Liberal Education, Self-Concept, and Altruism

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INTRODUCTION

Liberal education seeks to enhance the lives of individuals by developing the intellectual and creative potential of their minds. We want our students to gain a foundation of knowledge and the ability to analyze, problem-solve, create and adapt to new experiences that will enable them to understand the world as it has come to exist and to consider the opportunities and challenges presented by contemporary life. But we also want them to use their enhanced cognitive and creative powers for action. We want them to engage in effective and ethical action in the contemporary world. I assert that this action must be designed to improve the human condition. A simple goal, Thought Into Action, summarizes this important part of liberal education. This action can take many forms. The focus of this paper is on one critical component of action: Altruism. This concept can be defined as Helping Others In Need With No Expectation Of Reward In Return. The encouragement of students to do something that makes a difference, that will change the world in some significant and positive way, is closely related to altruism. We are asking them to help in the broadest possible sense of that word.

The assertion that we want our students to develop some commitment to altruism raises several questions. First: is action a proper goal for liberal education? At least some argue that the ability to think is the goal of liberal education and considerations of using cognitive powers to engage in action is not the concern of our institutions. Second: is encouragement toward altruism the right road to take if we want our students to engage in action? Some important activities in the world may not fit the definition of altruism. Some have even argued that there is no such thing as true, pure altruism. Third: can altruism be taught? There is at least some evidence that measured tendencies toward altruism are genetically determined - some people inherit a strong capacity for altruism and others less so. This is related to some speculation that altruism is an adaptive quality
that develops through the process of evolution. Fourth: will the development of altruism lead to lives of fulfillment for our students? These and others are interesting questions: here I want to focus on the following assertions:

1. Altruism is a legitimate goal of a liberal education. If we want to have our students engage in effective and ethical action, we must encourage a commitment to action that goes beyond the interests of the individual and helps make the world a better place.

2. There is a relationship between altruism and personality characteristics.

3. We can encourage the development of altruism through the curriculum we offer at liberal education institutions.

4. Altruistic behavior can be fulfilling

The plan of this paper is to start with a focus on studies of the relationship of altruism and personality, first by describing some of the measures of each and the classification of personality types. Then I present some ideas about how findings on factors that affect altruism might suggest ways to encourage its development and expression. Following this are some suggestions about inclusion in college curricula.

MEASURES OF ALTRUISM

Psychologists have conducted research on altruism in laboratory and in field studies. Most studies start with an implicit notion that altruism consists of helping behavior where there is no expectation of a reward in exchange for helping. In laboratory studies, one approach is simply to ask persons what behavior they might engage in when presented with an individual or group in need. For example, we might ask whether an experimental participant would donate funds to a particular cause such as homeless shelters or programs aimed to eliminate adult illiteracy. A
second approach is to pay individuals for participation in a study and at the end of the study ask whether they would contribute part of their pay to an individual or a cause. Appendix A provides some examples of questions used in studies of altruism. These measures of altruistic behavior often are used in studies where there is the manipulation of some important variable in an attempt to see if the variable affects the altruistic response. For example, a person characterized as needing help may be described as having created a problem for himself or as the completely innocent victim of some event such as a crime. In another manipulation, participants are made to feel happy or sad by imagining positive or negative events before being asked to help.

In field studies, persons are placed in situations that simulate the need for help and watched for evidence that they do help. An example is a manipulation in which persons are asked to go to a lecture and along the way encounter a person lying on the street in apparent need of help. The primary measure is the number of persons who stop to help.

These studies have often yielded stable results that can suggest factors involved in altruism. For example, one study found that being in a happy mood makes persons more likely to engage in helping behavior than if they are in a sad mood. Another study found that if persons are given very complex, difficult problems to solve, they are less likely to display subsequent helping behavior than if they engage in easier problems. The methods used in these studies are subject to the criticism that they are not valid studies of what persons do in real situations that may call for help. Self-reports of whether a person will help are not necessarily accurate; in many areas of psychology there is evidence that the ability (and motivation) for accurate self-reports are suspect. Laboratory studies of actual giving behavior, such as making a donation, are vulnerable to the criticism that people will not behave in the same way in real world situations where the stakes may be higher, or the helping commitment is more long term. Nonetheless, these studies
do provide interesting data and have isolated several factors that appear to affect altruism. Some of these are essentially situational: Certain aspects of a situation will elicit more altruism while others will not be effective. Current mood is a situational variable. Other factors are related to personality variables. Before describing the various categories of variable, it is useful to consider briefly some current analyses of personality differences and ideas about the structure of personality.

PERSONALITY

There are many theoretical analyses of human personality, including those that are based on the traditions of Behaviorism, Freudian Psychoanalysis and the Humanistic approaches of Maslow and Rogers. Each involves ideas about the basic motivation that shapes behavior and mental processes and about the basic structure of the mind. The analysis here rests on another approach, that of Trait theory. Trait theories try to classify personality differences in terms of where a person falls along a set of dimensions. Ideally, a small set of such dimensions would enable us to account for all personality differences. Scores on these dimensions would make it possible to look at relationships between personality and important behavior patterns. For example, many researchers are interested in the relationship between personality and learning styles. For present purposes, we are interested in the relationship between personality measures and altruistic behavior. There are two critical relationships to look at. First: is there a particular personality dimension that is related to whether someone engages in altruistic behavior? Second: is there some overall relationship between the stability of a person’s personality structure and altruism? If we assume that some persons have a clear, consistent, and well differentiated sense of their personality or sense of self, are they more or less likely to engage in altruistic behavior?
The most widely accepted Trait Theory involves five dimensions and is generally referred to as The Big Five Theory. Analyses of personality differences suggest that scores on these five dimensions can account for a great proportion of these differences. We can describe persons in terms of these five dimensions. The dimensions are:

**Openness to Experience.** This is a measure of a person’s general appreciation for art or music, unusual or new ideas and varieties of new experiences. Persons with a high degree of openness have been found to be intellectually curious and often connect with liberal ethics.

**Conscientiousness.** Persons high in this measure show good self-discipline, aim for achievement, and have good control of their impulses. They are likely to engage in planned behavior over spontaneous behavior.

**Extraversion.** Extraverted people are interested in connecting with others and are interested in the ideas and behavior of others. They are likely to be connected to the external world. One of their characteristics is a fondness for talking. Extraversion is contrasted with Introversion. Extraversion and Introversion are at opposite ends of a single dimension.

**Agreeableness.** This is a measure of general concern for social harmony. Persons high on this dimension tend to be considerate and helpful and are willing to compromise with others. They tend to have an optimistic view of human nature.

**Neuroticism (Sometimes called emotional stability).** This is a measure of the tendency to express negative emotions. Persons high on this score have a tendency to express anger, experience anxiety, and suffer from depression.
Appendix B contains some of the questions used in studies measuring individual’s placement in the Big Five dimensions.

The matrix of dimensions allows us to have quantitative measures of the correlation between a particular variable and altruism. It also is possible to use the matrix to measure the extent to which a particular score is solid—this is a subjective measure of how stable the scores are and can be interpreted in terms of strength of personality commitment. It is conceivable, for example, that we can determine how self-assured a person is about his or her personality or how certain he or she is about adherence to values that are measured in each of the dimensions. The strength of sense of self is related to the concept of Role Identity, as described by Erik Erikson.

Erikson describes role identity as a situation in which the individual has a clear sense of what he or she values, what characteristics he or she has, and what role he or she wants to play in any future situation. The strength of role identity can be taken as a measure of the degree of self-understanding and differentiation from others that a person has. The effects of role identity are described further in a later section.

WHAT FACTORS AFFECT ALTRUISM?

Studies of helping behavior have suggested a number of factors that affect the likelihood a person will engage in altruistic behavior.

**Social Exchange**

There are several results that suggest altruism is a form of social exchange; helping behavior is exchanged for something that is of benefit to the helper, either materially or in some more abstract, intrinsic fashion. According to social exchange theory, individuals engage in altruistic
behavior when they believe they will gain something of value in return. Some argue that this form of altruism is really a form of self-interest, and does not deserve the label of altruism. Regardless of the strengths and weaknesses of this argument from a philosophical perspective, it does give us ideas about procedures for encouraging helping behavior. According to social exchange theory, the way to enhance altruism or helping behavior is to demonstrate a return that benefits the individual in some way. These benefits can be classified into three categories: Extrinsic Rewards, Biological Rewards, and Psychological Rewards.

**Extrinsic Rewards.** Some altruistic behavior leads to material rewards. For example, it has been claimed that care and concern for the environment leads to lower expenses than reckless use of environmental resources. According to this claim, investing in clean energy will create cheaper resources and will be felt when persons figure out what it costs to run a car or heat a home. It may also lower our taxes that are assessed in order for government agencies to clean up environmental hazards. The altruistic saving of natural resources may have complex extrinsic rewards such as lowering international tensions related to resource conflicts with a resulting decrease in taxes used to support military preparedness. Another example is volunteerism that addresses issues of poverty. If individuals can devote time to activities that are successful in lowering poverty, we can expect that crime rates will go down and with them property damage and property taxes. Volunteering to help with adult literacy, the construction of housing through programs such as Habitat for Humanity, financial counseling for persons suffering from debt or working in youth programs are all activities that have a reasonable chance of return through social exchange.

The question of extrinsic reward is important for public policy programs. Tax incentives for using clean energy or charitable giving are obvious examples of this. The point of the present
paper is not focused on attempting to change such policies, although motivating college students to engage in public policy development is itself a form of altruism. The point is that teaching students that there may be extrinsic rewards for helping behavior may be one path towards enhanced altruism.

**Biological Rewards.** Some forms of altruistic behavior have direct biological payoffs, often in the form of improved health. Persons who engage in volunteerism are healthier than their counterparts and tend to live longer. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle that respects the environment by cutting down on the costly production of expensive junk food is itself a form of altruism with biological rewards. This can also have extrinsic rewards. My university promotes wellness in part because it lowers our health insurance costs. This saving is passed on to all of our employees.

**Psychological Rewards.** Altruistic behavior can lead to better approval, both from persons who are part of an individual’s social contacts and from the individual in terms of self-reward. Several studies have shown that persons feel better about themselves after engaging in helping behavior. There are several theories that attempt to account for this. Social Learning theories of personality emphasize the internalization of reinforcements. As we move through childhood to adulthood, we change from being reinforced by praise from others to self-reinforcement based on the understanding of what others might approve of or the adoption of standards that others have insisted on during the individual’s development.

It is important to remember that psychological rewards depend upon the development of social codes. In terms of the development of the individual, movement from dependence on material rewards to dependence on abstract rewards, such as a belief in the improvement of the human
condition or of universal justice, is crucial. Theories of moral development generally agree that movement from material rewards to those based on abstract codes tends to happen as children become older, but we should not think of these as automatic. An emphasis on the psychological benefits of altruism has to be part of our general culture and has to be part of a liberal education.

Psychological rewards also depend upon group values. Group membership has a powerful effect on the behavior of individuals and the codes of the group become the codes of individuals. This also has important educational implications. Through teaching and example, institutions that support altruism will have members who behave altruistically. Certainly academic institutions qualify as important groups in the psychological lives of their students.

Conclusion: The conclusion is simple, although not easy. If we can demonstrate that altruism brings reward, we can increase altruistic behavior.

**Emotional States**

There is evidence that one’s state of happiness affects helping behavior. One study has shown that persons in a good mood are more likely to help than persons in a bad mood. This is true even when the source of mood is not directly related to the situation that calls for help. In addition, there is evidence that having to perform a difficult, perhaps frustrating task inhibits helping behavior.

Conclusion: These results point to a positive state of mind as a factor. When individuals are in a positive emotional state, they are more likely to help.
**Personality Characteristics**

Research suggests that certain personality characteristics are correlated with altruism. Studies looking at the relationship between the Big Five personality dimensions and altruism have frequently found a correlation between extraversion and altruism. Persons who are oriented towards the ideas of others are more likely to engage in helping behavior. A second factor, empathy, has also been identified as important. Empathy can be defined as the ability to understand the feelings of others. Persons who have this capacity are more likely to engage in altruistic behavior than people who do not have it.

These two factors suggest that altruism is more likely when there is good differentiation between the individual and others, combined with an interest in the other. Empathy depends upon the skill of taking the role of the other. If you cannot distinguish between your own feelings and that of persons with whom you are interacting, then you will not be able to understand their feelings. Extraversion adds to this picture by suggesting that in addition to being able to understand the other, you must be attuned to the ideas and feelings of the other.

There is a current debate about the extent to which personality characteristics are genetically determined, as opposed to being formed by interactions with one’s social environment. If we wish to make a difference, we must assume that characteristics such as extraversion are at least partially the result of environmental influences. There is also evidence that empathy results from developmental sequences. Very young children have limited capacity for taking the perspective of others. This characteristic, sometimes labeled ego-centrism, makes empathy difficult. As children grow, they develop the cognitive capacity for taking the role of the other. This facilitates the development of empathy and opens up opportunities for altruism.
The idea that good differentiation between the self and others is important leads to some speculation about the extent to which a stable, clear, and well understood self can enhance altruism. Someone who understands his or her self and understands the distinction between that self and others in the environment- in short a person with good differentiation- may well be better inclined towards altruism. That idea will be part of the next section.

Conclusion: The development of qualities of extraversion and empathy are likely to increase the tendency towards altruism.

**Role Identity**

Erik Erikson’s theory of personality development is based on the idea that life involves a series of crises, each characterized by some interaction with the environment, and each having an outcome that is either favorable or unfavorable. For example, infants depend upon the environment for basic needs such as food. If these needs are met, the infant develops a sense of Trust. If not, the infant develops the characteristic of Doubt. These characteristics are carried through life. Each successive crisis builds on the characteristics established at earlier stages. One of the most significant of Erikson’s stages occurs in late adolescence or early adulthood. This is the crisis of Role Identity. The individual, confronted with the question of what he or she is interested in, stands for, and will do in life develops either a strong role identity or suffers the effects of role confusion. Role identity means having a strong sense of self. Whatever the characteristics a person has, if he or she is aware of them and believes in them, then role identity has by definition been achieved. Erikson makes the point that role identity is a happier state than role confusion. I argue that strong role identity can be a positive factor in altruism. A person with a strong sense of role will be happier than a person without that sense, and we know that
happiness can play a role in altruism. A person with a strong role identity will be able to distinguish between himself/herself and others. We know that this distinction, between self and others, is important for empathy, and we know that empathy is a factor in altruism.

Conclusion: A person with a good, clear sense of self is more likely than someone without that sense of self to engage in altruism.

ALTRUISM AND THE CURRICULUM

Liberal Education works to achieve its goals using one of two distinct pedagogical approaches. First: we can construct a course that describes a particular goal and encourages students toward the achievement of that goal. In such a course we teach students relevant information and encourage them to incorporate that information into a knowledge base, integrate it with other knowledge, and apply it to new situations when needed. For example, in a course in psychology, we might present research data on the relative effectiveness of positive reinforcement and punishment in changing behavior. A student could then integrate this information into an understanding of human nature and use it to design a program for rehabilitation of persons convicted of criminal behavior. This type of learning can be contained within a specific course. The use of a specific course or set of courses to achieve a set of learning goals can be termed the Dedicated Course approach. Setting up such a course requires faculty time and the development of expertise that may fall outside his or her primary disciplinary area. Sometimes such courses are not strictly speaking dedicated but are selected from an existing set of courses whose primary design is for some other purpose. The advantages of the Dedicated Course approach are that the course goals can be carefully articulated and made clear to the students, and that very specific knowledge bases can be developed.
A second approach is to infuse ideas and perspectives into existing courses throughout the curriculum, where appropriate. For example, if we wished to have students become aware of important applications of knowledge to global issues, it is possible to include an emphasis on such applications in a variety of courses. In biology, there are applications to issues of emerging world diseases; in geology, the issue of water availability on political crises; in art and literature, the understanding of cultural differences and their effects on individuals. This approach is *Infusion*; there is no one course that contains all of the material, but it becomes part of many courses. Infusion approaches require a great deal of faculty development and planning. They may be attractive approaches where the goals involve a long-term, slowly developing set of student interests, behavior, and attitudes. Since a significant part of altruism has to do with the transformation of individual personalities, the infusion approach may have some value.

**Dedicated Course Approach to Altruism**

If we wished to have students learn specific material that encourages altruism, such materials might be embedded in a course that urges students to consider their life choices, provides information on making choices, gives them tools for cost-benefit analyses, encourages them to think about both extrinsic and other rewards for various courses of action, and gives them the opportunity to consider specific ideas about their future. Such a course might be entitled, “Bridge to the Future”. It could include the following elements: The importance of choice; the goals of liberal education including effective action; analyses of various career paths, tools for analyzing the costs and benefits of career choices and activities, consideration of personal goals, and significant global issues. The material on cost benefit analyses would include some attempts to determine both extrinsic costs and benefits and intrinsic costs and benefits, such as quality of life. Extrinsic costs and benefits focus on health, economics, and environmental events such as
global warming. Costs include both what we would have to invest in addressing particular global issues and the costs of not addressing them. For example, one topic in the course would be the environment. Within that topic would be some consideration of the evidence that a public policy of encouraging responsible use of the environment will be economically preferable to a policy with no such economic incentives. Intrinsic costs include the quality of life. The course would end with students engaging in personal reflections on their own choices. These reflections would focus on their own tradeoffs: To what extent do they wish to be involved in the sacrifices and benefits of various life choices?

A brief sketch of these potential elements follows:

**The importance of personal choice.** This would be a section that begins with some material on the importance of developing role identity, stressing the positive life fulfilling effects of successful role identity development. This would be followed by a description of the Big Five personality characteristics and their relationship to role identity. The students would have the opportunity to take a personality inventory that would help them identify their own characteristics. There are personality rubrics that could be substituted for the Big Five. The Big Five analysis is mentioned here because of its current visibility in the literature on personality, but it could be replaced by other personality theories for which tests exist. The Myers-Briggs Type Inventory is a test based on one such alternative approach.

**Goals of Liberal Education.** The students would read at least one book on liberal education and write a paper on its goals. A critical part of such a paper would be consideration of the question about whether a liberal education should include action in the contemporary world. An example of a book that might be on the syllabus is Martha Nussbaum’s *Cultivating Humanity*. An
interesting exercise would be to look at various College mission statements along with the mission statements of organizations such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The goal of this portion of the course would be to have students consider their education and relate it to their personal futures. In my view, these goals should include motivation for action in the world, although it is important to note that not everyone would agree.

**Cost-benefit Analysis.** This portion of the course would have a significant component of economics. We would want students to have the tools to understand the cost of investing in trying to do such things as clean up the environment, improve the quality of our schools or eradicate certain diseases. Analysis of intrinsic costs and benefits would be more difficult, but considerations of quality of life in the broadest sense would certainly be part of this.

**The Nature of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Rewards for Altruism.** Students would be exposed to some of the literature on altruism, including the effects of happiness, personal health, and personality.

**Global Issues.** This portion of the course would present several case studies of issues that have an impact on the lives of each of us. Each could be studied in detail. The study would include an emphasis on cost-benefit analyses, the relationship of these issues to the individual and the question of whether the individual would become involved in some altruistic fashion.

**The Grand Bargain.** Students would be asked to reflect on the choices they face. They would engage in a reflective piece on what they wish to accomplish in the future. The emphasis is not so much on making the “right” choice as on trying to make an informed choice. Altruism is not so much the correct way as it is a way, one that has various rewards, but also involves some sacrifices.
A sample syllabus is included as Appendix C.

The dedicated course approach, as mentioned above, has the advantage of presenting information in a clear way. For example, if there are specific economic benefits to altruistic behavior (leaving aside the question of whether to label the behavior as “altruistic”) then these can be presented as part of a knowledge base. Similarly, if there are health benefits to altruistic behavior, these can be presented in a straightforward fashion.

**Infusion Approach to Altruism**

Encouraging the development of certain personality characteristics can have a transformative effect on students. Just as an emphasis on writing across all appropriate courses in the curriculum can enable students to become more effective writers, an emphasis on the development of role identity can lead students to a clear understanding of who and what they want to be. Because altruism is associated with particular personality characteristics, including, in all likelihood, good role identity, a promising approach is to encourage the development of these characteristics. These are holistic qualities that are likely to develop slowly over time. I describe three characteristics here: Development of ideas on the relationship of learning to one’s personal life and sense of self; the development of an outward looking perspective, and the development of global understanding.

**Relating Ideas to the Self.** Many topics or themes can be understood in abstract, non-personal terms. The interpretation of a novel, material on education and poverty, and the differences between the styles of two composers can be understood without a sense of personal involvement. I suggest that we urge students at all times to see knowledge bases as not abstractions to be absorbed but as knowledge that ultimately relates to them and to their existence. There is some
evidence that relating information to one’s own life improves its memorability. The emphasis here is on how relating material to one’s ideas can help the development of a sense of self. Certainly self-awareness can be enhanced by thinking about how the motivation of a character in a novel can relate to one’s own motivation or how education is important to one’s economic future or how one reacts emotionally to different styles of music. This can help in the development of role identity, which in turn will enhance a tendency toward altruism.

There are many ways to encourage this. An obvious one is to have faculty development opportunities in which there is discussion of techniques and assignments that will help students relate materials to themselves and create a stronger sense of self.

**Outward Focused Perspective.** Just as engagement can help students relate ideas to themselves, it can help them relate ideas to the external world. Studying a character in a novel can help us understand others. Similarly, the role of education in poverty can help us understand why some persons suffer from poverty and think about ways to alleviate that poverty. Thinking about why certain composers work to create certain types of work can help to understand the culture in which they grew up, the influences of others and the effect of their work on audiences. This awareness of the external world and of the people in it is known to be important in altruism, as demonstrated by the correlation between extraversion and altruism. In fact, one theory of altruism places emphasis on empathy; being able to understand the emotional feelings of others may be an important key to acting altruistically. In short, focusing outwardly may enhance personality characteristics of altruism.
Once again, this seems to suggest programs of faculty development that help instructors design activities that will produce a particular focus in students, in this case an outward looking focus. An example would be pointing students to external applications of the ideas they encounter.

The outward focused perspective may seem to be at odds with the idea of relating ideas to the self; one is an inward focus, the other external. What can make these compatible is an emphasis on deep engagement with ideas and their relationship to self, others and the contemporary world. The development of relationships between ideas and the individual can occur at the same time as the development of relationships between ideas and the external world. There are empirical questions here, but it seems quite possible that an emphasis on engagement will enhance both a sense of self and a sense of others. One key may be an understanding that the world consists of both oneself and of others.

**Global Perspective.** The twenty-first century has brought with it an inevitable increase in the effects of global issues on the individual. Events in faraway countries affect each of us, even if we do not know much about their details. An understanding of these influences is critical for a life of effective functioning. It is also likely to increase altruism. Knowledge of the pain and suffering of others is going to cause consideration of others to emerge from the individual.

Once again, there are faculty development opportunities. In virtually all disciplines, faculty who have initially thought their subject matter had no bearing on global issues have found they could generate examples if prodded to do so. Such examples can affect what they do in the classroom.

If altruistic behavior results both from a specific understanding of such empirical knowledge as the health inducing nature of acting altruistically, and from long term personality and attitude development, then it seems likely that both the dedicated course and infusion approaches can
have value. I suggest both here, although I suspect that either by itself can be valuable if applied
with energy and commitment.

CONCLUSION

The analysis here suggests that there are factors related to altruism. If we are committed to
asserting that enhancing altruistic behavior is a legitimate goal of liberal education, then we can
create programs based on these factors that encourage altruistic behavior in our students. These
programs involve both a Dedicated Course approach and an Infusion approach.
Appendix A  Sample Altruism Measure


Scale:
Using the following scale, please select the category that conforms to the frequency with which you have carried out the following acts.

1 - Never
2 - Once
3 - More Once
4 - Often
5 - Very Often

1.) I have helped push a stranger's car that was broken down or out of gas.
2.) I have given directions to a stranger.
3.) I have made change for a stranger.
4.) I have given money to a charity.
5.) I have given money to a stranger who needed it (or asked me for it).
6.) I have donated goods or clothes to a charity.
7.) I have done volunteer work for a charity.
8.) I have donated blood.
9.) I have helped carry a stranger's belongings (books, parcels, etc).
10.) I have delayed an elevator and held the door open for a stranger.
11.) I have allowed someone to go ahead of me in a lineup (in the supermarket, at a copy machine, at a fast-food restaurant).
12.) I have given a stranger a lift in my car.
13.) I have pointed out a clerk's error (in a bank, at the supermarket) in undercharging me for an item.
14.) I have let a neighbor whom I didn't know too well borrow an item of some value tome (eg, a dish, tools, etc).
15.) I have bought 'charity' holiday cards deliberately because I knew it was a good cause.
16.) I have helped a classmate who I did not know that well with an assignment when my knowledge was greater than his or hers.
17.) I have, before being asked, voluntarily looked after a neighbor's pets or children without being paid for it.
18.) I have offered to help a handicapped or elderly stranger across a street.
19.) I have offered my seat on a bus or train to a stranger who was standing.
20.) I have helped an acquaintance to move households.

Scoring:
Score scale
Appendix B- Sample Items for Big Five Traits

Taken from Wikipedia, Big Five Personality Traits

Openness to experience- Sample items

- I have a rich vocabulary.
- I have a vivid imagination.
- I have excellent ideas.
- I am quick to understand things.
- I use difficult words.

- I am full of ideas.
- I am not interested in abstractions. *(reversed)*
- I do not have a good imagination. *(reversed)*
- I have difficulty understanding abstract ideas. *(reversed)*

Conscientiousness- Sample items

- I am always prepared.
- I pay attention to details.
- I get chores done right away.
- I like order.
- I follow a schedule.
- I am exacting in my work.
- I leave my belongings around. *(reversed)*
- I make a mess of things. *(reversed)*
- I often forget to put things back in their proper place. *(reversed)*
- I shirk my duties. *(reversed)*

Extraversion- Sample items

- I am the life of the party.
- I don't mind being the center of attention.
- I feel comfortable around people.
- I start conversations.
- I talk to a lot of different people at parties.
- I don't talk a lot. *(reversed)*
- I think a lot before I speak or act. *(reversed)*
- I don't like to draw attention to myself. *(reversed)*
- I am quiet around strangers. *(reversed)*
- I have no intention of talking in large crowds. *(reversed)*

Agreeableness- Sample items
• I am interested in people.
• I sympathize with others' feelings.
• I have a soft heart.
• I take time out for others.
• I feel others' emotions.
• I make people feel at ease.
• I am not really interested in others. (reversed)
• I insult people. (reversed)
• I am not interested in other people's problems. (reversed)
• I feel little concern for others. (reversed) [51]

**Neuroticism - Sample items**

• I am easily disturbed.
• I change my mood a lot.
• I get irritated easily.
• I get stressed out easily.
• I get upset easily.
• I have frequent mood swings.
• I worry about things.
• I am much more anxious than most people. [51]
• I am relaxed most of the time. (reversed)
• I seldom feel blue. (reversed) [51]
Sample Syllabus. Bridge to the Future

1. Role Identity, Personality Characteristics and the Importance of Choice
   a. Erikson’s Concept of Role Identity
   b. The fulfilling effects of personal choice: Having an internal sense of control
   c. The Big Five of personality and social interests

   Activity: Students take a personality inventory and consider its implications

2. Liberal Education and personal goals
   a. Historical ideas on liberal learning
   b. Contemporary ideas
      i. Martha Nussbaum
      ii. Sample liberal arts colleges
      iii. Other statements on liberal education
   c. Liberal education goals and personal goals
   d. The Grand Tradeoff: What will I sacrifice for a “good life”?

   Activity: Students write a paper on the goals of liberal education and how they relate to them.

3. Cost Benefit Analysis
   a. Extrinsic variables
   b. Intrinsic variables
   c. The assignment of Values

   Activity: An exam that includes some mastery of cost-benefit analysis and an essay on extrinsic and intrinsic rewards

4. Cost Benefits and Action
   a. Some data on altruism
   b. The costs and benefits of active engagement in the contemporary world.
   c. Alternatives to action based on altruism.

   Activity: Group discussion of the desirability of altruism and alternative foundations for individual action

5. Some Global Issues
   a. World diseases
   b. Science and technology
   c. Military preparedness- How many aircraft carriers do we need?
   d. Education
   e. Poverty
   f. Medicine

   Activity: Students do an analysis of a particular case study

6. The Grand Tradeoff Revisited
   What does all of this mean for me?

   Activity: Students do a reflective paper on choices available to them and the meaning of these choices.