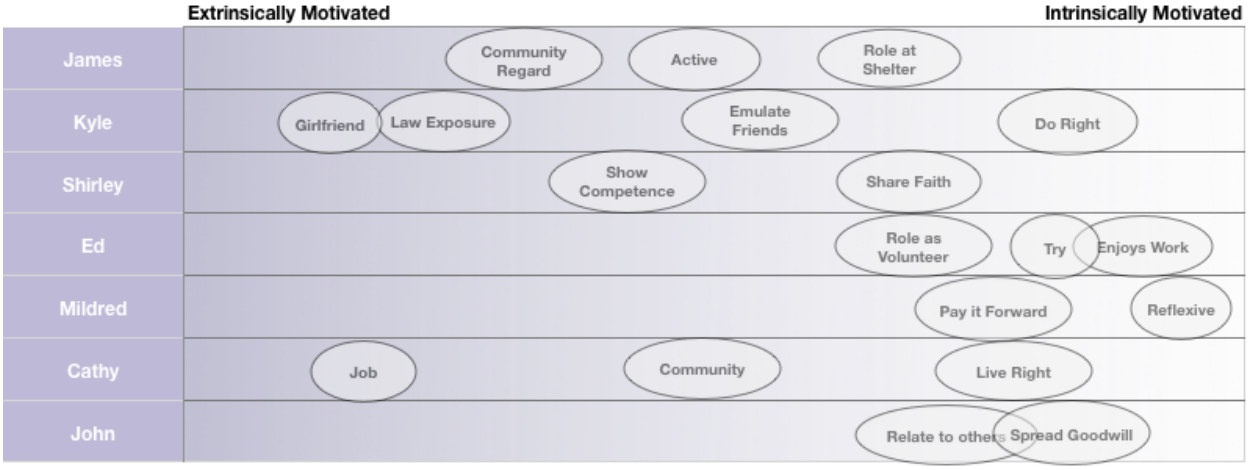
| Behavior | Nonself-Determined | | | | | Self-Determined |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived Locus of Causality | Impersonal | External | Somewhat external | Somewhat internal | Internal | Internal |
| Relevant Regulatory Processes | *Nonintentional, Nonvaluing, Incompetence, Lack of Control* | *Compliance, External Rewards and Punishments* | *Self-control, Ego-involvement, Internal Rewards, and Punishments* | *Personal Importance, Conscious Valuing* | *Congruence, Awareness, Synthesis with Self* | *Interest, Enjoyment, Inherent Satisfaction* |

**Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1998) with Role Identity (Finkelstein, Penner, Brannick, 2005)**

*Organized according to nearest match with regulatory style.*




**Interviewees**



At least according to John's words, the hypothesis of trait empathy leading to a value system and lifestyle seems to be in place. While he never described feeling empathy, his manner of speaking about his mentee (and that boy's mother) seemed to indicate that he was very concerned. The same was to a lesser extent true with those at the homeless shelter. It does not seem to necessarily be that empathy leads to prosocial behavior or altruism directly, but rather is mediated by some belief system or other choices. This is not a particularly radical hypothesis, those who feel concern for others are likely more motivated to concern themselves with others in their actions. That however brings us again to the question about what the differentiation between volunteers and non-volunteers. The manifest difference is that volunteers choose to do.

The VFI does not explicitly address the motive to do or act, however another model of motives to volunteer does. Interestingly, another researcher at one point utilized a quantitative analysis of interviews with religious volunteers to develop an eight factor "Octagon Model" of volunteering (Yeung, 2004) . This octagon model consists of four axises (newness - continuity), (proximity - distance), (getting - giving), and (thought - action). Yeung (2004) describes the dimensions as aligning somewhat with an underlying dimension of inward (continuity, proximity, getting, thought) and outward (newness, distance, giving, action).

Some aspects of this seem to map well into the SDT/VFI framework, that is generally be converged upon. Namely, proximity-distance seems to map well with the need for relatedness and the need for autonomy. Newness - continuity seems to encompass VFI's growth factor, whereas continuity may partially overlap with role identification motives and/or reflexiveness. None of these is overwhelming evident, testifying to the uniqueness of Yeung's (2004) model. What is of note here though, is that it is one critical work that identifies the motive for action per se as a motive for volunteering, something present in the current interview data as well.

## 2.8 Pam: Locked Outside

### 2.8.1 Context of Interview

I met Pam at the law office where she volunteered. Pam was an overweight Asian American woman, a bit over 30. She was dressed in worn out sweat pants and a stained, torn t-shirt. She had obvious facial scars and a small dog with her. The small dog was running between us throughout the interview. The office was covered in confidential files for children served by the law office. Pam seemed at once very alert and on top of her work, but also quite disheveled.

### 2.8.2 Facts of Narrative

Pam grew up in California. Her father was verbally as well as physically abusive and her biological mother left her father when she was still fairly young. She stayed with her father and her brother.

Her father remarried and had a son with his new wife. Pam and her brother were both quite good at school. At home, the situation was a constant struggle. Her father was abusive and beat the entire family, perhaps particularly her and her mother. She felt that her brother had at the very least come out with less emotional scars, and mentioned that there was a lot of traditional patriarchy in the household.

She felt ashamed and unable to ask for help. She recalled that her neighbors saw her locked outside of her home at night, but they never intervened. At the same time, she acknowledged that a science teacher had asked her about whether she was safe at home, and she had lied to the teacher instead of admitting the abuse.

She was able to excel at academics, and used college as an opportunity to flee her home. For her undergraduate studies, she went as far away from her father as she could. This was limited by a scholarship that she had won, which she needed to attend school. She described these time as the best in her life, where in spite of some hard incidents for her and her friends, she was able to excel and feel close to others.

She had hoped to become a medical researcher and enrolled in a medical scholars program out of state. The program being out of state was a major attraction for her, as she hoped to go even further away from her abusive father.

The summer before she planned to leave, she had a major car accident and nearly died. This was the cause of her facial scars, which she referred to having half her face ripped off, though this looked to be an exaggeration. As consequence, she arrived late at the university that fall. The first place she moved into was highly insecure, and she left after the police came to ask about a drug dealer that was illegally living in the basement. She worked things out after that to buy a house, where she still lives, though she struggles with the mortgage.

Eventually, her stepmother also wanted to leave her father. When her father took a trip back to his home country, she went and helped her stepmother and her stepbrother move out of the family house and into a gated community. After Pam had returned to school, her father returned to the US, found out where Pam's stepmother had left to, bought a gun, and then killed himself, Pam's brother and stepmother. (Pam generally referred to her stepmother as her mother, and it was clear that she saw the stepmother as her mother)

Pam's life since the double murder and suicide has been broken. She has been in and out of her grad/med school program, though she is now out of the program and expressed no interest or hope of being able to

return. She had received many accommodations, but had ultimately been unable to keep pace or succeed in her studies. It did not seem to be due to a lack of ability.

While still in school, she had tried to work a full time job at a local abused woman's shelter. This job continued for quite some time, but she eventually quit. Most recently, she is essentially unemployed. She rents out half of her house to help with the mortgage, and works odd jobs to stay current with the rest. She otherwise gets by on the remaining money from her student loans. She describes herself as suffering bouts of depression and PTSD. Nonetheless she is able to volunteer as an advocate for children and is seemingly effective in that role. She also has volunteered for the humane society. She has little contact with her remaining family. Her mother in particular has Alzheimer's and can no longer communicate.

> **Pam**: I'm flying by the seat of my pants. Well, ok, I'm not really flying. I'm dragging by the seat of my pants. Um... doing odd jobs. Probably the thing I'm most dedicated in... to is my volunteer work. The odd jobs are to pay for food when I don't just take the food the Catholic Worker house is throwing away.
>
> **Pam**: I don't know which direction to go in right now. That's why I'm in limbo. I'm in... I was convinced of what I was going to do. I was convinced of what my life track was for such a long time. So now that I'm off that life track I don't know which direction to go into because I had never considered anything else in such a long time. So I'm lost...

### 2.8.3 Interpretation

#### Therapy

> **Pam**: I will be dealing with the aftermath of that double murder suicide. And well, um... well I mean most double murder suicides don't come out of the blue. It came out of a household with domestic violence.
>
> **Pam**: So, I have that in my past too and I'm dealing with that as well. So, there is going to be a lifelong healing process that may never end... And I just don't know what direction I'm going in right now. But all my life I have wanted to help people that's been the most rewarding thing, one of the most rewarding things I've ever done that I do with my time.

Pam was direct in saying that her involvement in volunteering, nonprofits, and charity in general were squarely aimed at trying to heal from the pain in her own life. I did not see any reason to doubt that. She had firsthand experience being abused as a child, seeing her mother, stepmother, and siblings abused as well. Her activities since the murder/suicide have focused on domestic abuse situations, either the children

or women. Though she talked about it as part of the healing process, there was a compulsive element to it as well.

> **Pam**: I umm... I wasn't leaving the house. I wasn't very functional at the time. And I decided that I needed to... ummm, do something, anything to get out of the house. And I needed to....and feel like there was something, anything that I could do to make this world a less horrible place than it had seemed like it became. Then the perspective that I had witnessed. That I had witnessed up until now. Umm so I started to volunteer at *(the women's shelter)*.

This came up multiple times during the interview, often with her voice on the brink of breaking into crying.

> **Pam**: Whereas this one does desperately need an advocate. So, yeah, I just said, yea someone's got to do it. I'm gonna do it.
>
> **Interviewer**: How much do you feel like you have to do this stuff?
>
> **Pam**: Umm.... It would be hard for me to live in a world where I know that there is so much awful crap going on... Without actually making some kind of effort to help change it. I don't think I could. I don't think I could. I.. I... I wouldn't. I'd feel like I was wasting oxygen and wasting space and resources. If I didn't do something.

It came up again towards the end of the interview. I often asked interviews about what they thought altruism was and/or whether they saw their actions as selfish, this lead to some insight into Pam, she phrased her working as fulfilling her needs.

> **Interviewer**: Yea, but is also sounds like you don't feel the work that you do is altruistic.
>
> **Pam**: Not entirely, but only in that teeny, tiny, eensy, weensy, weensy, weensy sense that I do it for myself as well.
>
> **Pam**: I need to give. I need to serve.
>
> **Interviewer**: Why do you need that?
>
> **Pam**: Because its such an ugly world and if I felt like I wasn't doing anything about it. I couldn't live in this world. I couldn't. It would be intolerable.

Her full explanation of how her work was not altruistic was that she felt a need to do it. Essentially her logic was this: she wanted to make the world a better and felt the need to make the world a better place,

so since she was trying to make the world a better place because of this want/need, it was serving her as well. It was somewhat less relevant to her, what she concretely got out from the experience. She had been working with women and domestic abuse for years before the interview, which was also a period of slow decline in her ability to support herself financially, succeed in school, etc.

**Helping**

It is hard not to see her volunteering as a direct reaction to the events of her life, namely the personal suffering that she and her mother felt. That explanation may not be the best however. Firstly, it is clear that she was interested in helping and caring for others as early as high school, and at that time, she was not focused on domestic abuse or children's safety. She had her dog with, and there were also parts of her narrative that made it clear that she has a very long interest in animals.

> **Pam**: When I first considered medical school, which was later in my undergrad, I thought that you know what I'd like to do ideally is to be able to make enough money part of the year to live and spend part of the year doing volunteer work about things that I care about like maybe working for the Center of Reproductive of Endangered species that, umm, San Diego Zoo. Ummm, the research is the long term view. Working at *the women's shelter* was a bandaid and not a very good one.

She also mentioned having thought about becoming a veterinarian, but "anatomy is hard enough with one species". Her pet dog was intended to be a therapy dog, and she was intending to train the dog to interact with kids in order to build up rapport with children from abused contexts. Pam was an avid reader, and this actually came up in the context of her telling about things she was reading. Evidently, she would learn about dog training and therapy dogs as a bit of a hobby.

Amongst her odd jobs, she also assisted her neighbor with some things, caring for her neighbor's child when he is sick. It also sounded like she would generally help that neighbor, though Pam saw it as reciprocal in that she would get paid a bit. Pam would also spend time at the neighbor's place, though she was sometimes disturbed by the other people that would visit. The neighbor was herself helped quite a few other people who were going through hard times, at least one of whom reminded Pam of her father.

It did not seem that Pam was exclusively focused on helping others in the context of child/spouse abuse throughout her life, it seemed that she had always been an outgoing and helpful person, but that the past few years had challenged her ability to function and drawn all her activities to fit into her role helping abused women and children. It did seem that at this point in time all things led back to that somehow. The earlier interest in research and animals, found itself in the "hobby" of training a therapy dog. Watching Pam, it was

clear that her little dog was first and foremost a friend for herself, something for her to give her love to. She mentioned not wanting to have her own children, but maybe wanting to become a foster parent. She also mentions plants that died all the time because she wouldn't water them enough ("Survival of the Fittest"). Her face lit up when talking about playing with some of the kids she worked with. It was clear that besides the darker emotional needs, she did get a lot of joy out of the interactions.

**Need**

Pam was a very bright, sharp, witty, and intelligent woman. She had a proven resume of success right into graduate school, where her life essentially fell apart. Within the interview she repeatedly used her intelligence to simply underline, how she was not entirely functioning. It was also apparent, she looked visibly shabby and down in a way that at times seemed at odds with her still continued success in her volunteer job. At times the interview was interrupted as the lawyer would interrupt and ask Pam a question, Pam clearly had her volunteer work under control.

Pam saw her work as part therapy, but also need. Returning to the quote already given, she was very clear about the depth of her need to have the world be a different place:

> **Pam**: Because its such an ugly world and if I felt like I wasn't doing anything about it. I couldn't live in this world. I couldn't. It would be intolerable.

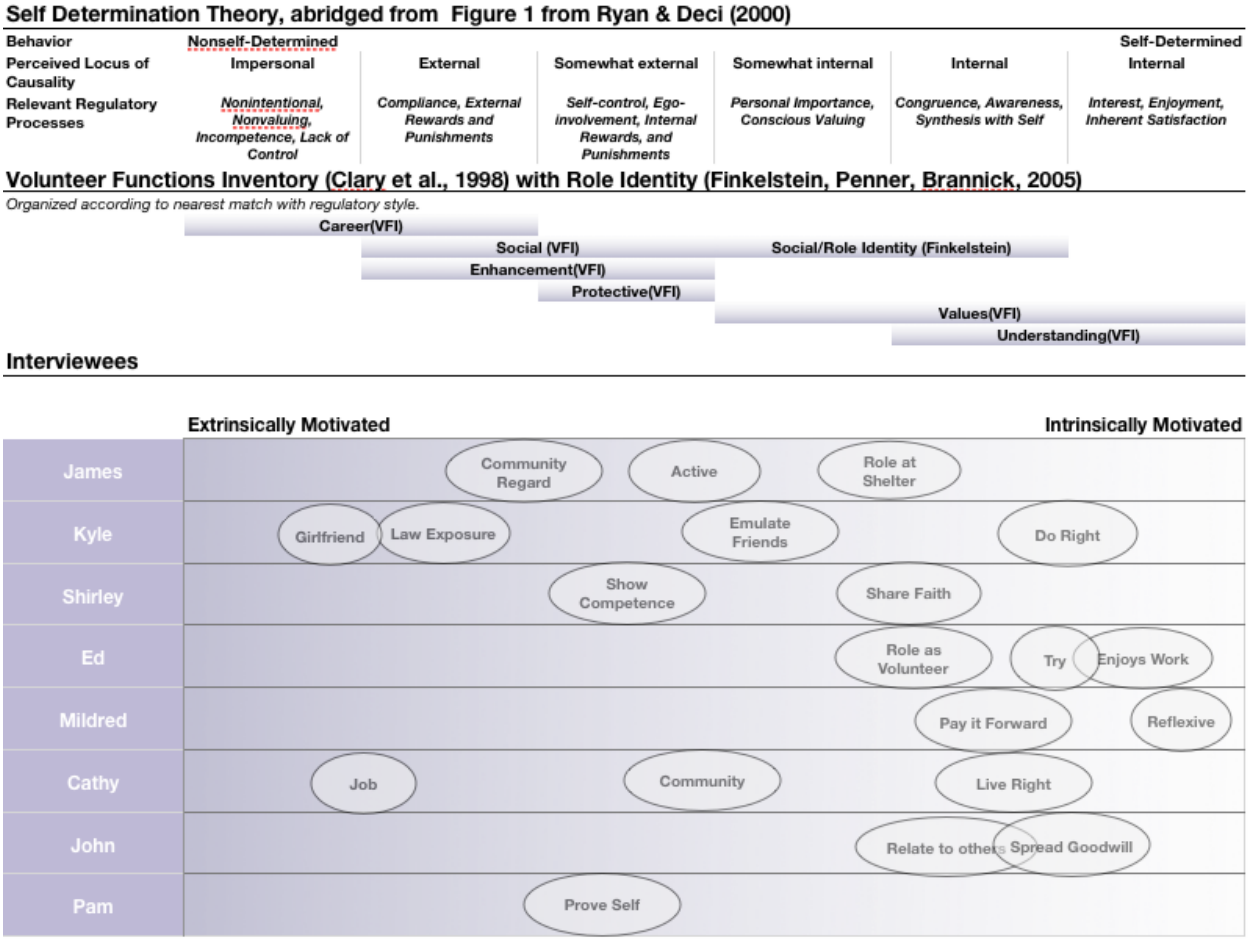
Pam's experience as a child left her traumatized. She mentioned being locked outside and no one coming to help her, no one reporting the abuse that must have been apparent. Her teacher had tried to reach her, but she had not been able to open up to the teacher. Her father had been able to abuse both of her mothers, and kill her mother and brother. He had been able to get a gun, and also enter a gated community where he did not live, without being on the entry list, etc.

Pam caught a glimpse of the world where little kids got abused and no one helped. This sense of injustice in the world came forward again when her father was able to find and kill her mother and brother. Pam's need does not seem to be one for recognition, but rather a need to convince herself that the there is justice in the world. This is reaffirmed by her emotional recounting of when a judge made a decision to send children back to abusive parents. That story seemed to trigger the same emotions as her stories about her father. Pam seems disappointed in the world, and her work may be an effort to prove to herself that world is not such a hopeless place.

### 2.8.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

Pam's volunteering was related to her values, but both her values and her taking action according to those was strongly motivated by traumatic experiences. Both her abusive childhood and her inability to stop the murder of her stepmother and brother can be seen as threatening her feelings of competence. There is some evidence that the former may have been crippling even before the incident, she described going to medical school alongside working part time at a women's shelter, which would have entailed over 60 hours a week or work or study.

Pam's emotionality clearly distinguished her from those such as John who took joy in his work. This is again where the regulatory mechanisms identified within OIT suggest a means of inferring a position of motives on the spectrum between intrinsic and extrinsic. Pam's motivation was intermediate. It was not that she volunteered for career reasons or social reasons, rather she seemed to have a certain fear or terror of the world being a certain way, and used her own actions to shield her against this world.



Pam's situation relates directly to work by prior authors on Altruism Born from Suffering (Staub & Vollhardt, 2008) . In reviewing and conceptualizing when/why traumatic experiences led to enhanced altruism in place of vengefulness or helplessness . Staub and Vollhardt's (2008) model was that suffering when followed by support from others, actions by the self, understanding/healing, and altruistic role models led to stronger sense of self and increased "perspective taking, empathy, sense of responsibility), which then led to greater altruism (in terms of acting for the benefit of others. This ABS model fits partially with Pam, where Pam seems to have lacked several elements, namely a role model, and the greater sense of self.

However the rest of the ABS framework (Staub & Vollhardt, 2008) is of no small interest to the present discussion. What is called healing is very similar to growth (VFI), actions by the self seems related to asserting autonomy and competence, finding role models and support seems to be fulfillment of relatedness. This are then theorized to lead to increasing strength of self and empathy (Penner's OOE). In other words, the model may be summarized as such: Following trauma, and individual needs/benefits from: relatedness (SDT), competence (SDT), action (Octagon Model), thought (Octagon Model) and growth (VFI), and someone whom they identify with (Finkelstein's Role/Social Identification ). If the individual receives those, they are likely to internalize values (SDT/OIT) and develop empathy (OOE), with these the individual becomes more altruistic.

What is of note, is that the model almost exclusively references themes already encountered in the interviews/literature review, and moreover the overall process that the framework describes is a process of internalizing new values through relatedness and *doing* something that is consistent with those values.

Pam would seem to be trying her best to follow this model, to understand the trauma she experienced, help others with her actions, regain competence and relatedness. It is just that she is still caught in the healing process, her motivations are still largely in reaction to fear, anger, or confusion instead of coming from a more intrinsic motivation based on values or her self identity.

## 2.9 Dave: It needed to be done.

### 2.9.1 Context of Interview

Dave was a somewhat overweight 80 year old White man. The interview was conducted in a sort of nursing home where he was recuperating his leg after having had an operation, and as such he was lying in a hospital bed with his knee in a heavy brace. It was difficult to arrange the interview because his physical therapist's schedule was variable. People came in and out of the room, including an elderly roommate and a friend who came to visit. As such the interview started late because of his therapy and ended earlier than planned

because of the friend.

### 2.9.2 Facts of Narrative

Dave grew up on a farm east of town. His parents were Christian and along with the community helped out their local minister. Many relatives such as cousins still lived in the area, and he himself was still living on the family farm. Even though he described himself as retired, it was clear that he also still did some work on the farm.

Even though Dave talked about working on the farm, his career had been in aviation. He had been an instructor at an aviation institute, and proudly counted an astronaut amongst his students. He had not been involved with any sort of formal volunteering or social advocacy while at the aviation institute, according to him simply because he did not have the time or opportunity.

Since retiring 24 years ago at the age of 56, Dave has remained active. He volunteers delivering affordable meals to the elderly and disabled. His father-in-law also used to participate in a similar program. Besides volunteering, he also audits course at the nearby university on topics such as biofuels. He has started planting crops such as miscanthus on part of his farm to learn more about that crop and how it can be converted to fuel.

### 2.9.3 Interpretation

#### Farm Folk

When asked about why what appealed to him about volunteering, Dave gave a few different answers. He did not dwell on them, and they seemed off the cuff but honest. He gave his mother's condition in the last years of her life as one reason, his fath-in-law's volunteering as another, but most of he just credited the values his parents had espoused.

> **Dave**: I think probably one of the things that gave me the impetus, was uh, my mother had utilized uh the uh, meals on wheels uh when she got to the point when she couldn't make her own meal. And I would um, have it delivered to my home, here in town, and then take it out to the farm and give it to her. So uh when she passed away, I thought, well, it would be nice to, to give a payback to society, so I've been doing it ever since. Now why? It could be that maybe some of the things that she and dad instilled in us kids, uh, when we were in the formative years, you know, try, try to help as many people as you can and make the world a better place than it was when you came in. That type of thing.

Interviewer: Now, did you, when you came to that decision, did you feel like you had to do it, or was it just like, hey, I have to do something and why not that?

**Dave**: That's a good question. I suppose, uh, I had to do it because it was ingrained in me. Um, like uh, if you see somebody getting hurt, well, you go try to help them. Um, I guess that's, that's the reason, uh, can't think of a better reason.

Interviewer: No, yeah, well you did say, um, your parents kind of instilled those values, um, did they do anything? I mean obviously most parents are gonna say, you know, this is what you should do, but um, were they involved in either, I don't know, charity work, but not necessarily even that formal, just, is there any instance you can remember that they did or that indicated that those were the values they had?

**Dave**: Well, it, it probably isn't a good example because uh, farm folk are expected to take care, for example the minister, uh the ministers weren't paid an awful lot back in those days, and uh, you were expected to give the preacher a ham, or when the uh, garden was in production, uh give them a few dozen uh sweet corn, uh, things like that. Maybe that's what it was, I don't know. It was probably so um subtle that I don't even know why I did it, you just, you just do it.

"I don't even know why I did it, you just do it." It's not that Dave has no insight into his volunteering, rather it is clear that much of Dave's world perspective is based on fairly straightforward values and implementing them. "Farm folk are expected to take." This statement reveals a lot about Dave. At once it reveals that he still identifies strongly as 'farm folk', what values he sees that group as caring for, and in the context, that he wants to meet that expectation. Later in the interview, he talked about not being able to volunteer at the moment. " But I suspect when I, when my legs get to the point when I can now drive a car, uh, I'll probably go back to it. It's just, you know, a way of life. " Beyond any sense of obligation in an emotional sense, it seems that for Dave, this is just something that you do. One could see it as behavioral emulation, as Dave freely admits that his father-in-law influenced his decision to deliver meals. Talking about his father-in-law Dave said: " He'd deliver the meals, and help, you know, dish them out and put them in the little cartons and then, uh, deliver them. And he would do it everyday. And uh, I guess that maybe that was a subtle hint that I should do something like that too. " Dave followed this with a hearty laugh, an indication for his affection for the father-in-law but also I think seeing himself as part of a chain of people like him that did things like this.

**Need and Old Age**

Growing up in the area, Dave knew a great many people in the community, including several people that he had delivered meals to. Dave did not seem to see this as a reason to do it or a benefit. He said he did not have much of an opportunity to chat with anyone, largely because time did not allow it.

Dave did certainly enjoy seeing people he knew, but for him it was a natural occurrence. He also knew the families of several of the nurses where he was. He compared it to "that thing on Facebook," (where) "you list all your contacts and then you can pick from somebody else and next thing you know uh, you're bound to come across people like that." While Dave saw meeting people and people he knew as routine, it did seem that for him connecting with society mattered, he felt needed.

> Dave: for instance there's one fellow that used to be a uh, he, he handled paperwork for people who would buy cars and title, and a title and a license uh guy, I've known him for a long time. His brother, I guess, was uh, owned and operated a filtering station in Urbana that I went to an awful lot when I was a kid, uh, but it's just something extra, I think, uh, the fact that I didn't know them, uh doesn't really matter. Uh, as you can imagine, a lot, if not most of our clients are in the, in the uh lower income bracket and uh, some of the places we go to in the daytime, I don't think I'd want to go there at night, particularly on Lierman Avenue there in Urbana, some places in Champaign, uh, uh, and in Urbana, but, you know, it's something you've got to do and uh, we don't deliver Meals on Wheels at night and I don't suppose we ever will do it. It's one of those things. But um, it's just, you know, I feel, someday I'm going to get old and I'd like to think somebody would deliver a meal to me. I guess us men don't have to worry because we're usually the first ones to go and it's our wives that uh, in fact most of the uh clients that uh, that we take are, that I carry meals to are, you know, are the ladies.
>
> Int: Um, so what keeps you doing it?
>
> Dave: Oh the fact that, uh that it needs to be done. I don't know how many total there are each day, but there's eight different routes and uh there's probably at least a dozen on, on each route that has to be done. Uh, some of the people have been working with it for quite a long time, some were uh, you know, clients ten years ago. Uh, it was, it was nice to see how the progressed and uh it's nice, you know, I've got the uh, where with I don't have to work, course the taxpayers are paying my salary, so I figure maybe that's another reason and I don't know. A lot of people don't do that though, they say well I'm just gonna lay here and collect my tax money, what the heck?

When Dave says "another reason," he was referring to the reasons he had to volunteer. Dave could not give one answer. All of his answers seemed to relate back to just being the right thing to do, either because of being farm folk, what the government gives him, what his father-in-law used to do, or that someone might help him in the future. The common thread in these is a certain view Dave seems to hold of society. He never puts forward an explicit theory of how society works. He never seemed concerned either though, often laughing as he spoke and focusing much more on the details of the work. It seemed that Dave just saw things as given. It was a given that people helped each other, that everyone benefitted from everyone else.

**Wind Farms and Miscanthus**

A great deal of the interview with Dave amounted to discussing things that he was learning in his coursework on BioEnergy. He also asked about my voice recorder, told about doing recordings at his church, and fuel prices over the past fifty years in various countries.

Dave was an 80 year old man lying in a hospital bed next to a wheelchair, with nurses waiting on him, and was talking about planting miscanthus on his farm, because it was the only crop in the BioEnergy class he thought he could cultivate. He talked about getting old in the future tense, and generally expected to return to driving and volunteering within 3 months of not being able to walk unassisted.

I tried a few times to ask indirectly about his apparent optimism towards life. A question about whether the little things like increasing use of ethanol was met with a listing of numerous other crops that would also work as biofuel, and recommendations where I could learn more. When I replied by asking more about his optimism about the health of the world overall, he replied by talking about windmills about an hour's drive away.

I asked what he would do if he couldn't deliver meals, maybe if the program closed, and his reaction focused on how people would be hurt if the program ended. When I asked about whether he could not deliver, and he said he'd like to go camping.

Dave's answers withheld an overall optimism, that helping was a default, that improving things was a default, and the only thing to do was find out the details.

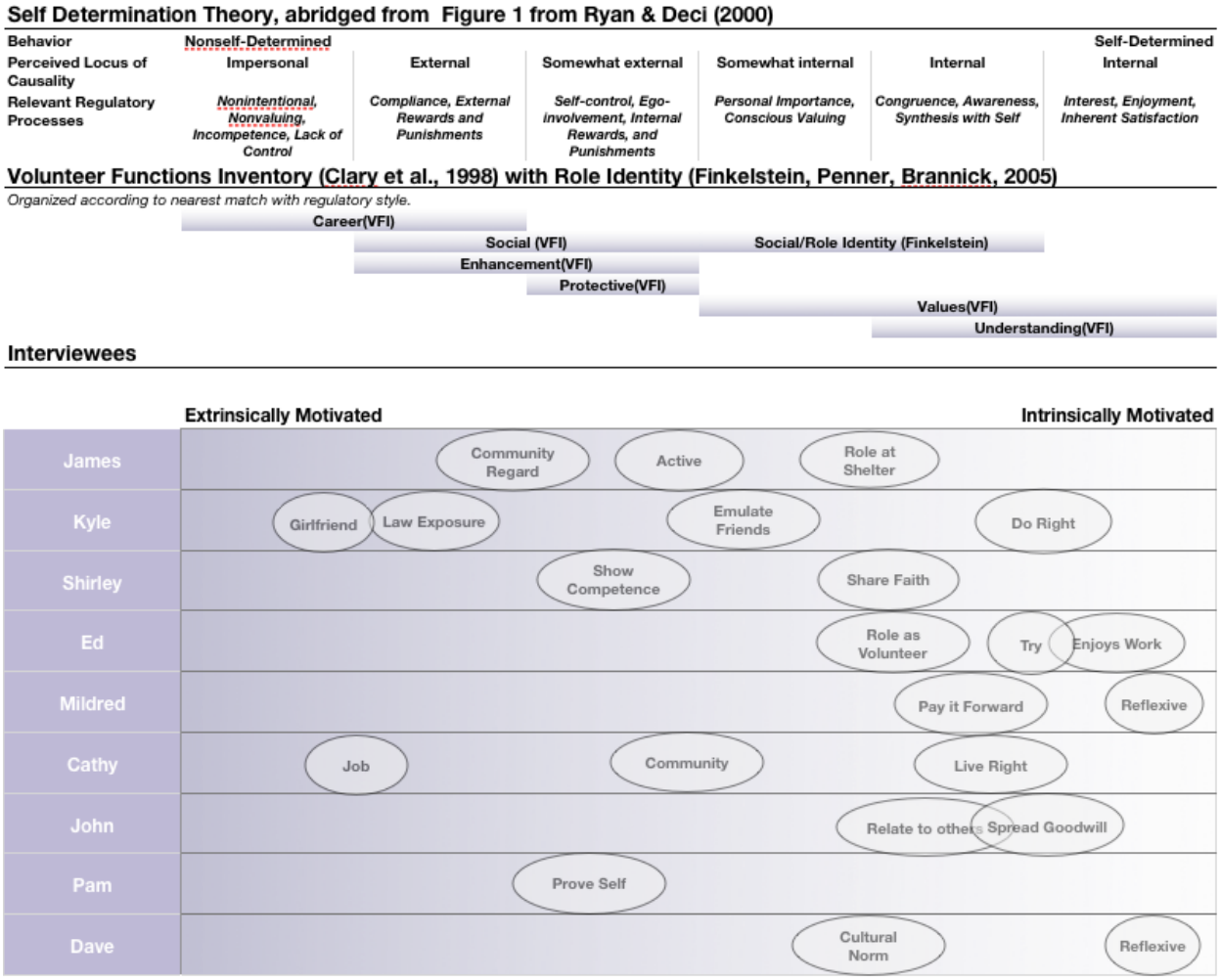
### 2.9.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

Following from the direction of OIT (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Pam's traumatic experiences, and Altruism born of Suffering (Staub & Vollhardt, 2008) , one is led to think about the internalization of values to come from relating to a role model and acting like that role model, until the actions become part of the self. This is not explicitly stated in SDT (which does not identify action so much as relatedness), but it is quite compatible.

This seems to have been the case with Dave, in fact, it is almost the only theme that can be identified. Dave's reasoning is even more reflexive than Mildred's. He just seemed to do things that seemed to be useful for others without thinking about whether he should do it or why. This observation itself being interesting, as it suggests that helpfulness might be related to long term volunteering, which is not the case (L. A. Penner, 2002) .

In any case, it was difficult to talk to Dave about his motives. Whereas Mildred had certain clear, simple, and to the point explanations, Dave was instead excited to talk about the work and how he met people. Dave definitely got a feeling of relatedness, but it was evident that the driving motivator was his reflexive sense that this is the sort of thing he was supposed to do.

He did not understand the concept of not continuing to volunteer, except if by severe injury. Admittedly, it could be the case that his answers were a coordinated psychological effort to avoid the issue of his recent problems moving and need for physical therapy at his advanced age.



## 2.10 Daniel: Not Part of the Empire

### 2.10.1 Context of Interview

Daniel was a 23 year old White man, thin and with multiple visible piercings. We met at a coffee shop in the downtown, walking distance from his home. His home was also his place of volunteering. He had contacted me via another one of the interviewees, who lived/volunteered at the same location.

### 2.10.2 Facts of Narrative

Daniel was born in a southern US state. The culture there was very Christian and he saw it as influencing him even though he hesitated to call himself Christian and said his family only really attended Church on holidays.

> I didn't grow up very religious like my family. I never really went to church that often. It's hard to describe to someone that hasn't experienced the southern Christian culture. Because even if you don't go to church it's kind of this ethos of you do right and you don't do wrong and you follow the ten commandments.
>
> So its like a weird kind of overlap of not a strict religious practice but just kind of informs your morals. So I was coming from that perspective and I guess at one point was interested in Christianity as a religious and spiritual practice. I'd say a lot has changed since that time in that regard of that. So it started out of that kind of that as a position for social change.

Daniel was raised mostly by his mother growing up. After graduating from high school he attended university for one year, but after one year, he decided that formal education was not for him, and that he needed something more 'experiential' and chose to join a Mennonite community near Chicago. His mother was relatively neutral about this decision to leave education and live a meager lifestyle. Most notably, she recognized that he had grown up not having much and been responsible, and therefore said she trusted he knew what he was choosing.

At 19, he moved into this community, which he described as an 'intergenerational' Mennonite community, which shared resources by household. This choice he attributed to learning from Jesus' teachings, not necessarily as taking on the faith itself, but the message of giving up wealth and serving others. He moved along with a friend to this community in a different state and lived with a mixed family of an older couple, an unrelated, middle-aged single mother, and her teenaged daughter.

Daniel appreciated the supportiveness of that community, and the extent that it functioned somewhat separately of society, living a modest and ecologically sustainable lifestyle. What it did not do was engage others or help those in society. Consequently Daniel joined the local charity in the same community as the interview, where he lives in a house in a communal style, but along with others needing help.

Daniel has lived in this house for almost two years, and does not have any specific plans to leave or stay. He is clear that he has certain values and goals for life, but none with a specific timeline.

### 2.10.3 Interpretation

#### Following Jesus

Within Daniel's story the role of religion was at once large and quite small. He acknowledged it as an unavoidable influence in growing up in the South, he never made any specific reference to Christianity or Jesus' teachings as the basis for any of his subsequent actions.

According to his own telling, the ubiquity of Christianity in the South led him to investigate what Christianity was actually about, and thus study the Bible, particularly what Christ himself had said.

> And when I started reading those texts I heard examples of Jesus living with the poor and kind of aligning himself with the people on the margins of society and actually had a lot of things to say about wealth and distribution of resources. So I kind of started looking at that and drawing kind of a political and philosophical position out of Christianity and I felt like that community, I'd heard about them through these investigations and wanted to live there and check it out.

In this quote, Daniel was referring to the Mennonite community in Chicago. While Daniel never made any reference to faith and did not consider himself particularly religious, he had literally followed the words of Jesus by leaving his privileges behind. Moreover, when Daniel left that community, it was because he felt he wanted to join a similar quote with more emphasis in reaching out to the underprivileged. So Daniel had twice chosen make a drastic move in his life in order to live in a way more consistent with Jesus's words.

The motivation however, was unlikely to have been to follow Jesus' words because they were Christian, but rather that Daniel himself saw something better, or more ideal about people living that way. In particular, Daniel seemed to be reacting to the idea of leaving society to reach out to the marginalized.

He at times made reference to 'Personalism'. Personalism to Daniel seemed to mean a humanistic approach to others, he saw the goal of the charity he was living/working with to provide an accepting and open space for all. His concept also seemed to incorporate ideals of direct responsibility for one's own actions.

**Empire and Society**

> Well I guess I'd like to make a distinction between like... I want to be part of a community, a society, a people. But like I don't want to be part of like this large United States of America, like Empire. But.. It's not just a choice I get to choose okay I get to leave you now. I mean, like I was already claimed, like being on this land. Like this government has claimed me as a dependent, or like a representative, a citizen.

Danny had followed Christ and largely dedicated his life to reaching out to the marginalized. At various points throughout the interview, it was also clear that he sought to be on the margins himself. There was a clear sense that he saw himself as part of a system that did things he did not approve of.

At various points he referred to 'empire' and a desire to be on the margins of society directly or indirectly. His sense was that society did not serve everyone, and that perhaps some things could be improved. Living on the margins provided room to experiment and find a better way of life. In this sense, Danny clearly desired large scale societal change. At the same time, he kept his expectations at a much more practical level.

> I just feel like it's delusional. Like oh, whats the point, going to an anti-war demonstration and be like: we're going to end the war! Kind of just stand out there and you're just like oh well, that doesn't work. You go back and forth. Do I think I'm going to affect society as a whole and have some revolution? No. But I feel like its the only thing I can really do in terms of, its what I feel like I should be doing, and this is the only deliberate way I thought about handling these responses to issues of poverty and homelessness and a bunch of other issues. Just kind of handling it how I think is best, and I think that's the only thing I can do.

Danny set himself apart from society and desired change, but for the most part, he tried to keep this at a personal, individual level. He focused on himself, his own actions, and the actions of those around him.

> I mean its a pretty diverse and inclusive group. But also there's very much of an active like, not trying to rope people in or convert them necessarily. Its more of creating an open space where people can come and we can exchange ideas and you can participate in whatever way that is. Its not a complete like oh you've got to be like this or do these things. But I do think, another thing that kind of drew me to (this place), was just that it talks about all these different issues. It has a position on ecology and simplicity and it has a perspective on social interactions or economics or back to the plan like crafts and trades. So I feel like it brings all these things in and a lot of

> people are interested in these topics and things that are kind of subdivided. So someone might really be into environmentalism while someone else might be into studying alternatives to the capitalist exchange system. But bringing all those things together and everyone can participate in that, I feel like that's kind of a unique thing about the (here)

In describing the environment where he lived, he implicitly set it against the things he disliked about American society. He disliked that American society was not connected, and he disliked the disconnect between government and individuals. Elsewhere he made it clear that he preferred decentralized government, allowing communities to be more self sufficient and relatively disconnected from the federal government and larger society, I.e. Local governance. At the same time, he desired direct democracy, where he and others would be able to directly vote on issues instead of relying on elected representatives.

Though he never said it directly, it would be fair to characterize his beliefs as desiring control over how he impacted larger society and for the role he played in society's action. He did not wish to have any part in contributing to certain evils in the world, e.g. Wars. He did desire to be able to connect to others, to make contributions, and he appreciated being part of something.

**Connection**

In living at the charity in direct contact with those he sought to help, Danny was constantly trying to connect with others. When he left school, it was in search of more experiential learning, but he also went straight to shared living communities. When Danny moved to the community, he described how he knew more homeless men than students. Nonetheless, at the charity he found a vibrant intellectual discussion, and of greater importance, an accepting environment.

> I mean its a pretty diverse and inclusive group. But also there's very much of an active like, not trying to rope people in or convert them necessarily. Its more of creating an open space where people can come and we can exchange ideas and you can participate in whatever way that is. Its not a complete like oh you've got to be like this or do these things. But I do think, another thing that kind of drew me to the (charity), was just that it talks about all these different issues. It has a position on ecology and simplicity and it has a perspective on social interactions or economics or back to the plan like crafts and trades. So I feel like it brings all these things in and a lot of people are interested in these topics and things that are kind of subdivided. So someone might really be into environmentalism while someone else might be into studying alternatives to the capitalist exchange system. But bringing all those things together and everyone can participate in that, I feel like that's kind of a unique thing.

In these discussions, Danny was mostly, but not exclusively, referring to the others who worked at the house. In giving up his life as a student, and with it at least the expectation of future money, Danny also sought to build reciprocal connections with those living on the margins of society. We spoke at some length about how power relationships were, what distinguished his role from those he helped. One thing he shared was that he was surprised at how reciprocal the bond did become.

> yeah I mean I guess that depends on how people look at in terms of help. I feel a lot of people are kind of ... I hear people say like how many guests, so like how many people have come through your program, like what's the success rate. It's like wanting to understand the idea what does it mean to help someone, does it mean like giving them your program? You graduate? You get your own apartment. Get a job somewhere. Is that success? I mean I think they feel like they need that help, then then I guess that's successful. We have people with mental health issues that aren't going to like get jobs, like get their own apartments, so how do we help them. And I feel it's in the experience of living together and sharing life together. So that there not having to be isolated and feel like oh well I have mental health issues and I can't be in these social contexts. But like I have some place where I'm welcome. So I think in that sense, that's the help. And it goes both ways, not like just helping the guests, but helping us like reconcile and be open to like other people.

In particular, Danny shared that the guests would really surprise him with how much they helped him. They would do small things like simply remembering what his favorite food was, or something else he liked, and then he would feel cared for in return. This seemed to be very important for Danny, that the connection was not just giving something. Notably, he never expressed joy at being thanked, but that those he helped knew who he was. If he was seeking validation it was of himself as a person or an equal, not as benefactor.

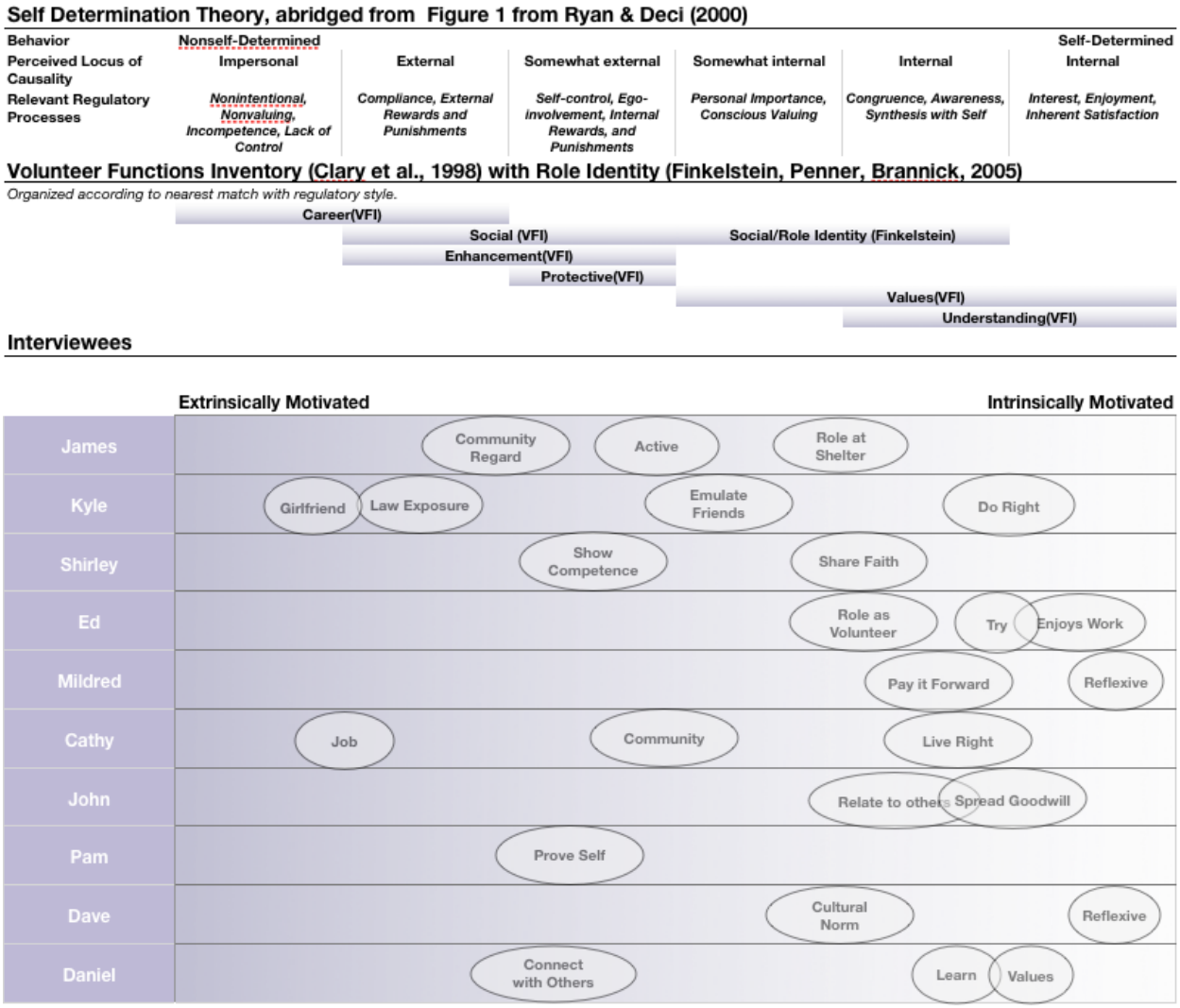
### 2.10.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

Danny's motivations were a coordinated effort to assert autonomy (SDT) from the mainstream culture, while attaining relatedness (SDT) to other humans at the same time. In terms of the VFI he was extremely motivated by personal growth and his values. Like other volunteers, Danny finds putting his values into action both motivating and satisfying, enough so that he is willing to sacrifice a great deal of comfort.

Danny had a clear moral sense but he also seemed to be fighting against society, instead of purely expressing his own autonomy. The older volunteers Dave and Mildred also had a clear moral sense, but theirs were borderline reflexive and not entirely open to introspective or in depth conversations. In that

regard Danny was the opposite. Whereas Dave or Mildred may simply respond to a request for help without even considering that there was another choice, Danny would argue why the right choice was correct.

Danny is of course much younger than Dave or Mildred, and has not been volunteering for as long. It is interesting to speculate whether Danny's values would become more reflexive over time. Unfortunately, the present interviews do not provide sufficient evidence to make strong inferences. The difference in Danny's motivations from Dave or Mildred were more than just that however, Danny's motives were similar to Kyle's, in that he was still very much exploring. His beliefs had solidified such that he knew what he valued in a way that he likely did not a mere two years early.



## 2.11 Steve and Eve: Not for Money

### 2.11.1 Context of Interview

Steve and Eve were an elderly couple living on the edge of town. I drove to their house and interviewed both of them jointly in their living room. They were in the middle of a moving process, so there were some boxes around. The decision to interview the couple together was made because they had responded jointly, and it seemed consistent with the principle of interviewing volunteers on the terms they were most comfortable with, as they had presented as a couple, and often volunteered together, conducting separate interviews would have likely missed some of the dynamics in their relationship. On the other hand, it was apparent that Eve often spoke more than Steve. They had likewise been married nearly 50 years if not more. They would also occasionally fill in gaps in each other's memory, which both of them seemed to appreciate in the other.

### 2.11.2 Facts of Narrative

Steve and Eve were born in different midwestern states. Steve had been a soldier during the second world war, and met Eve at university in her home state. He studied using the GI Bill, and was able to continue using that government support to complete his PhD in the same university town where the interviews were conducted.

Steve was an exceptional case in that he was hired to the faculty of the university after completing his PhD at the same university. The couple then settled and raised a family in this community. After the children were old enough, Eve began volunteering at several different organizations, and at some points worked for a salary at some of the same organizations. Eve had volunteered with a food delivery program, a radio station, and a charity for animals. She had become involved in the radio station first, and the animal work later. She only became involved in the food delivery after Steve had started. On the other hand Steve became involved with some activities for the radio station through Eve, though he never was involved with the animal work. For his part Steve volunteered assisting others with their taxes, which Eve did not seem to do.

The couple had children who were grown and had moved to the southwest. Steve and Eve had tried living in the southwest, but decided that it was not for them, preferring to stay in the community they had lived most of their lives, including their doctors. Eve in particular mentioned missing living in a university town and the atmosphere that that brought. They had decided to move from their family home into a smaller apartment near other seniors however. They were quite happy about this, and how it allowed them

to downsize and give away some of their things.

They were churchgoers, but that did not play a large role in their explanations, though they felt connected to the community through their church as well.

### 2.11.3 Interpretation

#### Eve, appreciation

Eve had volunteered 20 or 30 years in the community.

> **Eve**: so I started volunteering and then I discovered, one day, that I was going over there at eight in the morning and I was coming home at five in the afternoon. And, umm that went on, and on, and on. And umm, I guess I was making myself indispensable.*laughs* And for a while I worked for them for money and I decided that I didn't like that.
>
> **Eve**: You know, when you work for money nobody ever says thank you. It's your job to do it.
>
> **Eve**: But if you're a volunteer then if people appreciate what you do they tell you. And I really like that also I became very fond of the staff.

On the surface, it seems that Eve straightforward wanted to be thanked, and that might be the reward she was seeking as a volunteer. While it is undeniable that she wanted to be appreciated, it is not as simple as being thanked. Eve did not go out of her way to be thanked, it was possibly more about not being taken for granted. She shared that once a year the food delivery program would hold an event to honor all of the volunteers, for years they chose not to attend. According to Eve, they only started attending because they realized it meant the charity was going out of their way to host the event, and it would be kind of sad for them if none of the volunteers turned up. Eve had volunteered elsewhere, and had sympathy for the organizers in that regard.

It seemed that for Eve (and Steve), it is important to distinguish between gratitude and appreciation. They did not seem to caught up to be praised, they did not want respect for what they did.

Eve volunteered at a radio station (Steve occasionally did as well), at some point she worked there as an employee. She disliked, in part the formalities of the job. She described having a wonderful relationship with her boss, but when she worked they were forced by the affiliate university to have weekly meetings critiquing each other.

Eve just wanted to work in an environment of her choosing, doing something she believed in. She had also volunteered at an animal shelter in the back office and seemed happy there, until other volunteers joined and took it over.

**Eve**: O, there were a couple of the volunteers that were very devoted. But, one of them, for instance wore a big button that said, Boss. And she was about six foot two and weighed about two-fifty. And to think of volunteers having a boss was so far off from my philosophy about working with volunteers. Working with volunteers not bossing volunteers. And, ah there were just a couple of little episodes that happened that so turned me off. And anyway I want to go back to (the radio station)

**Eve**: That's right I was at the (animal shelter) pretty much full-time. And so I told the Board of Trustees that I would like go back to (the radio station) and I had set up their program. So all someone had to do was fit into my chair and continue it. So I didn't see that I was hurting the (animal shelter) in any way.

Eve's motivation was not simply the social reward, but confirmation that she had done a good job. She cared a great deal about the quality of work, treating it as a job.

**Interviewer**: Do you feel obligated to volunteer?

**Eve**: No

In truth, the topic of obligation did not come up much at all within the interview, at least not on the surface. Steve and Eve clearly did not think of themselves as being obligated to volunteer or help others at all, even though they took the task so seriously.

While obligation did not come up, "no obligation" was a subtext for much of what Catherine in particular spoke about. She had at some point been a volunteer coordinator, and had a somewhat developed theory of being a volunteer. She certainly valued being needed herself. Her desire to not work at the same place she had volunteered was directly related related to wanting to be appreciated.

This implicitly related back wanting to do something that was not her obligation, I think that may be the most concise explanation for Eve's desire for appreciation. She wanted to be the type of person that contributed to the community more than was expected, and she liked having the role and the appreciation that came with it.

**Steve, efficiency**

The main volunteering that Steve and Eve did together was delivering meals. This had begun with Steve while he was still a professor. He literally could not remember how he got involved, and while Eve could not remember details she said that someone had asked him. Steve never presented much of any explicit reason for his volunteering, though he certainly seemed to enjoy it.

What was striking was the level of pride he took in doing the job well. Eve volunteered as well, and she was the driver. They brought along their own food cooler to do the job, they also tweaked the delivery routes in order to finish quickly.

> **Steve**: Well, some routes we can cut as much as six miles off of them because of who happens to be taking meals that day. Because not everybody takes them everyday.
>
> **Steve**: And ah, you can alter the route and also you can play a little game. They ah, standard practice is for you to take two containers one for the hot another for the bags that have the, the cold stuff in it. And you come back and put those in the Union. Well if you don't have to come back and you play the route right. You can cut as much as six miles off a route! Because ah, you know.

In a literal sense, Steve saw some of volunteer work as a game to be optimized. He was smiled as he described this. Eve shared some of these sentiments as well.

> **Eve**: Because I have been asked to volunteer at a lot of place. And umm, I think that my reputation is established. And they were just places that didn't. Worthy causes, good people but it just wasn't what I felt I put my heart into. And one of the things that we enjoy so much about (the charity) is that driving everyday, five days a week means that we are so familiar with the routes that Steve doesn't have to say, "Turn right here. Turn left a block ahead."

Steve and Eve converged on their pride in feeling useful and vital to a project.

> **Eve**: One thing that we have learned to do is to make appointments with people in the afternoon because then it doesn't interfere with Meals on Wheels. And when Margie at the charity calls us at 9:15 some morning when we haven't planned to go. She knows we'll go. I may be dressed like this but that's ok. I sit in the car and nobody sees me.
>
> **Interviewer**: And it sounds like it means something to you that that's the case. The you're at the ready.
>
> **Eve**: Well, I think people that work at family service are in it not for the money
>
> And it just feels so good when they call and say, "O, I've had a cancellation today. Is there any possibility or the extreme, could you possibly take two routes today because of blah, blah, blah." Sure, we would be glad to do that. We never say no. Do we?
>
> **Steve**:: No
>
> **Eve**: They're going to miss us when we're gone.

#### Community Attachment

While asking Steve and Eve about themselves, we talked a bit about their attachment to the community. They had left and returned. Eve had volunteered for many years, they had raised children there, they'd mentioned an attachment to the church, etc.

In their food delivery, the talked about multiple individuals that remembered them. One who had taught one of their son's art in high school. They mentioned one woman who they always helped with her flag, another woman who remembered Steve as the man that fixed her vacuum cleaner (itself simply left unplugged). Both Steve and Eve glowingly spoke of the volunteer coordinator for food delivery as well. Eve had become very good friends with her boss at WILL, for the period where she'd been an employee, she said supervisions consisted of them talking about how wonderful they both were.

During the interview, the discussion went on tangents related to the community, the weatherman, and their asking where I had grown up. They mentioned that when they tried living in Arizona, they'd missed the vibrant community around the local university. What was apparent, was that the community mattered quite a bit to them.

It was not the sense of feeling that the community had a dire need to improve, but that they valued contributing to the community that existed and connecting with it.

### 2.11.4 Identification and Integration of Motives

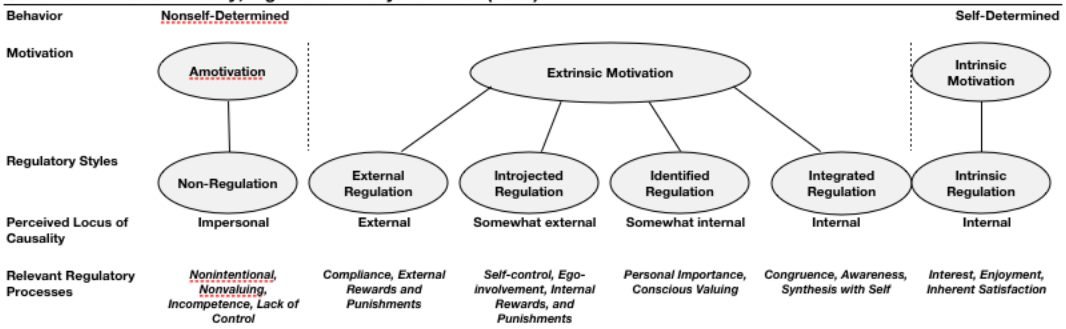
Eve and Steve present interesting and unique cases when contemplating altruism. Eve and Steve both exhibited some of the calm and joy that other older volunteers such as Dave, John, and Mildred had. That is they did not have major questions about why they were doing what they were doing or whether it was good, they just did it. At the same time they acknowledged very openly social benefits as a key motivator, literally saying that the "thank you" was their pay.

Steve's motivations seemed particularly reflexive, or at least non-introspective about his volunteering. From discussions about the nature of nonprofit work that occurred as part of the interview, it was very clear that he was interested in macro level issues and prosocial causes, but more on an intellectual level. He was far from an activist. He never volunteered to volunteer so to speak, he worked without pay, but by request of friends or his wife. He clearly enjoyed it though, but he seemed to focus mostly on how to do it best. In the context of discussing the role of a role model or relatedness to others who value volunteering, it is quite possible that Steve would not be nearly as active in volunteering if not for being married to Eve. His mentality was however quite similar to Dave's. He enjoyed the work itself and maintained an overall positive outlook on the community and life. In this sense, volunteering likely provided him a sense of competence

and relatedness.

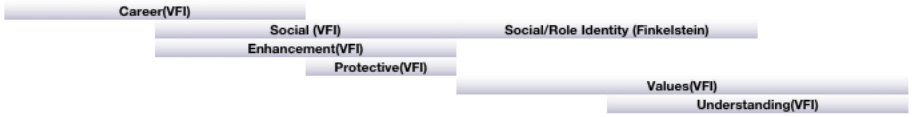
Eve on the other hand was fairly unique within the sample, largely in the professional manner she regarded volunteering in selectively choosing different organizations to work with and how she would work there. She very much admitted that social affiliations and recognition (VFI's Social function) were motivators for her. At the same time, she had causes which she believed in, and particular way that she wanted to work. She had both left one organization because of the way it operated, and more notably had quit a paying job with one organization in favor of volunteering. The latter in particular is clear demonstration that her volunteering is tied to her autonomy, and it is important to her to control her own role and contributions. As mentioned, she found that the social involvement within the community was also a very big draw for her, as it was one she had missed when Steve and her had moved away for some time. Finally, it is very clear that she choses out only the organization where her work will match her values (VFI) and that she feels she is contributing.

**Self Determination Theory, Figure 1 from Ryan & Deci (2000)**

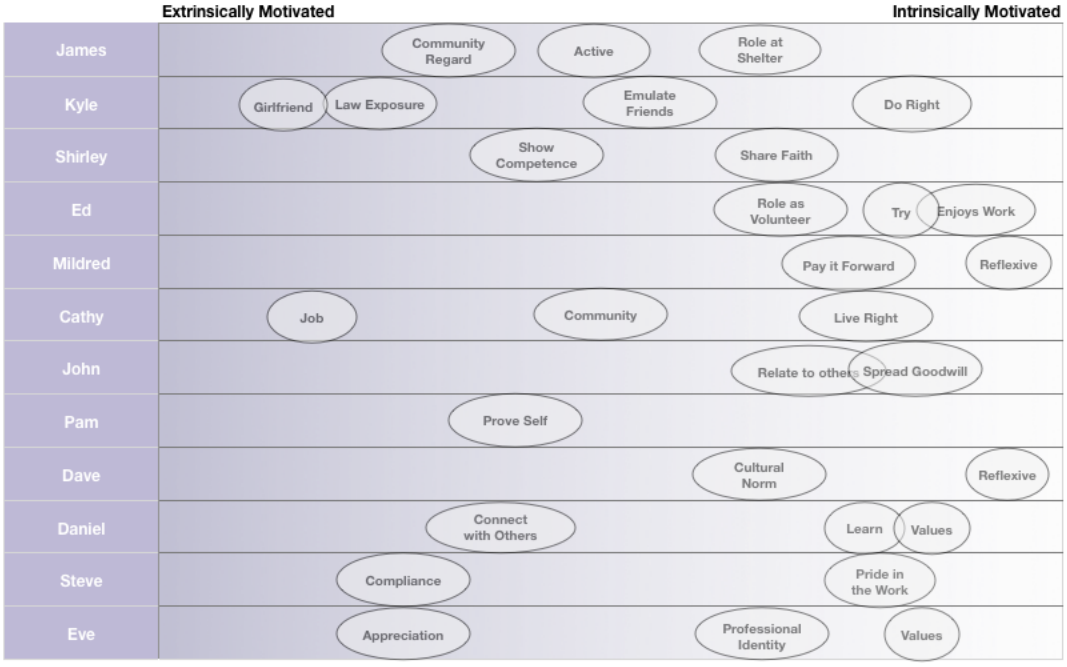



**Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1998) with Role Identity (Finkelstein, Penner, Brannick, 2005)**

*Organized according to nearest match with regulatory style.*




**Interviewees**



# Chapter 3

# Emergent Themes from Narratives

The present study examined the experience and motives of long term volunteers as means of taking a broader look at altruistic motivations than generally considered in the social psychological literature (perhaps excepting Colby & Damon, 1994) . In accordance with this goal, a theory-building orientation was adopted alongside a qualitative methodology of interviews.

This approach yielded two things. First, it yielded a great deal of context and first person perspective about how lay people become and stay involved in volunteering and how they see their own behavior vis-a-vis self-other benefit. These were used to build a basic description and categorization of the motivating forces in each individual's life. Secondly, and building upon these "grounded" descriptions, clear links to prior social psychological theories and frameworks were made, most notably VFI and SDT.

As part of synthesizing what the investigation uncovered, it is first worth taking a deeper look into the aspects of interviews' stories which are not captured sufficiently in prior literature or the VFI/SDT framework. Thereafter, the discussion will return to the VFI/SDT framework in order to present an integrated perspective on altruism.

## 3.1 What were long term volunteers like?

The interviews reveal certain consistent patterns about volunteers and the work that they do, context, that is useful when considering both the motives of volunteers and altruism as a construct. This context suggests a somewhat different understanding of prior work on the volunteer's motivations, and perhaps ultimately suggest an alternate view of altruism in humans, that is selfless action.

What follows is a summary of the "themes" that seem most noteworthy within the interviews narratives. The term "themes" is used loosely, as what emerges from the narratives is not so much themes, but attributes or perspectives that the interviewees took on their work. Moreover, attesting to the diversity of human motives, individuals, and indeed the diversity within this sample, I make no attempt to hide when a certain theme was not apparent in an individuals' narrative.

The three recurrent trends/themes are: The Categorical Imperative, Uncertainty and Personal Obligation, and The Simple Motive: Do what you can, do what you do. The Categorical Imperative characterizes the most dominant moral ethic which most interviewees seemed to follow, if not specifically express. Uncertainty and Personal Obligation characterizes the nature of day to day decisions that those invested in "helping" face, namely a situation where other-benefit and responsibility are difficult to define and disentangle. Finally, The Simple Motive relates to the theme of focusing on doing and the basic optimism that doing something with the best intentions is worthwhile.

### 3.1.1 The Categorical Imperative

Kyle's motivation as he neared the end of his volunteer commitment was not necessarily to do good, but to *not* do evil, he felt that a lot of things in the world caused harm. John just wanted to act in a way that was consistent with giving people the benefit of the doubt, in hopes that people would learn to see the world a bit more like he did. Pam wanted children to have someone to turn to, so she became someone for children to turn to. Mildred felt others had benefitted her, and felt it was good to keep the system of paying it forward in place.

With the likely exception of James, each of the volunteers seemed to have a strong motivation to act in the 'right way', that way being both consistent with their own values and beneficial to others. Moreover, they either explicitly (Danny, Cathy) or implicitly (Shirley, Ed, Dave) hoped that the world would become a better place via others following their lead in values and especially behavior.

At some point over the course of the interviews, I had observed that value consistency or avoiding hypocrisy was the most pervasive common motive amongst those interviewed. This of course fits with prior work such as the VFI (as the values motive) and SDT (as the congruency regulatory process), but those do not capture the role of acting or the aspect of acting in the way that one wishes.

In trying to categorize what the core philosophy I was seeing was, I focused on concepts such as the Golden Rule ('do unto others as you would have them do unto you'). What emerged though, was in fact Kant's Categorical Imperative.

The Categorical Imperative according to Kant, in its simplified form, is that the moral way to act is in the way that one would want/hope all other individuals should act in a similar situation. It is similar to the Golden Rule, except that it mandates that one judge not by how one wishes one's self to be treated, but by the broader system of all others in society.

The Categorical Imperative as the operative motivational force for altruists presents a somewhat different story than the Empathy-Altruism hypothesis or the Golden Rule. In either the Golden Rule or Empathy-

Altruism, the potential "altruist" sees another individual in need, and conducts a certain level of self-other projection, considering how one would feel in that situation and responds to alleviate that state in the other (Indeed seeing the self in the other was the basis of inquiry for Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, & Luce, 1997) . The extent to which the other is seen as the self or the self is used a model has of course been debated (Batson, 1997) . What is more of obvious though, is that utilizing the categorical imperative necessitates thinking of the level of values and humanity at large and not just the individual.

There is a two part distinction between the Categorical Imperative and the Golden Rule or Empathy-Altruism. Assume an actor and a recipient (of some arbitrary benevolence). Under the Golden Rule or Empathy-Altruism, the actor is implored to make decisions on the basis of how they would feel (empathy) or what they would desire (Golden Rule) if they were the recipient, and act to give the recipient that which the actor would want in the same situation. The Categorical Imperative, in contrast, focuses on how the actor would have the class of all potential actors act towards the similar recipients. I consider the distinction two parted, because besides focusing on the actor instead of the recipient, the Categorical Imperative seems to rule based logic more so than emotional processes.

To the extent that an individual desires the greater good, the Categorical Imperative would be evidenced by acting in ways that, if all other actors acted in the same way, would achieve that greater good. In other words, individuals would play forgo individual gain in a tragedy of the commons situation. This ethic seemed to be pervasive though not necessarily universal amongst those interviewed.

**Fit to Volunteers**

1. **James** may well not have been making any attempt to operate in accordance to an ethic similar to the categorical imperative. He certainly advocated others acting like himself in terms of obeying rules where he volunteered, and he certainly wanted others to follow his example of trying to learn and to respect one another. It did not seem that he was trying to live in a better way or actively help per se, the benefits he derived from volunteering were largely a sense of being needed and maintaining activity, not values.

2. **Kyle** all but explicitly endorsed the categorical imperative. He wanted the world to be a better place and felt that greed and lack of consideration for others were creating a lot of problems. He was proud of having firstly not participated in activities which he though led to harm, and secondly he was proud to have been working with others doing the right thing or "with God on their side". Finally, he hoped to continue living in a way that at least did not harm others.

3. **Shirley** was a believer in the Christian faith and saw her actions as her way of sharing that faith. She

did not support active proselytization, but clearly hoped that her sharing of that faith through her actions would lead others to believe and do the same as her. She seemed to implicitly also see this as the correct way for all people to think and act, though this was tempered by a certain curiosity about others' ways of life.

4. **Ed** certainly desired systematic change, but at the same time he did not have any expectation or hope that others would follow his lead. That said he certainly wanted to act in a way that benefited society as a whole, and was extremely critical of others who professed to desire to help but acted in ways that were inconsistent with that goal (CEOs). As an exception though, Ed clearly found it acceptable for people to be greedy if they admitted their greed and disregard of others. In that sense, Ed largely but incompletely subscribed to the categorical imperative. He felt he had used rational thought to lead to his ethics and motives, expected himself to act consistent with his ethics and motives. He wanted others to be as rational in their ethics and motives, and as consistent in their actions.

5. **Mildred** at one point in her brief interview made a statement about believing in "paying it forward". She had benefitted from others acting in this way, and she felt it was right for her to do the same. She never stated so explicitly, but I think it was implicit in her terming the actions as "pay it forward", that she hoped others would do the same. Paying it forward as a term exists as a contrast to paying something back, instead of returning resources or a favor to the individual that rendered the help, one shows similar generosity or helpfulness to a 3rd individual, often a stranger.

6. **Cathy** could be said to explicitly endorse the categorical imperative. She aimed to reduce her own consumption, help others, build community, and explicitly hoped others would follow her lead. Moreover her own behavior with regards to social connection and ecologic impact were guided by trying to live in a way that, if others followed, would result in a better society from her perspective.

7. **John**, like Shirley, was Christian, but did not aim to spread Christianity at all, but he did want to spread a belief in the basic goodness of humans. He explicitly saw his actions as "passive activism", as acting in a way that was a consistent expression of his values, in the hope that others might see him and adopt similar values. He indirectly expressed that he felt some conservative politics were based on not believing the same, and were not right for society.

8. **Pam** had been abused as a child and had the negative experience of having very little support from adults. She was horrified that that could happen to others, and her volunteering served to remedy this deficit of society. That she did so because she felt others should act in the same way, is nearly self evident.

Pam's case is very close to Kant's own view of why charity does/should exist. While one could obey the categorical imperative in a way that no one rendered aid to those in need, in practice, so many find themselves in need of charity of some manner during their lives, it becomes intractable that charity could not exist under the categorical imperative.

1. **Dave** did not seem to reflect specifically on his motives, so much as he took for granted that at least his own people, 'farm folk', can and should care for another. While it is not clear what he felt about literally all humans acting in this way, he seemed to be proud to act in this was and liked the group where this was true. To this extent, he seemed to implicitly rely on this principle.

2. **Danny** like Cathy, all but explicitly endorsed the categorical imperative. In his case, he specifically saw himself as experimenting on the margins of society with different ways of life that were more humane on the individual level and would scale to all of society. He did not have any expectation that this would spread, but was clearly excited by the possibility and felt the world would be better off if people did.

3. **Steve** did not seem to present a strong case for the categorical imperative as an implicit or explicit ethic. His volunteering seemed well intentioned, genuine, and to be taken quite seriously. He was however notable in not mentioning other strong motives for his volunteering, he seemed to have joined on request and just gotten and stayed involved. It was not clear he wanted others to act similarly.

4. **Eve**, like her husband, did not provide any specific evidence for her support of the categorical imperative. She pointedly said she felt no obligation to volunteer at all, which could imply she did not find it important for others to volunteer either. At the same time, she had been an active solicitor of donations and volunteers for more than one charity, and highly critical of those who did volunteer but did not act consistent with the prosocial mission. In this manner, her viewpoint was perhaps closer to Ed's, that of moral consistency.

### 3.1.2 Uncertainty and Personal Obligation

In the interviews, there is a complete lack of stories where the individual saw someone in need, felt such strong pity or empathy, that they felt obligated to help. This is notable as it is a key mechanism in the most prominent theory of Altruism within the social psychology, Batson's Empathy-Altruism hypothesis (Batson et al., 1981) .

It is possible that the interview setting simply did not elicit sharing of such stories. However, if we assume that that was not the case, the lack of such story may ultimately relate to the uncertainty inherent

in volunteers' perceptions of their rendering help. By focusing on systems and their own behavior, volunteers may have been able to shield themselves from negative feelings if they were to take on the task of helping an individual. Past research has indeed noted an increase in donations to having a plausible explanation whereby the individual need not feel responsible for the outcome/other situations (Holmes, Miller, & Lerner, 2002) . (Arguably explicit adherence to the categorical imperative would achieve a similar outcome, since one is responsible for one's self, not the other)

I by no means think that no such tales of empathy existed, rather they were not key parts of the volunteers' own narratives of their experience and operating motives on a day to day basis. This was striking because the mechanism of empathy/pity leading to helping behavior is key to both sides of the Batson/Cialdini debate on altruism. Penner's work has likewise focused on trait empathy as a motivator. So it is fascinating that volunteers themselves did not recall any such experiences as focal points in describing their experiences.

I suspect this follows from the nature of social work itself. In contrast to short term helping, the volunteers interviewed repeatedly faced ambiguous situations, some of them difficult. Many of interviewees desired that the world change in some way and wanted to help people. However, as observed in the interviews, the interviewees were likely to not see concrete outcomes of their efforts. If for example, one of the homeless men that Fred or James gave food to went missing, it was not clear whether that individual had landed a job, in the hospital, or in jail.

Helping others is an uncertain goal. If one were to simply try and learn a skill such as shooting baskets, making chairs, or running, one's performance would overwhelming depend on one's own skills and progress. When helping others, the outcome is generally moreso dependent on the other. For the sorts of help that many volunteers provide, e.g. mentoring, legal help, social work, the assistance rendered to the other may be necessary, but is rarely sufficient to ensure the other individuals experience a better outcome.

Batson's (1981) hypothesis was that empathy leads to altruism, seeing an individual in need led to concern for that individual's well being and the altruist taking personal responsibility for rendering assistance. With the volunteers interviewed however, there was occasionally the sense that the feeling of obligation to help or responsibility for another's outcome was negative, not just in terms of emotional experience (e.g. a negative state to be avoided, Cialdini et al., 1987) . It was a mark of experience to not function in either way.

Interpersonally though, most volunteers seemed warm and friendly and empathetic, several expressed sincere interest in the interviewer and study after the interview. As previously suggested, it could be that experiencing empathy leads individuals to form more altruistic belief systems and to act more altruistically, but empathy may not be involved in the day to day regulatory process of altruistic behavior.

Within discussing their volunteering, some, such as Cathy, made it very clear that they had learned

to keep a certain emotional distance from individual outcomes. Empathy was felt, but at the individual level it did not necessarily reach the point of the volunteer feeling obligated to do anything for any specific individual. Again referencing the categorical imperative, individual action was moreso regulated by how a person should treat another person in such situations, than affecting the specific outcome.

Volunteers did not feel obligated by the individual outcome of the people they helped, and to the extent they did, they found this undesirable. This was tied to the inherent uncertainty of any of their actions having the desired consequence. Kyle mentioned second hand the story of a lawyer's client getting arrested naked on the brink of receiving custody over his children as an example of this. He was explicit that the expected outcome for any of the people he worked with was negative, so he focused on sharing knowledge effectively because the outcome was likely to be still negative. He did feel like he helped, because even though people still lost their homes, he thought they would fair better with their finances in the future. Shirley said that she was rewarded by knowing she did God's will and expected to see no results from most of her actions, but that over time the small actions of herself and others might lead individuals to reach a point where they turned their lives around. Eve proudly declared that she did not have any obligation to help and that was how she liked it (incidentally linking the lack of experiencing emotional obligation for an another with autonomy. If volunteers routinely felt compelled by empathy to act, then it would be difficult to preserve a sense of autonomy or take pride in values).

Though Kyle and Shirley had radically different perspectives on politics and religious beliefs, their belief systems seemed to function in the same way. Help could not be measured by visible outcome. By taking this perspective, they were able to focus on their actions, and not on the outcomes experienced. In a certain way, this reaction seems to allow long term sustainable motivation by avoiding the sorts of obligation issues raised by Miller's work on the exchange fiction (2004) . Moreover, from a self determination perspective (Ryan & Deci, 2000) adopting values for one's self and acting on one's own internal values should be a psychologically preferable situation for volunteering, and therefore expected to be more sustainable than the empathy mechanism.

Evidence of the uncertain situation and not feeling personally responsible for individual outcomes was frequent within the interviews, but not for all interviewees.

**Fit to Volunteers**

1. **Fred** never mentioned any sense of moral obligation to volunteer. He did see volunteering, in terms of the activities, as his life, and reached out to others informally to give advice on how to get by. I do not think that Fred himself ever got so into thinking to consider the magnitude of uncertainty.

2. **Kyle**, if anything, felt that failure at helping was certain. At least, he felt it was the likely outcome, and that as someone trying to change society his reward was not being part of the problem or taking refuge in being on the right side, not actually seeing change occur. He did not doubt that he had helped individuals, only whether that help *meant* anything in larger picture of no concrete gains.

3. **Shirley** and I spoke directly about whether she felt obligated to help specific individuals. She said that she did not, but she did feel obligated to act. Her obligations where to herself, to follow God's word. Her faith then also led her to believe that she was part of God's will. This faith allowed her to feel that though many individuals would be apparently be unaffected by her actions, they would eventually find help.

4. **Ed** spoke at length about seeing certain things as cyclical and not being sure if things really changed. Towards the end of the interview, he seemed outright depressed. For him this lack of knowing reinforced his own identification with being someone that at least tries. He did not mention personal obligation at all. He generally only met people after they were already receiving help of some sort, or did not meet them at all. He did value getting to know everyone and that if nothing else he helped repair things.

5. **Mildred** was difficult to interview because of her absolute certainty. To the extent we talked about outcomes, she seemed to focus on simple things that she had done, not on the outcomes others' experienced. Within her belief system though her obligations were not towards individuals, who she largely never met, but to people in general. She had benefitted by others helping her, so she felt a certain obligation to contribute to others' well-being.

6. **Cathy** spoke at length about not knowing whether she contributed or not, but did not feel obligated to specific individuals for the most part. She did form relationships with individuals and valued that. She specifically spoke about having to learn to not feel responsible for others.

7. **John's** motivation was explicitly to act in a way that he wanted others to act. He did not seem to act out of a sense of obligation, but was very motivated by the connection he felt with his mentee and to a lesser extent with those he worked with at the shelter. He did not mention any feeling of obligation and his experiences of empathy were framed as an overall orientation for human compassion, not as reaction to seeing those in need.

8. **Pam** did feel a sense of obligation, though to the entire class of victims of domestic abuse and not specific individuals. She still experienced a great deal of uncertainty in her life, and it was apparent

that this uncertainty may have been related to her own mental health struggles. She felt powerless to affect change, and at times seemed to suggest feeling that had she not tried to help her mother, her mother would still be alive.

9. **Dave** was involved in providing basic food help exclusively, and thus his volunteering did not involve uncertainty. He was friendly but not close friends with those he rendered help to. To the extent he felt obligated, he was not emotional about it. Rather he did seem to believe that as a farm person, helping others was something that he should do.

10. **Danny's** philosophy was one of building personal relationships and taking personal responsibility for one's impact on society as a whole. In retelling stories of asking people to leave the house they were staying at, it was clear that Danny did not feel responsible to giving individuals basic needs, though he maintained empathy and warmth towards those individuals at the same time. He was unsure about whether he had impact, but seemed very hopeful that he was the small part of something much larger.

11. **Steve** had volunteered simply because he was asked, and could not remember who asked or when. His entire description of the volunteering was focused moreso on personal pride and enjoyment of the job and perhaps feeling needed by the volunteer coordinator rather than those he actually served. This does not mean he did not feel empathy, rather it was not the focus of his retelling of his experience as a volunteer. He did warmly recall the attachment those he helped developed for him.

12. **Eve** actually smiled while saying she had no obligation to do what she did. She also was visibly happy to retell stories of people she helped. She had left multiple volunteer activities in favor of different ones that were more consistent with her values and preferences, evidencing a lack of feeling obligated to a specific group of people. In her case, she likely also chose volunteer organizations where she felt she would benefit the mission of the organization. Again here Eve is distinct in her organizational focus.

### 3.1.3 The Simple Motive: Do what you can, Do what you do

Several volunteers commented on their own lack of introspection about their motives prior to the interview. Some things in the interview moreover suggested that their long term commitment came simply as the product of someone asking them once and what might be called behavioral momentum thereafter. Steve did not gave much insight into his motivations for volunteering, he actually did not remember, but it seemed that a decade or two earlier someone had asked him. James had a philosophy to his actions, but seemed to similarly select his volunteering experiences based on others' suggestions. Ed was simply committed to doing something, whether or not it did much good for the bigger picture.

Volunteers are those who do something of their own free will and with no direct compensation. Perhaps not surprisingly then, many of the volunteers seemed focused on the doing aspect. The final characteristic that stands out from the interviews is a focus on doing, only explicitly mentioned by Yeung (2004) .

This aspect was not as shared amongst all the volunteers, but played a very large role for some. Dave, Steve, and James for example gave almost no philosophy for their actions, but simply took for granted that they were volunteers and would continue volunteer. This was not necessarily the case when individuals started volunteering, but at least at the time of the interviews some we more focused on the job and their role (Finkelstein et al., 2005) and less on issues related to "why". This did not imply that they no longer cared about the underlying values, but that they'd long since accepted it as part of their identity. It was something to do, something good to do, or in their minds, just what they did. This again is entirely consistent with the findings of Colby and Damon (1994) , who found that for their participants often did not even consider acting in ways other than they had, rather simply doing what was needed to help others, even when it seemed to harm their own or family interests.

**Fit to Volunteers**

1. **Fred** saw his volunteering as his life. He had long since ceased to differentiate fully between his role as a resident, volunteer, and employee. As a matter of fact he had never been an employee where he volunteered, he had just come to see it as his job and knew he would be missed if he did not show up.

2. **Kyle's** self-acknowledged main motivation to volunteer was that he saw others doing something similar and admired their doing it, so he chose to take the same path. He felt inspired by the feeling of each day simply being on the right side of greater social issues, and doing something for that side, whether or not it had greater impact.

3. **Shirley** saw her actions as expressions of her faith, and that the doing and the service were what was mandated.

4. **Ed** expressed doubt in where the country and world was going, but also expressed that all you could do was what you did. He chose to do lots of hands-on, skilled labor to make clear and concrete contributions to the organization and those they sought to help.

5. **Mildred** said that she had not thought much about why she volunteered before getting the invite to the interview, and reasoned it was just part of a system of paying it forward. Others had done things for her, so she did things for others.

6. **Cathy** also acknowledged not having thought about some of the issues before the interview. She had initially been drawn to social service in a paid position after wanting to actually do something. She later sought out a situation where that act of doing was more all encompassing. When asked about whether she saw her volunteering as a job, she said she did not see it that way, it was just what she did.

7. **John's** volunteering occurred through informal suggestions of his friends, they'd suggest something was worth doing, so he would do it and continue if it suited him. Other acquaintances asked about whether this served any greater good, to which he'd respond that at least he gave someone a meal.

8. **Pam** volunteered in part as a means of working through her own issues. In her narrative it was clear that she occasionally went through near compulsive phases of working and being involved.

9. **Dave** expressed the sentiment that his volunteering and helping was just what farm folk did. He also was largely obsessed with the actual details of his volunteering and other socially beneficial projects he had hopes for. Even with regards to ecology, he had gone the step of planting biocrops.

10. **Danny** had sought out experiential knowledge, this lead him to his current all encompassing volunteer experience.

11. **Steve** was primarily focused on the logistical tasks of his volunteering, i.e. Doing the task, not its rationale.

12. **Eve** had somewhat literally made a career of volunteering, alternating being a paid post as a volunteer coordinator and volunteering herself. Though she cared a great deal about matching her experience to her values of how an organization should be run, she like her husband, came across as more focused on the doing, the how, than the why.

## 3.2 Characterizing the Altruism of Long Term Volunteers: Black Box Altruism

The prior section presented three intersecting aspects that emerged from the interviewee's narratives. Taken together these observations suggest a certain unified mentality that volunteers might adopt to maintain prosocial motivation over the long term.

First volunteers seemed largely motivated to follow their own values, but in terms of their own behavior, i.e. follow the categorical imperative through personal action. Secondly, whether or not volunteers felt

empathy, they did not let empathy for individual lead them to feel obligated to that individual. Rather, perhaps as response to the uncertainty of outcomes, they focused their obligations on their own actions. (A stance which plausibly reinforces dedication to maintaining the categorical imperative). Finally, some volunteers were simply focused on this act of doing.

As a set, what is apparent is that volunteers found ways to focus their motivation on the self and not on the other, even working in areas that were in many ways inherently other-oriented. To the extent that their actions were ultimately other oriented, they were prosocial. However, the regulatory processes that maintained these behaviors were inherently focused on the self.

In examining the narratives of the long term volunteers, it is apparent that many of them have given a great deal of their life to helping others. It was more difficult to see how the volunteers benefitted from rendering this help to others. It is hard to not return to the classic debate on whether, amongst other human motives, there exists a fundamental motivation to help other human beings. That selfless motive to help is the so called altruistic motive.

The Batson-Cialdini debate framed the entire issue as a series of tests whether individuals would help others in absence of all other conceivable motives except concern for the others' well being. While the theoretical question was whether a 'pure' motive existed, empirically the examinations only focused on isolated helping, and not enduring behavior.

That debate ended generally with the conclusion that people are motivated to help others out of empathy, with mixed opinions on whether this was sufficient to be considered altruism (Cialdini, 1991) . The model of the individual's psychology within that debate, presupposed that individuals are motivated by the expected outcome of their actions (e.g. the other's well being, as opposed to the actions of helping process), and focused on whether seemingly selfless actions might instead be selfish. Thus the entire framing of the debate exists in a different set of circumstances than what the interviewees talked about in their narratives.

The narratives of the volunteers and the themes emergent suggest a different way of looking at selfless motivations altogether. Consider the reality presented in this statement by Shirley:

> I can't say that I make an impact on anything. Um, I don't think I do, now, you talk to my husband and he thinks I do, but um, I just, I don't worry about it.

Shirley firstly does not feel she necessarily creates a positive impact for others, but her husband does. One could easily conclude this as evidence that her volunteering is motivated by 3rd parties viewing her positively, i.e. A selfish motive. Indeed, it is hard to eliminate that as a possibility. There are other possibilities as well, perhaps equally hard to eliminate.

Shirley's statement, particularly in context of the interviews overall, is revealing of two underlying realities:

1. To the extent that volunteers are motivated by spreading values, system change, or even helping another individual, feedback on success is ambiguous in nature.

2. As often as not, the ambiguity is related to role or vantage point of the person making the evaluation, as well as their subjective criteria.

So in contrast to altruism/helping in the experiments central to the Batson-Cialdini debate, here the outcome is not only unobservable, but often inherently undefined. Moreover the actor sees an action as selfish, for a mix of reasons related to their vantage point vis-a-vis regulatory processes as well as the norm of self-interest (Miller, 2004) , whereas an outsider might see it as selfless.

As an example of these ambiguities, consider Pam's personal story of helping. Pam helped her stepmother move away from her abusive father. Within several months, the father killed the stepmother, Pam's half brother, and himself. Did Pam help her stepmother? Was Pam's assistance altruistic? What did Pam gain from providing resources and time to her stepmother? What answer would Pam give? What answer would Pam's stepmother have given? What answer would her father have given? The point is that there may not be a single objective answer whereby the beneficence of an action can be judged. Pam did repeat several times during the interview that mortality is most common when the abused leaves the abuser, indicating that in terms of raw probability her choice to move her stepmother had maximized the chances of death.

I pick an extreme case for sake of illustrating the inherent ambiguity of "help", as well as how the outcome relies on multiple agents, the same point could also be made from more typical cases. From interviewing the long term volunteers, there is a sense that this ambiguity in "success" of help is the normal case. Mildred rarely even met the individuals she helped in the legal office. Cathy on the other hand lived with the same individuals she helped, and recalled that with time she had had to learn to *not* take personal responsibility for the choices that individuals made, simply because often individuals would return to the street, drugs, alcohol, or abusive partners. Kyle stated that according to the most objective criteria, his 1.5 years in a specific capacity had led to *no* successes in spite of having hundreds of cases. The ambiguity of 'help' in particular as an outcome was a pervasive theme in the interviews, and several interviewees (especially Kyle and Ed) explicitly elaborated that this ambiguity was likely inherent in any effort to better the norms for all.

As another benchmark of altruism, one can simply ask the volunteers about whether they feel their actions are selfishly motivated. The answer then is simply that altruism does not exist, since no volunteer

described their actions as exclusively altruistic, and many described their actions as largely selfish. Here though, several caveats exist.

First, there was a clear sense that volunteers were reluctant to say they wanted to help others, as if that were the wrong answer, e.g. Mildred said calling her actions anything but selfish made it sound like she had a 'halo'. Pam expressed the belief that altruism did not exist, and seemed to consider this a scientific finding. Cathy was the only volunteer who seemed to actively lay claim to wanting to help others for its sake, but she also said that she wanted to do that to further her own personal/spiritual development. This is consistent with past research on the norm of self interest (Miller, 2004) , where individuals are more willing to donate if they can maintain the exchange fiction, that they get something for their actions, even if it is clearly irrational (Holmes et al., 2002) .

Second, as the quote from Cathy indicates, there were occasional references that others in the volunteers' lives did see these interviewees as helping others, and perhaps even selflessly. So from a first hand perspective, they were not altruists, but from a third party perspective, they often appeared to be.

In interviewing the individuals, few seemed to gain concrete benefits from others. Half of the interviewees were retirees with plenty of retirement benefits, and families that were doing well enough to help care for them. They certainly appreciated the activity and the social connections of volunteering, but the fact remains they had other options that were less prosocial and provided more objective benefit. This is not to deny that volunteering provided for psychological needs in accordance with SDT (autonomy, relatedness, and competence), merely social volunteering was unlikely the only option available.

The next largest subset were young people, who were without exception very bright and capable of holding other jobs that would provide basic needs more adequately. Here I refer to Kyle, Cathy, and Danny. All three of these individuals had opted to live at sustenance level (Kyle), or poverty level (Cathy and Danny) instead of employment or the at least temporary stability of a college environment and loans/low pay jobs. For Kyle, his work with lawyers could well lead to him getting a better job later on (though he reported having abandoned that goal). For Cathy and Danny however, this was very unlikely to be the case. Their organization has no supervisor who could recommend them, does not operate in a manner that would be deemed professional experience, and their actions have led them to acquire police records that would be seen as a negative by employers, except to agencies with similar politics.

The remaining volunteers had neither completed successful careers, nor had strong expectations of entering a career again in the future. Fred had lived much his life homeless and dependent on the charity he now volunteered for. By continuing to volunteer there, Fred maintained stability in his life and social connections. He had however ceased to gain concrete benefits from his association. Pam in contrast did not

receive stability from her volunteering, and did not have stability in her life per se, though she continued to volunteer. Shirley was supported by her husband and did not seem to think she was able to work full time due to her recent medical problems. Her volunteering gave her something to do and some feeling of being productive (SDT's competence need), but many of the social interactions she described having through volunteering were neutral or antagonistic.

Quite a few of the volunteers (Danny, Pam, Ed, Cathy, Kyle) expressed substantial social cynicism alongside their ideals for their own behavior. There was almost a bit of gallows humor, such as: 'Well I must be doing this for myself, because that last person I helped landed in jail and I sure as hell ain't changing society.' Not meaning that they literally believed that they did not change anything, but that they did not expect to see direct evidence of their impact, and occasionally questioned why they stuck with volunteering instead of more concrete benefits.

Do the volunteers benefit from their volunteering? The volunteers clearly benefitted from their own perspective. They found the work rewarding and considered their volunteering to be partly or wholly selfishly motivated. If one considers social connections (SDT's relatedness), feeling needed (SDT's Competence), and expressing one's own values in the way one chooses (SDT's autonomy), then certainly volunteering benefited all the volunteers. Indeed volunteering offers ideal means to fulfill the core psychological needs according to SDT (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010) .

It was by no means their only option to fulfill those needs. Volunteering had direct costs (e.g. time, related monetary costs like gas), and at times truly substantial opportunity costs. Opportunity costs refer to alternatives that would be more concretely beneficial (often obvious). Three volunteers (Pam, Eve, Cathy) had quit paying positions doing closely related or identical work to their volunteering, in favor of doing the work for free. In all three cases, the explanation was that it reduced their emotional costs because they were able to volunteer in a way that more precisely fit their values. (Again they placed high value on acting in a way consistent with their beliefs, SDT's autonomy.)

It is interesting to consider the case of evaluating benefit, harm and motivations of charitable volunteers as opposed to drug addicts. With charitable volunteers, social science has been operating with a default assumption that their actions are motivated by self gain (Khalil, 1990; Miller, 2004) , whether or not the individual acknowledges this. Consider how drug addicts are evaluated, their actions are generally considered harmful to the self, whether or not the individual acknowledges this. It seems odd that with drug addiction, there is a greater willingness to ignore what the individual says is beneficial/costly and focus on the inputs/ outputs. Whereas with charitable volunteers, there is a willingness to say that any positive benefits the volunteer receives for volunteering are sufficient to motivate this behavior on the individual level and to

explain prosocial behavior.

It is very difficult to quantify the benefits volunteers received, if not impossible. I don't think that the volunteers that I interviewed benefitted from volunteering unless one considers the benefit of the experience of volunteering and their feeling of doing something "right". It's not that they received no benefits from volunteering, it just seemed that volunteering was relatively poor choice unless one considered the issue of doing things the right way according to personal beliefs. The issue of whether or not their actions represented altruism then seems circular and a matter of definitions. In other words, someone wants to do good in the world independently of their self interest, but since they have that as a goal, doing it can be considered selfish and hedonic. It is not altruistic, only because one has placed the perspective "inside" the agent and not outside.

Consider Pam. Pam's primary motivation in volunteering was that she could not live in a world where children had no hope (according to her words), and in at least my assessment, her volunteering served as a sort of proof by existence that kids were not hopeless. She considered this selfish, because her helping the children was in response to her own fear/outrage at the world. At the same time, the basic facts of her situation was that she was living day to day financially, in spite of having substantial skills. At the end of the interview I repeated the logic that she had given me. "Because you basically just said that you wanted to make the world a better place and you feel the need to make the world a better place. Because you're trying to make the world a better place, you're being selfish?" She laughed at my phrasing it that way, but also she agreed that that was her argument.

This discussion suggests a framework for understanding altruism as a human goal that reflects the real experiences of those individuals that do invest large amounts of their lives in helping others, while at the same time giving perspective to past research on altruism. I refer to this framework as black box altruism.

"Black box" is meant to reference the sort of behaviorist views of human behavior, where researchers tried to focus on inputs, outputs, and observable behaviors while actively avoided interpreting internal states and motivations. In discussing altruism, it seems that the focus on internal states, hedonic responses to helping have perhaps blinded psychologists to a more holistic assessment of behavioral patterns that are readily apparent by looking at people.

In specific, what was clear from the interviews, was that individuals focused on internal motivations, such as their values (A. Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Colby & Damon, 1994) . In their telling, this was learned in part through efforts to affect positive change. If they focused on the outcome for the other, they themselves would lose their motivation because there would not be any "reward". Whereas if they instead focused on living consistently with principles, and finding what they could do rewarding, then they felt good about

continuing their work. Where within the context, their work was trying to help other people/society at large. By being "selfish", they may have been able to affect a greater more sustained effort at helping others.

Taking a 'black box' perspective, and not focusing on finding an isolated "pure" helping motive, an individual that consistently acts in ways that help others over the course of their lifetime likely affects a greater common good than an individual that readily ignores their own well being or principles in order to react to empathic stimuli in the environment. Altruism from a black box perspective would consider an individual who considers common/societal gain higher than personal gain as acting altruistically.

It is expected that integrity of the individual remain a higher priority than helping others in all but exceptional cases. This does not indicate however that the individual is not fundamentally other-motivated, rather that maintaining a functioning self is necessary strategic goal for the greater good desired by the individual altruist. The judgement of altruism rests on an assessment of the actions of the individual over time and whether those actions are planned and enacted in a way that supports other motivated goals moreso than self promotion.

# Chapter 4

# Integration of New Theory with Prior Literature

Throughout the body of this thesis, interviews were analyzed first within their own terms and secondly in reference to existing literature. In this penultimate section the themes that emerged (adherence to the Categorical Imperative, Uncertainty and Non-obligation, Doing) will be discussed in terms of how they interface with the framework built by conceptualizing VFI and role identification as motives along the SDT spectrum.

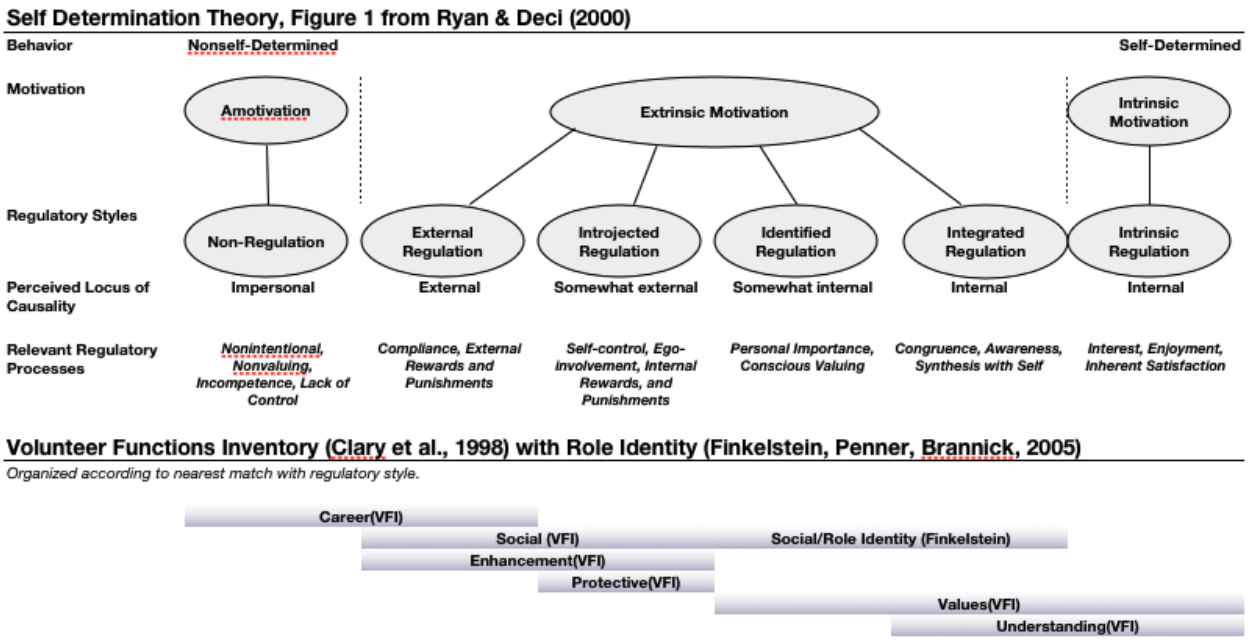
## 4.1 The combined SDT and VFI Framework of Altruism

The present inquiry found that interviewees' motives for volunteering were frequently aligned with fulfilling one or more of the primary psychological needs according SDT (Autonomy, Relatedness, Competence). It was also observed that the numerous motives that interviewees mentioned generally aligned with the domains already identified by work on the VFI or that participants had formed a strong identification with their role as a volunteer, fitting Finkelstein's work on role identification. On a conceptual level, it is relatively easy to place the various functions named within the VFI and role identification as fulfilling distinct portions of the continuum of actions being either coerced or self determined.

Depending on an individual's pattern of beliefs, potentially any goal/action can be intrinsically motivated. However the regulatory processes outlined by Ryan and Deci (1985, 2000) give a fairly clear sense of where a particular motive would typically exist in terms of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Because the VFI is already restricted to the domain of reasons for volunteering, each of the six functions has a relatively clear placement.

If someone is volunteering because of their Career goals, they would be expected to be seeking an external goal such an entry on their resume, a better job, or other social regard. In some cases, volunteering could be essentially mandatory for Career goals, e.g. as required volunteering as part of corporate social responsibility programs or training programs. As such, the VFI's Career motive is placed far to the left.

The VFI's Social function is a bit harder to place along the continuum, because the VFI taxonomy does




not fully differentiate between the pressure one feels from a circle of friends and the internalized expectations one may feel as a result of social identity. To counter this, and to be more congruent with research by Finkelstein (Finkelstein et al., 2005) , the placement of the Social category is both expansive across the domain and subdivided. Social motivations such as contact with others, finding a mate (Griskevicius et al., 2007) , and norms of a group are considered more external and congruent with the VFI's social function. Concerns related to role or social identification should logically be more intrinsic and to the right hand side of the diagram.

VFI's Enhancement motive is deemed relatively external such that it matches the relevant regulatory processes, Enhancement refers to ego enhancement. It could conceivably encompass either making social appearances or self-affirmation (Steele, 1988) , both of which Ryan and Deci (2000) categorize as somewhat external, in that they assume a comparison with something external or the views of someone besides the agent. VFI's Protective function is also somewhat external, the motive to protect essentially refers to one's ego, that one feels guilt or lack of self-worth in the extreme and seeks to atone. As with enhancement, protective also has an implicit reliance on external validation.

Values and Understanding are clearly more intrinsic goals, but hard to place on the spectrum. Ryan and Deci specifically mention conscious valuing, but only as identified regulation. However, VFI's Values is likely also part of "Congruence and Synthesis with Self", since congruence would presumably mean action-belief congruence. It is difficult then to not include values in the same category as 'interest'. Understanding then falls as the far right, since it seems to align most with personal growth motives and interest. Notably,

definitions are almost stretched to place VFI functions in the most intrinsic category, a limitation to be reconsidered later.

Placing Self-Determination theory as the framework for conceptualizing the VFI, volunteering, and altruism is, in spite of its crudeness, a powerful and compelling framework for understanding altruism. Miller (Miller, 2004) has noted that amongst both lay people and academia the assumption of self-interest is pervasive. More than any empirical evidence, this is what Batson and colleagues had to fight against most in demonstrating altruism.

Cialdini's (1991) critique of the most complete case for altruism (Batson & Shaw, 1991) amounted to saying that the remaining variance between conditions left while controlling for one or more selfish motives could not be assumed to be altruism, and to demonstrate altruism would require controlling all conceivable self-interested motives out simultaneously. The underlying assumption is that left over variance can be assumed to be self-interest (Sevy, Minneapolis, & Perloff, 1988) , alternately, the default framework for understanding human behavior is the homo economicus model.

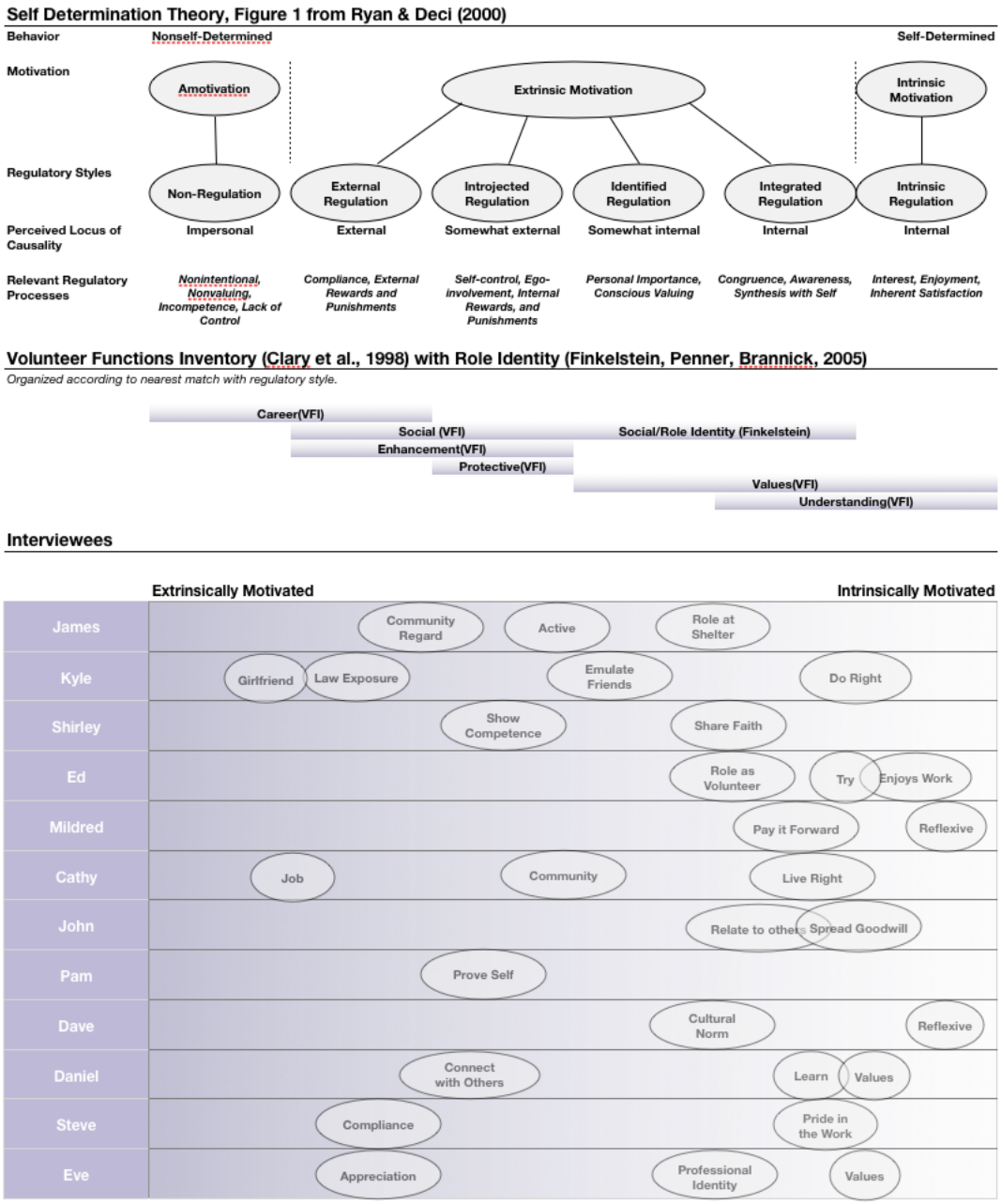
What has been lacking is a sufficient framework to make altruism sound as compelling as self-interest, that breaks out of the egoism-altruism false dichotomy (Krebs, 1991) . Self determination theory seems a viable starting point. SDT presents a model of human behavior that is rooted not in gains/benefits for the self or other, but more so in self evaluation and social meaning making for the individual. In the context of the narratives of interviewees, this seems to address concerns about a false dichotomy. Primarily because SDT itself is agnostic about whether behaviors are self or other benefitting, potentially allowing the framework it encompass egoism as well as altruism.

This is critical, as an identified theme was that self/other benefit was not only subjective, but ambiguous. It is very difficult to judge benefit to the self or others. It is somewhat more parsimonious that an individual has goals to make one's own decisions (autonomy), be secure in one's role amongst others (relatedness), and have capabilities to take action (competence). It is more tenable, simply because they are goals that are primarily defined in respect to actor and not any other.

Additionally, seeing the VFI as oriented along the dimension of extrinsic – intrinsic motivation provides clarity to what some of the literature had already been finding. Namely serving for values or understanding is somewhat more related to long term volunteering than career or protective functions (Colby & Damon, 1994; Ryan et al., 2001; A. Omoto & Snyder, 1995) .

Looking at the interviewees' motives mapped onto the framework likewise provides some evidence that more intrinsic motives (values, understanding) should be better predictor of long term commitment. It is not necessarily the case that values at the beginning of volunteering predicts long term volunteering. Rather

motivations may become more intrinsic over time (i.e. values or interest may be internalized over the course of volunteering). Examining the various motives described by the interviewed volunteers, one notes that several extrinsic motivations were short lived and in the past. A reporting bias is certainly possible, but it could also be that people learn to value what they are doing (Festinger, 1957) .




Notably, the interviews do not suggest that only these internal motives are persistent and predictive of long term involvement. Rather an individual who is intrinsically motivated will by definition be motivated in absence of external factors. If the environment does not change, and consistently provides what the

volunteer is seeking, then volunteering could continue longterm with only extrinsic motives. This is not a bold claim at all. Volunteers continue volunteering if they continue to have a motive to do so, stable external motives will lead to stable volunteering. Internal motives may be more stable, if one only speaks to long term volunteers one expects to speak with those who either initially had intrinsic motives or whose motives shifted from extrinsic to intrinsic. At least to the extent that individuals are expected to be more stable than the volunteer labor sector.

Overall however, volunteers seemed to have more intrinsic motives related to helping others and this drove their behavior. This behavior was self determined, arguably self-centered or egoistic, but the behavior was directed to benefit others.

## 4.2 Merging the Blackbox Altruism concept with the SDT/VFI Framework

Omoto and Snyder (1995) commented that long term volunteering seemed more related to self-centered goals than motives to help others. The interviews of the present study revealed the same. What the interviews did not reveal however were people who acted to benefit themselves, but rather people who gave a very large amount to help others and the common good. Indeed, many of those interviewed seem to fit Comte's view of altruism as living for others.

In examining what major themes emerged from the narratives, I characterized this as black box altruism, that the effect of people's behaviors could be altruistic in effect *because* they had established a self-sufficient intrinsic motive for their behavior. This is black box altruism, in that if one avoids semantic debate about what internal reward/punishment mechanisms are going inside the individual, the external inputs/outputs may clearly be directed at improving others' welfare.

This observation is readily adapted and elaborated upon with the combined SDT/VFI framework. From this perspective any behavior that helps others and has negligible, absent, or negative concrete value for the individual would be deemed altruistic if it was also intrinsically motivated. This definition should not be taken to the absurd extreme, but rather serves as a sufficient psychological definition of altruism. In terms of the graphical representation, other benefiting behaviors that are substantially to the right hand side of the VFI/SDT depiction could be considered altruistic.

Moreover, including the concept of regulatory mechanisms into the framework parallels the larger point of the black box altruism perspective. The effect of an action should be differentiated from the mechanism which creates or maintains that action. Indeed, Batson et al. (1981) sought to exclude considerations of

consequences for the self from the operational definition of altruism. If one identifies one's self with a religion that mandates self-sacrifice for others, and because of this belief, one sacrifices things for others' likely benefit, then in an economic sense, one was altruistic. Disqualifying such behaviors from being altruistic because one attained an internal religious goal discounts that the individual nonetheless did something did not benefit them in any way intentionally.

Within the framework of SDT and OIT theory, as a motive becomes more intrinsic it becomes more integrated into the self. This logic provides perhaps the clearest explanation of why it makes sense to grant intrinsically motivated, prosocial behaviors the title of altruism. Specifically, the more intrinsic the motive for a prosocial behavior, the more the actor's prosocial behavior is just them being their self. It does not make sense to say that an action was not committed for the benefit of another (i.e. altruistic) because the actor was an altruist and that is what altruists do.

This black box conception of altruism clearly parallels the conception of intelligence in the famous Turing test for computer intelligence. The Turing test is simple, humans interact with other humans and computers via some system of electronic question and answer or chat sessions, such that the humans do not know a priori whether they are chatting with a computer or with a human. If humans consistently judge a computer to be human in this interactive chat, then it can be said to have achieved intelligence.

Agreeing upon the Turing test as a standard for intelligence sidesteps the myriad semantic issues related to the conception of intelligence, while protecting intelligent computers from strong biases that humans may hold that computers cannot be intelligent. Agreeing upon the Black Box conception of Altruism as a standard for intelligence likewise sidesteps a myriad of semantic issues related to the conception of altruism, while protecting potential altruists from strong biases that humans may hold that humans only act out of self-interest.

This is not to say that the conception is correct, only that it has merit. The implications and limitations of this conception and the methods used to reach it will be explored next.

## 4.3 Implications and Limitations of the Framework

The SDT/VFI framework is a largely superficial integration of existing theory that nonetheless encompasses some findings well, and has the potential to generate novel hypotheses for future inquiries. It is a rough theoretical framework, in need of further development. In fact, even within this inquiry there are substantial issues which are not fully addressed. I will treat three to further discussion. First, reflexive action will be examined. Second, I will return to the role of doing. Third and finally, I will return to the dominant moral

logic of The Categorical Imperative.

Several interviewees seemed to not have much of a guiding belief system, but to almost reflexively see some helping behaviors as good. The action taken was considered self-evident and alternatives were not even considered. The same was found by Colby and Damon (1994) regarding the behavior of their exemplary altruists. Actions were not thought out intentional efforts to adhere to values or help others, but more like unplanned reflexive responses. "Reflexive" is not well defined in the SDT/VFI framework, yet it is perhaps the most altruistic behavior imaginable. On the one hand, reflexive responses/judgements can be seen as the mostly purely altruistic, as one gives of themselves with literally no regard for doing anything else, it is a pure and direct expression of the actor's self and values. Reflexive actions could represent complete internalization. On the other, the thoughtlessness of the action could be used to categorize reflexive action as essentially extrinsic. In either case, it is a limitation that this cannot be readily conjectured, let alone resolved with regards to SDT. However, for the purposes of the Black Box Concept of Altruism, if a reflexive action also appears to clearly favor others over the self, it would be deemed altruistic.

Along similar lines, many volunteers identified 'doing' as a key motive. Doing something. Doing good. It makes some intuitive sense and is consistent with classic theory on attitudes (Festinger, 1957) that the more that one acts a certain way, notably without clear external motivation, the more one will internalize a belief. Nonetheless, the framework does not directly entreat how the role of doing acts as an initial motivator or perhaps a value/goal that is acquired through experience.

Finally, the a dominant and perhaps novel finding that came from narratives was the usage of the categorical imperative as moral framework to guide action. Even if one disagrees with calling the theme as Kant's categorical imperative, there is a clear emphasis on following certain implicit or explicit defined, prosocial moral rules (c.f. Kohlberg, 1973) . While this does not self-evidently fit into the VFI/SDT framework, it is quite compatible and opens the door to some further directions of theoretical integration.

The VFI is based on the work of functional attitude theorists such as Katz (1960) , and the conception that individuals enjoy volunteering because it fits their needs, so someone motivated for career reasons would be more satisfied by volunteering somewhere with side-benefits for the volunteer's career, etc. Matching motives of prosocial actors has also been examined in the domain of charitable donations by the Good Ageny (Clayton, 2009) , except that instead of the VFI as the functions model, or a psychological needs model such as SDT, that work is built upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The findings suggest that those with more resources view donations differently because of their own resources leave them with different needs. However, in some sense Maslow's hierarchy of needs can also be rested on its side, to align with the continuum or extrinsic vs intrinsic. Self-actualization seems a very intrinsic motive, eating and drinking is

comparably much more extrinsic.

This is also reminiscent of Kohlberg's (Kohlberg, 1973) theory of moral development with three major stages, pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. What is notable is that the stages and substages almost completely mimic the progression of regulatory processes given in OIT/SDT. At the pre-conventional stage, the individual's sense of morality is entirely external, related to reward, punishment, and social judgment. At the conventional stage, the individual's sense of morality is partly internal and partly external, the result of social norms and social identification. At the post-conventional stage, morality is based on self-determined abstract principles, where Kohlberg gives the Categorical Imperative specific mention. (Kohlberg, 1973) .

The implication being that there is a convergence of theories along this certain aspect on extrinsic-intrinsic and altruistic (prosocial or moral) action. Whether Kohlberg, Maslow, Ryan and Deci, or perhaps the set of VFI researchers, there is an overall tendency for externally oriented paradigms developing into self-determined principles which can become ingrained in the individual. This pre-dates Ryan & Deci's (1985) work on self determination, but is largely consistent as well. (Even Freud's conception of the super ego hints at the individual progressively integrated concern for others into the self.)

Unfortunately, it must be admitted that the present data does not allow much more inference about this framework than to initially spur its integration/creation. In the concluding section, methodological limitations and future directions are considered.

# Chapter 5

# Conclusion

The goal of the present inquiry was simple: To examine the concept of altruism through interviews of long term volunteers. The group was chosen based on being under-examined in regards to altruism, the methodology chosen in order to maximize the ability to document this group and due to lack of prior qualitative studies. The outcome of this inquiry has been to propose a framework for understanding volunteerism and altruistic action in terms of the psychological needs posited by self-determination theory, and a progression of motives ranging from extrinsic to intrinsic. Moreover, a concept of altruism is put forward that allows that regulatory behaviors may provide internal rewards such as pleasure at helping others, while still deeming an action altruistic if it serves the needs of others moreso than the self. (Black Box Altruism) This concluding section discusses the future directions that might be taken both in terms of methodology and theory.

## 5.1 Review of Methods, Limits and Benefits

Prior work on altruism (excepting Colby & Damon, 1994) was either entirely theoretical or based on a quantitative deductive hypothesis testing paradigm. Beyond using the qualitative method of interviews, the present study adopting many aspects of the grounded theory approach (Glaser et al., 2008) , most notably examining the data before reviewing or integrating prior theory.

Not doing a thorough literature review before data collection was problematic in that there was no guarantee that conclusions from the data would be novel. However, that may be a benefit as well. Not conducting the literature review before data collection changed the entire perspective of the research towards best accounting for the phenomena observed in the world outside of the laboratory. This is indeed the goal of the Grounded Theory approach.

As consequence of the same mentality, literature is approached quite differently. Instead of approaching literature with the perspective of finding gaps or flaws in existing theories which could be filled or exposed, the focus on literature shifts towards one of incorporating past theories into the explanation of the observed phenomena. This is consistent with how the method treats primary data, it should be processed until a

pattern emerges that provides sufficient explanation. If more researchers were to adopt this integrative approach instead of trying distinguish their ideas from other theories to gain publication, it might assist the field of psychology in addressing its balkanization issues (c.f. Gilbert, 2002) . More can be said on how the Grounded Theory approach compares with more typical social psychology methods however.

A large difficulty with the Grounded Theory approach is that it defies numerous conventions within the field, to the point that it hampers communication. Science is not a purely rational endeavor, and the history of science is full of examples where new theories or methods were chosen for reasons that were as much social as logical or empirical decisions (K Feyerabend, 1981) . Many aspects of scientific inquiry are arbitrary, pragmatic, or social convention, such as occam's razor or the standardization upon 5% type A error rate. Audiences for research expect a certain process: formal definitions and hypotheses at the beginning, a test of the hypotheses, and conclusions at the end. Not holding to this conventional structure raised issues in interpreting intermediate findings, and made it difficult to determine best practices within the present study.

In trying to utilize the Grounded Theory approach it seemed that the approach itself was overly formal about some aspects, perhaps as a means of replacing conventions that it do not follow from more traditional methods. Some of these, such as noting and identifying "themes", were themselves counterproductive in this research. Specifically, it was not clear what did or did not constitute a "note". "Themes" seems to presuppose that the analysis was largely thematic. What was found were psychological schemes or a regulatory processes, and these do not seem to constitute "themes"? Consequently, I abandoned these concepts and focused on the iterative process of inductive reasoning, and focusing on identifying what I seemed to be observing in the data in a way that stayed true to the data. These two aspects seemed to be the core of the process, and core to gaining the benefit expected from the method: to capture what the data said independent of prior theory.

More can be said about the role of induction in the grounded theory approach. It explicitly relies on the inductive, sometimes non-conscious mental organization processes of the researcher to build theory. The methodological mandate is to merely treat this process of forming ideas with more formality than a lay person. This is uncomfortable for a researcher trained in primarily traditional quantitative, deductive methods commonplace in social psychology. Firstly, the role of the researcher as interpreter of data is exposed to the researcher as well as consumers of the research. Secondly, many interpretations and assumptions made by the researcher when applying the traditional statistical methods (e.g. normalcy of data, homogeneity of variance) require little explanation or defense because they are commonplace. When adopting the less conventional method of this approach, the standard assumptions are not made, but replaced by many other small assumptions and interpretations which are then open for debate.

Nonetheless, the research consumer is able to evaluate for themselves whether they agree or disagree with conclusions. Methods, sampling, and indeed analysis can be replicated. However, the fact that interpretations are interpretations of researcher is always front and center. For this reason, it would also be highly desirable to have an independent researcher evaluate the recordings and transcripts and conduct their own analysis, as a validity check on the current findings.

However, having the interpretative nature of the research be front and center is also a virtue. Prior research is nonetheless interpretive as well. The studies of the Batson - Cialdini debate can be used as examples of methodological precision and control in experimental research. Neither side of the debate questions the methodological rigor though, the sides simply interpret the data differently.

As mentioned earlier, the work from the Batson - Cialdini studies was that the definition of altruism was perhaps too narrow in order to allow the methodology of those studies. This led in part to the adoption of a very different methodology for the present research, to no small extent avoiding the definition of altruism altogether. What this masks however is that the two research paradigms ask very different questions, and the present paradigm may have particular strengths in terms of applicability.

## 5.2 Applicability of Findings

In a typical social psychological study, there is a sample of between thirty and several hundred individuals, who completed surveys or experiments. In most cases, these individuals are either college students, though national survey samples are not uncommon either. In those cases questions of generizability refer to issues of whether the findings observed could reasonably be expected to *apply* to other nations, regions, age groups come forward with regards to the importance of the findings. Inherently though, the question is at the *group* level, because the statistical tests relied upon in most social psychological studies compare group level parameters, not individual attributes or psychologies.

There are legitimate concerns about whether an interview study of long term volunteers from Swaziland, Mongolia, Russia, New York, Bangladesh, or Finland would conclude the same as the present study. An argument could be constructed that there is no reason to expect differences, but the inductive method used already stretches the accepted practices for science. Moreover, inherent to the practice of inducing general rules from exemplars, the quality of the inferences would be better if the data were more expansive in terms of the geographic, economic, and cultural diversity of the exemplars.

However, it is worth noting a critical difference between the present study and other studies, and one that may reveal one of the great methodological strengths of this inquiry. The present study focuses heavily on

individual narratives (and psychologies) to make inferences about individuals, instead of inferring individual psychology based on average behavior of individuals in a group. This removes a step of inference by remaining at the same level of analysis.

Typical social psychological research is quantitative in nature and focuses on parametric methods. (Though I suspect that the following critique applies equally to non-parametric methods which focus on differentiating entire distributions as well.) Thus, the majority of such research operationally asks questions about average individuals from different groups (either experimental conditions or pre-existing groups). Generizability concerns are frequently phrased in terms of which groups were or were not reflected in the sample (and thus the parameters). Inherently, the concern of researchers is whether the theory tested and conclusions reached are *applicable* for other *groups*. In contrast the present study focuses on individuals, such that the question of applicability is moreso whether the conclusions reached by considering the 12th interviewee are likely to apply to a randomly selected 13th interviewee.

That typical studies use the parametric, group oriented process raises a major concern when trying to apply social psychological findings outside of laboratories. This is most evident in legal or forensic applications. Psychology provides a great deal of information about how average individuals from defined groups might act. This sort of information can be extremely useful in setting policy for police line-ups, where the intent is to increase the chances that a just outcome will occur at a group level. However in a courtroom setting, the information that is needed is the likelihood that a specific individual would have acted or did in a certain way given what is known about the individual and the environment.

This situation is also what a lay person may most desire from psychological findings; not to determine how an average person might act or feel, but to infer how a specific person is most likely to act or feel in one or more specific situations.

It would be too bold to state that the present findings are more able to provide insight into a specific individual than say, logical inferences based on the VFI alone. The present point however is that for the purposes of drawing conclusions about new individuals, in depth case studies of other individuals may be more readily applied than group differences data. Moreover theories built upon the foundation of by-individual analyses may be more easily applied to other individuals than theories based on averages. This is not to say the conclusions are necessarily better, but that level of analysis is closer and matches between theory more readily identifiable. As illustration of this, it is notable that practicing psychiatric therapists, who largely deal with individual cases, are allowed to give expert opinion in court room settings about what an individual may or may not have done or been capable of.

In short, the sample size is limited to a very small number of individuals from a small region. This

presents limitations to how applicable the findings are to other individuals from other regions. However, due to the depth of the findings, they are likely to provide insight into any individual whose motives and attitudes bear more than passing resemblance to those within the sample. That is not to say that there are not myriad of directions that merit further exploring to better understand altruism or expand on the methods, which will be elaborated on presently.

## 5.3 Future Directions

As mentioned prior to the presentation of the interviews, the interview data within this study were not collected specifically for the purpose of examining altruism, though they do provide some insight into altruism. Were further investigation to be made, it would be most interesting to broaden the scope beyond volunteers to those who work for money in the social sector, and to emphasize the diversity of the sample as well as the level of pay. Additionally, it would be informative to have a comparison group in for-profit jobs from similar socio-economic status.

One of the key findings of the present study was that motivations often aligned with SDT needs for long term volunteers. Volunteering may however be particularly able to meet the need for high autonomy while also providing a sense of competence and/or relatedness. It would be fascinating to determine whether those who worked for the same agencies and/or same area for money shard similar motivations and view on life and their work. Returning to Festinger (1957) , if an individual did a large amount of prosocial work with very little compensation, then they would tend to infer that they valued those prosocial goals. However, the converse could also be true, that if the individual was well compensated for the same work, then they might see themselves as doing the work for the money. There could also be an over-justification effect if prosocial actions are rewarded too early or often (For developmental research on this hypothesis see Warneken & Tomasello, 2008) .

The issue of paid vs. unpaid comparison is particularly fascinating with regards to compensation (extrinsic rewards) as it relates to intrinsic motivation. Leete (2000) argued that nonprofit companies' goals were best served by underpaying employees relative to for-profits, this in order to affect a self-selection process whereby only intrinsically motivated individuals would join a company. This is particularly beneficial for companies with social motives as their performance is related to achievement of a social value and not profit. Whereas in profit making setting, offering high salary attracts those interested in earning money, which is often compatible with the motives of the company.

Notably, Apple Computer, Inc., one of the most profitable companies of the last decade, also pays its

employees less than other major technology companies. This may allow it to filter its application pool in favor of individuals with inherent interest in valuing adherence to the organizational ideals of the company (Kahney, 2010) . Several interviewees expressed specifically that they would not do the their volunteer job for money. This suggests a need for research determining the nature of limits on individual value oriented motives vis-a-vis their motives for external rewards.

Another direction worthy of investigation relates to how individuals experience moral obligation as it relates to action/inaction. As interviews demonstrated, helping behavior often has ambiguous outcomes, volunteers avoid judging themselves based on individual outcomes, and yet many volunteers share a motivation to do something. This suggests that volunteers may hold a different view on moral obligations to act, assuming that there is likely a group of individuals with similar values who are not acting (i.e. not volunteering).

Prior research has explored biases in framing of moral dilemmas such as so called trolley scenarios (c.f. Petrinovich & O'Neill, 1996) , where the morality of throwing/not throwing a switch in order to save/kill different people strapped to a trolley track are investigated. Cathy for example, made a statement to the effect that once she knew of the situation, she was obligated to address it. Kyle and others made similar statements, and this seems also congruent with the "reflexive" decisions taken by participants of Colby and Damon (1994) . A possible explanation is that volunteers (and perhaps other altruists) see individual more morally culpable for negative results of inaction more than nonvolunteers. This issue of course leads back to the most basic question of this research: what is altruism?

## 5.4 Concluding remarks about Altruism

Altruism was the subject of the present research, whereas the focus on volunteers was merely the method of inquiry. Within the present research, Altruism was effectively defined as the common motivator underlying the actions of the participants. In doing so, the present research assumed that volunteers were altruistic, while admittedly referencing past others who strongly linked the two (Unger, 1991; Haski-Leventhal, 2009) .

The choice to not operationally define altruism was motivated by two reasons. The first is that defining the construct a priori restricts the scope of inquiry. (K Feyerabend, 1981) The second was that conducting a sufficient review of the term quickly provided too expansive a task to do adequately, as the term is used in several different disciplines quite differently.

Batson et al. (1981) in a seminal work on Altruism linked the operational definition of altruism within that study to Comte's original usage of altruism as well as to the dictionary definition of altruism as unselfish

concern for the welfare of others. Comte's work however does not define the term altruism so much as advocate a positivist moral religion, wherein altruism is a key element. Comte's altruism was a more holistic concept of living life for others.

The black box conception of altruism is perhaps closer to Comte's altruism than Batson's. Instead of selecting one or two individual mechanism such as empathy which lead to altruistic behavior (especially self-sacrifice) it allows many paths which different individual might take to nonetheless direct their lives towards helping others. As a matter of definition, altruistic behavior from the black box conception need only be predominately intrinsically motivated and the behavior be directed at improving conditions for others. Again as with Comte, the individual may over time and gain of wisdom come to see goals beyond the self as more important than the self. Nonetheless, the self drives the behavior.

In some sense this is a return to the conception of altruism that prevailed in social psychology prior to Batson et al. (1981) . In the 1960s and 1970s, numerous researchers investigated different aspects of what they called altruistic behavior without questioning whether the behaviors were other oriented or altruistic (and not necessarily claiming that other oriented behaviors had no benefits to the self.) (e.g. Pomazal & Jaccard, 1976; L Armand & Pepitone, 1975; Wolosin, Sherman, & Mynatt, 1975; Zuckerman, 1975; Weiss, Boyer, Lombardo, & Stich, 1973; Yarrow, Scott, & Waxler, 1973; Krebs, 1971; Darlington & Macker, 1966) Perhaps looking forward, a greater understanding of altruistic behavior might be gained by focusing on obligations and situations where the actor does receive some concrete benefit. Comte's altruism was likewise routed in inherent obligations to others.

Observing potential altruists who do receive benefits may actually be a stronger sample for theoretical examination of those who truly live for others. Because volunteers, by most definitions, receive no compensation, their other oriented behavior is dependent on them having an unrelated source of resources. If an individual is able to somehow support themselves at a self-sufficient level through the helping behavior, then the other oriented behavior can become all encompassing of the individuals' time. Such individuals who wholly dedicate themselves to others would meet the criteria of altruism from a black box perspective, from Comte's perspective, but not from Batson's or Cialdini's.

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