Development within the Individual: Community and Societal Supports

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Introduction

From May 2015 to July 2015, I worked as a live-in assistant for people with disabilities in a L’Arche Canada home. During this time, I formed ideas of what it means to contribute to development through enhancing an individual’s well-being. Using my experiences in this caregiver role, I will argue that development occurs with direct individual intervention that upholds the dignity of human person. However, these interventions must be supported on a community level and an institutional level in order for individuals to fully flourish to the best of their abilities.¹ In the autobiography Loaves and Fishes, theorist Dorothy Day describes development as respecting the dignity of the human person, which is achieved by satisfying basic needs for all people.² Day’s way of development advocates for a common humanity amongst all people. Indeed, her programme provides for individuals’ basic needs in a similar manner for everyone who asks for it. While Day’s methods explain part of the structure wherein L’Arche provides development, her methods are not sufficient to describe the highly individualized needs which people with disabilities and their caregivers have. Thus, I argue that Day’s theory of development must be supplemented with theorist Martha Nussbaum in order to fully encompass how L’Arche fulfills specific and unique individual needs. Nussbaum argues that humans all deserve to be treated with dignity, especially those with disabilities.³ To respect their dignity, individuals must receive support in increasing their capabilities wherever it is appropriate.

² Day, Loaves and Fishes, 35.
³ Martha C. Nussbaum, Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership, (Boston, MA: The Belknap Press, 2006), 96-103.
ideas of development suggest enhancing an individual’s capabilities that would correspond to their unique levels of ability. Thus, Day and Nussbaum agree that development starts with individual needs within society. While they differ on how to address those needs, both theorists must be taken into consideration when analyzing the way L’Arche provides support for people with disabilities in their communities.

While my experiences point to how development begins with the individual through direct intervention, I will also argue that community and societal structures must be there to better support an individual’s growth. Thus, development takes a bottom-up approach, yet the efforts of developing the individual are inextricably linked and maintained by higher structures. Again, I will use both Day and Nussbaum to explain how L’Arche’s support structures contribute to individual development. Day’s ideas of a community whose members work together to support people in poverty greatly contribute to examining the mutual relationships in L’Arche communities. Nussbaum’s ideas of institutional and governmental policies that financially support the organization and its caregivers further explain the development I observed and experienced in a L’Arche Canada home. In sum, I will explain how Day and Nussbaum would analyze individual development in a L’Arche home. After this analysis, I will use Day and Nussbaum again to explain how this individual development works within community and societal structures.

6 Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, 211-216
A Day in a L’Arche Home

Founded in 1964 by humanitarian Jean Vanier and Father Thomas Philippe, L’Arche is an organization which cares primarily for adults with developmental disabilities. It does so by inviting people with disabilities to live in homes which are often residential and indistinguishable from its neighbours. Caregivers are expected to live in these same homes as the people with disabilities, providing all kinds of support. In the L’Arche community, people receiving care are called core members. Those who live in the home and are providing care are called live-in assistants.

My experience as an assistant in a L’Arche home showed me how developing the individual involves direct support with their needs. The interaction between disability and the intricacies of society often present challenges to meeting needs independently. As a result, people with disabilities have a greater need for support. Day-to-day life as a live-in assistant brought me up close and personal to how disability can affect an individual’s life. It became clear to me that some people with disabilities needed consistent support from assistants at the individual level, while others need less.

My L’Arche home had its own way of how to provide care for individuals with disabilities. The home I lived in had four core members, four live-in assistants, and one house leader, the latter of whom is an assistant that oversees all home activities. A regular day would involve constant interaction between assistants and core members. If I was the one doing morning routines, I would help the core members wake up at 6:30 AM and help prepare breakfast. Each core member had their own routine.

First, I would wake up Anna, who was the youngest core member. A girl full of life, she would bound out of bed and make breakfast on her own. Next, I would help David, a man who

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needed more assistance due to his limited mobility. I would help him shave, wash his face, apply deodorant, then leave him on his own to change into day clothes. Betty was more independent. She would wake up and prepare breakfast on her own. Finally, Phoebe, the oldest core member, would wake up whenever she wanted to, and there were times where she chose not to come to breakfast at all.

After breakfast, all of the core members had the option to go to work. In our home, Anna, David, and Betty went to work on a regular basis. Phoebe has chosen to retire from work a few years ago. For the core members, work was a day program for individuals with disabilities that involved a variety of recreational activities, including volunteer work. When core members were at work, assistants would fulfill basic needs for all members of the home. Responsibilities varied widely. We would need to do tasks such as cooking dinner and doing laundry, to buying birthday gifts and much more. I have a fond memory of spending several hours with Therese, a fellow assistant, in planting a vegetable garden for the home.

When core members would return home from work in the afternoon, we would help them with their personal care, including assisting with bathing. Afterwards, everyone from the home would come together for quiet time on the couch, and then we would share dinner together. Dinner was one of my favorite times at L’Arche as it was a time where we could spend time conversing with one another.

When dinner was completed, core members would help assistants with washing dishes and other house chores. There was usually some free time afterwards, so core members and assistants would spend time doing activities, such as watching a movie or making crafts. This was when I would spend a lot of time making Rainbow Loom bracelets for Anna, one of the core members. Bedtime was usually around 9:00 PM. It was truly a shared life together.
While we all followed the same routines, each core member had their own individual needs and preferences. Even in our small home, the four core members were so different in the nature of their disability and its accompanying physical, social, and emotional needs. Indeed, the hardest part about the job was learning about each core members’ unique needs and continuously finding ways to best support all of them on an individual basis. For example, each core member in the home had different medical conditions, so assistants are trained to give them their proper medication to stay healthy. Unlike the other core members, Robert needed lots of physical support. He did not have many fine motor skills, so he needed extra support to do basic tasks, such as personal care routines and folding laundry. Another core member, Betty, was very physically capable despite her small stature. She did not need very much help with personal care, but she needed assistance with higher cognitive tasks, including literacy and financial affairs.

Anna, the youngest core member, was 22 years old and full of energy. Since we were close in age, we formed a friendship very quickly. She had little physical disability. Her developmental disability did not limit her from enjoying outings to the mall or excursions to the park, but she did need someone to accompany her. We went out often together, which provided her with opportunities to integrate in our surrounding community. It gave her the chance to develop further social skills, such as picking out things at a store and paying a cashier. She had difficulty counting change, so I would support her with this task. By accompanying Anna in social outings, Anna was able to develop facets of her outgoing personality, which she would have more difficulty doing without support. She could experience her enjoyment of new experiences outside our home to a fuller extent. Spending time with Anna was a joy and gave our lives fulfillment.

In contrast, Phoebe, the oldest core member, was much more introverted. She was 63 years old, so her physical ability and energy level was lower than Anna’s. Arthritis in her knee limited
her movement, so she needed a wheelchair to travel long distances. Though she had her wheelchair, she did not like to go out, preferring to spend time alone in her room. She could spend hours cutting paper with no other company. Phoebe’s ideas of how to best spend her time were very different from how Anna liked to spend her time. Unlike Anna, Phoebe did not have much desire to go out and meet with other people. Instead, Phoebe wanted support for her independence in making her own decisions. In order to help address Phoebe’s needs, I and the other assistants respected her choice to be alone. When she wanted company, she would take it upon herself to find others. In the evenings, I would often watch Netflix in the basement. Some days, I heard the stairs creaking behind me. It would be Phoebe, climbing downstairs to join me. These shared moments are what brought Phoebe social fulfillment, as she loved to watch films with a trusted friend and fall asleep in front of the television. Thus, by supporting Phoebe to make her own decisions on how to spend her time, Phoebe’s desire to have greater individual agency is encouraged.

Yet, it became clear to me that core members were much more than their disability. Rather, disability was just one facet that interacted with many other parts of their complex identities. They had their own diverse ways of expressing who they were as individuals, and it was our job to recognize and understand their individuality. By directly interacting with core members, assistants could figure out where they wanted to grow in their skills and experiences, and where they would need support for tasks that were beyond their abilities. It was important to encourage independence from assistants within core members. Overall, Anna and Phoebe’s stories show how their development as an individual is enhanced through direct support from assistants. They are both vastly different people who choose to live in different ways. The following analysis will
use Dorothy Day and Martha Nussbaum’s theories to provide a framework that examines this individual development in more detail.

**Dorothy Day and Individual Development**

How does Dorothy Day’s concept of development fit with L’Arche’s work with people with disabilities? First, I will discuss two aspects of Day’s theories that I observed as an assistant in the L’Arche community: individual intervention, and enhancing human dignity. In the autobiography *Loaves and Fishes*, Dorothy Day explores her ideas of development as an activist in the Catholic Workers Movement. Through her work in alleviating poverty, Day argues for an approach that places the individual’s development at the forefront. Day’s development scheme consists of completing “works of mercy”\( ^8 \), where volunteers of the movement directly interact with the individual through satisfying basic and immediate need, including actions such as “feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked...”\( ^9 \). Day facilitates “houses of hospitality”, which are houses where volunteers of the movement can provide such immediate care for everyone who arrives at their doorstep.\( ^{10} \) For Day, the houses of hospitality are avenues in which she can directly relieve some of the consequences of poverty for an individual. Her form of aid comes with no strings attached, as everyone is welcome to live at the houses for as long as they want if they continue to have need.\( ^{11} \) Day extends the same types of assistance for all individuals, emphasizing a common humanity among all those in need. It is up to the person

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\( ^9 \) Day, preface, xvii.

\( ^{10} \) Day, *Loaves and Fishes*, 29.

\( ^{11} \) Day, *Loaves and Fishes*, 37.
to decide whether they want to continue to accept the works of mercy or leave the houses.\textsuperscript{12}

Overall, Day’s houses show a dedication to creating change at the individual level.

As an assistant directly supporting people with disabilities, I saw Day’s ideas of individual intervention take place in our L’Arche home. By sharing the same home as core members, assistants provided the immediate care that core members needed for their day-to-day lives, which is analogous to Day’s houses of hospitality providing for immediate needs for those in poverty. Day would consider some of the consistent routines that core members and assistants do for each other as akin to her works of mercy, including the way assistants did the cooking for. Like the people receiving care from Day’s houses of hospitality, there was a mutual relationship of giving and receiving between assistants and core members.

Second, I will address Day’s ideas of human dignity. Day believes her work with poverty alleviation enhances the dignity of the human person by providing basic needs for individuals.\textsuperscript{13} In her development scheme, Day respects the human dignity of all people by realizing that basic needs should not be denied for any individual. She recounts her observations of unemployed marines, cheated out of their fortunes after their term at sea was over. These men were forced to go to Day’s houses of hospitality for their basic needs, which is an action Day says “made them [the marines] feel completely degraded”.\textsuperscript{14} Despite the difficulty in accepting help, Day claims that fulfilling their needs was a way to bring them out of their poverty and “help them in regaining some measure of self-respect”.\textsuperscript{15} Day’s main goal in satisfying immediate need was to alleviate the debilitating effect of poverty and still retain a sense of dignity. That way, an

\textsuperscript{12} Day, \textit{Loaves and Fishes}, 37.
\textsuperscript{13} Day, \textit{Loaves and Fishes}, 63.
\textsuperscript{14} Day, \textit{Loaves and Fishes}, 64.
\textsuperscript{15} Day, \textit{Loaves and Fishes}, 65.
individual may have the chance to find the way to achieve some sort of self-sufficiency later.\textsuperscript{16} However, Day believes that respecting human dignity from the onset is necessary in order to build up the individual.

Similarly, a central theme of an assistant’s work was providing individualized care in a way that respected and enhanced their dignity, which further affirms Day’s theories of development in the L’Arche home. Day would likely agree that people with disabilities deserve access to basic human needs, as she takes an inclusive stance in her theories of development. Just as the impoverished marines and anyone else in need are deserving of dignified care in Day’s eyes, people with disabilities would deserve to have their basic needs fulfilled in a similar manner. Indeed, I noticed that despite the difference in abilities between assistants and core members, assistants provided care in a manner that respected their intrinsic human dignity. Robert, the core member with limited mobility, would have difficulty eating because he could not use a knife to cut food. He would likely use his hands to rip food apart, if it was necessary. Assistants did not want him to struggle with a basic need such as eating food, so when I cooked meals I often cooked softer cuts of meat. We would help him cut up his food at meal times, so he could use a fork to scoop the smaller pieces into his mouth. I was struck at how this simple intervention for Robert could enhance his dignity by not only providing a basic need of food, but also giving him the dignity to eat with a knife and fork, which was the norm at our dinner table. Day would observe this intervention with Robert as an act that, while small, is crucial in recognizing and respecting Robert’s dignity.

\textsuperscript{16} Day, \textit{Loaves and Fishes}, 29-43.
Limitations in Day’s Approach

While useful, Day’s theories of development alone are not sufficient to describe the aspects of development I observed in the L’Arche home. I argued that Day’s theories offer insight into the effects of individual intervention with immediate need and explain the importance of human dignity in such interventions. However, Day does not cover two key aspects in my L’Arche experience. First, Day does not address the highly individualized and unique ways in which L’Arche assistants fulfill some of the needs of people with disabilities. Indeed, Day’s houses of hospitality generally provide relief in a consistent manner for all individuals in need. Her theories are not broad enough to cover the ways in which assistants accommodate needs that arise from disability, like Robert and his limited ability to use eating utensils. Day does state that different houses of hospitality differ in the way they address issues of poverty, but is unclear in what manner they do so.\(^\text{17}\) Secondly, Day does not address the possibility that development can go beyond satisfying basic needs to developing the individual to the fullest of their abilities. In order to fill in the gaps, I argue that Martha Nussbaum’s theories of development can further explain individual development at L’Arche.

Martha Nussbaum and Individual Development

How would theorist Martha Nussbaum further explain development in L’Arche? I argue the following: first, Nussbaum explains the highly individualized support for core members; second, she provides insight into L’Arche’s development beyond basic needs. In *Frontiers of Justice*, Nussbaum argues for the Capabilities Approach (CA), which describes development as a set of core human rights necessary to live a life of dignity.\(^\text{18}\) There are ten categories of these

\(^{17}\) Day, *Loaves and Fishes*, 43.
\(^{18}\) Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, 76.
human entitlements, which Nussbaum calls “Central Human Capabilities”: Life, Bodily Health, Bodily Integrity, Senses and Thought, Emotions, Practical Reason, Affiliation, Other Species, Play, and Control over One’s Environment. The CA’s main argument is that people are entitled to the ability and choice to conduct actions that fall under the core rights, whether or not they choose those things is irrelevant.

Like Day, Nussbaum believes every person has an intrinsic human dignity that deserves to be respected. While Day discusses human dignity in terms of poverty alleviation, Nussbaum specifically addresses how people deserve such dignity through the CA. Nussbaum argues that in many areas of society, people with disabilities fail to have their dignity recognized or enhanced, because their disability can create limitations to achieving their desired capabilities. In order to remove such limitations, Nussbaum argues that care should be sensitive to the nature of the individual person’s unique disability. Good care would allow people with disabilities to achieve some level of all the Central Capabilities. Nussbaum acknowledges that some disabilities are so severe that they make it impossible to achieve a standard of living akin to those without disabilities. Thus, Nussbaum argues that care must continuously strive to bring their level of capability up to this societal standard.

Nussbaum’s CA align with L’Arche’s individualized methods of care, as these methods increases core members’ capabilities. As a live-in assistant, I could provide care that suited the core member’s level of ability and thus, their continued independence. My house leader emphasized the need for assistants to support core members in building their skills, rather than

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20 Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, 76.
doing every task for them. As previously mentioned, Robert needed my support with personal care tasks, because he did not have the physical ability to do so. However, there were some tasks that Robert could complete on his own, including wiping tables and drawing birthday cards. It was my responsibility to recognize Robert’s individual skills and remove limitations so that he could practise these skills. On a daily basis, I encouraged Robert to wipe the dinner tables by asking him and handing a rag. We gave him more time to complete the task, because his physical disability made him move slower relative to others. Overall, as an assistant, I could see how care that is sensitive to individual ability could further develop their capabilities, which helped me to see Nussbaum’s theories in action.

Additionally, Nussbaum recognizes that this individualized care can extend beyond providing basic needs. It can be adjusted to a wide range of capabilities that suit a person’s individuality. Nussbaum would say that if care adopts the CA, it must address the wide range Central Capabilities. She shares the story of Sesha, a young lady with severe developmental disability, and the unique nature of care that allows her to live a life of dignity. Sesha’s level of ability prevents her from achieving many capabilities that would allow her to express herself as an individual. It is true that she requires her basic needs fulfilled with assistance, such as being fed and tending to personal care, but Sesha also loves socializing with others and exploring nature.25 Thus, Nussbaum argues that for Sesha to flourish, care must also allow for Sesha to be capable of finding human companionship and love.26 Day does support the individual and their growth, but Nussbaum’s CA encompasses Sesha’s needs that allow her to live the life she wants to lead.

Indeed, Nussbaum’s CA can provide insight into L’Arche’s extensive methods of care for core members. Previously, I recounted the stories of Anna and Phoebe, where Anna is a vivacious young lady who enjoyed going out, while Phoebe is a senior who prefers to cut paper in her room. As seen with these two diverse women, disability can present challenges to achieving individual needs. Providing tailored care directly to individuals can overcome these barriers. Anna and Phoebe both had developmental disabilities, but a general program of care would not be enough for the two of them to fully express who they are as individuals. Having the mutual relationships between assistants and core members provides the latter with the opportunity to express their individual needs. Anna and Phoebe are very different people, and their disability presents different challenges to both. In order to continue with their personal development, there must be opportunities available to not just survive, but to flourish. People with disabilities have their own gifts, preferences, and personalities. By recognizing their intrinsic human dignity, people with disabilities must have a right to access capabilities that fulfill their individual needs and enjoy life. Nussbaum would see assistants accompanying Anna to the park as increasing her ability to enjoy her passion for the outdoors and engage in play, both of which Anna would not be able to access easily if she were alone. Yet, for Phoebe, Nussbaum would note that she still has the same capability as Anna to go out. The key difference is that Phoebe chooses not to exercise this capability, preferring to stay at home. Phoebe’s care is not centered on those play capabilities, but on increasing her individual agency and capacity for independence.

To summarize, Nussbaum’s theories encompass those highly individualized and extensive needs outside of basic care by increasing capabilities for people with disabilities. Day’s theories of development cover some of L’Arche’s methods by highlighting the needs for basic
care, which provide the stepping stones for a life of dignity for all individuals. Yet it is
Nussbaum’s theories provide greater insight into the complex and unique care relationship
between assistants and core members in the L’Arche home.

**Support from a L’Arche Community**

The discussion on development based on my experience at L’Arche now turns to the
structures in place to support the care relationship between core members and assistants. Using
my own observations as a L’Arche assistant, I will explain how the community and societal
structures support the individual development, of which I previously outlined. Furthermore, my
observations will align with the structural schemes in Dorothy Day and Martha Nussbaum’s
theories of development. I will begin with my experiences with the L’Arche community as a
whole, and relate it back to Dorothy Day’s own community within her houses of hospitality.

My L’Arche home was one of six in this particular Canadian city. Along with the
assistants and core members living in the same home, there were relief workers, who provided
extra support, living outside the home. Night support workers, who worked from 10 PM to 6
AM, provided care within the home as well. Along with these 6 homes, there is also a central
L’Arche office that handles all the administrative affairs. These houses and the office formed the
whole L’Arche Community within the city.

During my first week, I noticed the strong emphasis on community life within L’Arche.
Even before I started my training, I was taken to the different homes in the community,
immediately forming relationships with all the members. Building community was especially
prominent in L’Arche’s events, which were consistent and long-held traditions. One such event
was the monthly Prayer Night, where all members of the community came together to share
news and updates about each other. Other events included core member birthday parties which were a special time. They were always celebrated with a large party, where all core members and all on-duty assistants would attend. I realized that the outcome of these community building events fulfilled two key purposes that enhanced individual development. First, by having a strong community, development on a wider range of needs could be satisfied, especially for core members. Thus, a community could bring unique opportunities for members. There was the opportunity to build deep friendships with old and new friends during celebration. Indeed, from these continued interactions, I am proud to call some L’Arche members friends. There was also a chance to participate in political agency within the community, as all members of the community could vote during L’Arche board meetings. Second, there was greater support for care. Having a network of people supporting an individual’s development not only allowed for a more comprehensive experience, but the burden of being a caregiver could be shared amongst more people. The assistants in my home worked well together, often taking turns to clean and cook. Relief would come by on the weekends, so we could rest. Night support would provide care in the evening, giving a chance for assistants to end the workday and sleep at night.

My experiences shed light on Day and community support within her scheme of development. For L’Arche and Day, having a network of people to support an individual greatly increases development to a wider degree. Day’s houses of hospitality are a community of their own, since each has a group of people coming together to serve the common purpose of alleviating poverty. Thus, having the community within houses of hospitality provides the support needed to fulfill the basic needs that mitigate poverty’s effects. Without the community, it would be easy to imagine that Day’s houses could not provide the same degree of development for such a large number of people. Furthermore, like L’Arche, Day’s houses of hospitality were

supported by a wide variety of individuals, who could share the work for Day’s development scheme. I noted that L’Arche’s community can share the tasks of a caregiver, in Day’s scheme, she notes the importance of her volunteers and she further extends their duties by highlighting the ways they uniquely contribute to the tasks of poverty alleviation.\(^{28}\) She mentions how her houses accept every individual who wants to contribute, including a boisterous Mr. Breen, whose aggressive attitude seems to cause lots of trouble in the houses.\(^{29}\) Despite his tendencies to pick fights, Day appreciates his contribution by claiming he “strode in one day with a cane and a fountain pen... and, in a beautiful calligraphy, began to answer a trayful of letters”.\(^{30}\) Later on, Day mentions important individuals who contributed to the working of the homes, including Slim Borne, the dishwasher, and Frank, the business manager.\(^{31}\) L’Arche showed me the importance of community coming together for a sustained development scheme, and I can see it reflected in Day’s own houses of hospitality.

**Societal Support of the L’Arche Organization**

I will discuss the importance of the need for societal support for organizations such as L’Arche and overall care for people with disabilities. Day rejects top-down solutions to development, as her development scheme focuses on grassroots initiatives towards poverty. However, Nussbaum strongly emphasizes certain policies and societal supports specifically for those with disabilities and their caregivers. As an assistant, I had an intimate knowledge of how societal support for core members can have a positive or impact on our everyday lives. After facing certain struggles and reprieves which were highly influenced by those top-down policies, I

\(^{28}\) Day, *Loaves and Fishes*, 42.

\(^{29}\) Day, *Loaves and Fishes*, 38.


will evaluate how these experiences are explained within Nussbaum’s mechanisms of support.

First, I will discuss the importance of government financial assistance for both core members and caregivers, particularly with the recognition of care work as paid work.

I had the opportunity to attend my L’Arche community’s annual general board meeting, which gave me insight into how societal support, in terms of financial assistance, supported our homes. L’Arche is a non-profit organization, so its funding comes from governmental assistance and fundraising. At the meeting, I discovered that in my community, the city and province provided the vast majority of funding, with fundraising and donations coming in as a distant second. This government funding is crucial to supporting individual development for core members in a variety of ways. It gives core members the opportunity to purchase goods and services, allows for the maintenance of the homes, and provides an overall sense of financial security. L’Arche can continue to operate in a stable manner, as it does not need to worry about pressing financial need. Government funding provides caregivers the support they need to achieve a higher level of individual development for core members. At L’Arche, assistants are considered employees and are paid. Under the city policy, I was entitled to basic employment rights. We are given time off and receive benefits. Becoming an assistant is now a career choice. Our work in supporting a core member in his or her individual development becomes the main focus in our job. Yet, we can do so without compromising some of our own dignity and financial independence, which would not be the case if our work was not financially supported. I had time to rest during my days off, greater financial independence, and if I was sick, I could take time off without worrying about how the individual needs of core members would be fulfilled, as other assistants were there to share the caregiver duties. Overall, the governmental support fosters the
environment in which core members can receive the individual development previously outlined, and assistants receive the support they need to provide such direct interventions.

Nussbaum strongly advocates for policy that elevates individuals with disabilities and their caregivers as equal, contributing members of society. After all, a just society, she claims, would recognize and respect individuals with disabilities and their caregivers because of their inherent human dignity. She would commend the government departments and policies in place that provide financial assistance for individual with disabilities, as she believes it is a society’s duty to recognize and provide for their unique needs. Under her Capabilities Approach, financial assistance would be seen as a means to achieve the needs of people with disabilities and their caregivers. Indeed, as mentioned previously, the financial support from the city and province ensure that L’Arche can continue to operate as a non-profit organization. Within L’Arche, the financial resources can be appropriately distributed to enhance the capabilities for core members and assistants. For example, we could purchase Netflix for Phoebe and Betty, fulfilling their capabilities for leisure and a love for movies. Furthermore, Nussbaum would applaud the financial support for assistants, as she strongly advocates for caregiver work to be recognized by society as legitimate work. After experiencing the incredible commitment and difficulty for the care of individuals with disabilities and the ease of such work with government support, I recognize the importance of Nussbaum’s arguments. By providing financial support for caregivers, and by extension, recognizing it as work, caregivers can provide the individual development and intervention services without diminishing caregiver’s capabilities within the larger society. Nussbaum discusses the troubling consequences of a

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society that does not support caregiver work as an unacceptable loss of capabilities under her Central Capabilities list. She claims many caregivers suffer from health problems, emotional stress, and diminished opportunity to participate in the workforce.

By distributing the responsibilities of care among the family and external workers, caregivers can achieve greater capability as they have a greater choice to arrange the role of care in their lives. Financial support is integral to recognizing the work and incentivizing people to choose caregiving as a career. The way L’Arche and, by extension, the city and provincial government, recognizes the assistants’ work with financial support can foster the individual development that core members deserve. The financial support respects all individuals in supporting the development and maintenance of capabilities.

**Conclusion**

Overall, my experience as an assistant leads me to assert that L’Arche’s development scheme was one that placed the individual as a main priority. In order to achieve individual development, direct intervention is needed. Both Dorothy Day and Martha Nussbaum agree that directly assisting the individual is central to their development, but have different approaches. Day argues for a programme that respects a person’s dignity by fulfilling their basic needs, including food, shelter, and work. While Day can explain part of the work L’Arche does, her theories are not sufficient to explain the way L’Arche provides highly individualized care that people with disabilities require in their lives. Thus, Nussbaum’s theory supplements Day’s

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notion of development with development that starts by enhancing an individual’s capabilities, and requiring a focus on the unique individual and their corresponding needs.

My argument then turns to how L’Arche is able to maintain an environment that supports the individual. Using observations regarding the L’Arche community structure and how it relates to Day’s own houses of hospitality, both of which use mutual relationships that strengthen development. Yet, community structures can be assisted by higher-level supports, so I discuss the governmental and financial assistance in relation to the L’Arche organization, using Nussbaum’s policy theories as support.

Day and Nussbaum’s theories examine L’Arche’s humanistic way of supporting people with disabilities, a group of individuals who are often marginalized in contemporary society. Applying these theories to L’Arche sheds light on its special way of combating the struggles people with disabilities face on a daily basis. Most importantly, this analysis provides the opportunity to share and celebrate the individuality of the person.

Acknowledgements

I look back on my experience and wonder about the incredible complexity of the individual person. I have gained a new respect in truly getting to know the individual and supporting them in lives that are fulfilling and full of happiness. Thank you to L’Arche for taking me in and sharing your lives with me. I am proud to call you life-long friends.
Bibliography
