

Request for Proposals

Scientific Research on Unlimited Love - Altruism, Compassion, Service

Letter of Intent Receipt Date: March 29, 2002

Proposal Receipt Date: July 29, 2002

Institute for Research on Unlimited Love
Stephen G. Post, Ph.D., President
A free-standing non-profit 501 (c) (3) located at:
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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Institute for Research on Unlimited Love is devoted to the scientific understanding of other-regarding love in all its manifestations from compassion and kindness to altruism and volunteerism. It seeks to encourage, support, and disseminate high-level scientific research on unlimited love so that we might better understand our human capacities and potential. The Institute also fosters dialogue among researchers, educators, scholars in the humanities, theologians, exemplary practitioners, and the professions in a way that enhances our common understanding based on significant scientific findings.

The following is a broad definition of unlimited love: The essence of love is to affectively affirm as well as to unselfishly delight in the well-being of others, and to engage in acts of care and service on their behalf; unlimited love extends this love to all others without exception in a manner that is enduring and constant. Widely considered the highest form of virtue, unlimited love is often deemed a creative presence underlying all of reality. Such love acknowledges for all humanity the absolutely full significance that, because of egoism, hatred, greed, and group conflict we otherwise acknowledge only for ourselves or for those closest to us.

Rigorous scientific methods in numerous disciplines ranging from neuroscience to psychology are typically applied to the analysis of negative behaviors and psychological conditions. These methods, however, can and should be equally applied to the creative capacities for love, compassion, and altruism. (See S.G. Post, L.G. Underwood, J.P. Schloss, W.B. Hurlbut, eds., *Altruism and Altruistic Love: Science, Philosophy, & Religion in Dialogue*. Oxford University Press, 2002 [www.amazon.com]; see also Pitirim A. Sorokin, *The Ways and Power of Love: Types, Factors, and Techniques of Moral Transformation*, reprinted from the 1954 original with a "Foreword" by Stephen G. Post. Templeton Foundation Press, 2002 [www.templetonpress.org])

Unlimited Love is a principle affirmed universally by great traditions And leaders: "We can do no great things - only small things with great love" (Mother Teresa); "Kind speech and forgiveness is better than alms followed by injury" (Qur'an); "You shall love the alien as yourself" (Leviticus); "Love cures people- both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it" (Dr. Karl Menninger); "God is love" (I John); "Sooner or later, all the peoples of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love" (Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

GOALS

*To better understand the human potential for loving and other-regarding emotion and behavior through studies from all scientific disciplines, including human development, epidemiology and health care, neurobiology and neuroscience, positive psychology, sociology, and evolutionary biology, as well as anthropology, political science, economics, and education.

*To better understand how the expression of unlimited love in society might be fostered, including attention to the roles of education, media, and spiritual-religious beliefs and practices.

*To promote widespread dialogue on the empirical, theoretical, practical, and socially beneficial dimensions of exemplary lives of service and love.

MECHANISM OF SUPPORT

The funding for each individual research project is expected to range from \$30,000 to \$100,000 total. We anticipate funding as many as 30 projects, although the exact number will be dependent upon the receipt of a sufficient number of applications of the highest scientific merit. Projects should usually be completed within two years. Awards are non-renewable. The support may be used for personnel and supplies pertinent to the proposed research. The Institute will look favorably upon applicants who have been able to arrange for matching funds from their home institutions or other funding sources. The Institute will provide funding for principal investigators to attend a meeting, most likely in Cleveland's University Circle, before the projects begin.

ELIGIBILITY

Proposals may be submitted by public or private nonprofit organizations in the United States, such as universities, colleges, hospitals, laboratories, or research institutions. The proposed Principal Investigator (PI) must have a doctoral degree with sufficient training and experience to accomplish the proposed work.

COMPETITION CRITERIA

All proposals will be evaluated and ranked by an independent panel of academic experts. These recommendations and evaluations will be considered by the Institute in all final selections. Proposals will be evaluated in open competition according to the following criteria:

- 1) Capability of the investigators
- 2) Intrinsic merit of the research with regard to progress in scientific understanding
- 3) Relevance with respect to the stated goals of the Institute
- 4) A realistic and rigorously developed methodology, and appropriateness of experimental design
- 5) Detailed knowledge of the nature of the proposed problem to be investigated, including the history and status of existing studies
- 6) Where feasible, (a) a collaboration between scientists and scholars of religion and ethics; and (b) inclusion of religiously significant issues; and (c) if the project involves human research subjects, inclusion of subjects representing faith traditions (e.g., a study on organ donation could easily include attention to motivations among religious donors; a study on adolescent development and altruistic activities could easily include attention to the role of spirituality and religion); and (d) if the study focuses on volunteerism in organizations, inclusion of faith-based groups
- 7) Cost considerations include: adequacy of the proposed resources; budgets that make maximum use of time, resources, and institutional leverage; potential or existing joint project funding (encouraged but not required)

8) A clear plan for submission of findings to leading scholarly journals, presentation at major academic conferences, and, where possible, the extension of published findings into significant monographs (encouraged but not required)

RESEARCH PROGRAM AREAS AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Research proposals are welcome from all scientific disciplines.

The following six research program areas have been developed by a team of research consultants who have written extensive white papers (visit www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org, click on publications, and then on research white papers). These papers include details about the significance of the research area, history of existing research, methodological considerations, annotated bibliographies, and further elaboration on the sample questions listed below. Interdisciplinary applications that pertain to several program areas are also welcome. All applicants are strongly encouraged to read the white papers before applying. The sample questions below are by no means exhaustive.

(1) HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (to review the Human Development white paper, visit www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org, click on publications, and on research white papers)

This research area will focus on analyzing and synthesizing biological, psychological, sociological, spiritual, and religious aspects of the human developmental trajectory that may serve to foster unlimited love and altruism.

What are the variables in parent (mother) -child attunement and attachment that produce a gradient toward healthy and even extraordinary other (object) love as opposed to a gradient toward narcissism and even sociopathy? Another way to put the question is: How does parental love received become transduced in the child to the capacity to give love?

Do those high on altruism or empathy scales do better at choosing "attachment solutions" during separation stress or challenge?

Is the generativity that develops in later adult life on a continuum of human development with other-regarding love and unlimited love?

Is there anything we can learn about the human development of altruistic or unlimited love capacity from a greater understanding of the development of cluster B personalities built on the core of entitlement?

What are the neuropsychiatric elements of the human development of love?

What can be learned about the human development of unlimited love from "religious altruism" in the medical context?

What do we know about how we can teach altruistic behavior and empathy?

Is there a genetics of love?

How powerful are the effects of religious experience, belief, and/or behavior on the capacity to love in an exemplary way?

Do conditions of "brokenness" free us from inauthentic or routinized existence and provoke a response of other-regarding love?

(2) PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICINE (to review the Public Health and Medicine white paper, visit www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org, click on publications, and on research white papers)

Cross-fertilization of the fields of positive psychology and social epidemiology is valued. Among "positive" psychosocial constructs, giving and receiving love has received preliminary scholarly attention requisite to furthering epidemiologic research. Mid-range theories of love have been proposed by psychologists; scales and indices have been developed and validated. Most of this work, though, has focused on romantic attachments, in keeping with the emphasis among researchers on the psychology of love. Broader multidimensional theories, such as the sophisticated taxonomy of sociologist Pitirim Sorokin, have been few. Sorokin conceived of love as comprising seven "aspects" (religious, ethical, ontological, physical, biological, psychological, social). Epidemiologic, clinical, basic-science, psychophysiological, and psychometric research are all viable approaches.

Is love a protective factor against morbidity and mortality?

Does love promote health, psychological well-being, and high-level wellness?

Does love exhibit therapeutic efficacy?

Is love a salutary component of the patient-provider relationship?

What are the physiological mediators of the love-health and love-healing relationships?

What are the psychosocial mediators of the love-health and love-healing relationships?

Are there psychophysiological correlates of giving or receiving love?

What can non-Western and unconventional perspectives on mind-body connections tell us about love?

Can new assessment instruments for love be developed and validated?

What are the most promising theoretical and conceptual models of love?

(3) APPROACHES TO DEFINING MECHANISMS BY WHICH ALTRUISTIC LOVE AFFECTS HEALTH (to review Defining Mechanisms white paper, visit www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org, click on publications, and on research white papers)

The chain of events leading from negative emotional responses to External events to impact on disease has been well worked out. There has been less research into the application of the same model to studying the effects of positive emotional responses on health. The same approaches and standards that have been used in the stress literature can be applied to the studying of the chain of events leading from altruistic love to beneficial effects on health. It is possible that the mechanism by which altruistic love affects health occurs through blocking or attenuating the stress response, or through activating positive neurotransmitter pathways in the brain.

What can we learn about the neurobiology of altruistic love?

What are the neurohormonal and neurotransmitter transduction mechanisms associated with altruistic love?

Does altruistic love positively affect specific aspects of immune cell function or other measurable elements of health or disease? If so, are these effects mediated through neurophysiological pathways, neurotransmitters, neuropeptides, and neurohormones activated by altruistic love?

How do learning, memory, and early maternal environmental factors impact the development of altruistic love behaviors?

(4) OTHER-REGARDING VIRTUES (to review the Other-Regarding Virtues white paper, visit www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org, click on publications, and on research white papers)

Recent advances in the social sciences point to a variety of character traits or dispositions that may predispose people to positive interpersonal relationships. Some philosophers have referred to these traits as "virtues" - i.e., individual dispositions that prepare people for success in the social realm. Traits such as trust, generosity, faith, empathy, kindness, gratitude, forgiveness, and honesty are traits that one would ascribe to individual persons to varying degrees. Society and its institutions socialize people toward the acquisition and expression of these virtues because they are presumed to enhance helping behavior. How are these other-regarding virtues connected to personality and behavior, and to mental, physical, and social well-being? Religions and spiritualities provide many people with social and psychological resources that encourage virtues such as love. Proposals for studies are welcomed that investigate how this takes place - e.g., the extent to which spiritual moments (e.g., mystical states, peak experiences, experiences of awe or reverence) produce loving motivations and behavior.

What are the relationships between religion/spirituality and the other-regarding virtues?

What are the sociological and social-psychological conditions that Foster other-regarding virtues and behavior?

What are the motivations behind other-regarding virtues and their implications?

How can other-regarding virtues be measured beyond standard self-report measures?

What action tendencies accompany other-regarding emotional states?

To what extent can other-regarding virtues be viewed as components of personality?

Are the other-regarding virtues related to health and well-being?

By what physiological or psychological pathways do other-regarding virtues influence health?

How are the other-regarding virtues related to social and interpersonal outcomes?

How can other-regarding virtues be promoted and taught?

(5) EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES ON OTHER REGARD (to review the Evolutionary Perspectives white paper, visit www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org, click on publications, and on research white papers) Human love, widely regarded by religious and wisdom traditions as both An essential means toward human flourishing and a crucial end of human fulfillment, has been largely ignored in the history of evolutionary science. Since Huxley (1894) and Spencer (1897), prevailing interpretations of Darwinian biology have tended to view altruism and sacrificial other regard as incommensurable with the process of natural selection. In the last several decades, however, biological sciences in general and evolutionary theory in particular have witnessed a remarkable upsurge of interest in altruism and other forms of love.

To what extent are differences in other regarding attitudes and behaviors heritable?

To what extent is variance in altruistic attitudes or behaviors associated with fitness differentials?

To what extent is kin selection - and familial bonding dynamics that may emerge therefrom - a necessary and/or sufficient substrate for the development of deeply caring, richly benevolent other regard?

To what extent is reciprocal altruism - and the social and affective structures that emerge therefrom - a necessary and/or sufficient substrate for the development of deeply caring, richly benevolent other regard?

To what extent is altruism a sexually selected trait, and under what conditions does it function positively or negatively in mate recruitment?

To what extent do patterns in moral and altruistic behavior conform to expectations of indirect reciprocity?

To what extent do patterns in moral and altruistic behavior conform to expectations of self deception theory?

How plastic is the influence of group-selection, and must genuinely sacrificial other regard inevitably come at the cost of intensely exclusionary disregard or hostility?

Are the most radical forms of altruism evolutionarily "uncoupled" (Plotkin, 1997) from the human genetic/neurological substrate?

Can game theoretic models of cooperativity be extended to account for genuine sacrifice by reformulation in light of group or hierarchical selection?

How far can animal models take us in our understanding of human altruism?

What is the relationship between organismal well-being and altruistic behaviors and disposition, i.e., is unlimited love a homeostatic adaptation for life in groups?

How can religious beliefs, experiences, and institutions be understood in terms of evolutionary (genetic selection) or coevolutionary (memetic transmission) processes, and in what ways are they biologically adaptive and/or altruism-promoting?

(6) THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO THE SPIRITUAL IDEAL OF UNLIMITED LOVE

(to review the Sociological Study white paper, visit www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org, click on publications, and on research white papers)

Some would argue that the ills of contemporary life are largely traceable to a deficiency of altruistic behavior. Greed and the self-seeking nature of consumer culture are considered responsible for the deterioration of social bonds that once kept life more humane. Americans from across the ideological spectrum have argued for the significance of civil society as an overlooked, yet integral, part of a functioning, healthy republic. As concerns about the level of civility and social capital in this country have grown, scholars have become increasingly interested in unraveling the very ingredients that define and produce civility and social capital. Many with an interest in civil society have been particularly interested in the question of what role faith-based organizations may play in countering the effects of greed and narcissistic behavior, thereby contributing to a more civil society in which altruistic behavior and other-directed love are more commonplace. Since many methodological and theoretical cross-cutting issues are relevant to this understudied topic, multidisciplinary projects are strongly encouraged. Interested scholars from sociology, political science, public administration, economics, and other relevant social science disciplines should consider applying.

Are faith-based organizations more effective than their secular counterparts in addressing various social problems?

Preliminary research seems to indicate that faith-based organizations are more effective in providing social services than secular or governmental counterparts. What is it that makes these initiatives more effective?

What are the most important variables influencing a person's decision to become a volunteer - and why?

How have faith-based organizations been so successful in mobilizing and sustaining so many volunteers?

What are the political, administrative, and legal conditions under which organizational cultures of principled agents exist and persist?

What are the most important determinates of civic engagement and participation?

How can religion or religiously-motivated workers and organizations combat anti-social and egotistical behavior?

How can religion or religiously-motivated workers and organizations promote pro-social behavior?

What is the extent of other-directed love dispensed by faith based organizations?

Can faith-based organizations and government work together to combat social ills?

Does the potential for altruism or unlimited love exist in all people?

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Letter of Intent: Due March 29, 2002

The Letter of Intent (LOI) should be no more than two pages in length. It should include the name of the institution and the Principal Investigator(s), and be on letterhead stationery. It must arrive at the Institute on or before March 29, 2002. No facsimiles or electronic submissions will be accepted.

All applicants must submit the original and three copies of the LOI.

The LOI must include the following items, in the order listed:

- *the name of the institution and the Principal Investigator(s) on letterhead stationary
- *research aims
- *a brief description of the methodology
- *significance and potential impact of the work
- *approximate cost
- *the Research Program Area(s) (see above) under which the application might best be considered
- *phone, fax, email, and address
- *an attached copy of the full curriculum vitae of the Principal Investigator(s) only

A notification response to the LOI will be emailed to applicants on April 26, 2002 after expert review with a follow-up letter mailed to the home institution. The notification will invite a full application submission or reject the proposal. The Institute will not provide feedback on LOI content.

Full Application Submission: Due Date July 31, 2002; Notice of Awards November 27, 2002

Seven unbound hard copies of the application must arrive at the Institute by July 31, 2002. No facsimiles or electronic applications will be accepted. (Downloadable application forms, or mailed copies as needed, will be provided.)

COVER PAGE:

Title of Project

Name of P.I., degrees

Department of P.I.

Mailing Address

Telephone, fax, and email address

Dates proposed

Total (amount of support requested)

Approval date of institutional review board (IRB), or pending date if this is the case, for all studies involving human subjects. Note: IRB approval must be obtained; if approval is not available before submission of the application, documentation of IRB approval must be submitted before the project can be funded.

Tax-Exempt Status Letter: Please include documentation of your organization's tax-exempt status under Internal Revenue Code 501 (c) (3) or evidence of governmental entity status (as with some state universities that do not have 501 (c) (3) status).

Name of applicant organization

Address

Name, title, address, telephone number, fax, email address of administrative official to be notified if award is made.

Name and title of the official signing for applicant organization and address

TABLE OF CONTENTS PAGE: Please denote the page(s) for the following required submission items:

Abstract: Must contain a clear statement of purpose, explain why the work is important, and briefly describe the methodology to be used

Budget: Detailed costs and justification for budget items, including all personnel (role on project, length of appointment, percentage of effort on project, total salary including fringe), consultant costs, supplies, subject reimbursement, other. The Institute does not support indirect costs, nor the purchase of major durable equipment. Please include a budget for each year of support requested.

>Current and Pending Other Support: Indicate current and pending support for all personnel from other sources, including percent effort. Which of these sources might also support this work (e.g., grants, institutions)?

Biosketches: Provide biosketches of all personnel, including educational backgrounds, current and past appointments, honors and distinctions, especially where relevant to the application, and significant publications in peer-review journals. (Not to exceed two pages each.)

Statement of Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Proposals are encouraged to include interdisciplinary collaboration, including religious studies where possible

Statement of Organization Resources: Define the scope of organizational resources available to perform the work proposed

Research Plan: Include sufficient concrete information to facilitate evaluation. The following information should be included: overall goal, specific aims; a clear hypothesis; background; description of research design and procedures; estimated timetable of major research tasks from inception to conclusion of project; description of how research results will inform subsequent work by the applicant. This section should not exceed 3000 words, including references.

Plan for Dissemination of Results: A clear plan for dissemination of results is important, including potential high-level specialty and generalist peer-review journals, presentations, professional society symposia, etc.

Appendices: Applicants may include appendices with information relevant to the proposed work, although this is not required. To assist reviewers, the appendices should not be overburdening. No more than two of the applicant's exemplary and most relevant journal articles should be included.

Please send applications to Stephen G. Post, Ph.D.
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Questions: email caa7@po.cwru.edu, or call 216-368-6204
Please check our web site at www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org for additional information.