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Becoming an Altruistic Learner

Aaron William Snyder

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

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## ABSTRACT

### Becoming an Altruistic Learner

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This master's thesis is a qualitative research project that explored the transformation of multiple individuals who initially learned for self-interested purposes, but later had a shift in their desire to learn so as to benefit others. The author collected rich narratives that described this phenomenon and provided insight into the following question: what is the experience of a learner who transitions from learning out of self-interest to learning out of altruistic purposes?

The author found the following five major themes across six participants as they transitioned to more altruistic learning: humility, self-efficacy, resources, success and agency. These themes give insight into the shift of an altruistic learner's perspective as they shifted from self-interested desires to altruistic desires. In doing so, these learners find the most significant meaning in learning by helping influence the recipient in a meaningful way and not just accomplishing the task. The implications of this research can better help educators understand principles of altruistic learning and thereby create opportunities for others to become altruistic learners.

Keywords: altruism, motivation, transformation, agency, service learning, spirituality in education

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Finally, I want to thank my family. They have always been supportive of my efforts and their sacrifice for me has always had a lasting impression on me. Their examples and many others whom I have associated have demonstrated genuine altruism. These individuals have left a lasting impression on me and helped me achieve all that I have done.

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## Introduction

“Bah, Humbug!” These words are almost as familiar to us as Christmas and Thanksgiving. They immediately remind us of an old, stingy, self-conceited man named Ebenezer Scrooge, a man who once told the poor to die and “decrease the surplus population” (Dickens, 1991, p. 6). However, through a series of events, Ebenezer experienced a change of heart and “became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world” (p. 68). *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens, has become a classic story in the Christmas tradition.

Other classic stories follow a similar motif, that of an individual transforming selfish motives and desires to altruistic ones. For example, *Les Miserables* (Hugo, 2008) describes the transformation of Jean Valjean from a criminal to the protector of Cosette, a role he assumed to the point of sacrificing his own life. Many consider these works literary masterpieces, as evidenced by their popularity and prestige. Something about the description of the characters’ transformative change inspires many individuals to further explore and revisit these narratives. Perhaps these transformative works are so successful because people can relate to them; they find meaning and significance in the plot that draws out the morality and value of human life.

Yet, as prominent and successful as these motifs are in literature, little research has explored the possibility of genuine transformation of an individual’s dispositional nature to learn altruistically, while assuming human beings are agents. As I will show later, most psychological studies explain transformations of one’s dispositional nature—especially that of altruism—under the pretense that psychological egoism governs all human action. If all human action is ultimately controlled by self-interest then there is no possibility for a human to act and respond to anything but self-interest. Any concern for another beyond one’s own self-interest becomes an

impossibility. A human being becomes a puppet controlled by the strings of self-interest. As I will describe later, this ontological footing ultimately destroys the meaning of human experience as well as the possibility that any human being can exhibit any form of altruism. Yet, many psychological studies obviate the meaning of human experience by performing studies and interpreting data on the premises of egoism and determinism.

During the course of my research I accepted the possibility that people will learn with egotistic intentions, such as attempting to earn a raise or gain recognition. However, I was also open to the possibility that people can learn for altruistic purposes without being driven by a static force of self-interest. For example, a parent may learn some math to help a child, or a missionary may decide to learn a language to help others find religious peace. Similar to Monroe (1996), my research assumed a conceptual continuum with altruism and self-interest at opposite ends—between which human behavior oscillates—rather than as separate dichotomous phenomena. Thus, there are also times when one initially learns for selfish purposes, but through some type of experience, changes to more altruistic ones.

This qualitative study explored the narratives of individuals who experienced a transformation in their motives for learning from selfish to altruistic ones as they interacted with the world around them. The study was predicated on the assumption that human beings are agents for whom altruistic action is a genuine possibility. The study described the stories of learners who seemed to have experienced such a change in motives by offering insight into questions such as why do people sometimes yield self-interest, with regard to learning, for the sake of helping others, what is their experience as they undergo such a change, and how do people undergo this change? By understanding this transformation practitioners and others can gain greater insight into how to promote an experience of loving to learn for others.



## Literature Review

### Overview

Initially, I show—both in everyday practices and within the field of psychology—the assumption of determinism as implicated in the presumption of psychological egoism. I then show the ontological issues involved with these assumptions and offer an alternative. The literature review concludes with the implications of my assumptions regarding altruism as well as the contributions this study can bring to the field of educational psychology.

### The Tradition of Determinism Manifested Through Psychological Egoism

Researchers have conducted thousands of studies on learner motivation, creating a plethora of data and theories. Motivation is explored in so many ways because of its significant impact on the social sciences. Motivational researchers Ryan and Deci (2000) described the magnitude of motivation in our life:

Motivation concerns energy, direction, persistence and equifinality—all aspects of activation and intention. Motivation has been a central and perennial issue in the field of psychology, for it is at the core of biological, cognitive, and social regulation. (p. 69)

Yet in spite of the vast amount of motivational research, the ontological underpinnings of these studies have remained relatively unchanged in that they rest upon a Newtonian axiom. This axiom disguises genuine human agency by positing natural laws and environmental stimuli are the cause of human behavior. Consequently, this axiom creates an ontological foundation that leaves humans with no power over their behavior or choices; they become subjects to laws and efficient causal conditions (Gantt & Williams, 2013).

This view of determinism—that all human action is ultimately determined by causes external to an agent’s will—is one of the most influential and common assumptions in psychology (Yanchar, 2011). For example, Ryan and Deci (2004) explain the magnitude of the widespread attacks of determinism on agency:

Both in the popular and the professional literature there is no doubt that attacking cherished notions of human autonomy, choice and free will have become a popular sport for psychologists and brain scientists. But the tactics vary. Some have a familiar ring, because they come from neobehaviorists who see the environment by definition, the ultimate cause of all behavior and who maintain that that fact closes the matter. Some new and novel attacks are forwarded from neuropsychologists, armed with techniques to track the activity of “the brain,” which is somehow considered to logically preclude autonomous processes... Such reductionists, like their behavior counterparts, are focused on causes of behaviors. (pp. 462-463)

Interestingly, determinism’s influence on psychology is even evident in the very term we use to describe the origin of human action—motivation. A careful breakdown of this word shows an etymology grounded in Newtonian physics:

The etymology of “motivation” stems from the Latin *motus*, “movement or action” and “*motivus*,” or motive power... We note here that the terms *motus* and *motivus*, used in the 17<sup>th</sup>—19<sup>th</sup> century natural philosophy to account for movement of natural objects, are the roots of the most general concept behind all human behavior, that is, *motivation*. (Gantt & Williams, 2013, p. 3)

Studies of motivation typically view human action as the effect of natural laws and forces. For example, motivational researchers generally separate casual stimuli on human behavior as either

extrinsic or intrinsic motivation. *Extrinsic motivation* occurs when the motivation to act comes from outside the individual, such as responding to pain or monetary gain. In contrast, *intrinsic motivation*, occurs when an individual does an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, in most cases, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are ultimately explained by some type of inherent Darwinian trait of self-interest (Monroe, 1996; Wallach & Wallach, 1983). For instance, intrinsic motivation is usually seen as an internal force that arises from biological need (Wallach & Wallach, 1983, p. 208). People act altruistically, from this reductionist perspective, because they are driven to fill a biological need of wanting to feel good about themselves or the need to be recognized by others. As a result, there is ultimately little difference between an individual who acts due to an extrinsic motivator, such as a reward, and those who act for an intrinsic reward or benefit; both originate from, and are subservient to, the law of psychological egoism. Put another way, people's motivations—either intrinsic or extrinsic—are determined by biological urges that function independent of anything like a “will.”

The philosophy of psychological egoism—the notion that all human action is driven by the desire to maximize personal pleasure—is one of the more common attacks on human agency. There is a body of literature in which researchers such as Monroe (1996), Wallach and Wallach (1983) and Gantt and Williams (2013) have shown psychological egoisms vast impact on theory and research. Consequently, I rely on their research to support this claim. Jeremy Bentham, a British philosopher, wrote, “Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain*, and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do” (Bentham, 1907, section I.1). Such egoistic explanations of human

action seem to dominate our culture, but also seem to be accepted as a primary explanation of human behavior in psychology (Slife, Reber, & Gantt, 2000; Wallach & Wallach, 1983).

The impact of psychological egoism is seen in diverse aspects of humanity, including but not limited to economic policy, corporate and educational motivational tactics, and the structure of the educational system. For instance, in *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith developed the economic metaphor of the “invisible hand” to describe his view that desire for profit and self-interest are the forces that drive economic development. Daniel Pink (2009) the author of *Drive*, a New York Times Best Seller, observed that many companies appeal to profit and self-interest to increase performance:

Too many organizations... continue to pursue practices such as short-term incentive plans and pay-for-performance schemes in the face of mounting evidence that such measures usually don't work and often do harm. Worse these practices have infiltrated our schools, where we ply our future work force with iPods, cash, and pizza coupons to incentivize them to learn. (p. 9)

Many corporations give large bonuses for creating a product or reaching some goal. Yet these extrinsic rewards tend to be more harmful than helpful in the overall performance of the employee (London School of Economics, 2009).

Education is no exception. The organizational structure and process of education assume students are exactly the same who respond to the same deterministic laws embedded in the curricula or educational methodology. Some educators have emphasized the mechanical treatment of students by comparing the school system to factories where students are treated as widgets that are run through a standardized process, tested and exported (Bobo, 2003; Serafini,

2002). For example, Ken Robinson (2013), author and educational advisor, emphasized this point in his TED talk on education:

Many of the current policies are based on mechanistic conceptions of education. It's like education is an industrial process that can be improved just by having better data. And someone in the back of their mind, some policy makers, is this idea that if we fine-tune it well enough, if we just get it right, it will just hum along perfectly. It won't and it never did. The point is that education is not a mechanical system it's a human system, it's about people.

Furthermore, this mechanical school system is fueled in large part by the assumption of psychological egoism (Kohn, 1993; Lepper & Greene, 1975; Monroe, 1996). For instance, researchers have determined that many students calculate the minimal effort they have to put in a class to get the grade they want (Afzaal, 2012; Kohn, 2011; Kuntz, 2012; Pink, 2009). However, even grades are not always sufficient motivation for students, many instructors turn to extrinsic rewards as a form of bribery. Deci, Koestner and Ryan (2001) state:

Tangible rewards—both material rewards such as pizza parties for reading books, and symbolic rewards, such as good student rewards—are widely advocated by many educators and are used in many classrooms, yet the evidence suggests that these rewards tend to undermine intrinsic motivation for the rewarded activity. (p. 15)

As Deci et al. pointed out, tangible rewards have a negative impact on students' learning and achievement. Yet the consequences of psychological egoism are further reaching than just inhibiting performance. There are significant ontological consequences of assuming human action is determined by psychological egoism.

### **Problems with Psychological Egoism**

The debate over determinism and agency has raged for thousands of years and spinning out of this debate is the related issue of psychological egoism and altruism. Theorists like behaviorists and evolutionary biologists are upfront about the influence of determinism in their theories, but others, like rational choice theorists, are less upfront as they advocate choice among alternatives. However, rational choice theorists still assume an underlying determinism. While an individual from a rational choice perspective may be able to choose among some alternatives they still have to satisfy their self-interest. One acting under rational choice can never choose anything but self-interest; they can never be free to care about another more than themselves. In that respect the impetus, or the intentionality of their choices, is determined from the outset and they can never escape it.

The debates are related in that psychological egoism is rooted in determinism. My intent is not to prove the existence of agency or altruism; rather, I demonstrate that ontological determinism and psychological egoism lead to the conclusion that human existence is fundamentally meaningless, and moreover, that agency and altruism offer a perspective that allows human action to be understood as meaningful.

Perhaps the greatest issue with determinism is that meaning and purpose are not possible in a mechanistic natural order (Yanchar, 2011). For instance, Gantt and Williams (2013) explain,

One deeply problematic implication of such an explanatory approach is that human behaviors, thoughts, and feelings are seen as the necessitated products of other more fundamental causal forces that happen to be operating on the individual. Persons become essentially “clock-work objects” in a “clockwork universe,” discrete “units of humanity” that are passively subjected to various mechanical and necessary forces that lie beyond

themselves, outside of their control or active participation, and of which they are seldom if ever truly aware. (p. 7)

If determinism is true people ultimately lose any form of free will or true choice because the mechanics of the causal forces of the universe ultimately govern the choices of the individual. This means humans have no autonomy or any intrinsic power to make decisions or change their lives; their path is fixed.

Others, like biological reductionists, similarly assume a kind of determinism in which humans are equivalent to an advanced biological machine controlled by phenomena such as genetics and neurology. Humans become an electrical network of neural fibers the response pathways of which are already established and thus solely controlled by external stimuli. Consequently, there is no possibility of alternative human responses; this results in a human experience that is void of meaning and purpose. As Williams (2005) explained:

Without genuine possibility in life, all acts are simply necessitated and, without the possibility of being otherwise, are without meaning. By the same token, if we are not human agents, since we simply are what we must be, we simply must do what we must do. And since necessitated acts are neither good nor bad, we cannot behave morally or immorally. We can reach no judgments about morality except those we are predetermined to reach. (p. 122)

If all action is ultimately controlled by some force beyond an agent then, one can never respond in any other way. One does not have the power or capacity to make a moral choice because he or she can never act contrary to the casual law in effect. For example, one does not argue about the morality of a rock, or put it on trial for breaking off a cliff and killing someone, because a rock could not do otherwise. The “behavior” of such material is determined and strictly governed by

the natural forces that surround it. If human action is determined in this sense, then behavior is only an outward manifestation of those natural forces. Consequently, those who break a law do so of necessity; the actions of murderers, rapists and thieves are, in this sense, mere responses to these natural forces. Thus, if one has no choice to respond differently, then there can be no accountability or judgment.

Thus, if psychological egoism is the natural law controlling human action, then human ontology is no different than that of a rock. People become a kind of automaton, manipulated and controlled by the invisible hand of self-interest. An agent's actions, choices, and thoughts are nothing more than expressions of a self-centered drive. Gantt and Williams (2013) argue against such Newtonian models by explaining, "A person's behavior is stripped of its intentional, relational, and moral qualities... all actions happen to persons, and all meanings lie outside their own being or creative purview" (p. 7). Thus, like a rock, life becomes nihilistic—love becomes nothing more than a chemical reaction, choices are an illusion, and there is no plausible basis for responsibility and accountability. The ability to truly care for another without any intention of personal gain is impossible. All the "heroes" of the world who "sacrificed" their lives for another were ultimately performing a self-centered act, with no moral conscience. Wallach and Wallach (1983) explain, "If motivation is all ultimately egotistic, then conscience cannot originate within ourselves. What internal standards we have must then be imposed on us from the outside" (p. 198).

Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that people are different and not controlled by natural forces as in Newtonian mechanics. Even in the most Darwinian circumstances, people violate the supposed laws of self-interest. For example, Dr. Kristen Monroe conducted a landmark qualitative study on altruism. She interviewed several groups of people who



demonstrated altruism in their life; one group was made up of individuals who rescued Jews during the occupation of the Nazi regime in World War II. These individuals lived in an environment of war and self-survival. Despite these conditions, these rescuers put their own lives, and lives of their family members, in jeopardy to rescue some strangers. Dr. Monroe (1996) recounted the following in an interview with one of these rescuers named Margot, who risked her life, lost contact with her young children, was imprisoned six times, and conducted an affair with a Gestapo commander for Amsterdam to get information for the resistance, and whose fiancé was beaten to death by the Gestapo because of her actions. (p. 209)

Margot's story is not an isolated instance but is representative of a plethora of similar instances when individuals acted contrary to the law of self-interest by looking outward when conditions would "cause" them to look inward. This instance and many others like it emphasize the meaningfulness of the human experience and point to the possibility of genuine altruistic action that originates from the individual.

This study offers an alternative to the many studies built on a premise of psychological egoism that other scholars have already established (Gantt & Williams, 2013; Monroe, 1996; Wallach & Wallach, 1983) I assert that humans are agents who are meaningfully engaged in the world, and that as agents, people can act with self-interest and altruistic intentions of varying magnitude. This ontological footing is essential because understanding the basic nature of what it is we are studying forms assumptions, research design, data analysis, and interpretation (Gantt & Williams, 2013). For example, if one was to conduct a study on Zingiberaceae, he or she needs to start by knowing what it is (e.g., a thing, disease, emotion). Without such knowledge it becomes almost impossible to attain trustworthy findings and applications. Likewise, research on

motivation must start at the origin of action in human beings—is it the human being itself or is it the byproduct of natural laws? If one accepts psychological egoism, then at the end of the day, there is some natural force or entity that controls human action. Thus, evolutionary psychologists, behaviorists, and rational choice theorists are in the same camp, because they each assume psychological egoism and its underlying determinism. Humans essentially become indistinguishable among the matter of the universe. Consequently, the study of humanity is no different than the study of engineering. People become items of environmental control, meaningless machines without any internal uniqueness or possibility of change.

### **An Emerging Alternative Perspective**

A number of researchers have recognized the problems with the traditional casual approach to motivation and altruism (Gantt & Williams, 2013; Williams, 1992; Yanchar, 2011). These researchers argue that many psychologists try to reconcile their experience with the psychological tradition by creating empty explanations—one tries to explain human action through constructs, such as motivation, by simply giving the phenomenon a name and attaching casual properties to it.

Consequently, few educational psychologists have truly treated humans as agents who create unique meaning and have unique backgrounds and contexts for their decisions. Ryan and Deci (2004) proposed, “Autonomy is different from being an initial cause or stimulus to action. It rather concerns the capacity to effectively evaluate the meaning and fit of potential actions with one’s overarching values, needs, and interests” (p. 468). This is a different approach to studying “motivation” —or as Gantt and Williams suggest “intentionality”—because it does not have ontological footings of determinism that treat people as only physical matter governed by physical laws. When intentionality is approached from an agentive view it preserves meaning, purpose, and gives humans an originitive role, in contrast to the deterministic perspective of

motivation where it is an experimental variable in a complex algorithm or the transfer of electrons in the nervous system.

Some researchers are starting to emphasize the ontological challenges of attributing the cause of all human action to variables and environmental stimuli. Scholars like Gantt and Williams (2013), Williams (1992), and Yanchar (2011) have laid an ontological foundation in which human beings are taken to be agents, “meaningfully engaged in the world around them” and that as agents they are “a holistic, fully embodied being present in the midst of living, always already engaged in a variety of significant activities with other people, tools, objects, and so forth” (Yanchar, 2011, p. 279). This ontological approach rests on an axiom that individuals have meaning in their lives, that things really matter and, that decisions and actions originate from one’s engagement in the world. Some people will engage with self-interested intentions, while others will engage with altruistic ones, perhaps even varying by context or moment to moment. The manner in which people are disposed to act has been termed dispositional action.

... dispositional action has to do with the details of people’s existential concern and how they are specifically engaged in the world. As a clarification of existential concern, dispositional action encompasses the valuational, assumptive, and purposive ways in which agents actually participate in the affairs of living—that is, what agents specifically value and commit to, their purposive engagement in certain activities, their goals, how they treat others, and what they find most worthy of their time and attention. The particular way in which one is meaningfully engaged in the world, then, might be thought of as a disposition, or to avoid the connotation of having acontextual, thing-like properties, it might be construed as dispositional action. (Yanchar, 2011, p. 281)

Dispositional action is not determined by the environment, but originates with individuals themselves. It is

marked fundamentally by a sense of what matters most, ends worth pursuing, how to treat others, and so on, always within concrete situations. And it is in this sense that a participational agent's dispositional action might be thought of as a form of moral participation. (Yanchar, 2011)

Thus, the way people engage in the world provides an outward expression of what is meaningful to the agent.

Furthermore, the way an individual engages in their learning significantly impacts their learning, their lifestyle, and those around them. For example, several studies have shown that those who learn with the intent to serve others have higher GPAs (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000), greater interpersonal skills, and seek for more career development skills, like pursuing higher degrees in education (Duffy & Raque-Bogdan, 2010). Yet, despite these positive correlations, altruism is rarely used in education as a means to facilitate learning. For example, many classes are graded on curves where students compete against one another for the better grade (Bobo, 2003; Kohn, 2011). However, educators might be able to better help their students if they better understood the change in meaning in an individual's experience as their desire to learn changes from egotistic to altruistic. Such insight and narrative may aid educators in helping their students transform their disposition of learning for self-interested intentions to more altruistic ones, which may result in greater learning.

### **Implications for Altruism**

If humans really are agents that are meaningfully engaged in the world, then an alternative approach to studying human behavior seems warranted. Gantt and Williams (2013)

recommend that researchers start by changing their vocabulary from the implicit Newtonian approach to one of intelligent human behavior. As they state, “A vocabulary of genuinely human action would make sense of—and make use of—terms such as ‘intending,’ ‘desiring,’ ‘enticing,’ ‘persuading,’ ‘electing,’ ‘preferring,’ and ‘yielding’” in place of the usual vocabulary such as “drives”, “motivation”, “forces”, “inhibition” and “causes” (p. 3). The vocabulary suggested by Gantt and Williams preserves human meaningfulness and individuality as the initial source of action by using verbs to reflect active, ongoing engagement with the world as opposed to nouns representing causal entities for something to happen.

Narrative allows a researcher to explore altruism from an agency perspective. For example, Monroe (1996) explained the important role narrative had on her landmark study on altruism:

First, it [narrative] requires agency: it involves human beings as characters or actors who have a place in the plot, in the story. When it emphasizes human action that is directed toward goals, a narrative provides insight on how different people organize, process, and interpretive information and how they move toward achieving their goals. Second, it suggests the speakers’ view is canonical. What is ordinary and right are is discussed as the matter-of-fact. (p. 19)

Altruist researchers have used interviews in their studies, but generally seem to explain away the altruism with some egotistic reasoning, even though the altruist never gives any suggestion of self-interest intentions (Slife et al., 2000; Wallach & Wallach, 1983). For example, some explain a heroic, self-sacrificing act as egotistic because “one could feel personal distress and experience self-oriented feelings by being troubled or upset by the other’s suffering” (Slife et al., 2000, p. 81). Thus, people act altruistically to alleviate the personal suffering that

accompanies empathy. Such egotistic philosophizing generally opposes the experience of people who claim they acted solely out of concern for the individual. However, my study assumes people are agents. As such their narrative is closer to lived human experience and offers a more meaningful way of taking account of the relevant phenomena than amending someone's narrative in support of a deterministic theory.

In summary, this approach actually preserves the possibility of altruism. There are actual heroes who go beyond being self-centered and actually self-sacrifice for others. The World War II rescuers such as Margot gave a part of themselves by choosing to help another when conditions would prompt them otherwise. This study preserved altruism, agency, and individuality, by espousing the human experience as meaningful, moral, and empowering.

### **Contribution of Study**

This study focuses on transformative change in meaning that people experience when they change their desires to learn from selfish reasons to altruistic ones. This approach does not seek to establish causal relationships; rather it seeks to understand the individual while preserving the morality and meaning within the human experience. By understanding different experiences, one can see similarities and transfer such experiences to help establish greater meaning in learning.

This study is unique in that it is built on the assumption of agency and seeks to explore the transformation of meaning that occurs within different agents who initially learn with selfish intentions but then yield to altruistic ones. As far as I am aware, there is no literature today that assumes people are agents whom are meaningfully engaged in the world and then seeks to explore agents' transformation in meaning as they yield their self-interested intentions for learning to altruistic ones.

This qualitative study recorded the narrative of individuals in different contexts who experienced such a transformation while capturing the dynamics of the human experience as one interacts with others and their surroundings. I gathered rich narratives that provided insight into the following questions: How do people yield their self-centered reasons for learning to altruistic intentions? What is their experience as they undergo such a change? How do people undergo this change? By understanding such questions, educators can better apply principles and methods that may change students' learning experiences to be more meaningful.

## **Method**

This qualitative study explored the narratives of multiple individuals who, at times, have transformed their desires to learn from selfish intentions to altruistic ones. I analyzed these narratives using a multiple case study analysis approach (Stake, 2006).

Robert Stake's multiple case studies analysis approach (2006) allows a researcher to study a phenomenon (i.e., change in learning desires) from a learner's lived experience and then compare and contrast it with the experience of others. The commonalities in the different narratives form assertions that are primarily used to better understand the phenomenon and identify components that may be transferable to others. In addition, multiple case study analysis also allows a researcher to see the interesting differences between the cases—how the experiences can vary regarding the contextual details but still manifest something in common with other cases.

## **Procedures**

I analyzed the experiences of individuals who personally experienced a transformation in their desires to learn. The data was collected in interviews and the participants related their experiences as they remember them. Each case was recorded with rich description that attempted to preserve an individual's context, intentions, and meanings. The narrative collected from the interviews were managed with the seven worksheets Robert Stake created for multiple case analysis; these worksheets include

1. Graphic design of a case
2. Case themes
3. Analyst's notes while reading a case report (each case will have its own worksheet #3)
4. Ratings of expected utility of each case for each theme
5. Ratings of importance of each case finding for each theme



6. Assertions

7. Planning the final report

### **Participants and Data Gathering**

Similar to Monroe (1996), I designed my research around a conceptual continuum with altruism and self-interest at opposite ends between which human behavior oscillates, rather than as separate dichotomous phenomena. I selected participants who were initially learning for largely self-interested intentions but then significantly changed their intention to more altruistic ones. The exact location of an individual's desires along the continuum was insignificant; rather, it is more important that each participant experienced a significant altruistic change somewhere along the continuum.

Stake (2006) designed the multiple case analysis approach to analyze narratives in different environments so long as the phenomenon is present. I interviewed six individuals with different backgrounds who experienced a significant change in their desires to learn for others. My objective for the project was to get richer insights into the phenomenon, as well as have enough participants that produced assumptions that were transferrable across different contexts. Thus, I took a saturation (+1) approach, which means I interviewed new participants until I felt that I had adequately captured the phenomenon, after which I interviewed one more; this was the sixth participant. This approach is in accordance with Robert Stake's (2003) recommendations (p. 22).

I found participants through criterion sampling (Patton, 2002). I chose participants that fit a particular criterion, namely, people who had experienced at some time a significant change in their desires to learn from selfish intentions to altruistic ones. In other words, I identified cases of interest by talking with people who knew others who met the criteria of an individual who has experienced an altruistic change in their desires for learning. Many of these participants came

from networking through work and church affiliations. Those who appeared to have a rich experience with this phenomenon were asked to participate in the study.

### **Interviews**

I conducted interviews using a semi structured design (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). This type of interview permits a researcher to have direction and purpose in an interview without specifically directing the interview. This interview approach helps prevent biased responses but also allows the researcher to explore a topic until the researcher is satisfied with the depth of response. I conducted pilot interviews to practice my interview protocol and then did another pilot interview with my chair, Dr. Yanchar, to make sure my protocol worked well. See Appendix A for the initial interview procedure that was refined during the pilot period.

Interviews began with a participant affirming that they experienced a change in their intentions, moving from learning for selfish reasons to learning for altruistic ones. The participant explained how he or she experienced such a change. I used follow-up questions to gain greater insight and detail about their experience. This approach allowed me to capture participants' lived experience as they underwent a transformation in their desires for learning and make assertions about the phenomenon.

All participants were interviewed twice, except for Sally, because she was the saturation +1 individual who provided sufficient descriptions in her first interview. In preparation for the second interviews I reviewed each narrative and prepared some questions that would help clarify and enhance the richness of the narrative. Every interview was recorded and transcribed. See Appendix B for the transcription protocol.

### **Data Analysis**

From this data set I identified several themes that were prominent across multiple cases and gave the best insight into altruistic learning. After the first set of five interviews I identified

themes within each participant's narrative using Robert Stake's Worksheet #2. Across these different cases I found 21 different themes. I then compared these 21 themes across all the different cases using Stake's (2006) Worksheet #4 to reduce the themes of interest to 12. My Committee Chair, Dr. Stephen Yanchar, reviewed these 12 themes and confirmed they were an appropriate selection.

The second interviews focused on these 12 themes and another participant, Sally, joined the interview process to be the saturation +1 participant. After completing the 6 interviews, I analyzed each theme within each interview and then compared the findings across the different cases using, once again, Stake's (2006) Worksheet #5. I reduced the 12 cases to 5 assertions that were the most prominent and insightful across the different cases. I supported each assertion with evidence from other cases.

### **Trustworthiness of Assertions**

A multiple case study analysis is built on assertions; the degree to which these assertions are trustworthy influences the persuasiveness of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized the following four criteria for enhancing trustworthiness in a study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

**Credibility.** The first criterion of trustworthiness is credibility. The credibility of a study is determined by the extent to which a study accurately describes the phenomenon being studied. This study uses the triangulation of multiple cases to support assertions that occur across multiple contexts. The credibility of the study was enhanced as data was appropriately collected in a manner that drew out the authenticity of the phenomenon in which assertions frequently occur across different contexts. This study appropriately collected data by administering interviews that captured the phenomenon through the lived experience of the interviewee. Assertions were determined credible if they could be triangulated across several interviews. I

also used member checking (e.g., participants were invited to review and correct their interviews) and negative case analysis (e.g., searching for any data that may be contrary to the findings) to enhance the credibility of the study. See Appendix C for the email template that was sent for member checking. Also, peer debriefing and reflective journaling—for my progressive subjectivity checks—were conducted. See Appendix D for my reflective journal.

**Transferability.** The second criterion of trustworthiness is transferability. Transferability refers to the extent that assertions found across multiple cases can be applied to cases in other contexts. Assertions are claims that are developed by recognizing commonalities such as themes or results that occur across multiple cases. These claims will be supported by rich description from cases that have varied contexts. The narrative collected from the six individuals provided rich description of the phenomenon; these narratives were then compared and contrasted to discover recurring assertions among the different cases.

**Dependability.** The third criterion is dependability. Researchers are expected to properly perform studies according to accepted procedures and methods. I will use the methods and worksheets Robert Stake (2006) developed for a qualitative study involving multiple cases.

**Confirmability.** The fourth criterion of trustworthiness is confirmability. Any assertions and conclusions the researcher discovers in a qualitative study should be able to be confirmed by another individual. This study used an audit trail to record the procedures and thought process behind the assertions. My committee chair, Dr. Stephen Yanchar, reviewed this audit trail to confirm and validate the findings of the study.

## Results

The interviews produced a rich description of altruistic learning. From this data set I identified several themes that were prominent across multiple cases and gave the best insight into altruistic learning. This section provides a case summary of each participant in their own words followed by the following five assertions:

1. Humility: Self-confidence and an awareness of others helps develop humility in individuals which seems prerequisite for altruistic learning.
2. Self-Efficacy: Altruists seem to exhibit self-efficacy when they initially engage in learning to help another.
3. Resources: Resources and the associated knowledge of how to use them are a crucial element in the development of altruism.
4. Success: Altruists view knowledge as meaningful only to the extent that an individual changes or applies what they learned.
5. Agency: Altruistic learners view themselves and those they are learning for as agentive participants who can each contribute to make a more rich and meaningful learning experience.

The quotes used in the following sections were chosen because of their clarity and representativeness of the chosen assertions. Pseudonyms were used in place of the participants' true names. Quotes were slightly altered to create a smoother flow when there were unnecessary filler words and grammar was excessively distracting. None of these changes altered participants' meaning as evidenced by the member checking. See Appendix D for the email template used in member checking.

## Case Summaries

The six case summaries are a brief description of each participant's story and background as it relates to their experience of becoming an altruistic learner. The case summaries will be as follows: Steven, Sam, Mac, Cristy, Jennie and Sally.

**Steven.** Steven is Caucasian, married with five kids, and in his early thirties. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and just completed a master's degree in instructional psychology and technology. He describes his experience as he further learned to develop several of his skills, such as car mechanics, to help others. Steven also is heavily involved in the Scouting program where he helps youth learn scouting principles. He explains his experience as follows:

I started learning about car mechanics years ago about how to fix the junker cars that I drive. I didn't have a lot of money and I don't remember the very first thing that I fixed, probably a brake job or something. I watched a lot of videos on YouTube and asked people and try to figure out how to fix the brakes just because I couldn't afford to pay someone else to do it. I thought, "Well, I'm going to try it, if I can't do it then I'll tow my car to the mechanic shop and they can do it for me."

When my car broke or I had to fix it, it was more of an obnoxious thing that I had to spend time learning because I was forced into it. But once I had that knowledge and figured it out, people started talking about brakes and I realized, wow I can help others. And little by little it transitioned into a passion where I realized that I could be successful in learning about cars and I realized, and started noticing more opportunities that I could actually help others too.

I wasn't just in my own little world that learning could contribute. As a result it became very interesting to me, I read articles on it, I looked on forums, I helped other people asking me, even if I don't know the answer to the question, I'm willing to go out and research it. Whereas before I would say, 'Sorry, you can figure that out just as easily as I can.' But it has increased my ability to use the different tools, not even the mechanical tools but the tools of discovery and finding knowledge, much more effectively, much more efficiently because I've opened up my world to very different things. Now granted a mechanic with self-interest can learn all the same stuff, you know, perhaps even the same way as me. For me at least, my depth and breadth of knowledge for mechanics has gotten a lot more because I've looked outside myself and I'm trying to help others with that.

And then after I became fairly proficient I realized I could help lots of people. And when people ask I am now in a position to bless others' lives with that. So I help people as much as I can fixing their vehicles and giving them advice about how to fix them and things like that. And I just realized that there is a relationship somehow between, for me at least, that I start most of my learnings out intrinsically valued and it becomes altruistic when I start to realize see the possibilities that I use to help others with that mastery.

However, I don't always feel super good, because you're still tired. I know you feel happy that you helped someone but that's not typical, I don't think much about that to be honest. It's more just because I want them to be happy and I want them to be relieved. I don't want them to have the stress that I know comes with a broken car or being a teenager or whatever.

But I went from I'm going to survive to I'm going to master replacing brakes on a 99 Chevy Lumina. It has grown to I don't just want to know how to fix brakes on my car but fix everyone's brakes. I want to know how to replace the head gasket even if I never faced that problem. I want to learn, I just like learning about cars, engines and mechanics, in general now, much more than I used to.

**Sam.** Sam is a Caucasian man in his sixties who served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War. He is married with five children and graduated with a bachelor's in business management. Sam currently serves as bishop for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His story captures more of the learning involved as he worked with and managed human capital in different capacities. He describes his experience as follows:

At eight years old I remember the first change in my life, I was laying on the floor and my mom was beating on me telling me that she would kill me. We were very poor and all we could wear was short pants when we weren't at school. I remember thinking go ahead and kill me; I don't want to go through this anymore. From that point on—for a number of years—I just found every opportunity that I could to run away from home or to not just be there to be beat; it became a daily thing for me.

So then the next big transformation, which was probably the most significant one was at the age of 18. I was living on my own and I decided that I can't afford college and I'm not smart enough for college so I'm going to go in the service. I enlisted in the Air Force and decided I was going to make something of myself.

There was a point in the Air Force where another decision came up and I decided that I love my country and we wanted freedom, so I volunteered to go to Vietnam. The first month of Vietnam I looked very inward, everything was about me dying. Just about



every night we were attacked and just about every night we had to fight off the enemy. I wasn't sleeping at all, it got to the point where I had to let go or die.

Worrying about dying is quickly taken away from you in combat and you learned that you have got to protect your buddies. You don't worry about yourself anymore, you worry about the unit. In combat you become friends with somebody and you start relying on this buddy then all of a sudden you're sitting there holding him without a leg or you're smelling his burning flesh and he's staring at you, not dead yet but ready to die. When that person dies then you realize how much you care about somebody else and that becomes a new pattern in my life. Selfishness becomes a thing of the past.

I went back to my church, the Catholic Church, and it didn't work out. I met a guy and he happened to be LDS, and he started to teach me the gospel and I was baptized. I prayerfully approached everything at this point in my life, from the time that I turned 21 and found religion.

I got married and of course those changes came about; one being I had responsibility for someone else. So I plugged away at jobs and I went to college part time from the age of 24 until I was about 32. In that time I had the equivalent of two years of college and I said, "I've got to quit dinking around and get my degree no matter what." So, I told my wife that if need be we would mortgage the house and I was going to finish my degree no matter what. With this determination I went ahead as planned but was blessed when my company entrusted me with a critical job that I accomplished with flying colors. Our multi-billion dollar defense company was certified to do this cost scheduling system and the Army and Air Force attributed the success to me. I was then

promoted to a manager and with that title, 100% of my tuition was paid. What a blessing that was to our family. It also helped me understand that “as a man thinketh so is he.”

So it was when I became a manager that even another transformation happened. I would have been probably 34 years old at that time. Anyway I was promoted when I received my degree and I developed a self-confidence that I had never known my whole life. And with that self-confidence, I decided that now I made it to where I thought I could make it to and said, “Okay, I’m no longer the one who gets orders anymore, now I have to give them.” Managing or supervising people was a big change because it made me look outward instead of inward to be successful.

I had to learn to get these people that didn’t get along with each other to get along with each other and it was a real learning skill. I had to learn to convince directors that this manager, a peon new manager, was there to help them. I learned to look at people and pick their strengths and incorporate them into my life.

I love being a bishop because I love the opportunity to see lives change and being a part of seeing someone else transform. But there’s a lot I don’t understand. From a religious standpoint, the subject of the same gender attraction, I don’t understand it. So I had to go out and do a lot of studying. I talked to psychologist, I read books, and I talked to other same-sex people, asked them and tried to understand. Then I sat back with the individual and told them, here are some things I’ve learned.

In the beginning of my life it was always, why me? Why is this happening to me?” I think after Vietnam and finding the church it didn’t matter about me anymore. Transformations happened when I decided to stop worrying about certain things that I had no control over and that’s when my personality changed from being an introvert to an

extrovert. Now I want to spend the rest of my life serving the Lord and helping people wherever I can. I want to share with them some of what I was given and what I've been given exceeds all my dreams. It has empowered me to now have limitless opportunities.

**Mac.** Mac is a Caucasian man around thirty who enjoys the liberal arts. He is married with one child and graduated with a bachelor's in business. He especially enjoys composing Christian music that helps people live Christian lives. One of his hymns has been recognized by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He describes his experience as follows:

As a teenager in particular I spent tons of time writing music with the intent "hey I want to be a recording artist someday and I want this to be my career and I think I can create, music that can be marketable" So I spent hours and hours in my basement between 15 and 17, it was all electronical, digital music. I had a cool set up with my keyboard, my tracking program on my computer and some recording equipment, I spent hours down there.

And then the big transformation in my life where everything changed. So you could pick music, you could pick art, you could pick learning in general, my reasons for learning and doing so much of what I did changed when I was between 15 and 18. This is when I returned to activity in the church, after I had been less active in the church for several years. That was a period of self-discovery and discovery about God and my view of who I am shifted 180° during those years of my life.

So to speak specifically to music, and how that changed my approach to it, I found that rather than pursuing music because I wanted to have a career in it and express my, whatever. That I wanted to shift my focus to what can I do to serve and promote God's purposes with this talent. Part of the realization was "Wow, I have talents, I have

interests, I have skills. God must have given them to me for a reason” and I think I found out what some of those reasons were between 16 and 18. So on the other end of that I came out by saying, “How can I apply these to serve other people, to serve God, to build the church, to teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ?”

I started writing hymns and I started thinking in terms of stories and art that would teach spiritual truths about who we are, who the Savior is. And the awesome part was when I made that shift and started to find my talents to those purposes in mind; that’s when I did my best work. That’s when my skills, my capacities, my abilities just increased and I learned new things that I didn’t know how to do before. It felt that way, anyway for me. Whereas before, when I had done it on my own, in my basement as a teenager that was all to pursue my own interests because I wanted to.

As soon as something clicked in my mind, as soon as I learned something my immediate instinct was why don’t I share this. This was kind of a catalyst for the collaborating that I would do with this friend who is a gifted musician. Whereas, I had spent my time just learning on my own, primarily. He was a music major, a music education major, he was a double major in performance, he’s this very gifted musician and I began to learn from him. This started a relationship that still goes on today. We still collaborate on things, but I learned about music now, I started learning from him and I started improving my skills with the express intent to now use those skills to give and to serve other people

I could look back on all my music and I have this huge body of stuff that I created before age 17 and I have the stuff that I’ve done from about age 18 on. And it doesn’t look, what I produced it doesn’t look similar in the quality, it doesn’t look similar can

certainly I can say as I tried to improve my skills as a musician, but the reason was because I've had a whole different purpose for it. I wanted to do something for other people, for God.

**Cristy.** Cristy is a Caucasian in her early thirties with a bachelor's degree in nutrition. Since her initial humanitarian trip to Guatemala, Cristy has gone on nine other trips to countries such as Haiti and Uganda. During her trips she has learned a lot of different skills and knowledge as she helped the people in these developing countries. She describes her experience as follows:

So probably, internationally, it started with my mission. So I served in Northern Argentina and most my areas were pretty poor and so we have opportunities to do a little bit of welfare work. It was mostly just education and only if the relief society had a system set up. So I think that was hard for me, we didn't have the tools to help people physically. I didn't know what resources the country had besides just saying go talk to the bishop or the relief society president. I obviously knew how to take care of myself; but I didn't have the knowledge to help people living in the way that they lived, with the education that they had and how the country was set up with government programs. I didn't have the time to learn that, that wasn't part of our responsibility as missionaries. Two years after I had been home, a little less, I just started itching to get out. I just wanted to get out again and be immersed in Spanish I just love the Latin culture, it is more open than here. So I saw a flyer at BYU about spending the summer in Guatemala and convinced my brother to come with me. So we signed up and went down to Guatemala for kind of an adventure; but it was with a group to do humanitarian aid and work.

Well I realized that I didn't really know a lot. I was still working on my degree in nutrition so I did not have a lot of knowledge; but we did everything from English classes, to nutrition, to building adobe stoves, digging trenches for water pipes, and a bunch of random things like holding babies at orphanages.

A lot of what we did I had no experience, like building an adobe stove or making instructional DVDs so that we could teach the people. But when something came up in the project that we're doing and there's the feeling of—I don't know if I can do that, am I really skilled enough or trained enough—to then quickly figure out how to do that so that you're actually helping someone with your knowledge and not just spewing out random information is meaningful.

I realized, you have got to figure out someone's needs, like what they think they need, for you to actually be able to help someone. Because standards of living are different, wants are different, needs are different, and there's not just a blanket statement of what all people need. And so if they don't have it make sure they get it.

So when they brought back needs to us, we developed a solution. Kind of a mutual learning process where we both learned, they had an urgent need and we had an urgent solution and so that created a drive for both sides. Within a few weeks we built like 13 stoves in this little village. I think it increased my desire to learn things that will help someone else. I guess just learning things that are actually useful. Like it is fine to learn things that are interesting but there is such a deeper satisfaction when something that you have been able to learn has a benefit in someone else's life, it's a more fulfilling type of learning.

And so that's changed in other opportunities that I have had. That has changed how I approach assessing needs and then being able to help fulfill those needs. It has expanded my knowledge in a lot of different things. Nutrition definitely is one that is, even after getting my degree, seeking more understanding because of what people needed.

I just think that experiences always change us. It just kind of goes in waves. I think that with the trips that I've done the projects that I've done here in Provo, you go through moments of, what's the right word, where you think you can save the world, like you would just be willing to do anything then you swing all the way to the other side of just, what's word, where you're just skeptical. I don't know I feel like it is a continual process. I don't think I woke up one day and was like, I need to gain knowledge for someone else. I think it came out of necessity to be honest.

**Jennie.** Jennie is a Caucasian in her early thirties with a bachelor's degree in special education. After she taught for 1 year, she went back to school and did a master's in public health. After graduation she went to Uganda as a country director for HELP International. From that interaction she has started a successful nonprofit organization in Uganda to help disempowered women earn money and start their own businesses. She describes the change in her perspective and learning as she established this non-profit organization.

In high school, I was part of this dance company. At one of our rehearsals there was this woman who was sitting in front of me with three kids with Down syndrome. I asked her, "Are you watching these kids, or is this a school or what?" She said, "These are my kids." And we just got talking and by the end of that she needed a nanny for her three

children. So in my junior and senior year and then my first year of college, I worked in their home as a nanny, it was pretty crazy with the three kids with a lot of needs.

During my student teaching and first year of teaching, I had several students that were adopted internationally. I started noticing a pattern where some of these kids had very physical disabilities such as cleft lip, a clubfoot or deformed hand; stuff that's not necessarily associated with mental disabilities. And I just wondered, "I don't think these kids were born with mental disabilities. They probably gained disabilities in the orphanages that they were in."

So I went into the MPH program focusing on improving the conditions of orphanages in China, specifically. The MPH program broadened my interest in the whole health spectrum. I got to know the plight of developing communities and how health is such a big part of that.

Through the MPH program I went to China and worked in an orphanage doing a health program and training the staff in an orphanage for kids with disabilities. By the end of the program I was fully interested in the developing world's health and I heard a friend had been a country representative and I was like, "Oh, that sounds cool! That sounds fun! That would be so interesting to see this culture."

So then I got to Uganda and just like fell in love with the culture and the people, and started this thing that I didn't know would become this really big part of my life. We got there and thought, "Oh, we can sell jewelry over this little operation and then go on with our lives." So then, it was actually functioning on a very small scale for the first couple of years.



I went back and worked in the office as well as some other jobs. A couple of years later I started working in the office at HELP International. They needed somebody to go for a month in Uganda to start a project, well that was where our jewelry operation functioned. So in the spring of 2012 I went there and just saw the opportunities that we could expand.

So just a few days before I was to come home I changed my flight for 7 months later. I called my parents and said, “Can you guys go up to Provo and move me out of my apartment, because I’m not coming home for seven months?” I love these people. They’re all my dear friends. So I stayed for eight months and got this program rocking on the Uganda side. So then I came back here and was like, “Okay, now we got to get our stuff together on the U.S. side because we got things running well there.”

Some things that I learned were cross culture communication stuff, management, taking risks and things that I’m not naturally good at and probably never will be, but I can still learn them to a small degree. But then also talking with other professionals who have learned from mistakes and also about what’s working. There is very little that is working when it comes to developing third world societies.

In the beginning I was a lot more like, “We’re going to go in and do this thing,” and I think it’s humbled me, being there longer, and seeing people [Westerners] come and go and seeing myself in those people. Like I came here to make this big change, but—and they [Westerners] leave like, “Yay, we did it, we’re done!” and then they leave, and nothing changed.

If my motive really is for this thing to change, I’ve got to do it a different way than, we as a society, have traditionally been viewing it and doing it. Kind of going back

to this paternalistic view, I had that a lot more in the beginning, but it's just gotten less and less. I understand these people a lot more, I have lived among them and seen that they truly are really capable, and just need opportunity.

I really got to see the difference between where I am and where you [Ugandans] are? I've had opportunity and you've hadn't. I've had school, I've had food, I've had a family that nurtures me, I've had jobs, I've had so many opportunities—that's the only difference between me and you. So that perspective is humbling, because it's like, why did I get this? I've got to be doing good stuff with what I've been given. Like, when you get to the heart of people we're all so similar.

I think God has been a very big part of this journey. I got to go to Uganda and did not even think our nonprofit would be where it is today. I just thought, "Oh, I'll just see if we should continue our operation or shut it down." And then I ended up staying until the end of year. Now we need to focus on building more markets here, so that we can grow there.

**Sally.** Sally is Hispanic in her mid-twenties with a bachelor's degree in exercise and wellness. She served as a student body officer in high school and attended multiple leadership camps. She describes her learning experience as she learned how to interact and teach the youth at leadership camps to be more successful.

In high school I had a transformation. I started getting into leadership and so I went to leadership camps. The things that I learned really made a difference and helped me, especially my senior year in high school and my first year in college.

At the end of my freshman year of college I was presented the opportunity to be a camp counselor for a couple of different camps. One of the camps was in Hawaii and the

other one was in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia. It was on the trip to Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. that my perspective changed a little bit more.

The camp was called National Treasure and I was the camp leader for five youth, I did not have another partner with me. We had like treasure maps and we had to find different locations and historical sites as clues to put together. My original intent for the camp was to get out for myself, travel and do something that sounded cool. So I started with that intention, but as the weeks went on I started to think about the youth that I was over, instead of thinking what I was getting out of it. And I started caring about what kind of future are they going to have, or what leadership skills do they need to learn within this camp. So I would take more time to talk with them individually and we would have our little coach's corner at the end of the day. I gave considerable thought and effort into what I was going to teach them because of instead of thinking like, "Oh, I'm here because this is cool and I'm in Washington D.C." It was more like, "I'm here because I love these kids and I want them to learn to have a good future from it."

We taught using different strategies like problem solving and working as a team. In the team building activities we would give them a puzzle or we would give them an obstacle course and that kind of translated into life. If you are stuck on what you are going to do with your life or what school you are going to go to, it's not an unsolvable thing. Or something awful happens in your family, what are you going to do about it. I've learned from what we taught and in experiences that there's people around you who will help you through, you're not alone. I learned to draw from resources, like call my parents or talk to friends.

So I got a lot of fulfillment out of seeing the change that they were having and I think that the biggest thing was that confidence in themselves; because I feel like a lot of teenagers try to figure out who they are and what they're doing, I just felt so good thinking that now they too can feel that confidence in themselves and understand their values.

So I spent a lot of time thinking if I was in their shoes, because I went to leadership camp my junior year of high school it was kind of that same environment. And it completely changed who I was, it changed my life because I had positive counselors and people who supported me, made me feel like I was a good person. But when I did this camp it was even more of that change, I was put in a different position. I saw the changes that I had had and I was hoping that for them. I realized that I can really have an impact on their lives and so I wanted to be the best I could for them.

All of a sudden it didn't revolve around me, it brought me down to a level of were all in this together and we want everybody to succeed. It was less about what I was doing and my accomplishments. Before that I was all about competition and looking better than somebody else, but through the camps I realized, "I'm here to help other people succeed too, it's ok that I succeed but I want other people to succeed too."

### **Assertion 1: Humility**

Participants were uniform in expressing and demonstrating the importance of humility in their altruistic intentions for learning. Humility seems to play a very prominent role in giving people the capacity to learn altruistically and then further develop it. This assertion suggests how participants in this study view humility, what seems to contribute to humility and how humility lays a ground work for altruistic learning.

Cristy's definition of humility as "not doing things for you as the primary reason" seems to be consistent with all the participants. Along with Cristy, Sally and Jennie defined humility in their interviews with the same central theme but with additional insight. For example, Jennie defined humility as follows:

It's the ability to see somebody else's point of view and not be still stuck in your own head. It is not doing things to be seen of men or for whatever anybody else is perceiving you doing... like you could be doing something that looks really humble but you're being super prideful about it in reality because on the inside you're like, "Who's watching?"

Sally's definition carries the same motif as Jennie's and Cristy's, but she adds that humility is also being able to receive help from others and not belittling yourself.

I've never thought humility was belittling yourself at all. I feel a lot of people will be like, "Oh, I'm not good at it, whatever, or I'm not good" Thinking that they're being humble but I think it's ok to, to feel good about yourself and to feel good about accomplishments or, you know, things like that. But to me humility is more of, I'm going to say, like being able to receive help from other people...

I think it's like, not searching for the, the glory in yourself... I feel like humility is kind of doing things, like for altruistic purposes. I'm going to go help somebody but I'm not going to go tell all the neighbors that I'm going to help them. I think humility is really... seeing a need and fulfilling that without wanting things for yourself.

As Sally mentioned, humility has a cultural insinuation of completely looking outward. However, she saw humility as a strength of two opposing qualities—self confidence in what one can achieve and the recognition of others' capabilities. These two qualities seem to be at

opposites, but when they are appropriately balanced they form a type of humility that creates an atmosphere in which altruistic learning can occur.

Humility should not be equated with self-confidence; but the manner in which self-confidence is diluted with the recognition of others is an important element in the way altruistic learners view humility. In the course of Sam's interview, the role of self-confidence in humility came out fairly strong. I asked Sam the following question: "Self-confidence and humility, some could be seen as two different things, but yet, for you, self-confidence led to humility. How did that happen?" Sam explained,

You gain self-confidence in that you want humility to go with it. Because if you don't the opposite then will be pride. And, you know, I do think that self-confidence is different than humility but I think that self-confidence creates a fork in the road you get to decide if you go about it calmly or if you go about it arrogantly.

Sam sees self-confidence as either a road to humility or a road to arrogance, but the individual chooses which path to take. This perspective is especially insightful, seeing that Sam was constantly exposed to the strong will of others throughout his childhood as he dealt with abuse and fear. Due to his environment one might conclude that Sam would be more prone to act in a similar manner. However, Sam's upbringing seemed to act more as a discourager than a promoter. Sam explained,

I seen enough of the others [arrogant] that I say, 'This particular type of character acts this way and I don't want to act that way.' You know, so I don't. You remember the people all the time, I just remember the feelings that I get.

Sam's choice to be humble was made in part by his ability to transpose the effects his behavior and actions on others. This recognition is a means that helps bring the overconfidence of others into a realm that is more conducive for altruistic learning.

In addition, I asked Sam when he started to develop the attributes of humility. Ironically, he said it was when he experienced a self-confidence that he had never experienced before. The self confidence that Sam developed gave him a belief that he was capable of doing things and helping others. This confidence gives people the capacity to believe they can help others, a point that will be emphasized later in the paper. However, self-confidence has obvious destructive possibilities with regard to altruistic learning. Mac and Steven openly admitted that pride and extreme self-confidence had inhibited their learning earlier in their lives. During the early phase of Mac's efforts to produce hymns for others, he came to a point where he stopped learning and creating music. When asked why, he said,

I think my discouragement was rooted in pride. That's what I think. That's why I stopped is because my pride was somehow hurt. And then when I came to a place where I could say "alright, I don't care, let me just going to seek feedback and take it and if I don't get the feedback that I want then I'm going to ask for more, until I get something that I can do something with. So that's what I started out again to get feedback from Nate. If his feedback was this needs some work, then instead of feeling hurt about it and discouraged about it and not knowing what to do I would say, "Great, what do you suggest and perfect, would you, why don't you take a crack and tell me what you're thinking and show me what this line, what these measures might look like if I were to improve and teach me why... That's why I stopped is because my pride was somehow hurt. And then when I came to a place where I could say "alright, I don't care, let me just going to seek

feedback and take it and if I don't get the feedback that I want then I'm going to ask for more, until I get something that I can do something with.

Mac was a capable music writer and at this point had been writing music for years. Yet there was a point where his self-confidence obstructed his ability to improve and may have ended his writing. Only after merging his self-confidence with the ability of others did he start to flourish again.

Steven also expressed that his pride in his capabilities prevented him from reaching out to other resources and thus hinders his altruistic learning.

I haven't mentioned this yet but it is kind of a pride issue. I am willing now to say that I have no idea about this and know that you're not going to think that I am dumb or anything as a result that you are going to help me or that forum is going to help me. I don't feel bad checking out a basic programming book from the library because I know nothing about it where some people might be self-conscious. And so yeah learning, learning altruistically I think for others helps you realize that everyone is in this together

Altruists seem to have a communal perspective in that they see each other as participants who can have an experience together, and by doing so accomplish more. At a point in Jennie's first interview she expressed some frustration when people would compliment her for being self-sacrificing because of her efforts in Africa. However she felt that her efforts were not nobler than others and that everybody has a responsibility to serve. Jenny suggested,

You working well in your job here, you have no less opportunity for doing good. We need good lawyers that are protecting innocent people. We need good people. One day if I become a public speaker, my message that... I feel like I want to tell people is, but, sometimes people want to meet me and pick my brain, like "You're doing all this good



tell me about it.” And they’re kind of searching for how can I do good. Searching for that, I want to give back, whatever. And something that I usually tell them is like “whatever your passion area is, like whatever you love is the best way that you can do good.” And I’ve seen that time and time again...

In Uganda that first year there was a girl that came that was an acting major at BYU. And she was like, “Yeah I’m an acting major, I’ll do whatever you guys want me to do. Like what I do in the US has no application to here.” Anyways, but I really encouraged people to find the crossroads of what you do well [and] where are their needs and that’s where innovation happens, cool things can happen. Anyways, so she was working... [and] we got to know this group of women with HIV that were kind of doing outreach to tell people to get tested so that they could get treatment and like live long lives... Because people all the time won’t get tested just because they don’t want to know, they would rather die than have to tell the family that they have HIV. Even if many of them very innocently have HIV. So, we got to know these women and... she got these women together and put on a play with like music and dialogue about HIV to perform. And that like connects to people so much more rather than just telling them to get tested. So it was so beautiful to see that she had brought something that she thought was totally unrelated to Uganda in a small community and put on this awesome thing.

The change in perspective from a sole participant to a communal view seems to occur largely when individuals get to know those whom they are serving. Jennie’s comments suggest there was a shift in both her view and the girls’ view about their roles in learning when they got to know the people and saw how their gifts can contribute.

Others also expressed that much of their learning changed when they got to know the people whom they were serving. For example, in addition to fixing cars, Steven does a lot of additional voluntary work, including helping with the scouting program. I asked him when he transitioned from doing things out of obligation to more altruistic desires.

Interviewer: So what then influences that transition from duty to...

Steven: Oh it's the love I start feeling. I get to know them better. I start loving them. I, yeah, it's the love I guess. In the case with the scouts and my children although I don't think that it ever switches out with my kids. But with the scouts, once I actually had a chance to get to actually know who I am serving and why I've been called. You know, my motivations change, they actually become altruistic.

Altruistic learning seems to be significantly impacted when an individual gets to know the people they are serving. Initial self-interest intentions for engaging in altruistic learning (e.g., seeking a good feeling, or removing guilt for not helping) diminish as the altruistic learner comes to know the recipient or as they see meaningful change occur in the individual. In addition, this interaction seems to contribute to their humility in that it helps them recognize the value of the other person and the ways that he or she can contribute or change. Sally's interview also seemed to strongly support this:

I saw in them, very powerful individuals with so much capability to do good. One of the girls that I saw, she was a total joy to be around and extremely caring. I feel like... when I see people that pass by on the street, it's kind of like a potpourri image but the more you get to know people the more time you get to spend with them, the more details you get to see about them, like the more crystal clear their picture becomes. And so with those kids, with the time that I spent focusing on their positive attributes and seeing who they were,

their value in seeing, I mean maybe it's how, how parents see their kids or their babies because they see their little babies, their little kids with potential in that they can be wonderful people they can live happy fulfilled lives, they can impact other people's lives as well, and have a positive influence and I think I saw that when I was with them and serving them.

Interacting with others seems to be a viable means of developing an awareness of others that can balance overconfidence, similar to Sam's ability to see the results of his actions on others. Yet it seems that both confidence and an awareness of the value of others helps create humility, which, according to all the applicants, was an absolute essential part of learning for others. For example, I asked Steven, "So humility is a big driver for both sides for it to grow?" Steven responded, "Yeah, I think it is huge. Yeah, especially, especially on the person that's going to be helping."

Self-confidence and recognizing the value/capabilities of others are very prominent themes throughout all the interviews and will be discussed in greater depth in later sections of this paper. However, when altruists learn for others they seem to be at least aware whether cognitively or tacitly, of their capabilities and the value/capabilities of others. These attributes seem to give altruists a humility that allows them to have the confidence to reach out and help others, but in a more communal effort where they view each other as participants in a learning experience rather than controlling the individual.

### **Assertion 2: Self-Efficacy**

Participants generally expressed or insinuated that self-efficacy plays a substantial role in altruistic learning. An individual usually engages in altruistic learning when an opportunity presents itself and the individual has developed some self-efficacy about the required task or he

or she feels a sense of efficacy that enables him or her to learn about the current need. Steven offered an example of this phenomenon with his work in car mechanics:

First off I started out as not really caring much about cars, a task. When my car broke or I had to fix it, more of an obnoxious thing that I had to spend time learning because I was forced into it. And little by little it transitioned into, you know, a passion where I realized that I could be successful about learning about that and I realized, and started noticing more opportunities that I could actually help others too. I wasn't just in my own little world that learning could contribute. As a result it became very interesting to me, I read articles on it, I look informs, I hope other people asking me even if I don't know the answer to the question, I'm willing to go out and research it. Whereas before I would say "sorry, you can figure that out just as easily as I can." But it has increased my ability to use the different tools, not even the mechanical tools but the tools of discovery and finding knowledge, much more effectively, much more efficiently because I've opened up my world to very different things. Now granted a mechanic with self-interest can learn all the same stuff, you know, perhaps even the same way as me. For me at least, my depth and breadth of knowledge for mechanics has gotten a lot more because I've looked outside myself and I'm trying to help others with that.

Steven transformed a mundane learning task into something that he loved, which started by using the minimal experience he had with car mechanics and applying it to someone else's need. Once Steven saw the value of his knowledge for someone else, it inspired him to learn further and at a greater depth. I asked Steven more about the beginnings of this transformation.

Interviewer: So when did you feel there was a change in your intentions?

Steven: You know, probably when I experience success for myself, first, but I realized I could do it. But, you know, at least for me sometimes I doubt myself and often doubt myself, thinking can I really learn how to do this and do it where it will finally turn out well. Then I realize wow. I want other people to do be able to do this. I want to be able to learn as much as I can to help others. So frankly, probably when I was very first successful changing my brakes, where I realized that this is not that complicated, I figured it out and I want others to have that same feeling, to learn how to do it too.

Steven saw the self-efficacy he developed from his initial experience of changing brakes as an important step; however, it was not immediately following changing his breaks that he considered doing it for others. He needed an opportunity that was not overwhelming, and that inspired him to engage in further learning. Steven did not exactly recall when it happened but he did remember this specific experience with his brother:

My brother needed his valve cover gasket on his Jeep wrangler, on his Jeep Cherokee, replaced. And I hadn't even ever tried to fix that, you know, I had fixed my vehicles primarily. And we spent, gosh, like two weeks working on his car outside. And I realized this is cool. This empowers me to serve others and help others with this skill. And so I realize then I could learn how to do these things, from YouTube and things no matter what situation I'm in, and even if it is not for myself, for other people I can still fix them...

Steven further engaged in learning because he saw the value of this talent in helping someone else and knew how to learn further by utilizing YouTube. Steven's self-efficacy in his ability to help others with broken cars increased and as a result he was more prone to help others in the

future. In fact, the success he experienced encouraged him to further develop his car mechanic skill. Steven observed,

You know success begets success, essentially. The more, the more I actually feel that I'm helping in making a difference in people's lives, the more I want to learn and the desire to learn grows because, just shows me how important it is.

However, Steven notes that he largely reached this level of altruistic learning because he had some self-efficacy in car mechanics at the beginning.

If I didn't know anything about cars, I don't think I would've offered to help because I would have thought of it as being a help to someone. So my ability, my capacity to help is part of my belief system that helping is important and just my, my, I don't know what to call it, my confidence in myself, my self-efficacy, I guess, contributes big-time to that as well.

Altruistic learners are often not aware, or not fully aware, of their self-efficacy. Generally it seems to be more tacit. Furthermore, people find themselves in situations where there is more of a necessity to learn than a choice. For instance, Cristy's experience occurred in a variety of different cultures with different needs. In many cases, Cristy had absolutely no experience with the required need, like building an adobe stove. Thus, when Cristy was asked about the importance of prior knowledge and experience in her learning, she didn't feel it was as important. She explained,

I don't think I woke up one day and was like, I need to gain knowledge for someone else. I think it came out of necessity to be honest. Because there were things that I didn't know how to do.

This, then, appeared to be a negative case; but with further exploration, it seemed that Cristy did have self-efficacy in her ability to find solutions.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you—because you’ve had success in different areas, that gives you confidence, at least a belief that you can do something in other fields?

Cristy: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: So it kind of disseminates in your—when you approach something that’s unknown.

Cristy: Yeah, cause you now have better skills of figuring things out.

Cristy’s self-efficacy is not manifested in her specific skill set of the given task but in her ability to use different resources to find resolutions. The participants all strongly agreed that the use of resources was crucial for their altruistic learning, a point that will be further developed later. But self-efficacy in one’s ability to figure things out, to some degree, did seem to be a prerequisite to learning.

Sam’s experience was a little different in regards to self-efficacy. I asked if his altruistic learning grew because he had developed confidence in helping others over time.

Sam: I think in my case it was that that’s just, you know the cut of the cloth for me.

From, you know, if you went back far enough, yeah you probably could come up with that as, but it wasn’t knowingly. It wasn’t that maybe I was more confident to do it the next time. So maybe it helped me be more confident too.

Interviewer: Yeah that’s what I was alluding to your confidence to help someone change grew as you started to see impact on someone.

Sam: You know, if it did, I’m trying to think of situations I can see where it’s natural that it would but it was never a forefront of it. It wasn’t “Gee I helped him. So now I can go

out and help someone else too.” It was more, okay, opportunity comes my way or I look for opportunity to take and give back which was given to me.

Sam was not sure of the influence self-efficacy had on him; as he mentioned, it may have been too tacit for him to identify. Like Sam, participants did not seem to have such a formal evaluation of their efficacy, but in some manner they did seem to have a source of belief that they could genuinely help the individual.

Furthermore, it seems over the course of time that self-efficacy becomes less significant because it reaches a point where it becomes very much a part of the individual. For instance, as a youth Sam lived in fear and as a result was very focused on himself. Ironically, the war seemed to help him look more outward than inward:

Worrying about dying, that’s taken away from you in combat. You don’t worry about you anymore you worry about the unit. Well then you become friends with somebody and when that person dies then you realize how much you care about somebody else and that continues to grow.

Yet the war did not completely take away Sam’s fears; he still had to make significant changes to gain more control of his life. The following is one of the changes Sam expressed, “I decided to stop worrying about certain things that I had no control over and that’s when my personality changed from being an introvert to... an extrovert.” Sam seemed to have to let go of himself before he could pursue learning for more altruistic purposes.

However, he also had to build a level of self-confidence that was manifested in humility before he learned altruistically. Interestingly, Sam expressed that it was not until his 30s when he got his degree and promotion that he felt he experienced the most altruistic learning. He described part of this experience as follows:



I got promoted, got my degree and I developed a self-confidence that I had never known my whole life. And with that self-confidence, I decided that now I made it to where I thought I could make it to. I didn't think I could make it higher, probably never really achieved much of a higher level of position with companies. But I was always respected around the world as somebody who would get the job done and done right. And so I always at that point on I decided that it was a question of helping my bosses and my company be successful. And so I did that and my companies were successful. I managed billion dollar programs that all made profits and I managed programs that were losing money and turned them around and made money for the company while at the same time making the customer very happy because they got better than what they had wanted. And so that part changed my life wanting to help my company and my family. And then at the age of 62, I decided that, now, I wanted to spend the rest of my life serving the Lord and helping people wherever I can. Share with them some of what I was given. And I've been given so many opportunities.

Since that time Sam has learned many things to benefit others and volunteered his time and resources in many ways. Currently, Sam seems to have moved beyond having self-efficacy regarding specific tasks, because he has developed a confidence that has become a general trait. He no longer even thinks about what skills he has or hasn't, he just seems to tacitly act. Sam explains,

I think the question was could I do anything, There isn't much that I wouldn't try to do. What I go into to space? Yeah. If they said well there is a 50-50 chance you won't come back. Well if somebody has to go let's do it. Would I jump out of a plane and do skydiving? No, first of all I don't know if there is a parachute big enough to keep me up

(laughing). But, no that's a risk that I don't, that doesn't profit anybody. Would I jump out of a plane behind enemy lines and try to stop somebody from taking over our country or hurting my family. Yeah. So yeah, I think I have the confidence to go and do whatever I'm asked to do or whatever I see needs to be done.

In some ways, Sam has accustomed himself to voluntarily learn for others when the opportunity presents itself. He also seems to have developed a deep love for others, which came in part by doing so many things for others.

In summary, self-efficacy is an important aspect of altruistic learning, especially in the early stages. Self-efficacy is not necessarily a formal evaluation of one's abilities before each learning engagement but is usually manifested more tacitly. Furthermore, self-efficacy doesn't always relate directly to the task at hand but can be the belief that one can learn the task at hand. When an individual consistently learns for others and their self-efficacy grows, they are not as dependent upon it because they know they can learn and make a difference. In some respects, they act because it is who they are and not so much what skills they possess.

### **Assertion 3: Resources**

Every participant emphasized the importance of knowing how to utilize resources to further their learning. I define a resource as anything that provided the learner with feedback or instruction on how to improve. These resources consisted of a variety of mediums such as YouTube, forums, friends, family, other professionals, etc.

In all cases participants knew how to utilize resources, to some extent, to find answers when they initially engaged in learning. For example, Steven used YouTube to fix his cars before he had started to help others with their cars. Steven expresses that his exposure to YouTube helped empower him to learn for the benefit of others.

“So yes, I used YouTube to learn prior to that, primarily just for my own knowledge to fix my cars and tasks that were in front of me. But that was one of the events that really helped me to realize that this can be a skill that I have that can bless other people all the time. And it has helped a lot... So I realize then I could learn how to do these things, from YouTube and things no matter what situation I’m in, and even if it is not for myself, for other people I can still fix them.

Steven’s success in finding answers for himself helped give him the confidence to learn more about car mechanics to help his brother. Throughout Steven’s interview he emphasized the importance of resources and saw them as crucial for learning altruistically

The fact that I have a manual for it that I can go out and look stuff in is a big deal. I am much more inclined to try and fix that car when something breaks. If something broke on my van it’s, you know, I don’t have a manual for it or anything.

The knowledge and experience a learner has of utilizing external resources helps them know that solutions exist somewhere in the world. This helps bring a sense of empowerment; they feel they can make a difference and find solutions in unfamiliar learning environments. When Cristy was asked why resources were so important in her learning, she said,

Because there’s just so much knowledge out there and so much experience that, if you don’t collaborate, chances are you’re either wrong or teaching something that was old, or there’s a better way to do something, or—there’s just so much progress, always, that if you try to do it alone, that’s stupid.

The exposure Cristy had to the numerous resources helped her step away from her own perspective and recognize the value that others can contribute. She found it “stupid” to do otherwise.

Cristy and other altruists come to a realization that their skills are only a small part of what can be learned and done to help others. They look to outward sources to discover multiple ways and find the best solution for the current individual. This seems to help individuals change their paradigm from just looking at what they know to what others know. Cristy's narrative was especially strong in emphasizing that there is lots of information to be gathered by looking to other sources.

You start to realize that there is always a solution, it may not be the perfect solution and it may have to be through trial and error. But you can at least come to a decision or at least improve something. But it, yeah, I think it takes time. I think too it drives me to think about what other people have done because I don't think I've been in positions that are like no one's ever encountered this before. And so someone somewhere probably has experiences written somewhere. And so I think it helps you to network more, information network.

Sally also had very similar remarks to Cristy and gives a little more insight into the transformation she experienced as she utilized more resources.

I've learned through this to, to, to change my paradigm, to change, to have that, to look at things differently and to not give up and to seek others help and you know, that there is so many different faucets because you're never really in a corner even though sometime you feel that you are... if you are stuck on what you are going to do with your life or what school you are going to go to, it's like it's not an unsolvable thing it's not a, you know, or something awful happens in your family what are you going to do about it. It's like, I've learned from what we taught, I've learned in experiences like there's people around you who will help you through, you know, you're not alone.

The change in paradigm from just what they know to incorporating what others know seems to be further evidenced by the many times the participants emphasized the importance of listening and applying knowledge to the person.

Cristy, Jennie, and Sally all had very strong themes of listening to the ones they were serving so they could help facilitates a more meaningful change. Cristy gave several examples of times she relied on her own knowledge, only to realize that it was not meaningful to the people. She describes one such experience as follows:

I think the times that I actually saw an impact was when someone was able to do it themselves. And what I mean by that, is that with the adobe stoves, we went out, you know as gringos headed to the village with all of our knowledge and skills that we didn't really have. And tried to explain and show and built the stove with this little village. We built the first one with them but then we left the DVD and the computer with them as well. When we came back the next week a bunch of men in the community had started building. They would get together and pick a house, they were doing it, just as well if not better. They could make the adobe faster than we could. But just being able to give someone tools turned around and did. So with this village that we actually get the stoves we went out originally to teach them how to do square foot gardening. Which was fine but they didn't really need it. You throw on apple on the ground and a tree starts growing. You know their ground is so fertile, they're grateful for it. As we started talking with the women they said all of their babies were getting respiratory infections and are always sick. Because they're cooking over open flame and so the other kids would go out and play but the babies would have to be in there with the moms all the time. So when they brought that need back to us we developed a solution. Kind of a mutual learning process

where we both learned like they had an urgent need and we had an urgent solution and so the drive but that created both sides, within a few weeks we built like 13 stoves in this little village.

Cristy realized her goal of helping this village could only be achieved by really listening to the people and seeing things from their perspective. As she did more work for this village, her desire to get feedback and input from others seemed to grow. Cristy explained how her previous experience changed the way she approached later learning experiences in other countries:

A year ago I went to Uganda to do nutrition work and having had the experiences in Haiti of like really seeing firsthand that you can't really have the ideal diet. I approached that training so differently where I could teach a basic principle and then let the women that I was working with tell me what examples—So, for example with food, of trying to incorporate more vitamins and minerals. Instead of saying you need to have this much vitamin C; that means nothing to them. But to say you really need to have vegetables and fruits that are rich and color, so the oranges and reds and yellows. What do you have here? What's available to you? And having them say oh we have this and we have this and this. And to say do you eat any of this? And then to say "Is it expensive"? No, I guess we just don't really do it. Then say "You need to then, if it's not expensive then..." We are letting them decide. It was so much easier to teach them and they felt empowered by the end they're like we can do this.

After Cristy shared this story I asked her "So what did that then do to you? How does that affect you in the way that you saw things or did things?"

Why didn't I start this earlier (laughing)? No, I just think it reinforced like the importance of asking questions and listening and teaching principles that help people discover their

own personal applications. Which I think isn't for just a third world setting, I think, I mean, this is still a medical setting of noncompliant patients all the time with doctors who (referring to patients) have all the money in the world but they just don't want to do what a doctor tells them. And if a doctor could learn to ask the right questions and listen really understand the patient that they would be willing to do. I think that doctors would really change how they approach treatment

When an individual truly learns altruistically feedback becomes essential and natural because the circumstances of helping an individual necessitate seeing the other's perspective. Altruistic learners do not seek to just accomplish a task but empower an individual or change them in some meaningful way, a point that will be discussed in the following section.

However, feedback and resources that promote self-consciousness or doesn't empower the learner to do more can inhibit altruistic learning. When Mac originally started writing hymns he collaborated with his friend, but there came a point when he stopped collaborating and writing hymns. Mac explained why,

What actually probably made me discouraged and self-conscious was some of the feedback that I got from him. Lots of things that I had done on my own and I thought that they were pretty good (laughing), and this is still in the vein that I'm trying to create music that will bless peoples' lives. Got some feedback from him that's kind of like, yeah, the feedback I got was just kind of, I didn't really like or your accompaniment of this song needs some work, is all I got. On a couple of things that I sent to him and that was a little discouraging, probably because there wasn't much, I didn't know what to do to improve them. You know, he just said that needs some work. I didn't know what to do to get them up to snuff. And that's probably where my discouraged little phase started. It

was kind of like well, alright I'm writing music and musically some of it's not that good but I don't know what to do to make it good and so I was not motivated to do that right now. I did not want to produce music that was not artistically sound, you know, quality. Because my feelings and belief was that I could have the best intent and the best idea but poorly crafted and poorly executed, technically weird, would distract from, take away from the message or the what I'm trying to communicate and I don't want to do that. And so I felt like I didn't have the skills, on my own, to do justice to the ideas that I wanted to communicate, musically.

Mac was not closed to feedback, as evidenced by his going to his friend, he just didn't know how to improve. The feedback he did get did empowered him to learn more but also led him to question whether or not he could make a meaningful difference with his music. Mac only reengaged in his learning when he was awakened to his belief that he could make a difference and had the necessary resources to achieve it. Mac continues,

I started to hear from Nate again in very encouraging ways. Things like, hey David what are you writing? He started to share things with me and asked me what I was working on. He wrote me an e-mail once that said something to the effect of, I'm forgetting and half of it, but it was, he said, "I wish I could hear more of the stuff that you're working on that you're writing. I know that I have a hard time finding time to do it but here's some ways that I find time to write" and then he said something about, he just complemented my stuff that I had produced in the past. But the key was, he said, "you have a God-given gift for this" and that I think was, If I could point to something that prompted the reflection and the change of heart, if you will, allow me to start pursuing things again. That's the idea that did it, the idea of this is a gift and I remembered when I had realized that if I



have a gift it's, I want to use it to help bless other people and not do anything with it is to not do what I really actually want to do. I really do want to do something with it. So it was kind of a harkening back to what had originally prompted me to do in the first place to change.

When Mac believed he could make a difference again and felt that he had the resources means to do so, he re-engaged in his learning. Resources that empower an individual to find answers helps give them the self-efficacy that they can make a difference, which significantly facilitates altruistic learning.

In summary, receiving feedback and instruction through different mediums is a crucial element in altruistic learning. Those who engaged in altruistic learning had an awareness of different resources and took initiative to learn more by utilizing these resources. When an altruistic learner reached out to these different resources it further enhanced their recognition of others and the contribution they can make. This helped lead to a paradigm shift were they saw things from others' perspective and saw knowledge as meaningful when it applied more to the other's paradigm.

#### **Assertion 4: Success**

In various ways, all participants looked beyond just accomplishing the task; they wanted to help foster a more meaningful change with the one they were helping. The participants viewed a meaningful learning experience in a variety of ways and felt successful when the recipient of their efforts became something different. This becoming was generally described as when the recipient felt empowered to do the task on their own, they became closer to the individual or the individual's disposition appeared to be altered.

Many participants emphasized the importance of having the recipient of their efforts become independent of them. Jennie's entire purpose of her non-profit organization to help women in Uganda become independent and empowered to make a better life for themselves:

We started Musana thinking, what can we do to sustain them? So it was more of that immediate need. Now as we have gone... our goal is actually after a couple of years in the program they will be able to develop a business plan and graduate from the program and start like, launching their own business in the community... We are thinking a lot more long-term and like, how can we build these individuals so that they can do it themselves.

Jennie believes, "success is when something can run independent of me." Her focus is not on herself but making a lasting change on someone else.

Cristy also emphasized the importance of empowering individuals so that they can make more lasting changes in their lives.

Interviewer: What do you feel success is, what do you look for?

Cristy: Improvement.

Interviewer: Okay, and what is improvement for you?

Cristy: I guess it depends on what we're doing. But if it improves quality of life or improves situations or just enables progress.

Interviewer: Okay, um, what do you mean by "enables" progress?

Cristy: Well you can't like change a life overnight. But if you enable someone to move forward in whatever it is, whether it's improving their health or their education or giving them skills or whatever it is, but it's like empowering them to move forward.

Empowering individuals to learn and act for themselves provides the opportunity for one to make changes which they may have not been able to do otherwise. Thus, altruistic learners approach helping individuals differently than if they were just focused on accomplishing the task. Cristy explains,

It's not like, "Here you go, information. See you!" But I think if you walk in and say, "This is what you're gonna do," and it has no meaning to them, then it's not going to be long-lasting either, so it's like a combination of establishing vision from both sides, like you understanding them and them understanding you and like getting a vision and understanding principles. And then, either on their own or together, whatever's going to be best, then you figure out the application.

Cristy listened and interacted with the recipient because she wanted to confirm that her instruction was being meaningfully applied. The exchange of perspectives and ideas are viewed as successful when the recipient can act alone, thereby showing that they have the capacity to change. Cristy explains this interaction between parties as a learning cycle. "I think when, whoever you are, especially with education. If you are teaching someone else something, as soon as they're able to do what you just did, then I think education is complete. It is a continual cycle." At the point an individual can act for themselves the burden of change rests with the individual and not the altruist. Thus, altruistic learners feel successful because they provided the opportunity for the individual to change.

The interaction between parties naturally helps foster a relationship with the altruist and the recipient; altruists consider the strengthening of this relationship as another important aspect of being successful. In addition to empowering people, Steven's interview emphasized the importance of building relationships through this learning interaction.

Successful for me it's kind of two parts. It's to get the task done that we needed to and if we didn't get it done totally, that we try our best to get it done. And did I get, am I closer to that person now. Certainly those two things. Am I actually able to help this person, Show that I care about them and did we accomplish something.

Steven doesn't neglect the importance of accomplishing the task, but for him the more meaningful focus was the relationship he built with the individual. In my follow up interview I asked Steven to elaborate on some comments he made regarding his desires in the learning interaction.

Interviewer: You mentioned in your last interview "But my success is not evaluated by how many things that I am doing for them, but it's based more off of the impact it's having in their lives. So it's a becoming for me and for them," How do you measure a becoming in someone else's life?

Steven: Uh, I guess that is kind of an intro of do I feel a closer to that person. I mean, yeah, the becoming, that's just the evidence of it that maybe that we're both learning together and my brother has confidence now too, you know, go online and purchase a part and put it on himself. Maybe that's part of the measure, part of the measure where he can now go and do that himself and certainly that was one of my objectives was to help him learn. But ultimately, you know, my objective was to help him know that I love him and know that I'm there for him to help.

Steven revealed his ultimate reason for engaging in the learning activity, love. The strengthening of a relationship is a manifestation that love between parties is growing to some extent and this is what helps create meaning and success in the experience.

Interviewer: You've used the word 'meaningful' several times. What do you mean by meaningful?

Cristy: Uh I don't know, for me personally, it's just not rewarding—well, I guess it can be rewarding—not as rewarding when you don't get to see a face. And so, like, when it's not personal, so in a way for me 'meaningful' is also personal. Where I think abstract things can be somewhat meaningful, like hearing about something or playing a part, like in the behind the scenes, where you're like, "Oh, that's great we were able to do that," um, and I played a small part in that? But when you're like right there seeing someone's face—I don't know, that's for me, when it's meaningful.

No surprise that altruists are focused on people so naturally they desire to grow their relationship with the recipient. Cristy suggested that if a relationship didn't grow then it probably wasn't altruistic.

Interviewer: Sometimes when people help or learn for others, they turn into very egotistic people. "I helped this many people," or "I saved this many people in Africa," or whatever. What is it, then, about your experience that has helped you develop the other side?

Cristy: I feel like if—I'm going to make assumptions—but if people are saying things like, "Oh, I helped this many people in Africa," if it's like—if you know how many people you helped, you probably weren't actually face-to-face with those people. Just because, when you do that...—like it's not going to be a huge number because you just don't have the time to do that. So if that's true, of like, "Oh, I helped this many people," and it's a big number, I would say the opposite is what helps people. Like that it's— it's people. You know their name, you know their face, you know where they came from,

you know what they're going to try to do with what you've done, [or] what you've taught—and that's way more meaningful, like, personally, but so much smaller on paper... I know, like, statistics are important and for organizations and companies, they need to keep track of that. But if you know those numbers, it's probably because you weren't on the ground doing it, you know? Or if you were, then you, like, weren't talking to the people, you were just counting them.

Altruists primarily see an individual and not task when they engage in a learning experience. The focus becomes helping the individual and the task becomes the means. Thus a task may be completed but the experience remains unfinished because there was no exchange of love.

Sometime altruistic learners are in situations where an individual cannot demonstrate proficiency in a task and the interaction between the two parties are minimal. In such circumstances altruists seem to look for evidence that one's disposition has changed. Mac's altruistic learning experience is one where he works mostly alone to generate music for others to hear. Thus his interaction with the recipient is minimal; however, Mac still seeks to make a meaningful change like the other participants. Mac explains his success as follows:

It's the feedback of the people who have actually performed it or heard it. And what I would like to hear (laughing), I would feel really successful is if I heard someone say, "your song inspired me to do this, something. Help me with this question that I had and now I feel better about whatever that thing was." That is what I would like to hear and what would make me feel the most successful with my music.

Although Mac is in different circumstances compared to the other participants, he still seeks for the same meaningful changes. He wants people to act, change their circumstances, and improve their lives in some manner, so Mac looks for that in the feedback he gets.

Interviewer: So then why do you feel that you are successful with your music?

Mac: Perhaps because that's really my intent, is to be an instrument, as a composer as a musician. My intent really is to be an instrument of a higher power, God. Doing his work and accomplishing his purposes. And I am not the one doing that, he is. But I really do want to participate in whatever way he would want me to participate and I sense that this is one of those ways. And When I hear feedback that indicates something good is coming from it, that people's lives are being helped then I feel like I have succeeded in playing my part.

In addition to comments about his work, Mac seeks to make his music more easily performed. Sometimes this comes at the expense of sounding better. I asked him, "Why would that be better?" Mac explained,

Because if it is hard to perform then people aren't likely to perform it. If it is easy to perform people are more likely to perform it and that, the more people that perform it, the more people that have an opportunity to receive the message and be impacted by it. Again, Mac looks beyond the task to effects of the music on the recipient. If he were about making music bring to himself glory then he wouldn't sacrifice certain notes and melodies just so others can play it. He wants the recipients to receive it by acting on it and sharing it with others.

In summary, altruists seek meaningful change in individuals by looking beyond the task to the individual. Steven's comment below summarizes the altruists' perspective on being successful:

My success is not evaluated by how many things that I am doing for them, but it's based more off of the impact it's having in their lives. So it's a becoming for me and for them,

me becoming more or less self-centered, or more outwardly focused. And it's their becoming that I focus on. So it's not as much of what I'm doing, I'm using more what they're becoming as an evaluation tool to gauge what else I do

Thus altruists seek to strengthen their relationship with the recipient by offering their time and skills as a token of love and then help in a manner that empower recipients to act.

### **Assertion 5: Agency**

“No man is an island, truly they're not.” Sam's statement summarizes the general perspective of all the participants. Altruistic learners see others as agents who have the power to choose and act on the learning experience. Each participant in the learning experience brings uniqueness to the experience that they can contribute to make a more meaningful experience.

Jennie explains,

We have unique things to bring, and identifying what are those unique things, but then they have unique things to bring too. Um, whereas traditionally, I feel like development is more like, “We're going to come and bring you these things.” But like, we—like, this sharing, this learning together, that's where the power is. And that's where they're owning this.

The sharing that Jennie mentions above seems to be the exchange of talents, perspectives, and identity.

This interaction creates meaning in the experience because both parties are choosing to give of themselves to create a more successful whole. Steven describes some of the feelings associated with this interaction:

Just learning together, it's just kind of nice to have someone else out working with you in anything when you both are realizing, “damn it we can do this again, let's do it again.” Just



to kind of learn together and keep each other company. And that's to me were you really feel a closeness to is when you are out there, kind of elbow deep in grease, working together and trying to solve problems. And when they are solved you rejoice together. It's a bigger deal when you are with someone and you figure something out, you finally just walked in the house happy, but no one else really feels your joy until they are experiencing it with you.

This interaction seems to foster an environment of oneness and equality because both parties are striving to find an answer by merging their experiences. I asked Steven to confirm if this was the case for him when he helped his brother.

Interviewer: That person who is in the trenches with you so to speak, do you feel like you're more of a, kind of like, one, one with them, in the sense one in a purpose. Whereas the other one you are still separate?

Steven: Um. That's a good way to say it. I could agree with that. Uh, yeah we are both in this together we are both trying to figure this out

Cristy's interview was also especially focused on seeing the other's perspective and exchanging ideas. Throughout her interview she emphasized the importance of listening and seeing the perspective of the one she was helping. The following is one of the examples Cristy shared:

A year ago I went to Uganda to do nutrition work and having had the experiences in Haiti of like really seeing firsthand that you can't really have the ideal diet. I approached that training so differently where I could teach a basic principle and then let the women that I was working with tell me what examples of. For example with food of trying to incorporate more vitamins and minerals, instead of saying you need to have this much vitamin C; that means nothing to them. But to say you really need to have vegetables and

fruits that are rich and color, so the oranges and reds and yellows. What do you have here? What's available to you? And having them say oh we have this and we have this and this. And to say do you eat any of this? And then to say "Is it expensive"? No, I guess we just don't really do it. Then say "You need to then, if it's not expensive then..." We are letting them decide. It was so much easier to teach them and they felt empowered by the end they're like we can do this.

After seeing this theme emerge across multiple cases I asked Jennie in the second interview if my observation was true in her life.

Interviewer: [Do] altruistic learners see each other as equals who can all contribute in different ways to make a more successful poll. In this respect, they seem to recognize individual's agency and the environmental influences that affect them.

Jennie: Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

Generally altruists don't expect to be the sole contributor of the change; they recognize an individual's volition. However they also recognize that the environment and the information presented to a recipient can give the recipient an opportunity to change. Thus altruistic learners seek to inform individuals by tailoring their knowledge to the individual's unique background. Cristy explained,

You can't make people change. So I think that's where learning that it's gotta be mutual—cause you've got to present vision and excitement and give reason, and you can't do that unless you understand what would give vision and reason and excitement and then, like, having that hope—that's when you hope, that like, they'll get on board or they'll want this—but yeah, if someone doesn't understand or want something, it doesn't matter how great it is.

Like Cristy, Mac tries to cultivate helping others by cultivating his knowledge with the environment of his listeners.

I kind of see the idea of giving that knowledge as part of creating the environment honestly. I mean, I, I can say something, you may not feel anything about it and I could say the same thing to someone else and that person may be blown away by it. And a lot of other factors besides just the message that go into it actually, seeing that change happen. But yeah, I guess I see, something that I contribute is a clear way of looking at something. Putting something into words and into music so that it can be understood. Yeah, I am helping to do that, by using the talents that I have. But it's just that my fundamental view of this is, I'm really not causing any of it at all. I, I am offering myself as a means through which something good can come and doing my very best to apply my talents to help that happen.

Mac points out that he can present something one way to an individual and it will have a profound impact on them, but when he does the exact same thing to another it means nothing. Mac's experience in writing music makes him especially prone to such results, since he records his music and therefore can't adapt it to the individuals in the moment. Yet Mac still seeks to create and influence the environment of his listeners in such a way that they might change.

Since altruists don't believe they cause change, they view their role as one to inform and create opportunity for the recipient. I asked Mac what he felt he was influencing with his music.

What am I influencing? What am I contributing? Let me think, I am, (long pause) maybe I'm helping to create an opportunity, I'm, I do have talents I have abilities that I am applying here in the hope of creating an opportunity for someone to experience a change, not that I'm going to cause, but they with the help of God may experience. It depends as

much on them and their willingness to experience the change and as it does on God causing that change. Or on what created the environment with a change can happen. So I guess the piece that I'm contributing something to is offering something that contributes to an environment where people can experience a change of heart, a change of mind, seeing something in the new way that they have not seen before. And the more I learn about music and music expression the more I am able to do it in a, in a beautiful and refined way that, that makes that opportunity richer, more likely to produce the change.

Altruists view knowledge as crucial element of agency, because without a knowledge of something a recipient will never change. Throughout Jennie's experience she realized that the only difference between herself and the people in Uganda was the opportunities she had to gain knowledge and better herself.

I understand these people a lot more. I have lived among them and seen that-- that they truly are really capable and just need opportunity... Living in Uganda and spending eight months, that I was there, I really got to see, what's the difference between where I am and where you are? I've had opportunity and you've haven't. I've had school, I've had food, I've had, a family that nurtures me, I've had jobs, I've had so many opportunities—that's the only difference between me and you. And so that perspective is humbling, because it's like, why did I get this? And just like—I've got to be doing good stuff with what I've been given... Like, when you get to the heart of people we're all so similar. Like, the fact that I'm, well—I am opinionated and informed and well-spoken, or whatever, isn't because of me, it's because of my circumstances, in a lot of ways. And so yeah, that's humbling. So it's not like, "I've made myself into this and you poor people haven't." No, it's then, I've been so blessed and that's the only factor, is like, opportunity,

Since opportunity and knowledge are things that the recipients lack, altruists seek to apply the things they've learned toward the needs and circumstances of the individual. Cristy elaborates,

As far as what they don't have, usually it's just knowledge. I mean, some trips it's you're bringing supplies, but the long-lasting, it's knowledge but then helping them apply it how they need to apply it. So, principles, I think, more than application. I guess sometimes there's—you teach application, obviously with some things, but principles are what I think is more changing and meaningful, cause then they can apply it to different situations...I don't think teaching is ever one-way. Like, I think you learn together, because you can't teach someone something without learning about what their circumstance is and learning what they know. And they can't learn anything if you don't teach them anything, so it's like a mutual understanding.

Altruistic learners engage in learning because they can help an individual receive knowledge that is relevant to them. In this respect, altruistic learners will generally achieve a deeper level of understanding on a subject matter so they can apply it to the individual and thereby show it's meaningfulness in the life of the recipient. When Sam helps people in his congregation as the Bishop, he seeks to correctly inform individuals according to their unique situation. When I asked Sam about his role, he responded,

Probably more of a fact-finding, reference to professionals. In other words, I don't pass myself off as a professional. But I can refer them back to that and so in a way I can do the fact-finding for people in different situations and then I can refer them to professionals, if that's where they want to hear it from. But most people I found are smart and they put it together. They sit there and if they can get the information fed to them, Sometimes people, I've needed things spoon fed to me and I figure other people do to, from time to

time. And so I find myself being, a first of all somebody who feeds them the information then coaching them if they want to progress.

Sam's comments show the importance of information empowering people to change. In some cases he can just give people information, other times he has to take it easy by "spoon feeding" it to them as they are appropriately ready; but either way, Sam is adapting the amount of information and the way he gives it according to the needs of the recipient.

Altruists still feel they have a role and can impact people, but they do not view it as the major cause of an individual's change. Sally expressed that she was influenced by the camp counselors when she was young and as a result wants to have similar influence on the kids she works with.

I guess I spend a lot of time thinking how, how, you know, if I was in their shoes, because I went to leadership camp my junior year of high school and where it was kind of that same environment. And it like completely changed who I was, like I feel like it changed my life because I had those positive counselors and people who supported me, made me feel like I was a good person.

Sally's previous experience taught her that people do have a role in helping people change and many times can be a big influence. Yet, Sally also maintained that her involvement alone would not be the cause of the change.

Sally: If you push the canoe in the right direction just by a couple of degrees it can end up in a completely better place than it would have been. So yeah, I did feel like a little boost, there was still that hope, you know, they're going to end up on a much better plane than they would've if they haven't had crossed my path, or if they hadn't come to the camp.

Interviewer: Do you see yourself as causing that change?

Sally: You mean being the sole cause?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Sally: No. I feel like. I guess I never considered that if I was the sole cause (laughs). I feel like I was definitely a good factor, at least for that time in their life. Because, you know, it takes more, I feel like it takes more than one, one person, sometimes it takes one person but a lot of times it takes a lot of helping hands to help move somebody along.

Sally expressed that she was not entirely comfortable with her analogy of pushing a canoe, but she used it to show that people can influence the course of others by simply providing a little momentum in a direction they may not have been able to go without some help.

In summary, altruistic learners see others as agents who need to participate in the learning experience if they are to be successful. Thus altruistic learners obtain knowledge with the intent to empower individuals by informing them in a manner that applies to their unique circumstances or needs. The information exchanged does not change them, but provides them an opportunity to change. Thus, altruists do not see themselves as causing change but an influencer of change.

## Discussion

This qualitative study's primary objective was to explore the transformation individuals experience as they change their intentions for learning from self-interested purposes to altruistic ones. Participants freely described their experience and the accompanying analysis sought to preserve agency by not placing egotistic overtones on interpreting the participants' experiences. The narrative of each individual was compared and contrasted to others to describe the phenomenon in manner that was closest to the participant's lived experience. This study sought to build on Monroe's (1996) recommendation of not labeling participants' actions as solely altruistic or self-interested. Rather, this study attempted to explore the shift of one's desires of being predominately self-interested to a more altruistic one while recognizing that individuals may partially act out of self-interest.

The study produced several themes that offer insight into some of the transformations people experience as learners. Before a participant engaged in altruistic learning, they were humble, which was identified as self-confidence balanced by a recognition of others' ability to contribute in a learning experience. This self-confidence was either in the altruistic learner's ability to perform a certain activity or the altruistic learner had developed self-confidence in learning on their own. This initial self-efficacy helped learners act when an opportunity to learn for someone occurred. This aligns with Monroe's (1996) findings that altruists' see value in all people, including themselves. The self-efficacy of the altruists was the value they had in themselves while their recognition of others' capabilities and perspective showed the altruists' value of others. For example, Sally explained that her camp director encouraged her and the other counselors to make positive comments about the youth, which she explained helped her love the kids more because she recognize the value of her recipients.



However, this study further showed that altruistic learners learn in order to make a meaningful, lasting change in the individual and not just fulfill the recipient's current need, such as fix their broken car. In some circumstances, the meaningful change was furthering a relationship, but in many cases the altruistic learner sought to empower the individual to learn or act on their own, thereby removing the dependency on them. The ultimate success of the learning experience was only partially measured by accomplishing the task at hand but it seemed to be more weighted on helping create opportunities for an individual to make a more meaningful change in his or her life.

This desire for a more meaningful change generally created a learning partnership with the individual, where each party contributed something to the learning experience. In many cases the altruist provided the expertise of the learning activity and/or the knowledge of learning to discover resolutions. The recipient could contribute additional insights but more typically offered a unique perspective for the application of the knowledge which would then produce a more meaningful change. This interaction helped foster a relationship between parties and emphasize the importance of both parties contributing to make a successful learning experience.

This theme is very similar to Monroe's (1996) findings: "Altruists share a view of the world in which all people are one" (p. 198), and "altruists have a particular perspective in which all mankind is connected through a common humanity" (p. 206). The participants did not use these exact words in describing their experiences, but they definitely felt a bond of humanity with the recipients, which was usually made manifest in their comments regarding their relationship with the individual or more succinctly in their comments on helping make a meaningful change with the recipient. This bond helped create sense of oneness between parties

where the altruistic learner did not view themselves as any better than the recipient(s) but both were mutually engaged in a learning experience.

Altruistic learners emphasized the importance of utilizing resources in their learning. This seems to be in part due to an altruistic learner's assumed role of applying knowledge in a meaningful way to the recipient, which usually requires unique approaches and a sufficient depth of understanding. Thus, altruistic learners rely heavily on resources and view their ability to use resources as an essential part in their altruistic learning. Generally, the use of resources enlarged over time as the altruist was exposed to different circumstances and topics. This is not to say that non-altruists do not learn from resources, but altruists use resources to meaningfully apply to an individual's unique circumstances. This seems to lead to a deeper understanding and belief of finding answers on their own. Steven explains,

Now granted a mechanic with self-interest can learn all the same stuff, you know, perhaps even the same way as me. For me at least, my depth and breadth of knowledge for mechanics has gotten a lot more because I've looked outside myself and I'm trying to help others with that.

Since altruists seek to make a lasting change on an individual, their interaction is dependent upon the recipient's participation and willingness to change. This dependency emphasizes the agentive role of the recipient to the altruistic learner. In addition, the altruistic learner views their role as primarily giving a recipient the opportunity to meaningfully change. This requires the altruist to have a depth of understanding, or at least know how to gain further information by reaching out to additional resources, so that they can tailor the information to the individual and cultivate an environment where the recipients can have the best opportunity to

change. This naturally leads altruists to explore many different resources and perspectives that seem to bring greater depth of understanding.

As can be expected, multiple exposures to successful altruistic learning experiences encourage altruistic learners to learn more and engage in more altruistic teaching experiences. However, an altruist experiencing success was more important in the early stages of altruistic learning and less over time. Generally, this seems to be the case because altruistic learners better understand their role as a facilitator of change by creating opportunity rather than causing changes in an individual. This perspective empowers an altruistic learner to avoid frustration and continue to engage in altruistic opportunities, even though the result of the engagements may not lead to the success they desired. The fact that they gave an individual an opportunity to change is all they can do and thus completed their role in the learning engagement.

Furthermore, as an altruistic learner is involved in more altruistic experiences, their altruistic behavior becomes more tacit and the role of other influencers such as empathy and desire to get a good feeling become less significant. Altruists act because it is who they are and their perspective in the value of others has changed. This finding aligns with Monroe's (1996) research where she found that "Empathy's influence abates somewhat, however, as we move toward altruism" (p. 203). This was the case with Steven where he explained one of the reasons he initially helped his brother fix cars was because "I felt bad for him." However, as Steven chose to act more altruistically, the influence of empathetic response became replaced with Steven's perception of the oneness he felt with them as a human being and desiring to further contribute to that human family. This finding gives some additional insight into Monroe's observations:

Actors will shift between their individual and group identities at different points in time and depending on key stimuli. Every actor (group or individual) probably has an average point on a continuum where they tend to hover between individual self-interest and group or collective self-interest. But actors may not be fully conscious of the extent to which they move along this continuum; thus, behavior may result from both unconscious and conscious decisions. (p. 226).

As participants related their experience it seemed that as they moved down the continuum toward altruism their actions become more tacit, whereas in the beginning it was much more conscious. Stimuli such as empathy, getting a good feeling, and moral obligation had a more significant influence in the beginning but became less significant as the altruistic learner engaged in more learning opportunities for others.

### **Limitations of the Study and Future Research**

One of the limitations of this study was that the participants had similar religious backgrounds, a qualitative study that incorporates a variety of cultures and religious beliefs will likely provide additional insights and confirm other aspects of the phenomenon. In addition, in-field studies of the phenomenon such as participant observation and artifact analysis would prove insightful; however, the phenomenon is somewhat unpredictable especially to the extent that the phenomenon occurs. Reflective interviews, which were used in this study, allowed participants to identify and describe the more meaningful events that helped promote altruistic learning. In field studies could not control such events but could identify approaches and strategies altruistic learners use when they learn for others.

Another limitation of the study was precedent. Although many studies have been conducted on altruism, few have studied altruism on an axiom of agency and the genuine existence of altruism and self-interest. The major leader in this field is Dr. Monroe who has

studied altruism more generally. This study was unique because it attempted to focus on the change in individual experiences as they become an altruistic learner. The collection of narrative and the accompanying analysis of altruism from an altruistic learner perspective is unprecedented in educational literature, as far as I have been able to tell. As a result, it was difficult to put together a literature review, select participants, prepare for interviews, and know what to look for in the interviews.

As such there were themes that seemed to arise but needed more research and a broader range of participants in the learning process. For example, over time altruists seem to shift their learning from an individual's current needs to anticipating future needs. This means that an altruist doesn't wait for a need to arise, rather they anticipate potential concerns that may arise. For instance, Steven explained that he has recently learned to fix some aspects of a car even though there is no one that currently needs it fixed. Other altruists expressed similar perspectives, but this wasn't necessarily a strong theme because of time restrictions and perhaps because most of my research was on the earlier stages of becoming an altruistic learner. Future researchers may want to consider further exploring more of the transitional becoming in the later stages of altruistic learning.

Monroe (1996) explained that "Future work will need to elaborate on the conceptualization, origin and development of identity, defined here only in general terms to refer to one's sense of oneself and one's character" (p. 218). This study gave some additional insight into the shift of identity in the context of learning by exploring the change in the altruistic learner's perspective, but further exploration is warranted. Specifically, one should explore the change in perspective and influence of stimuli that are usually associated with self-interest such

as empathy, intrinsic happiness, guilt and moral obligation. These influencers have a role but seem to become less significant as one moves more toward the altruistic continuum.

This research identified potential principles that are associated with altruistic learning such as: self-efficacy, recognition of the value of others, knowledge of utilizing resources, and opportunities for others to help a recipient make a meaningful change. These principles have not been tested or confirmed as a means that may increase altruism, but they were evident themes in the participants of the study. A study that further explored practitioner application would be beneficial for organizations that seek to promote altruistic learning.

### **Conclusion**

This study sought to explore the transformation of individuals' intentions of learning from self-interest to altruistic ones. The study produced five themes that were rich in description and provided insight into such questions as: Why do people sometimes yield self-interest, with regard to learning, for the sake of helping others? What is their experience as they undergo such a change? How do people undergo this change? The study treated altruism as a real phenomenon and did not explain it away with egotistic philosophies, but rather let the participants freely express what they felt and how they change. The result of the study gives greater insight how to promote and recognize altruistic learning.

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## Appendix A: Example of Semi Structured Interview Questions

### Example Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Get to know the Individual's background
  - a. Occupation
  - b. Education
  - c. Pleasures and interests
  - d. What is important to them
  
2. Select a time when the individual experienced a change in their desire from learning out of selfish purposes to altruistic ones
  - a. Describe the learning experience. (Make affirming comments to encourage the interviewee to tell their story as he or she experienced it)
  
3. Clarify any vague details about the selected experience
  - a. Draw out general details
    - i. Describe the context of the learning situation?
    - ii. Why did you initially engage in learning?
    - iii. When did you notice a change in your desires to learn?
    - iv. What changed in your learning?
    - v. What feelings did you experience?
    - vi. Who was involved? What is your relationship to him or her?
    - vii. When did it happen?
    - viii. What was [this or that] like?

## Appendix B: Transcription Protocol

### Formatting:

Name of Interviewee(s) and session number:

Name of Interviewer(s):

Date of Interview:

Name of Transcriber:

Date of Transcription:

Duration of Interview:

Include page numbers on each page, centered, bottom.

All transcripts double-spaced with one-inch margins.

Include time stamp at least once on each page of transcription.

New paragraphs during long blocks when speaker introduces a new idea or when quoting dialogue.

Speakers will be identified by last name all in bold capital letters at beginning of each statement.

Indicate the end of a tape/beginning of a new tape in all capital letters.

### Content:

Anything that can't be understood should be indicated with: [indecipherable]. Or make a best guess with a [?] after it.

Do not engage in any editing/correction. Interviewer will be responsible for changes.

Include comments such as [laughs] or [points to...] or pauses [...] in brackets.

However, use italics to show emphatic in speech.

Bracket any necessary explanations (interruptions, recorder turned off, etc.).

Bracket important comments made by someone when someone else is already talking—e.g., Bill: No, I mean that it actually happened twice during the same project [Jane: Oh, I see]. It was very frustrating because I wanted to...

Eloquence reconstruction—e.g., replace “gonna” with “going to,” and so on, in ways that don't alter meaning. Also, exclude “um” and like place holders, unless they seem to hold special significance.

## Appendix C: Member Check Email Template

Dear \*\*\*\*,

We thank you for participating in our interview study of becoming an altruistic learner. Now we are preparing to submit a report based on this research to a scholarly journal and invite you to briefly review your quotes again to make sure you are comfortable with how we've included them. We welcome your input at this stage because a version of the current report (attached) is what will actually be printed in journal form and circulated to organizations such as academic departments and college libraries. Your member check enables your interests to be represented and provides a "validity" check on our uses of your statements—did we get them right? We anticipate that your involvement in this process would take about 10-15 minutes (unless you choose to read the entire manuscript).

If you'd rather not participate in this stage of the research, we understand. Please feel free to decline.

However, if you would be willing to help us with this member check, we would appreciate it. Your quotes (under your pseudonym) have been highlighted in yellow to facilitate the process. If you participate, please respond to us by [approx. 2 weeks away].

Similar to before, if you have time to respond, please consider the following questions:

- Do you feel like proper steps were taken to protect your privacy?
- Do you feel like you were characterized and quoted accurately?
- Do you feel like we offered a proper interpretation of your quotes?
- What, if anything, would you like to see changed regarding how you and your opinions were described in this study?

Again, we thank you for participating in our research to this point. Thanks for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Aaron Snyder, Principal Investigator

## Appendix D: Reflective Journal

1/6/2014

I met with Dr Yanchar about having the IRB approval. I was going to refine some of my initial questions and prepare for the interviews by the necessary equipment. We talked about transcribing the interviews, how to help dig a little deeper in the interview. By this point I had done a pilot interview with my sister who is a nurse. I told him that I felt like I got some good points from here, but had a hard time getting her to express the transformation because it was so subtle. However, I found it interesting when she told of her experience with a newborn child that was without a parent and was going to die. My sister expressed that she was the only one that could show any time of love for the individual because the little infant had no one. At this point she had lots of compassion. That experience helped change her perspective and she started learning differently because of that experience. Dr. Yanchar and I discussed about setting up another time to do another pilot interview where he could sit in and watch me interview and give me some pointers. We set this for Jan 15<sup>th</sup>.

1/13/2014

Today I got my IRB approval for my project. I will start looking for people to participate through my current network. Below is a summary of some of my opinions and views of altruism up to this point.

### Altruistic Agency

The issue of Agency lies at the very essence and origin of humanity. The debate of agency and determinism is a very old one and it still rages today. This research project does not seek to enter that philosophical debate but assumes that humans are agents and are meaningfully engage within the world around them. However the ways, motives and levels of engagement vary from person to person, especially in the realm of learning. Many engage with the motive of self-interest while others engage to make a positive contribution to those around them (Altruism). See Figure 1.

Selfishness ←—————→ Altruism

*Figure 1.* Agency continuum of selfishness and altruism

The way an individual engages in their learning significantly impacts their learning, their life style as well as those around them. For example several studies have shown that those who learn

with the intent to serve others have higher GPA's, greater interpersonal skills and seek for more career development skills like pursuing higher degrees in education (Duffy and Raque-Bogdan). Elder Packer has taught, "If we learn in order to serve, to give to others, and to 'feed' others, we will find the acquisition of subject matter much easier. We are then trying not to glorify ourselves, but to teach others."

It is one thing to claim the existence of Agency but quite another to appropriately utilize it, especially in education. Unfortunately it seems that many learn out of self-interest for tangible rewards. Daniel Pink recently wrote a book about the dangers of rewards as motivation and made the following observation regarding organizations and our school system, "Too many organizations... continue to pursue practices such as short-term incentive plans and pay-for-performance schemes in the face of mounting evidence that such measures usually don't work and often do harm. Worse these practice have infiltrated our schools, where we ply our future work force with iPods, cash and pizza coupons to incentivize them to learn" (pink, 9). In contrast the organizations that develop individuals through autonomy, mastery and purpose are more successful (pink).

Thus, if altruism is an effective means of motivation and purpose then what resources and environments can provide greater opportunities for individuals to engage in an altruistic manner? My research would involve a qualitative study that explores environments and resources that contribute to altruistic motivation.

"If we learn in order to serve, to give to others, and to 'feed' others, we will find the acquisition of subject matter much easier. We are then trying not to glorify ourselves, but to teach others." – Elder Boyd K. Packer

"Short term incentive plans and pay for performance schemes... usually don't work and often provide harm. Worse these practice have infiltrated our schools, where we ply our future work force with iPods, cash and pizza coupons to incentivize them to learn"

- Research like this has been done in social psychology, college student development and industrial organizational. Three categories of research:
  - a. The effect of altruistic activities on well-bing outcomes
  - b. The effect of service learning activities on well-being and vocational outcomes
  - c. The effect of prosocial work on work-related outcomes (satisfaction and productivity)
  
- Studies show that service learning improves:
  1. Academic outcomes: ability to analyze, apply concepts, critically thinking and academic performance (GPA's and writing skills, longitudinal study of 20,000 students)
  2. Interpersonal skills: leadership, problem solving and social-justice skills

3. Career development skills: more advance career-related skills and goals, those involved with service learning are more likely to pursue graduate studies
4. Personal growth; self esteem, personal efficacy and social awareness

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1/15/2014

I interviewed a fellow co-worker with Dr Yanchar. After 15 minutes of interviewing it was apparent that we were not on the same page, so we stopped the interview and Dr. Yanchar helped me realign the interview. We then proceeded and it went a lot better. I learned from this that I have to be clear in defining altruism and perhaps give some better examples before hand. Furthermore, in the event that I am not getting at what I need to it is all right to stop an interview and re explain the question and or objective.

1/24/2014

I met with John Spackman. He recently received his PhD on encounters of unfamiliarity. I wanted to discuss mostly how he used Stake's Multi-Case Analysis. I was a little bit confused about how you don't compare just the things that are similar. He helped me understand that the absence of an event in a case can be just as informative. John also mentioned that he would be interested in understanding the change in relationship that the individual encounters when they experience altruistic learning. However, I was really impressed with his comment about p values. He said the world interested in a low p value because it shows prediction and control. In this respect a p value is nothing more than showing the amount of agency that is involved in the situation. In this respect, he (john) is more interested in studying things with high p values because they are the most human. I thought this was a beautiful way to describe it.

1/27/2014

I did my first interview with "Steven". I was very impressed with the interview, I learned a lot from it. I think one of the biggest impressions was the role of success in developing altruism. It seems that people initially need to see some evidence that their efforts are helping someone



before they turn to altruistic intentions. This seems obvious now that I think about it, yet I think it is also can be very insightful. As I think about my own altruistic experiences, I believe that this to be true with me as well. I think that it is the effect, the good feeling that reinforces or encourages the action and not the cause of action. “Steven” also gave me some leads to other individuals whom I think are great candidates.

1/ 29/2014

I interviewed “Mac” today. His interview was ok, in the sense that I feel like there was more that he could have said but I couldn’t get it out of him. I think the biggest insight I gained from this interview was the slowing down of altruism in learning. For example he talked about the discouragement of not making a difference or producing a good song so he slowed down. I also found it interesting that he flat out talked about the role of pride in preventing his learning. I also had a hard time understanding by what he meant by seeking God’s approval. I will need to review my notes and see if I can learn more of what he meant. This discussion went more gospel than expected. In some ways I want to explore that more, but I know it will not carry much weight in the secular literature. However, I feel the principles that he express may still be used and provide insight.

1/30/2014

I interviewed “Cristy”. I remember in Monroe’s book the Heart of Altruism that she said altruists don’t really see themselves as altruists and they explain that anyone would have done the same thing. I think Cristy is in this same category, she doesn’t necessarily see herself as this great example of learning altruistically. Yet, she has gone on something like 9 humanitarian trips. Anyhow besides, that I was very interested in her comment that she wants the people she works with to become independent of her. This seems to make a lot of sense. Someone who is truly learning altruistically doesn’t want to be the sage on the stage, rather they want the person to be empowered to do it for themselves. Such a perspective moves the focus from them to the one they are learning for.

1/31/2014

I met with Dr. Yanchar and gave him a brief report of some of the things that I found interesting in the interviews. We did not go into much detail. I feel like I am making good progress on the project and that I am heading in the right direction. One of the things that seems to be very apparent is that in the situations that I have seen the individual goes into a situation not necessarily intending to learn altruistically but when they see a meaningful impact of their learning and or actions on the individual that their intentions start to shift towards more altruistic ones.

2/6/2014

I interviewed “Sam”. I was taken off by his interview in the first twenty minutes, it didn’t seem I was getting what I wanted from him. However, in the course of the interview I realized that learning for him was not the text book learning I was thinking of. Sam was learning to work with people and how to help others become successful. Once I understood this, I started to glean more insight into what he was saying. His situation and background is very different than what I expected. He was abused as a child and experienced some pretty horrific things in Vietnam, he now suffers with PTSD. Sometimes, I questioned his altruism because he expressed his concern that he wants to be liked. However, as I got to know him and hear of his experiences it seems that this is some result of his PTSD, yet it is also interesting to see the things he does do even with the challenges of his upbringing. The interview was also a little difficult because he would ramble a little bit and sometimes would lose focus of out topic. But overall, I think there are several things I can learn from him his experience. Responsibility seemed to play some type of role in his life in developing altruism, what role I am not entirely sure. This is something I think I will want to explore further. Sam also has a sense of community. There also seems to be a level of tacitness in this experience where people seem to act out of nature rather than giving it much thought. I think this will be hard to explore.

2/19/2014

I interviewed “Jennie”. She was very interesting because she was very focused on helping empower people. In some ways she is very similar to “Cristy”, especially with this idea of empowerment and self-sustainability. I was also very impressed how random and quick she was to act and learn altruistically. The thing that stands out is when called home and said she was going to stay in Africa to resume her humanitarian non-profit work for several months. She really reminded me of Monroe’s Book that altruists don’t always see themselves as altruists and many claim that others would do the same thing. This was apparent when she talked about that everyone gives and serves in there own way, just because her work deals with people on another continent doesn’t make her service any more meaningful. Another thing that stood out to me in this interview is what she called the crossroads of innovation, this basically happens when you have skills and another person has a need that your skills can help out with. I thought this was especially interesting, in every other individual that I have interviewed I have seen that altruism seems to start when someone is put in a situation that they can use their talents to help another. Once an individual sees that their skills can make a meaningful difference in someone’s life they start to change their desires.

3/1/2014

I have worked on my initial analysis and come up with themes and supporting quotes. By far the most common theme seems to be that people who started learning altruistically initially did so when they had a talent or a level of proficient knowledge and they say that that knowledge or

talent could meaningfully impact the people they were interacting with. In the analysis I was very interested in the possibility that there is a shift that occurs later in a learning experience where people don't just learn for current/immediate needs but actually anticipate needs. This seemed most evident in Steven's interview because he was reading a car mechanic book just because it was fun and he could see himself using that knowledge on day. As I look back on my own life, I think that this a true theme that has occurred with me. After I have developed a love and passion for a subject and see the difference it can make with others I seem to have shifted some of my study and methods to anticipating needs/concerns. I will want to explore this more with the other applicants in interview number 2. Another Theme of particular interest was that of empowering people and helping them become an altruistic learner. In some ways this makes a lot of sense, but was also surprising to me in that I never considered this. It seems natural that altruists would really want an individual to become empowered because that is what would be best for the altruists. They also would not want to be the sage on the stage, rather just a jump start for someone else to use their own means to be successful. And the way an altruists sees their success is that the person changes, almost a type of change in identity. One measure of this seems to be the extent that the individual takes initiative to do it for themselves.

3/3/2014

Met with Dr Yanchar and went over the themes that I developed. Dr Yanchar seemed to be pleased with them and suggested that we talk to Dr. Gantt about them to see which ones may be the best to further explore. I will talk with him to arrange another time, in the meantime I am going to simplify some of themes and make an initial selection of what I think are the most interesting. Dr Yanchar has recommended that I divide them into 3 meta themes: what is the nature of altruistic learning, what is the shift in becoming and what discourages it. I think this will be a great way to organize the themes and present the findings in a meaningful way.

3/13/2014

Met with Dr Yanchar and Dr Gantt for 30 minutes today. Dr Gantt got to briefly review the themes and recommended that I focus on the transformational and becoming themes. We also discussed potential journals that may be interested in this topic. I am going to prepare some interview sheets specific to the individuals

3/21/2014

I met with Dr Yanchar to go over my interview protocols for interview 2. He thought I had prepared some great questions for the interviews and gave me the green light to start interviewing for round 2.

3/22/2014

I interviewed “Steven” today. I questioned him about anticipating future needs and learning for those. His response was not as strong as I thought it might be, since his interview is where I originally had the thought. He basically said it did happen but not very often because he is so busy with other things, perhaps he would do more of it if he were retired.

Steven also mentioned that he gaged success by the accomplishment of the task as well as the impact it had on someone. This is especially important because you do need to do what you are set out to do, so I can’t fully neglect that, but Steven seemed to emphasize the more important part is that it has a meaningful impact on the individual.

I was also intrigued that the role of using and taking has on altruistic learners, when they see that their efforts are being wasted, or rather used, they are turned off by it. It seems that this result is contrary to their initial intent so they are not as inspired to learn and act altruistically.

3/26/2014

Today I interviewed “Sam”. He provided a great example of taking initiative to learn in other unknown fields. He gave the example of an individual who was experiencing same gender attraction and as a Bishop he didn’t know much about it. So he went out and learned more of what was involved and some of the science behind it. HE was then able to take this information to the individual. I think in both “Sam” and “Steven” they see their role almost as informative. They can either give them knowledge on a topic and help point them in a direction but the choice ultimately rests with the individual.

Sam also brought up that his altruism gets diminished when he doesn’t feel liked, this was interesting because it seems that he is the only one that seems to express this concern. I should probably look deeper. I also wonder if this is connected to confidence and feeling empowered to help people.

3/28/2014

Today I interviewed “Cristy” and “Mac”. Cristy interview was similar to the last time. She confirmed the importance of resources in her learning and again was very focused on empowering people and helping them improve.

Mac’s interview went very well. I was very impressed with the type of feedback he looks for, comments that show more change of character because they are acting. I think this interview

was a strong example of looking for more meaningful changes in people as a result of his composition and what he has learned. I found the way he viewed his role similar to the other participants. He sees himself as a teacher or a dispenser of knowledge that can empower people. However, it is not the knowledge that changes the people, it just gives the one they are learning for the opportunity to use it in a way that empowers them. I think there might be some forms of coaching when there instructing but generally I would guess it to be pretty open and direct, yet also delivered in a manner that will best help the one they are helping understand. I really liked Mac's story of when they were primary teachers and essentially only doing it because they had to, yet it was only when they saw the meaningful impact on ben that they started to change their approach. I also found it interesting that Ben did not change until he saw sacrifice or extra initiative on Mac's part, it would have been interesting to interview Ben's experience.

3/31/2014

I met with "Sally" tonight. This is my sixth interview. As I was talking with her I could see a lot of the themes that I had developed in the previous interviews were evident in her interview. Perhaps another insight I gained in my theme development is that of value and meaning. The value and meaning seem to come when an individual acts of their own free will to incorporate a change, it creates meaning because the individual could chose not to change but because they did the person feels like they had some part in that transition. It seems in this respect that altruists almost must see people as agents, otherwise there is no value or meaning in their actions. It seems when an individual sees an impact, not causal, but as Sally said "pushing the canoe" this builds their self efficacy and they desire to help others because they know they can.

4/1/2014

I completed two more transcriptions today, Mac and Sam. I felt Mac's 2<sup>nd</sup> transcription was especially helpful, he was able to better describe the transformation he had over time. Sam's interview as also pretty good. His case is so unique since he more focused on people management then a task, sometimes this make it a little difficult to see similarities with his case and others. Furthermore, he has PTSD and a unique childhood, I wonder how this influenced him. Initially it seems it may have just taken longer because he had to worry about himself so much in the beginning.

4/12/2014

I submitted my first draft of cases to Dr Yanchar. He will be reviewing them and giving me some feedback. I decided to have the participants describe their own cases because I thought that would be closer to the reality of the issue than if it went through my filter (even though I'm selecting which portions to cut and past). I feel that if I have the participants review their case

study as well then this may clear up any ambiguity and misleading things I did with the cutting and pasting.

4/14/2014

I also got approval to hire someone to go over my transcriptions and finish the last two transcriptions Cristi 2 and Jennie 2. I selected Kelly over the other two applicants because it seemed that she had the most experience transcribing. She will be a great help and act as a second source of validation. Dr Yanchar will review my case descriptions soon.

4/21/2014

I got feedback from Dr Yanchar, he said:

“Hi Aaron, You've got a good start with these case descriptions. They're like Keith's, right? All in the words of the participants.

One thing strikes me: You have to make sure that the learning part of the experience for each participant comes out clearly. I can see in all cases that the person seems to have a genuine interest in helping others. But I can't always see clearly how learning was involved. This is particularly so in Sam and Mac, but also for the others, with the exception of Steven. In Steven's case, learning for a noble cause comes out pretty clearly. I don't think you need to revise these summaries as much as enlarge them. That is, add some more material to bring the learning out more. But I like the way your case summaries are put together. They tell good stories”

I reviewed the case descriptions and could see what Dr Yanchar was talking about. I think one way to help see the change is search the word “learn” in the manuscripts. This will hopefully draw out those elements that I need to bring out more.

4/25/2014

I emailed Dr Yanchar the completed case descriptions today and will set up a meeting next week sometime. The case descriptions were difficult to put together because some used filler words a lot. I decided to cut them out to make the paragraph coherent. I also had to modify a few of the tenses of words to keep the story consistent with the major tense. Finally, I also replaced some instances of “This, it, that” with their proper nouns.

4/30/2014

I met with Dr. Yanchar today. We discussed my case overviews and he thought they were good enough except for Jennie because he couldn't see the altruism with the learning as well. After looking at her case description I agreed and made changes to her case description tonight. We

also talked about my approach to studying the different cases to make sure I was in line with the principles in Stake's multicase approach.

We decided the Results section will start with an overview, followed by around 6-8 assertions, but this is not fully decided since I have a little more analysis to do and figure out how I want to approach these. However, I am more inclined to go in depth in major themes than cover a lot of little ones.

We also discussed getting Dr Gantt and Williams involved once I get the draft done of my results section. We want to make sure any major issues are resolved before the defense.

5/2/2014

Tonight I was working on Assertion 2 Self efficacy. In the course of doing my analysis I realized that I had coded some things under the wrong assumptions. I spent over three hours fixing these issues and further searching for quotes on this matter. In doing so, I'm questioning the overall structure of my paper and some of the titles of my assertions. For example, I have changed the assertion two, originally called initial development to self-efficacy. I felt this change better reflected what I was really addressing even though it is very prominent and important in the initial phase of altruistic development. I'm learning qualitative studies are difficult because the themes can be so intertwined that it is difficult to just focus on one at a time.

5/9/2014

I finished my first draft on the Results section last night. Originally, I had planned on doing 6 themes, but after completing the fourth assertion on success I did not see a need to do assertion five on Development because it was already covered in the themes already noted. Thus this section would seem a little repetitive. Furthermore, my Results Section is already at 60 pages, this seems to be well above the requirement. I sent Dr Yanchar an email today explain why I have stopped at theme 5. Overall, I am very satisfied with the Results, I feel that it captures the core of the altruistic learning.

5/14/2014

Dr Gantt responded to my Results draft, overall very positive feedback. He had some questions regarding some of the terminology such as assertions and member checking. I think this was mostly because he was not familiar with Robert Stake's terminology. The only other major issue was his concern regarding the cases summaries. He thought they were well written but thinks that they should be in an appendix. This is contrary to Dr. Yanchar's perspective. I will talk to Dr Yanchar about it.

5/19/2014

I met with Dr. Yanchar today and we reviewed his comments and Dr Gantt's. Overall very positive feedback. I asked him about Dr Gantt's concern regarding the case summaries. He recommended that I introduce the case summaries at the beginning of the results section and then if there is still an issue with Dr Gantt, Dr Williams can be the tie breaker. Dr Yanchar has given me the green light to start merging all the different sections into one document. Once this is done, he will review it one more time and then I will submit it to the committee for a defense.

5/20/2014

Dr Williams responded to my email today. All he said was "This does meet my general expectations just fine. I agree with Dr. Y's comments too." I feel the major issues are resolved, I need to now merge my documents together into one draft and start preparing for the defense.

5/22/2014

I have put together a draft of all the different elements and changed the tense of the verbs in my Introduction and Methods section. The most substantial changes occurred in my Results section where I had to change the number of participants from 3-10 to 6 as well as the accompanying analysis to better describe what I did as well as implement the feedback I got from Yanchar, Gantt and Williams. I now need to work out the appendices and do an APA check. I am not exactly sure what to include in the appendices so I will compare what others have done and ask Dr. Yanchar what he wants to include.