

**STRENGTHENING HUMAN POTENTIAL FOR GREAT LOVE-
COMPASSION THROUGH ELABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT¹**

A dissertation

submitted by

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Abstract

Split conceptions of humanity reflect commitment to a *part* of humanity, and may be instantiated by war, genocide, racism, and nationalism, or even *ordinary* love and compassion. The embeddedness of all living entities makes them open systems that are integrally fused. Thus, commitment to a *part* will arguably compromise the healthy functioning of the whole.

This dissertation attempted to begin to elucidate the dynamic developmental processes involved in commitment to the *whole* of humanity, as instantiated by Great Love-Compassion (GLC), i.e., the wish for *all* to have freedom and joy and for *all* to be relieved of their pain and suffering. Following in the social-behavioral science tradition of scholarship about mending split conceptions of humanity, a nonrecursive structural model hypothesized relationships among adaptive developmental regulations, elaborative development, and GLC. The present study aimed to validate the hypothesized relationship between elaborative *status* (ES) and GLC at a single time point.

Quantitative and qualitative data from the John Templeton Foundation sponsored study of The Role of Spiritual Development in Growth of Purpose, Generosity, and Psychological Health in Adolescence were used to: 1. derive measures of ES and GLC via multi-step expert rater validation; 2. assess quantitatively the link between ES and GLC within 58 ethnically and religiously diverse high school-age youth ($N = 30$; 33.3% males) and college-age youth ($N = 28$; 50% males); and 3. obtain illustrative information about the manifestation of ES and GLC within 2 on-diagonal and 2 off-diagonal cases of ES-GLC relations. Expert rater validation yielded 33 psychometrically useful items indicative of ES ($\alpha = .65$) and 17 items indicative of GLC ($\alpha = .86$). Quantitative and

qualitative findings provided evidence of the expected covariation between ES and GLC. The two off-diagonal cases helped elucidate the quantitative findings.

To address the limitations of this study, future research should use a mixed method approach to measuring ES and GLC, dimensionalize measurement of elaborative and decremental status, employ longitudinal data, and increase the size and representativeness of the sample. Despite these limitations, this dissertation illustrates the possibility of conducting research on the concepts of adaptive development and commitment to the whole of humanity.