

Altruism–Self-Interest Archetypes: A Paradigmatic Narrative of Counseling Professionals



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The quality of the therapeutic relationship and the personal characteristics of professional counselors are key determinants of positive counseling outcomes and decision making, and they are believed to be influenced by conscious and unconscious processes. Beliefs about the unconscious nature of altruism and self-interest among 25 mental health professionals were examined through a paradigmatic narrative analysis. Data from 19 semi-structured individual interviews, one focus group, 19 artifacts and participant member checks were subjected to a secondary qualitative analysis. The results of the analysis generated three salient archetypes representative of the altruism–self-interest dynamic: exocentric altruist, endocentric altruist, and psychological egoist.

Keywords: professional counselors, altruism, self-interest, archetype, qualitative, paradigmatic narrative analysis

The constructs *altruism* and *self-interest* have long been described in dichotomous terms and as the sole motivators of human behavior (Holmes, Miller, & Lerner, 2002; Simpson, Irwin, & Lawrence, 2006). In 1851, Comte defined the term altruism as “self-sacrifice for the benefit of others” (1875/2001, p. 565). More than a century later, Sober (1993) defined self-interest as “the sole fixation on gaining pleasure and avoiding pain.” Because these two constructs typically have been associated with individuals’ actions and viewed through a polarized lens, there is a dearth of research examining the unified and unconscious nature of both altruism and self-interest (Bishop, 2000). The heretofore dichotomous and superficial understanding of these constructs has enabled individuals to maintain an inaccurate view of altruistic and self-interest oriented behaviors (Flynn & Black, 2011; Holmes, Miller, & Lerner, 2002), resulting in a value-based perspective that perpetuates under-informed over-generalizations of the phenomenon (e.g., people who give to others are “good” and those who take for themselves are “bad”).

Professional literature presents mixed messages regarding altruism and self-interest. To date, the concept of self-interest has seldom been explicitly examined within the counseling profession. Current literature largely describes professional counselors’ self-interest in terms of personal wellness, self-advocacy, positive beliefs, self-care and the development of self-regulatory systems (Hendricks, 2008; Hermon & Hazler, 1999; Myers & Sweeney, 2008; Myers, Sweeney, & White, 2002; Osborn, 2004). A smaller body of literature encourages professional counselors to maintain effective professional boundaries and to seek compensation commensurate with their level of training (Bernard, 2006; Myers et al., 2002). The literature on wellness, boundaries and monetary compensation sometimes conflicts with professional counseling’s altruistic foundation and has garnered less attention than professional literature that focuses almost exclusively on meeting the needs of clients. Although recent efforts have been made to address counselor impairment and burnout (e.g., Ohrt & Cunningham, 2012; Parker & Henfield, 2012), very little attention has centered on understanding counselor self-interest. For example, professional counselors are

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called to advocate for the underserved, to provide a percentage of their services pro bono, and to secure referrals for clients unable to pay the professional counselor's rate (American Counseling Association, 2005; Osborn, West, Bubenzer, Duba, & Olson, 2003). Professional counseling is a service-oriented profession, yet the almost exclusive focus on altruistic acts (e.g., giving of oneself) without a concomitant discussion of professional counselor self-interest potentially creates a culture of professional self-sacrifice and martyrdom that places counselors at risk for burnout and clients at risk for negative outcomes.

Although the negative consequences of an exclusive focus on altruism in professional counseling are evident, there has been limited scholarly dialogue on the unconscious nature of altruism and self-interest. Classic literature postulates that acts of altruism are disguised expressions of greed, with self-interest seen as a form of greed that may be exhibited as acts of displacement or sublimation (Freud, 1974). Contemporary literature encourages professional counselors to recognize how their own unconscious material may be projected onto their clientele and thereby affect the therapeutic relationship (Hackney & Cormier, 2009). We, the authors, assert that professional counselors and their clients may benefit from a more transparent discussion and consideration of counselors' altruism and self-interest. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the unconscious nature of the construct altruism–self-interest through a secondary supplemental analysis (Heaton, 2008), following the tenets of paradigmatic narrative analysis. Flynn's (2009) existing data set was utilized to explore the emergence of unconscious phenomena within the various participants' narratives. This analysis revealed three archetypal representations of the altruism–self-interest phenomenon expressed within the lived experiences of professional counselors. A brief review of archetypes is provided to set the context for the reader.

Archetypes

Carl Gustav Jung's (1875–1961) heuristic insights into the collective unconscious and primordial archetypal images have implications for altruism–self-interest and the present research. According to Jung (1969), the collective unconscious could encompass certain inherited aspects of mental life. Jung viewed two aspects of the collective unconscious as essential: the non-dichotomous interconnectedness of mind and body and the principle of natural selection through which various patterns evolved over time (i.e., archetypes).

Jung (1969) defined archetype as “an unconscious representation from the collective unconscious.” Archetypes can be recognized only through situations in which they occur, thus making their existence ambiguous and non-dichotomous. Jung also recognized the confounding nature of this construct, as evidenced in this quotation from 1953: “I admit at once that [the concept of archetypes] is a controversial idea and more than a little perplexing” (p. 15). He asserted that the process of exploring archetypes was parallel to the examination of humankind's inherited motifs regarding thoughts, feelings, dreams and religion. In other words, an archetype was and is a human universal that continues to emerge throughout history.

Jung (1969) described countless archetypes that he believed humans were compelled to act upon throughout their lives. In addition, he relied on interpreting symbols and dreams to access a client's archetypes. Some of the most commonly referenced archetypes include the trickster, the lover, the divine child, the shadow, the magical animal, the nurturing mother, the witch, the law-giving father, the devil, mandalas, trinities, judgment, heaven, hell and atonement. Mother and father serve as basic archetypes that have governed humankind from the beginning of time and history (Jung, 1986). The mother archetype (also referred to as goddess and great mother) symbolically represents ruler of Earth, bearer of fertility, giver of life, exhibitor of tolerance and acceptance of strangers, nurturer of family, and dispenser of compassion or mercy in human relations. The father archetype (also referred to as son of the great mother and wise old man) symbolizes the bringer of discipline and order, and represents honor, glory, fame, social hierarchy, secret knowledge, and wisdom.

Jung never specifically addressed altruism and self-interest in relation to archetypes, yet the descriptive elements of the mother and father archetypes seem to be reflected in the altruism–self-interest concept described by Flynn and Black (2011). We, the authors, acknowledge the risk of reinforcing gender-role stereotypes (i.e., mothers as self-sacrificing nurturers [altruism] and males as self-focused loners [self-interest]), yet we believe these images persist because archetypes represent collectively inherited unconscious ideas, patterns of thought, and images universally present in individual psyches.

Recent research has provided an initial exploration of the depth and breadth of the constructs of altruism and self-interest in the daily lives of professional counselors (Flynn & Black, 2011). The results of Flynn & Black’s qualitative study provided initial evidence that altruism and self-interest could more accurately be viewed as a unified, self-sustaining construct entitled altruism–self-interest. Additionally, Flynn and Black found initial evidence consistent with unconscious aspects of the initiation, process, and sustainability of altruism–self-interest. They postulated that the altruism–self-interest construct promoted an unconscious view of oneself (archetype) as helpful to others (altruism) while simultaneously experiencing or seeking positive or beneficial feelings for oneself (self-interest). The existence and relevance of these archetypes, although noted in the original study, were not subjected to analysis, as they were beyond the scope of the original guiding research questions.

Method

The authors hypothesized that the altruism–self-interest phenomenon described in Flynn’s (2009) original study potentially represented archetypal images for the participants. A secondary analysis of the original data was conducted through a paradigmatic narrative lens. In the paragraphs that follow, the authors briefly describe secondary supplemental analysis and paradigmatic narrative inquiry. For a more detailed depiction of each aspect, please see Heaton (2004) and Bruner (1985), respectively.

Secondary Supplemental Analysis

Beginning in the mid-1980s, secondary analysis of qualitative data has been conducted in the social sciences. Numerous authors (Corti, Witzel, & Bishop, 2005; Gladstone & Volpe, 2008; Hakim, 1982; Hays & Singh, 2012; Heaton, 2004; 2008) have documented sound rationale, procedures and protocols for the use of secondary analysis. For the purposes of the present study, the authors carefully considered the questions posed by Van den Berg (2005) and assessed and confirmed (a) our ethical responsibilities to the original participants, (b) our access to rich and abundant amounts of contextualized data (e.g., complete interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, artifacts, field notes, journals, and audit trails), and (c) the relevance, utility, and feasibility of the study. The authors opted to engage in a supplementary secondary analysis, as defined by Heaton (2008), in which we sought “a more in-depth analysis of an emergent issue or aspect of the data that was not addressed or was only partially addressed in the primary study” (p. 39).

Paradigmatic narrative analysis is a qualitative method that identifies instances of information and groups them into general concepts that share a common attribute (e.g., archetype) (Polkinghorne, 1995). Paradigmatic reasoning, which is similar to inductive reasoning, constitutes people’s experiences as consistent and ordered, producing cognitive networks of concepts that permit people to create experiences by putting emphasis on the repeating elements (Bruner, 1985; Lai, 2010). Our rationale for conducting this investigation centered on four points: (a) participants’ narratives collected in the original study were so dense and rich that they could not adequately be represented in one published work, so it was imperative that the participants’ voices be heard and honored with respect to this personal and value-ridden topic; (b) because participants provided recursive messages throughout the original interviews, the use of a paradigmatic structure allowed us to construct participants’ experiences in an organized manner; (c) the use of narrative inquiry allowed for the unconscious

nature of altruism–self-interest to be reported in a comprehensible literary structure; and (d) the present study could potentially yield insights into latent categorical concepts.

Original Research Study

Flynn's (2009) study provided a grounded theory that described the promotion, initiation, and maintenance of altruism–self-interest for professional counselors. The term *professional counselor*, as it is used here, describes individuals who engage in an active clinical practice and possess (or are seeking) at least a master's degree in counseling or psychology. Participants in Flynn's (2009) study were asked how they defined and experienced altruism; how they defined and experienced self-interest; and what, if any, synergy, tension, or conflict they experienced relative to these two constructs in their practice and the profession. Six data sources were utilized to address these questions: a measure of altruism, individual interviews, a focus group, participant artifacts, member-checking, and a topical analysis of subject matter published during the last decade in several major professional counseling journals.

Participants. Participants held or were seeking a graduate degree (master's or doctorate) in counseling, psychology, or counselor education, and they were providing counseling services or were a recognized but retired scholar in counselor education. A total of 25 individuals participated without compensation.

The sample comprised 10 women (40%) and 15 men (60%) who ranged in age from 25 to 79 years ($M = 49.76$). The self-reported ethnicities of participants were Caucasian (80%), Hispanic (4%), Asian (4%), Native American (4%), Arabian (4%), and Jewish (4%). The professional identity of the sample of 25 participants included (a) seven professional counselors (28%), (b) 14 counselor educators (84%), (c) three marriage and family therapists (12%), (d) and one psychologist (4%) (Flynn & Black, 2011).

Narrative Analysis of Original Data

According to Weglowska-Rzepa, Kowal, Park, and Lee (2008), archetypes can be discovered when an individual processes certain information and stimuli. The authors utilized a combination of qualitative data sources to further distill participants' experiences. By employing multiple qualitative data sources, the authors triangulated data to create a confluence of evidence that was designed to increase credibility (Denzin, 1970; Eisner, 1991) and to explore the latent experiences of the participants. Through paradigmatic narrative inquiry, the participants' experiences were analyzed to uncover the unconscious nature of altruism–self-interest. Initially, a paradigmatic cross-analysis of the participants' narratives and artifacts was conducted. The authors examined 19 individual interviews and the conversation of seven focus group members (25 total participants; one member participated in an interview and the focus group), which resulted in an initial group of emergent narratives/statements that were later grouped into 23 categories. A second level of analysis examined all non-dichotomous narratives and resulted in 12 categories. Next, an independent examination of the 37 artifacts was conducted to examine their relevance in light of the emerging narrative. This combined cross-analysis revealed three emergent archetypes involving altruism–self-interest: the exocentric altruist, the endocentric altruist, and the psychological egoist. The credibility and confirmation of the secondary supplemental analysis were explored through a participant member check. Specifically, the first author submitted the original transcript, descriptions of the three emergent archetypes, and samples of relevant quotations to each of the 19 individual interview participants for member-checking. Fourteen of the 19 individual interview participants confirmed the accuracy and relevance of archetypes, specific quotations, and the associated archetype.

To control for bias and group think, the results of the secondary and paradigmatic analyses were submitted to two independent auditors, unrelated to either original or secondary analysis. Each auditor, experienced in qualitative methodology, reviewed the interview transcript, initial codes, codes related to the emergent categories, and description of the archetypes with related quotations. The auditors confirmed the initial findings and sought clarification related to the description of three emergent archetypes. Subsequent to the completion

of external auditing, the literature related to the intersections of altruism and self-interest was examined to determine whether the emergent categories had previously been described. The general descriptions did in fact exist (Bond, 1996; Karylowski, 1982); however, there was a dearth of research relating these categories to the unconscious.

The authors returned to Carl Jung's (1969) theory that unconscious structures underlie human behavior and experiences, and can be represented by various archetypes. Jung described these archetypes as universal psychic structures and postulated that they were the representations of innate unconscious experience. Salient to Jung's theory of archetypes are their fluidness throughout an individual's life. For example, a person may demonstrate the shadow archetype one moment, and later the same person may demonstrate the trickster archetype. The authors noticed a similar fluidness in the participants' demonstration and reporting of the three archetypes. Specifically, during a particular dialogue or interview, participants would demonstrate a particular archetype and then demonstrate another archetype within the same dialogue or interview.

Results

Three categories of unconscious archetypes emerged from the paradigmatic analysis: exocentric altruist, endocentric altruist, and psychological egoist. The archetypes describe the unconscious nature of the emergent theory of altruism–self-interest. These categories were revised until they provided the best possible fit with a categorical scheme for the data set seeking to locate common categorization among the stories participants presented (Polkinghorne, 1995; Sexton, 2007). The process of data analysis yielded descriptions of each archetype.

According to Jung (1968), “A word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider ‘unconscious’ aspect...” (p. 4). The data demonstrate the introspection and dynamic conversation participants shared in relation to the constructs of altruism and self-interest. To preserve confidentiality, all participants' quotations used in support of each archetype are represented by an unassociated letter. Additionally, quotations were organized around the various data collection methods to aid in a structured presentation.

Exocentric Altruist Archetype

The exocentric altruist archetype describes an individual who receives internal gratification from the act of giving, yet does not deliberately take part in charitable acts with the intention of receiving internal gratification. Participants who demonstrated the exocentric altruist archetype reported the desire to assist others personally or financially because of a personal belief in giving, with no preconceived expectation for self, for recognition or for personal gain.

Individual interviews. Fifteen of 19 participants related stories of professionally oriented tasks that were completed for the good of humanity. Participant J reported on her personal and professional ethics regarding clients who could not continue paying for professional services:

I've had clients who have had insurance and then their benefits run out, so I've kept them as clients until we can figure out another...financial arrangement or I can make referrals to them to community resources.

Within this quotation, participant J demonstrated the exocentric altruist archetype by continuing to provide services for clients who could not pay. Exocentric altruists put the needs of others before self to achieve a higher moral principle consistent with their values. The content of this quotation represents the participant's motivation to care for clients despite the client's inability to immediately reciprocate in an equitable fashion (pay for services rendered); thus, this participant is willing to delay or even forgo equity in the professional relationship.

Ten of the 19 participants provided narratives involving natural disasters in which they volunteered to help those who had suffered. Participant B explained his process in responding to Hurricane Katrina:

And I think that was the case with Katrina. I think there it was just, you know, just 'cause you saw the sheer devastation. I don't think it was a matter of self-interest, but to help keep you engaged. I think it was the altruism and knowing that...it was just...where I should be at the moment.

The content of this quotation demonstrates that participant B may have engaged in exocentric altruism because of a personal calling to aid victims of indescribable suffering and devastation associated with a natural disaster. The exocentric altruist describes feeling internally compelled to assist others while simultaneously limiting his or her focus on self.

Focus group. All members of the focus group described incidents when they chose to give altruistically to the profession at a cost to their personal or professional life. Within the focus group setting, participants demonstrated a profound openness when discussing their altruistic acts and achievements. A counselor educator described exocentric altruism in his daily interactions with students. Participant B stated:

I'm thinking as a professor working with students. I do it because I care about them and I want to do it and if somebody's overwhelmed and has some personal stuff going on and they're taking three classes, and it's just too much for them and they talk to me after class I could just say, 'well you know I gotta get going. Shoot me an email.' But I almost always say, 'well let's go up to my office and talk a little bit' and then they vent, and we talk. Then I call my wife and say I'm late. Because, I had a student who had some difficulties and we tried to iron it out...

Exocentric altruists aid others because it appears to be something they must do. There does not seem to be any evaluation of mutuality or equity on the part of the participants.

Endocentric Altruist Archetype

The essence of the endocentric altruist archetype is centered on helping a person in need while concurrently feeling good about the self. Participants who demonstrated the endocentric altruist archetype reported a desire to assist others, with a preconceived or reported concern for self and some expectation of mutual benefit from the behavior.

Individual interviews. Seventeen of the 19 participants noted the mutual reinforcement that both the giver and receiver of an altruistic act received. Participant K extended the mutual benefit of an altruistic act a step further when he acknowledged the benefit a witness received from an altruistic act:

People who perform an altruistic act[s] get...big benefits, persons receiving get a benefit ...with a little less, and people watching the altruistic act benefit, so I think it's good for us...and it's very good for others. Within this quotation, participant K described the endocentric altruist perceptions of the benefits of giving. Whether a person is attempting to give or is on the receiving end of an altruistic act, that person is attending to self-interest. The participant closes his statement by acknowledging that the benefits extend beyond the one-to-one interaction to encompass observers.

Eight participants focused on how the monetary compensation for services rendered encouraged excellence in client care. Participant L described how being paid well helps support the counselor's personal happiness and promotes excellence in client care:

I think to value ourselves...treat ourselves well is also to treat it [counseling] as a business. I mean if you look at my three, the three core [business collaborators]...; we really treat it as a business...; we really make a good living and we really help a lot of people. And we really do a lot of good in the world. And I like that model.

Participant J demonstrated the endocentric altruist archetype by acknowledging the reciprocity of treating oneself well while effectively treating one's clientele. In the words commonly attributed to Benjamin Franklin, Participant J was "doing well by doing good."

Focus group. Six focus group participants described incidents representing the interplay of altruism and self-interest within human behavior. During the focus group in the original study, participants were asked to consider altruism and self-interest in the accomplishments of Mother Teresa. Participants identified Mother Teresa's behavior as a blend of altruism and self-interest. The following discussion exemplifies participants' perceptions of endocentric altruism in the spiritual leadership of Mother Teresa:

Participant C: When you said that [altruism does not exist], Mother Teresa popped into my mind. I mean did she give, get, give, get, give, get? [indicating a transactional approach]

Participant E (in response): I think she got tons. That may not have been her explicit reason for her, but I don't think she would have continued if she wasn't getting something...

Participant G: For me that question was a really good one. 'Cause when you think of the opposite to not do something, the contrast if you can't live with that code right, then it just seems like it would be a natural part of your value system. Mother Teresa's value system was...How could she not do what she did? Or accomplish all the things she chose and hoped to accomplish.

As evident within the above discussion, the endocentric altruist aids others and understands mutual interests of the giver (Mother Teresa) and receiver (those she touched).

Psychological Egoist Archetype

The psychological egoist archetype describes individuals who give solely to fulfill their own self-interest. Participants who demonstrated the psychological egoist archetype reported giving with the aim of meeting personal needs, wants or desires.

Individual interviews. Ten of the 19 participants portrayed all human behavior as rooted in self-interest. Descriptions of this core self-interest perception included the words self-interest, greed, capitalist, and opportunist. Participant K noted humanity's core self-interest value:

...you have needs and wants, and there are rewards and punishments. Let's not fool ourselves. Human beings at our basis are...opportunists. We're going to look for the best opportunity to fulfill what we think is fulfilling...and even when we have an ideal, our self-interest will kick in all the time, whether we think it's there or not.

Within this quotation, participant K demonstrates the psychological egoist archetype by describing self-interest as the sole motivation of all human behavior. Participant K described altruism as an ideal and self-interest as inextricably intertwined with altruistic behavior.

Six of the 19 participants provided detailed information on their experiences of witnessing fellow professional counselors who exhibited psychological egoism in negative and inappropriate ways. Participant I provided the following narrative:

Oh...and, who's that guy? [mental health professional who wrote a 'pop' psychology book for couples]
Uh...they are just to me like used car salesmen. They just found a niche to describe themselves, you know, they're just good at publishing and...I went to his workshop in Oregon as a therapy counselor when I was on internship and, um, he was introduced as the Moses of family therapy (laughter).

Within this quotation, participant I demonstrated the psychological egoist archetype through her belief in the overriding self-interest of a counselor who authored "pop" psychology books. Participant I went so far as to describe this author as "grandiose in his self-promotion."

Focus group. Four of the seven focus group participants described incidents in which the sole motivation of human behavior was self-interest. The following excerpt is a dialogue among several members of the focus group. The focus group members dismiss the existence of altruism and cite self-interest as the sole motivation of human behavior. This discussion exemplifies participants' perceptions of psychological egoism as the motivation to help clients within the counseling relationship:

Participant A: I've been thinking this from the very beginning...is there such a thing as charity? I've been thinking about it for the past hour. For me, that's what this one comes down to because are we not taking care of ourselves through taking care of others. Because we would feel like shit about ourselves if we didn't and I hate to be cynical, because there is something to be said for [the fact that] I do feel good if I do help this person...

Participant F: So, does true altruism actually exist?

Participant C: I actually don't think it does.

The psychological egoist gives to others mainly for self-benefit. Participants did not report much, if any, recognition of mutuality, but they did describe humanitarian actions motivated by self-interest.

Artifact Analysis

All 19 individual interview participants were asked to provide two artifacts: one that represented their professional (versus personal) altruism, and a second that represented their professional self-interest. Eighteen of the 19 participants provided photographs of artifacts that represented their altruism and self-interest (Flynn & Black, 2011).

The aforementioned artifacts were reanalyzed and reconsidered in conjunction with the participant descriptions and the emerging descriptions of the three archetypes. Every participant's altruistic artifact description demonstrated both endocentric and exocentric altruist archetypes; however, none of the descriptions included overt aspects of the psychological egoist archetype. For example, participant K elaborated on a heart-shaped business card holder:

...it's a business card holder, but it's really cool. It's a set of hands, and then, so the hands look like they're looking out and then there's kind of like a heart shape in the middle... To me it was, I feel like the symbolism of hands, and reaching out, being able to hold someone up, being needed to give,... I will hold you, I will support you.

Participant K revealed the endocentric archetype with her comment, "being needed to give." There is a mutual benefit to being needed and giving. The exocentric archetype came with the comment, "I will hold you, I will support you."

Every participant's description of his or her self-interest artifact included aspects of the endocentric altruist archetype, and five included the psychological egoist archetype. Interestingly, none of the participants' descriptions of self-interest artifacts included aspects of exocentric altruism. For example, participant J described his wizard figurine artifact:

My self-interest artifact is, weirdly enough, this little wizard. I got it...it's a wizard...on one level, I want to know everything. I want power! And not power that hurts others because a wizard...this is a quote from Lord of the Rings... 'A wizard always shows up when you need him and never when you don't.' The wizard is all-seeing, but doesn't take credit for what happens, and catalyzes major transformative events. And so, the wizard is also status, because a wizard is very renowned and nobody messes with the wizard.

Participant J revealed the endocentric altruist archetype with his comment, "A wizard always shows up when you need him." The mutual benefit is exposed with the self-interest of being needed and the altruism of showing up. The psychological egoist archetype is made obvious with the comment "I want power."

Discussion

Three distinct archetypes emerged from the secondary data analysis. Given that the three archetypes emerged in interviews throughout the focus group, were verified by 14 participants' member checks, and were confirmed by two outside auditors, professional counselors are urged to begin a more in-depth dialogue as well as

theoretical and empirical investigations around the dynamic and systemic nature of altruism–self-interest among professional counselors and those in training. These archetypes relate back to the established theory of altruism–self-interest (Flynn & Black, 2011) and create five discussion points.

First, professional counselors need to consider adopting a less dichotomous assessment of human behavior (e.g., “He is wrong because he charged a high fee for his service.”). Although certain acts and behaviors by professional counselors require clear and unambiguous consequences (e.g., egregious boundary violations with clientele, etc.), other behaviors are quite likely the function of something much more in-depth and commonplace than commonly considered. In other words, professional counselors who embody psychological egoism are not at fault or less “normal” than those who exude exocentric altruism because both are normal aspects of human development. Indeed, classic psychological research has depicted individuals as motivated by healthy selfish desires (Maslow, 1950). Maslow described selfishness, within his participants, as a behavior within individuals who have reached levels of self-actualization and have fully satisfied their lower needs, thus self-actualization can be viewed as an antecedent for selfishness. Further, society creates both overt and covert norms, rules, laws, and mores around human behavior. Professional counselors and educators of counselors would benefit from a more critical view of this value-based depiction of human behavior instead of simply accepting it without question. The potential benefits resulting from a systemic change in society’s perception of human behavior could include increased humanism, optimal wellness, less social stigma attached to mental health services, improvement in clinical boundaries, increased levels of intentionality in one’s life, and a system-wide decrease in both burnout and impairment.

A second point of discussion centers on the potential consequences associated with over- or under-activation of a particular archetype. The present research demonstrated the fluid nature of the emergent archetypes in a professional counselor’s everyday life; however, none of the participants described a personal over- or under-adherence to a particular archetype. This finding mirrors Osborn’s (2004) warning that professional counselors should monitor any use of absolutism and Jung’s (1981) perspective that the conscious and unconscious contain temporally connected experiences that are related, as each carries the germ of the other. Many of the participants ($n = 17$) described colleagues who did, in fact, display over- or under-activation of one of the emergent archetypes. Professional counselors could experience burnout and impairment as a result of an over- or under-reliance on one of the emergent archetypes. For example, professional counselors who display an over-reliance on the psychological egoist archetype could be at higher risk for violating others (e.g., sexual relationship with clientele, overcharging clients). Similarly, those who demonstrate an over-reliance on the exocentric altruist archetype may display unnecessary sacrifice for the sake of others that is unrewarded and unacknowledged (e.g., all pro bono client caseload, overly forthright communication with untrustworthy colleagues).

Third, the authors were intrigued by the content and processes by which professional counselors met their personal needs through the therapeutic relationship. Participant S described this experience:

I think they [counselors] are...people motivated more to help others because it makes us feel good and powerful and so then we start to muddy up the definition of altruism...we all know we can try to look really altruistic and inside we’re gloating away...

Ethically, professional counselors are mandated to model and mentor the highest possible level of ethical and moral behavior (American Counseling Association (ACA), 2005; Stevens, 2000). In addition, Rogers (1959) described authenticity as central to self-growth. Given the mandate of moral behavior and benefits of authenticity, professional counselors should explore their personal needs and understand how the counseling of other human beings meets those needs. This exploration could generate optimal levels of acceptance, empathy, and congruence within a professional counselor’s self and compassion for the suffering of others.

A fourth implication centers on counselor educators and supervisors developing curriculum, internship, and coursework that would enhance students’ understanding of how to achieve appropriate self-interest (e.g., fee

structure, implications for consulting, and marketing). Most of the participants admitted that they received very little information within their training that would help them understand a basic business structure, counseling's place in the economy, and how to market and advertise a service (Flynn & Black, 2011). Counselors working in the field who do not pay attention to their own self-interest (i.e., exclusive focus on altruism) are in jeopardy of burnout and impairment. The consequences of a lack of attention to appropriate self-interest (e.g., wellness) are: ignoring one's own stress level, low salaries, frustration, job dissatisfaction, stress-related health problems, lowered work productivity, inability to cope with occupational stress, interpersonal conflict, apathy, and poor boundaries (Baker & Baker, 1999; Ben-Dror, 1994; Flynn & Black, 2011; Osborn, 2004). Counselor education curriculum should resemble the multi-role conception of the field that counselor educators advocate for in many of their scholarly pursuits, including preparation to effectively fulfill multiple roles (e.g., advanced clinician; organizational leader; supervisor; program manager; private practitioner; director; researcher; teacher; and consultant; Sears & Davis, 2003). This could be completed through the creation of a student-friendly internship manual offering experiences in traditional settings (e.g., hospitals, agencies, and school) and settings that offer alternative options (e.g., private practice, adventure-based counseling, and organizational consultation).

Lastly, due to the difficulty of quantitatively exploring unconscious structures (e.g., archetypes), researchers should consider alternative methods that are congruent in exploring unconscious states, traits, and types that are part of the human experience (e.g., in-depth semi-structured interview techniques). Developing a unique research identity among professional counselors appears to be essential for designing research that expands the profession's understanding of covert phenomena that does not lend itself easily to examination by empirical methods (e.g., quantitative methodology, surveys). For example, if a participant endorses a Likert scale point indicating "I somewhat agree" to a statement about altruism, the underlying meaning of that answer could be very different from another participant's "I somewhat agree" response to the very same question. A strength of qualitative research is that it allows participants to describe just what they mean and for their voice to be present in the reporting of results.

Limitations

Two potential limitations should be considered when examining the findings of this research. First, examining participants' reported experiences of particular behaviors (e.g., self-interest) was a subjective experience. Although the author's subjective interpretations were validated through participant member checks, audits, and triangulation, archetypes are subjective in nature and are not meant to be generalized to particular populations. Instead, readers might reflect on their own experience in regard to the emergent archetypes and associated quotations.

The second limitation of this research is the potential for participants to present socially desirable profiles due to the controversial nature of archetypes around the constructs of altruism and self-interest. Jung (1953) was overt about the contentious implications of creating unconscious collectives that describe a common human experience. Describing human universals around the construct of altruism–self-interest had the potential for creating an atmosphere in which participants might present their motivations in a socially desirable manner.

Areas for Future Research

This investigation into the unconscious archetypes that underlie the construct altruism–self-interest begins to provide some understanding for a new query into the unconscious motivating factors of all human behavior. Although qualitatively these constructs appear to be stable, future research should quantify their occurrence in the human experience. This analysis could be conducted through an experiment, survey or creation of an instrument.

A second area that warrants further empirical support is the impact of a person's multicultural background on the emergence of particular archetypes. An investigation of this nature could increase understanding of multicultural issues related to the clients that counselors serve. In addition, this research would help professional counselors examine their own personal experience with the presented archetypes. This personal awareness could create a greater capacity for acceptance of the archetypes in a client's life.

A final area for future research includes a closer examination of the norms and mores governing the occurrence of the emergent archetypes. Participants described the influence of societal values on the occurrence of particular behaviors. These societal values were often described as originating within institutions (e.g., postsecondary institutions), religion, social media, and clinical diagnosis. Understanding the manner in which individuals are influenced to think and act in a certain way could increase awareness of behavior and cognition.

In conclusion, this research represents an attempt to develop an initial understanding of unconscious archetypes that underlie the phenomenon of altruism–self-interest (Flynn & Black, 2011). The results of all four data collection points revealed three emergent archetypes that symbolize common human collectives. The three collectives are the endocentric altruist, the exocentric altruist, and the psychological egoist. These archetypes are unconscious structures that symbolize the underlying behavior related to the phenomenon of altruism–self-interest. Our hope was to encourage professional counselors to understand that all humans possess unconscious collectives that encourage a range of behavior within a particular context. This understanding holds promise for inspiring greater ranges of acceptance, genuineness and congruence.

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