DYNAMIC INTERPERSONAL MODEL: A PILOT STUDY

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF THE

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY

PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

HILLSBORO, OREGON

BY

PATRICIA RENEE SHIMEK

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

September 25, 2020

APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE:

Lisa R. Christiansen, PsyD

Stephanie Schaefer, PsyD

Abstract

In this study, I introduced the Dynamic Interpersonal Model (DIM) and applied it in a small group 5-session workshop while examining relationship satisfaction and authenticity in relationship to determine if learning and applying the model would improve these qualities within participants' relationships. The primary tenets of DIM are meant to help individuals recognize polarizing relationship patterns from the context of scarcity and abundance. I discuss the development of the Dynamic Interpersonal Model and its connections to navigating relationship struggles that occur due to experiencing complex trauma. Finally, I discuss the results of the model being utilized with participants in a 5-session workshop format.

Keywords: polarizing, interpersonal, relationship dynamics, dichotomous thinking, black and white thinking, spectrum thinking, dialectical thinking

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."

— Henry David Thoreau, Walden

"You have learned - Way too soon - You should never trust the pantaloon."

—Tyler Joseph, TWENTY ØNE PILØTS, The Pantaloon

"Trust is not a myth."

—Ren

Introduction

From the age of 8, until my young adulthood, I lived between two sets of households that held extreme versions of scarcity and abundance. In my mother's household, I experienced a scarcity of resources and a basic sense of safety. At the same time, I experienced an abundance of emotional connection, a sense of love and belonging, and a respect for magic in nature. In my father and stepmother's household, I experienced scarcity of fully belonging. I simultaneously experienced an abundance of love and connection; access to higher learning; awareness of diversity; musical training; a stable household environment; and a platform with which to understand the world through philosophy and spirituality. It was not until my children came of age that I realized both parents were offering their experience and knowledge of all they had lived through. When I let my past wounds heal from living in such stark dichotomies, I began to see my parents' context from a new perspective. I realized my father and stepmother refused to fully absorb me into their family culture because they held the value that it is important for a child to know both their biological mother and father–come what may.

Therefore, I lived between two starkly different households. One household was with a single mother who held very traditional New Mexican Mestiza values of self-sacrifice, while

experiencing a context of poverty, lack of education, and lack of resources. On the other extreme was a household that held a hybrid of my stepmother's Caucasian American values and my father's New Mexican Mestizo culture valuing discipline, respect, sometimes overly strict, and always open to discussion and connection. Living within both households consistently throughout my young life showed me that there are good (moving towards growth in my definition) and bad (away from growth) experiences within contexts of scarcity and abundance. However, because my two worlds were at odds with each other, this also cultivated a consistent sense of dissonance within my understanding of who I am. I struggled with the same mindset that many people experience, one of scarcity and survival. Like many people, I struggled to categorize life into neat boxes of "right" and "wrong." But what if opposite experiences are both "good" or both "bad"? Or, both "good" and "bad"?

The Birth of a Model

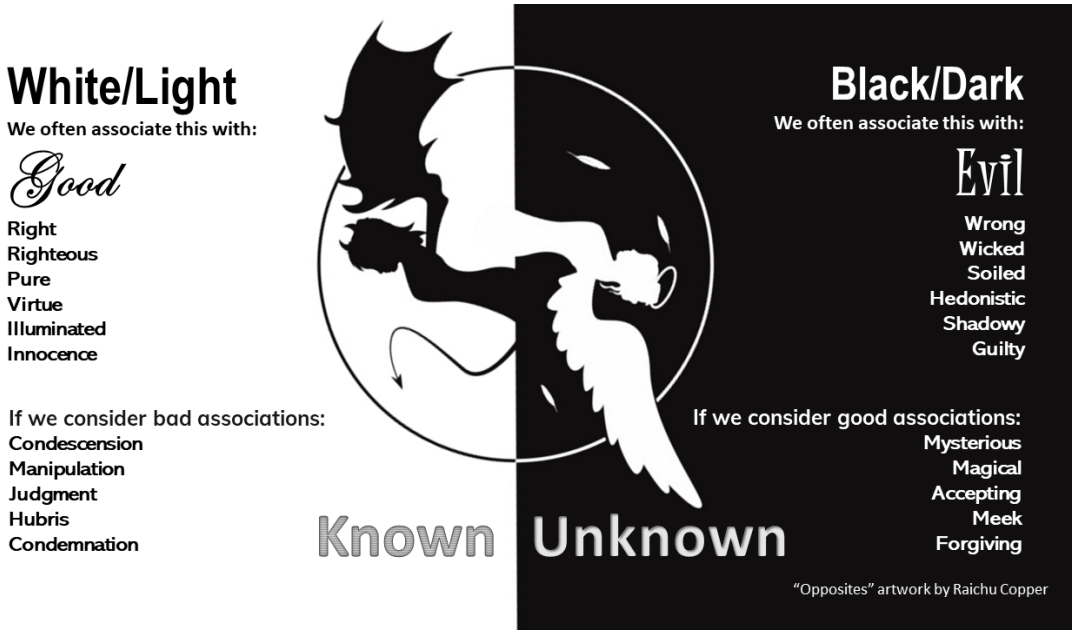
It is a natural tendency for us to categorize information or individuals into two different categories, such as "one of us" or "outsider" (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). Our associations with the colors black and white often consist of an intuitive categorization that the color black means "bad" and the color white means "good". This association automatically puts us into a literal black and white mindset, where we tend to automatically react to situations in extremes (all or nothing, yes or no, right or wrong). Over the years, there have been several studies in which researchers found an automatic association with moral judgment and black and white visual cues. In one study done by Zarkadi and Schnall in 2013, participants were introduced to imagery that was either in black and white (greyscale) or color; followed by a moral dilemma. They found that when participants were introduced to black and white imagery, they commonly endorsed extreme moral judgments (Zarkadi &Schnall, 2013). In other words, they often selected extreme

responses of either end of a Likert scale. Such stark categorization may be helpful when an individual must make a quick, life-saving decision; however, when we get stuck in processing our experiences from extremes, we leave ourselves with only two categories to sift every bit of information. This can become extremely problematic in relationships.

When we are stuck in a dichotomous mindset, we fail to recognize the fundamental concept that light cannot exist without dark, and dark cannot exist without light. Without both these dichotomies, there would be nothing to contrast or compare. When we accept both sides of extremes as true and relevant, we are more equipped to accept variation and diversity. In other words, once we consciously acknowledge that we make automatic associations that are extreme if we are stuck in dichotomous thinking, we can work toward understanding not just differences in our perspectives, but also the value of having different perspectives.

For example, one may regard every negative, dark, or unacceptable emotion as "bad" and thus to be avoided. When we change our automatic associations, such as dark being bad, we can change our response to it as well. During the workshop for this study, I discussed alternative ways to become aware by acknowledging the good and bad in our associations with the very words black and white. I began by asking participants what words they associate with white as opposed to black. At the end of the workshop, I created a visual of the most common words that were used to describe both good and bad words associated with black (dark) and white (light).

Figure 1: Good/Bad words associated with both White/Light and Black/Dark.



Beyond dichotomous thinking lies what is colloquially known as spectrum thinking. Psychologists often refer to this concept as dialectics. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), increases dialects by focusing on reconciling contradictory information using skills and techniques that increase mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotional regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness (Linehan, 1993). The term "spectrum thinking" has primarily been referenced a handful of times in journal articles from the fields of philosophy, military/intelligence, technology, and economic research. The most recent reference came from the book *Full-Spectrum Thinking: How to Escape Boxes in a Post-Categorical Future* (2020). In his book, Bob Johansen highlights the need for us as a society to cultivate our ability to conceptualize our world from a spectrum perspective as opposed to a categorical or "binary" one. He concludes with the following:

> Sometimes, certainty trumps truth. Saying things with certitude, however, will often trigger even greater uncertainty in the long run. In the future, people will need to trade in the certainty and the comfort of binary categories for full-spectrum thinking.

> Full-spectrum thinking will provide powerful ways to make sense out of new opportunities without assuming that new experiences mirror old categories, boxes, labels, or buckets. Full-spectrum thinking will help people avoid thoughtless labeling of others. Full-spectrum thinking will be a technology-enabled antidote to polarization and simplistic thinking. (p. 161)

Johansen makes the argument throughout the book that the next generation is acutely aware of differences that are not easily categorized and are instead better understood as lying on or within a spectrum of possibilities. Similarly, an essay by Adrian Wolfberg for the publication Military Review proposes a similar concept, suggesting the importance of spectrum-thinking in peaceful relations with other countries whose cultures are vastly different than our own (2006). Spectrum thinking, in both instances is defined as an ability to recognize the nuances and variations within and between categorical values (Johansen, 2020; Wolfberg, 2006). I suspect, as the two authors elude to, that if we can expand our awareness to include natural variations in perspective, we are more likely to find a connection between extreme dichotomous beliefs. I demonstrate this idea by examining our associations with colors. For example, we often associate red with passion, fire, and violence. When I ask the question, "what words do you associate with the color red," these are the responses I usually get. Our associations with colors also show up in our metaphors and euphemisms such as describing our anger as "seeing red". When we examine individual associations with red, each of our perceptions are like a gradient of that color (from pink to burgundy to blood red, etc.). Using the idea of varying gradients of experience to describe differing perspectives, we can develop our ability to more readily examine information from a spectrum mindset and are more open and accepting of individual differences in others.

A profoundly deep example of this surfaced when I began to question my own spiritual and religious belief system. I was baptized as Catholic when I was born, then became a born again Christian when I was 8 years old. I struggled with the idea that Lucifer, or Satan, was the closest to God, and ultimately became his adversary. When I was about 12 years old, I remember contemplating this with my father by asking, "What if God and the Devil are working together?" His response was, "You need to choose a side, or it will be chosen for you." I then replied, "What if I choose both?" He just shook his head and walked off. What I did not realize at the time was that I was trying to break into a sort of "spectrum" mindset by challenging the duality of Christianity.

It wasn't until my adulthood that this line of reasoning led me to other numerous disciplines, philosophies, religions, and oral traditions that imagine the diversity in the divine, such as with numerous gods as worshiped by ancient, Druids, Greeks, Romans, and Celts. This journey from spiritual belief to science and research expanded my ability to hold each religion, philosophy, way of life, or belief system as inherently "right" or "truthful" when examined or experienced within the context from which it came. By examining our context and reactions to our context, we begin to see just how much variation there is for every individual perspective. Said differently, human experience can be more thoroughly understood by becoming aware of context, response/reaction to context (thoughts, emotions, awareness), and intention or personal value behind the response. These three concepts were born out of understanding the tenets of the Integrative or Integral approach to therapy. In his book, Ken Wilbur discusses consciousness as perceived by all major theoretical orientations in clinical psychology (2008). He then suggests that each orientation holds a piece of a more complicated puzzle and proposes integrative or

integral psychology as the end pieces of the puzzle that makes up its border (Wilbur, 2008). He describes his approach below:

> What if, on the other hand, all of the above accounts [theoretical orientations] were an important part of the story? What if they all possessed true, but partial, insights into the vast field of consciousness? At the very least, assembling their conclusions under one roof would vastly expand our ideas of what consciousness is and, more important, what it might become. The endeavor to honor and embrace every legitimate aspect of human consciousness is the goal of an integral psychology (Wilbur, 2008).

This line of reasoning led me to recognize first, that each of us have our own unique perspective. It also led me to acknowledge that every individual's perspective is valid, regardless of the dictates of social perception. The prevailing question is, how do we transition from a dichotomous or categorical mindset to a more spectrum like mindset?

The Model Development

The Model does not propose new theories or interventions; rather, it is a structure for organizing existing psychological knowledge in a way that can help individuals recognize and understand the complexities of how context and personal response shapes our perceptions of each other within relationships. The model begins with the understanding of our tendency to automatically perceive others or events from a dichotomous mindset. For example, when we begin a relationship with someone, we perceive either acceptance or rejection of our own presentation. We automatically look at ourselves from only two sides, acceptable or unacceptable. When we are in this black and white thinking, we also tend to be in what people refer to as "survival mode". Our ability to survive stressful situations can be determined by whether or not we make an accurate assessment of a situation. In life or death situations, our

ability to make a quick judgment is the difference between staying alive or dying. In extreme circumstances, such as war, this ability to categorize quickly, is of most importance. However, if all of our biological needs have been met, and we feel a sense of safety in that we have a roof over our heads, expanding our awareness by acknowledging variability is advantageous. Examining the differences between dichotomous thinking and spectrum thinking, it helps to imagine what context would create these dueling (and ironically dichotomous), mindsets. Most of my life I have been contemplating the differences in values and behaviors from a context of privilege versus underprivilege. While contemplating these things with colleagues from graduate school, I began referring to these terms as Scarcity and Abundance. Experiencing the world from relatively extreme scarcity or abundance, will elicit eight possible roles, four in each context. Each role can be either passive or active and comes with reactions that are often automatically associated with the role. Most of the roles that are described in the context of scarcity were roles that were originally mapped out in the Karpman Drama Triangle (1968). Whereas the roles that are described in the abundance mindset were originally developed within The Empowerment Dynamic (Emerald, 2016). A short description of each model follows.

Karpman Drama Triangle.

The Karpman Drama Triangle, conceived within a group therapy setting, is a model of perceived roles that individuals hold in transactional, drama-filled, conflictual interactions (Karpman, 1968). According to Stephen Karpman, the three primary roles that appear in a drama-filled interaction are victim, Persecutor, and Rescuer (1968). The victim is often the recipient of action by the Persecutor or Rescuer; the Rescuer wants to "save" or take care of the victim; while the Persecutor attacks the victim in an attempt to gain something that was lost (Karpman, 2014). Holding the victim role can have the benefit of avoiding responsibility.

Playing the role of Rescuer holds the benefit of avoiding the pain of victimhood. Playing the role of Persecutor holds the benefit of trying to gain power, which is usually taken by force. All three of these roles are interdependent upon each other in that they cannot exist separately. In other words, without a victim, there is no Persecutor or Rescuer. These roles can be played by other individuals or carried out internally. Each person can transition into other roles based on interpersonal interactions, their perceptions of the other roles, or most importantly, the context in which the individual finds themselves. For example, a Rescuer may have a conscious or unconscious need to save a victim to avoid their own sense of victimization (saving others instead of self). If Rescuers cannot find a victim to rescue, they may attempt to create a victim through sabotage and emotional trip wires, taking on the role of the Persecutor. Often, individuals will have an affinity for one role over another, unconsciously seeking out others to play the "game", as Karpman suggests (2014).

Since its creation, the Drama Triangle has been expanded and developed into several different adaptations of other drama-filled interactions. There are even several philosophical books that look at both The Drama Triangle, as well as how to create a sense of compassion within each role. The most notable of these is the translation of roles from The Drama Triangle to different roles in what was named "The Empowerment Dynamic," (Emerald, 2016).

The Empowerment Dynamic.

The Empowerment Dynamic, often abbreviated as TED, is a transition of the three roles from the Drama Triangle in a move to cultivate empowerment instead of victimhood (Emerald, 2016). TED imagines passive victims as empowered creators with agency and self-efficacy; Persecutors as challengers that offer compassionate growth and learning; and Rescuers as Coaches who offer encouragement and support (Emerald, 2016). Interactions within TED are

considered empowering and can help free individuals to feel compassion, trust, and safety within their experiences (Emerald, 2016).

The Returning to Compassion Model.

In 2016, a colleague of mine, C. Ruth Diaz, was working with teenagers in group therapy on a psychiatric unit when she first began to develop a model of polarizing interactions based on the two models above. Many of these teenagers had experienced such extreme scarcity in their home environments that many of them held a scarcity mindset, meaning that every challenge felt physiologically or mentally threatening because they were so firmly cemented in sympathetic nervous responses (fight-or-flight) to their environment. At the same time, the Conscious Leadership Group, a consulting organization, published a book and created an animated video that was posted to social media and combined the Karpman Drama Triangle with The Empowerment Dynamic as equal and opposite interactions that occur in triangle relationships within an organization (Dethmer, Chapman & Klemp, 2015). This became the basis of the Returning to Compassion Model that Diaz utilized in her work with adolescents, eventually becoming a building block to the completed model presented in this study.

During her work with the organization Stand for Courage, which is a group that works to educate children about bullying in schools, Diaz came to understand the role of the bystander. The bystander is a role that appears consistently in the literature on bullying. She and I were also engaged in conversations trying to understand interpersonal relationships in terms of "polarities" instead of only a triangular "game". In polarities, there are not 3 players; a fourth felt somehow more balanced as we considered polarizing and dual interactions. I asked if villain (our renamed version of Karpman's Persecutor) was the opposite of victim, then what was the opposite of Hero (Karpman's Rescuer)? The fourth pole, in Diaz's conception of polarities in scarcity, became the

bystander. The bystander is experiencing the event from a vantage point that holds a feeling of helplessness. When individuals encounter a situation in which their reaction to the event is *inaction*, they are a bystander; when the reaction to witnessing an encounter is *action*, they are a hero. This completed the second axis of polarizing responses to a situation and added a fourth "player" or respondent to Karpman's Drama Triangle. With this inclusion, the beginning of a new model ensued.

Dynamic Interpersonal Model

My contribution in Diaz's development of the Returning to Compassion model up until this point was entirely philosophical. I helped by offering my insights and experience of scarcity and abundance, dichotomous thinking, and spectrum thinking. With her adolescent group, they began to describe emotional responses that corresponded with each corner in the scarcity context. Where the R2C model stopped was including emotional responses in an abundance context. There were also several other differences in our perception of the model; where we could no longer just say that either of our perceptions were more correct than the others. Diaz believed that the abundance version of a "bystander" is a "connector". I have instead seen this corner of abundance as being the "observer". My rational for this came from imagining what a passive bystander in an abundant context, would be doing. All I could imagine was a psychologist observing behaviors and contemplating their meanings. The role as observer felt like an intuitive addition and works well with the other three roles in abundance. Besides changing a role to observer, I also changed my label for its opposite role, to mentor. Both the R2C and TED models use the label "Coach". In the Dynamic Interpersonal Model, I relabeled "coach" as "mentor" primarily due to associations that many people make with the title "coach". The other

important way this model diverges from the other models is the acknowledgement that there are positive aspects of scarcity as well as negative aspects of abundance.

As our collaboration parted ways, I began to do the preliminary research of what we had anecdotally, philosophically, and in-relationship stumbled across. I found myself mapping out and providing evidence for the foundation which has now evolved into a model of relationship which I struggled to name, other than to call it "Relative". I hung onto this term as I imagined each role existing only in relationship with the other roles. It was my research mentor (Dr. Lisa Christensen, who suggested the title that felt most appropriate: Dynamic Interpersonal Model

Our experiences in the world are an amalgamation of interactions between our genetic makeup and our infinite number of experiences in a vast sea of past context and present environment. In other words, each role in this model holds an intention relative to the other three roles and interacts or reacts based on the context that each role is perceived from (scarcity or abundance). Each individual perception stems from the individual's experience of past contexts. Therefore, each interpersonal or intrapersonal interaction is relative to context (scarcity or abundance rooted in individual past context) and intention (villian/challenger, victim/creator, hero/mentor, bystander/observer). Each role comes with varying gradients of expression or perception that relate to the role they find themselves stuck in.

To break down the model into recognizable pieces, I describe it as being two sides of a coin on which one side resides the context of scarcity and on the other the context of abundance. The emotional reaction central to scarcity is fear. When we hold fear in our relationships we contribute to the "drama" of an interaction by not tapering or tempering our automatic and autonomic fear responses. On the other side of the coin, we find trust at the center of abundance. When we hold trust in our relationships, we find empowerment and self-efficacy for ourselves

and those around us. A more in-depth description of both contexts (scarcity and abundance) are described below.

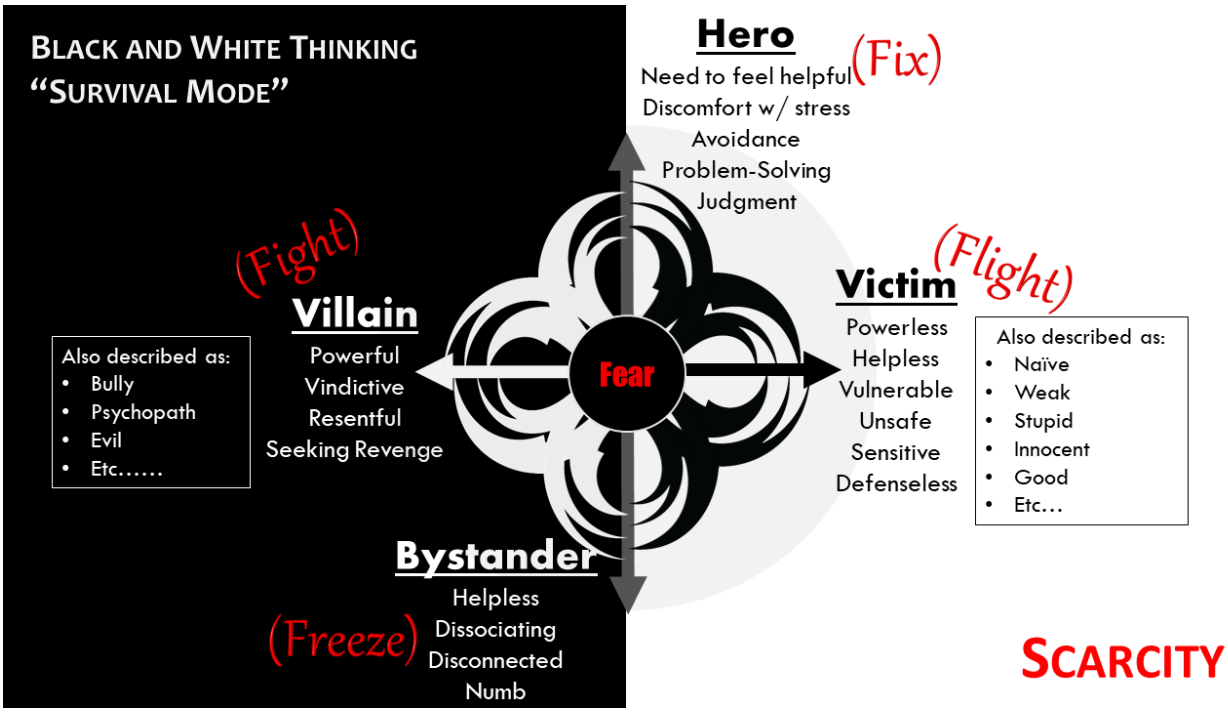
Scarcity/survival mode.

Scarcity can refer to resources, experiences, opportunities, respect, emotions, or any possible human experience in which one's needs are not met. Importantly, scarcity can exist due to an inability to cultivate abundance in any one area of one's life, rather than scarcity as determined by external factors. In the book *Scarcity: The New Science of Having Less and How it Defines Our Lives*, the authors discuss different ways in which scarcity itself may affect us and includes both negative and positive outcomes within a scarcity mindset (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). They discuss a scarcity mindset by calling it a lack of cognitive or mental bandwidth in reaction to having your mind taxed by stressors (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). One anecdotal example they offer is of an individual who has experienced an event that has a negative emotional connotation (such as a fight with a partner). The negative emotion will affect their cognitive ability by overtaxing it, which then lowers their bandwidth to think, react, or respond efficiently or even appropriately (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). In terms of extreme polarities, this also highlights that too much scarcity (maybe even too much of anything, including abundance) can be detrimental, adverse, and harmful. When discussing scarcity mindsets in this paper, I am often referring to extreme experiences of scarcity as opposed to beneficial aspects of scarcity. I will discuss the beneficial aspects of scarcity below.

Figure 1 offers a visual of an extreme scarcity mindset in relationships. At the end of each axis is a role that each of us may embody throughout our experience, depending on how we are relating to an event and the context in which that event is occurring. Each interaction is a push and pull of emotional experiences. Each role either pushes or pulls, away or towards its

opposite counterpart often as an automatic reaction. These reactions then create a tenor of fear within the individuals who are acting within all roles of scarcity.

Figure 2: Reactions in Scarcity



Villain.

This role is often someone or something we tend to want to separate ourselves from, or that we have difficulty recognizing within ourselves. We "other" the villain and hold them as someone we are incapable of being. We can go as far as to dehumanize them or label them as evil, psychopathic, tyrant, narcissistic, or any other personality disorder we can remember. This often happens in situations involving categorizations of "us" and "them" like politics or religion, but the villain can be activated whenever we encounter individuals who are engaging in behavior different than that to which we are accustomed, and our reaction to their difference is one of fear. villains are often victims who are demanding (usually out of a sense of rage) to get their "power" back. According to Van der Kolk, "most interpersonal trauma on children is perpetuated by

victims who grow up to become perpetrators or repeat victims of violence" (p. 402, 2014). To regain their power, childhood victims may attack another person out of rage. They may attack the villain (who has stolen their power) out of revenge or vengeance, thus victimizing the villain. If the villain is not accessible, they may enact their anger toward an individual who is perceived as weaker, creating more victims in the cycle of victim/villain responses.

The villain corner of the model corresponds with the autonomic nervous response "fight" of fight-or-flight. When we are pushed into a corner and perceive a threatening interaction, we respond to it by either fighting (which can look like an ardent defense of one's belief or could be taken to the point of harming another), or running away (which can look like avoidance, quietness, shrinking, or disappearing), when in the role of victim. An individual can perceive an interaction as threatening when it is different from what they are comfortable with, even if their comfort zone is harmful to them. This is to say that an individual can feel comfortable with extreme scarcity interactions and reactions (regardless of negative outcomes) and may feel threatened when confronting an interaction that comes from an abundance or spectrum mindset of trust. Growing up in extreme scarcity predisposes one to perceiving abundance as a threat to their comfort zone. In the villain role, one may feel justified in reacting to stressors out of anger or rage when their "way of life" feels threatened.

Victim.

The victim, on the other hand, is often seen as someone who is of a weaker status, someone who is harmed by the villain. We often see victims as vulnerable. We may even label them as naïve, innocent, sensitive, etc. We also often think of victims as an individual who is inherently "good" as opposed to "bad". They often perceived as innocent yet are also often derided for perceived weakness. Thus, the victim corner of the model corresponds with the

stressor response "flight". When we feel threatened, we can react from the victim role by creating extreme boundaries (walls) between us and the world due to our experience of a sense of terror. As we know, boundaries are useful and adaptive; however, as previously noted, anything in extreme can be problematic. Extreme boundaries can be confining, secluding, and disconnecting, sequestering us from relationships. When examining the victim role, I often picture the film Pink Floyd, *The Wall* (Parker & Scarfe, 1983). The main character in the film goes through years of complex and traumatic relationships in which each encounter is described as "another brick in the wall." The Wall effectively separates him from intimacy in his relationships with others and himself. He becomes separated from his own sense of self by continually staying in complete darkness. Regardless of light or dark, isolation itself can be devastating to a person's psyche. We only know ourselves in relationship when our personality is reflected by another (whether it be human, animal, or object). Extreme separation can lead to an experience of dissociation and a loss of connection to an individual's own experience and physiological reactions (Schwarz, et.al, 2017).

In the film, when Pink is fully isolated by his wall, his entire personality and psyche dissolves into a chaotic state. The main character then becomes villainous to the point of enacting atrocities stemming from a totalitarian mindset out of a sense of rage. This chain of events highlights the interaction between the villain and the victim and how the roles can be reversed (from victim to villain) if pushed to the extreme.

Hero or Mock Hero?

The Rescuer in Karpman's Drama Triangle is labeled the hero in the TED, R2C, and Relative Models. The hero is often someone who is engaged in the interaction between the victim and villain. In an event of extreme scarcity, to the extent that one's life is in danger, we

imagine a hero who might come along, just in time, to save the day. We imagine an individual who is confident, strong, daring, bold, brave, and courageous. They arrive just in time to curtail atrocious acts against humanity by rising to the challenge and overcoming it. I will refer to this aspect of the hero role as the *Authentic* hero. In a moment of extreme horror and vast scarcity the *Authentic* hero is one of the most valued roles. The Authentic heroes are individuals who step up in extreme circumstances to stop harm from occurring. We have seen some of the bravest people step up in moments of terror and horror. Therefore, we idolize this role and attempt to replicate it in ourselves. We believe that if we mimic the role of hero, we will feel the bravery and mastery that we imagine comes from rescuing, saving, helping, and supporting. What we fail to recognize is that during the moment of extreme scarcity, an Authentic hero is feeling fear just like every other role; however, they are responding to the fear in a courageous manner through action.

On the other hand, the hero that is mimicking acts of heroism is holding a "fake it until you make it" strategy in confronting any moment of scarcity. This adaptation is useful in certain circumstances if the moment of scarcity does not surpass the individual's threshold for psychological pain. Most acts of adaptation (such as mimicking what is modeled) work well in allowing us to practice responding in a favorable manner until we can cultivate our own sense of self-efficacy and courage. Unfortunately, adaptations only work well in a specific context in which the individual who is mimicking is not feeling overwhelmed. Therefore, I propose that the acting hero, or *mock* hero, when overwhelmed, will become stuck in the hero role in contexts that are not adaptable, and are instead harmful. *Mock* heroes respond to an illusory moment of perceived fear based on previous traumatic experiences that left them with an exaggerated sense of vigilance, or hypervigilance. Their skewed reaction to perceived danger comes from a place

that is incapable of holding the reality of the experience due to feeling overwhelmed. Therefore, a mock hero may be pulled to rescue, repair, or correct the issue that is causing pain for the victim, getting stuck in a "fix" mindset which may not be helpful within the context. The "fix" mindset is not necessarily part of the traditional fight-flight-freeze-faint reactions in an autonomic nervous response; however, I would argue that the "fix" instinct comes from our need to find homeostasis and cultivate a sense of safety. Thus, the Mock hero responds by attempting to "fix" either the perceived threat or by rescuing the victim. The Mock hero's attempt to "fix" can instead debilitate the victim's ability to rediscover self-efficacy that may have been stolen. In other words, a Mock hero is the individual who would give a hungry person a fish, as opposed to teaching them how to fish, in order to engage in an activity that creates a false sense of bravery and courageousness. However, it also takes away from the victim's ability to become a creator of their own sense of self-efficacy in overcoming a painful experience. This interaction between the *Mock* hero and victim may continually exacerbate a victim's experience of fear.

Bystander.

The bystander, like the hero, engages in the interaction between the villain and victim, but in a passive way. The bystander response can be linked to the "freeze" stress response, otherwise known as the "deer in headlights" reaction. The bystander may begin the interaction in the *Mock* hero role but is not able to fix, rescue, correct, or repair a situation. When a hero (authentic or not) is unable or feels insufficient, they can instead feel more like a bystander. They may experience a sense of helplessness or shame in being unable to alleviate the fear that is a result of the interaction between the villain and victim. The bystander response can also be adaptive or debilitating depending, again, on the context. A bystander who has not had their senses overwhelmed can become an observer of the event and can feel similar experiences as the

victim. They can either learn to overcome the stressful moment in an adaptive manner (grow and learn) or get stuck in the "freeze" response. When stuck in this response, an individual will experience a sense of learned helplessness. This means they will continually respond to any aversive moments with an extreme feeling of helplessness.

Summing up Scarcity.

We may find ourselves drawn to a role depending on the interactions we have experienced and the roles we have played throughout our lifetime. For example, if we have experienced trauma, we are more likely to view ourselves as a victim and may react to the stressor by isolating ourselves away from all possible stressors (including the stress of new relationships). A reaction like this results in isolation as well as stagnation, as without challenge we would never grow. On the other hand, if we often find ourselves in a caretaker role for, say, a parent who lives on the victim/villain axis, we may find our reactions tend to fall on either the hero or bystander orientations, leading us toward a desperate desire to change current or future adverse interactions. This can lead to positive outcomes (such as learning and growing), or we can become stuck in either a fix or freeze mindset. When stuck in a fix mindset, we can see where the *Mock* hero might cause harm through their desire to perceive themselves as helpful by seeking out and holding victims in their fear reaction to an adverse event. When stuck in a freeze mindset, the bystander may cause harm to themselves by becoming consumed by an experience of learned helplessness, where they believe that no matter what they do, they will not be effective. Scarcity, in and of itself, is not necessarily bad, counterproductive, or problematic unless experienced in its extreme. Too much of anything is unhealthy. There is also a positive component to scarcity. We have a threshold of stress in which we are able to grow. Once that threshold is breeched, we then become overwhelmed by the experience and may shut down in

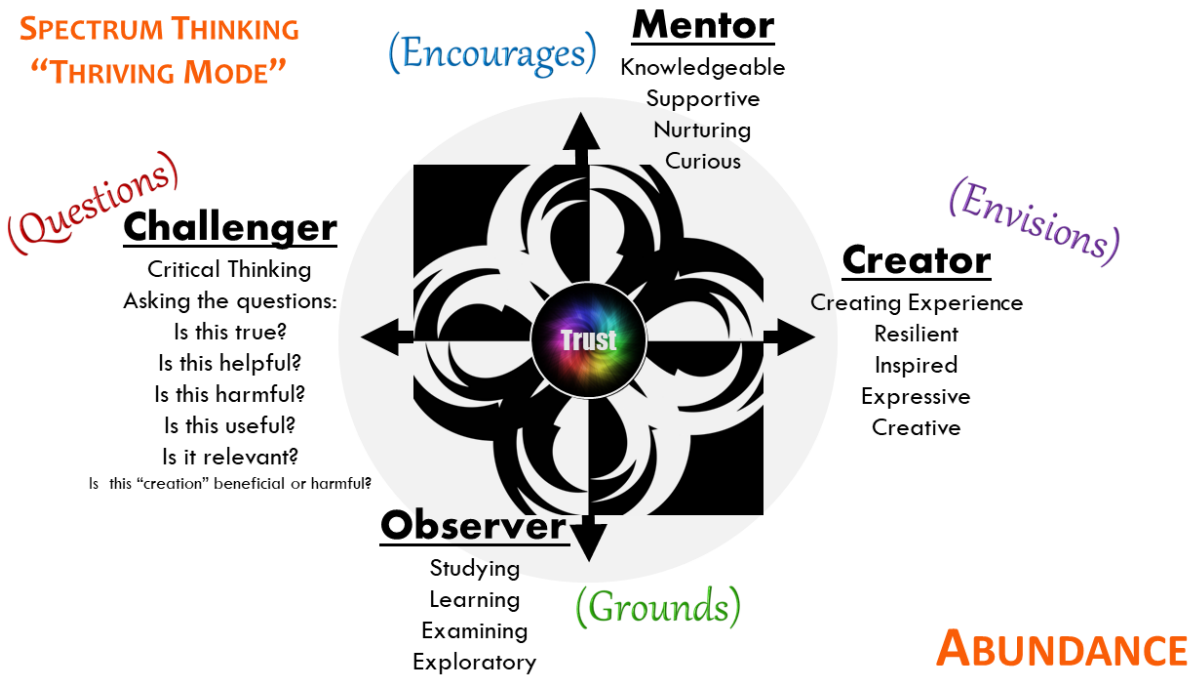
response to any further interaction. However, prior to exceeding the threshold we can experience scarcity as an impetus to grow, which increases our adaptability and cultivates a personal sense of knowledge, self-efficacy, and wisdom.

Abundance/thriving mode.

Existing within an abundance context does not imply that every possible need is met. Instead, what it means is there is a perceived abundance of resources to successfully navigate challenging moments, based on a cultivation of trust in oneself and in others. Trust in oneself occurs when an individual recognizes that they have the capacity to overcome life's obstacles. This recognition results in an internal sense of safety and self-efficacy. For example, I may trust that I am able to handle a moment when I have failed, that my failure is not permanent, and that it does not mean I am incapable. In other words, failure is only temporary and is meant to increase your understanding. Holding this belief, I can recognize my efficacy in overcoming painful experiences. This recognition cultivates a mindset which insures that for every situation there is a spectrum of emotional, mental, or physiological responses and reactions that are both appropriate and true, depending on the context.

Within an abundance mindset, the roles that are active in an extreme scarcity mindset transform (see Figure 2). The villain can be perceived as a challenger; a victim can be perceived as a creator; a hero can be perceived as a mentor; and finally, a bystander can be perceived as an observer.

Figure 2: Reactions in Abundance



Challenger.

The challenger embodies critical thinking; they do not accept every answer as the inherent truth, as doing so can lead to groupthink, which in extreme cases will manifest into atrocities. A challenger is interested in seeking truth and growth for all parties involved. They ask the questions: Is this right? Is this relevant? Is this harmful? And what does this mean? In order to understand, connect with, and grow any creation, the challenger elicits a response from the creator. We may often play this role in ourselves as we hone a new skill. The challenger reacts to new information through a curious lens to seek clarity and understanding. The difficulty for the challenger is recognizing that they may cause pain to the creator (in much the same way that the villain causes pain to the victim), as growth is often very painful. However, the difference is that a challenger seeks to offer the most amount of growth with the least amount of harm possible. The difference between the villain and the challenger is that the challenger knows the creator has a limit of experiencing a challenge before they become overwhelmed.

Remember the threshold of stress described in scarcity? There is a threshold of stress in abundance as well. The challenger knows how to back off and let go of a disagreement or misunderstanding as they can recognize when the creator's capacity has been reached. This might be manifested by an individual walking away when they notice either the other person, or themselves, becoming agitated. It can also involve letting go of a challenge that you are trying to overcome after you have reached the threshold that is conducive to growing, as to go further, without rest, would cause suffering, inhibit growth or roll back what you have previously learned.

Creator.

We are all creators. Every moment of the day, we create our environment inside of ourselves. Our brain consistently envisions which aspects of our internal and external environments to focus on and expand, thus creating a new experience in the world. Our created experience is part decision (to focus on a particular aspect), part genetic predisposition toward a type of reaction (with either a heightened or reduced physiological reaction), and part individual context (past experiences, past responses, modeling, etc.). We decide either to share or hide our created reality within our relationships. We may even decide to share or hide a created reality from ourselves. When we share our experience, we will often elicit a response that may be encouraging (mentor), challenging (challenger), grounding (observer), or reflective (creator). These responses illicit growth toward understanding self and others. When encouraged by a mentor, the creator can learn what was cultivated (wisdom, knowledge, reactions) from the mentor's previous experiences while the creator can recognize their own novel reaction (i.e., their created, diverse experience). When confronted by a challenger a creator can hone or focus their creation. Emerald (2016) describes this well: "A challenger calls forth a creator's will to

create, often spurring him or her to learn new skills, make difficult decisions, or do whatever is necessary to manifest a dream or desire" (p.103). The challenger can also help the creator learn there are other contexts with which to examine their experience. The challenger reminds us there are other possible reactions based in their individual historical contexts, that are equally true and give us a greater understanding of any event. A challenger's need in this interaction is to be recognized or seen by the creator (reflected). In other words, when we are being challenged, we are being asked to translate into the challenger's language and recognize that the challenger understands the situation from their own context. When grounded by the observer, the creator can take a nonjudgmental, nonbiased look at their creation from outside of themselves. This allows them to see the grounded, factual aspects of their creation separate from their personal relationship with it. In other words, with an observer's help, creators can objectively see their creations. Finally, when reflected by the creator (the self), the act of reflecting is like an esoteric moment where we examine ourselves in the mirror. We learn more about ourselves and our own creations (reactions) as we internally reflect on our experiences. The more we reflect, the more capacity we have available to recognize and understand our own experience in the world.

Mentor

In the TED model, as well as the R2C model, the top end of the Y-axis was named coach (Emerald, 2016; Diaz et. al, 2016). I renamed it mentor, primarily because the word coach has an emotionally charged context for many. A mentor is an individual who is pulled by fascination, wonder, and curiosity to the things they are passionate about. They approach a moment as if it is an adventure to overcome, grow, and learn from. mentors also love to share what they have discovered. A mentor is viewed, from the other role's context, as experiencing, or having experienced similarities to the individual they are guiding and supporting. Remember

that in moments of extreme scarcity, the hero is experiencing fear, just like all the other roles that appear in scarcity. In terms of being in an abundant mindset, the mentor has the capacity to recognize they are also an explorer of experiences they are passionate about. Like a hero, the mentor is not courageous because they acted the part, they are cultivating courage because they approach the moment with the belief that each experience is an adventure, a rollercoaster, and a moment to grow and learn from. In exploration and wonder a hero can instead become a mentor who is sharing the wealth of knowledge they have discovered in their adventures with the other three roles. The mentor does not seek support from the other roles; their intention is to support growth for the other roles while reaping the reward of sharing their experience in the world. In other words, they do not fret if a creator or challenger accepts or rejects their offering of support; it is the act of offering that is its own reward to a mentor.

Observer.

When we are asked to observe something, what we are being asked to do is pay attention in service of seeing or learning something. We ask children to do this constantly; however, in adulthood, we are often filled with such a large sense of responsibility that we forget to take the opportunity to simply observe our own experiences, with as few preconceived notions as possible. We forget that many of our reactions to most situations have been colored by our past and are saturated in subjectivity. In scarcity, when I have felt like a bystander, I will often remind myself that I feel frozen because I have no precedent from which to pull a response to this situation. If I stay frozen without attempting to observe the experience, I will keep myself in extreme scarcity, continually cultivating fear for myself and others who are looking for grounded reality. If I instead attempt to learn from my frozenness by examining it, I can become an observer who can recognize the grounded reality of any situation.

Summing up Abundance.

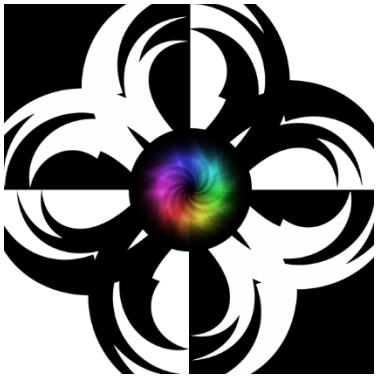
In an Abundance context we may find ourselves having an affinity for one role over the others, just like we can within a Scarcity context. We can also hold all four roles in any interaction depending on our context and intention. The challenger interacts with the intention of understanding; the creator interacts with the intention of growing a sense of self; the mentor interacts with the intention of sharing what has been learned; and the observer interacts with the intention of grounding information in objectivity. Together, all four roles are symbiotic. They do not wish to take away from an interaction, but instead to grow, nourish, and develop it.

On the other hand, there is such a thing as too much abundance. We get stuck in extreme experiences of abundance just like we get stuck in extreme experiences of scarcity. Each role holds a threshold that, prior to meeting, maximizes the amount of beneficial return. Once that threshold is surpassed, Abundance can be unhelpful and eventually damaging. Imagine having every need met, as you live in childlike wonder and imagination. To most adults that sounds like the place they want to stay forever. Unfortunately, when you stay in that mindset for too long (depending on individual thresholds) you will end up with a sense of underwhelm (as opposed to a sense of overwhelm in Scarcity). Abundance loses its capacity to delight and encourage growth, and instead becomes stagnant. For example, if you are a parent, you may have perpetually heard your child lament how bored they are by the end of a long summer break which had been excitedly awaited just a few months before.

As an important part of the Dynamic Interpersonal Model, it is necessary to reiterate that both Scarcity and Abundance have beneficial and detrimental aspects to them. If we examined the beneficial vs. the detrimental aspects to each side of the model, we would find that there are even further unfolding concepts that appear between those extremes. In other words, as you

begin to drill down into the core concept of the Dynamic Interpersonal Model itself, you begin to recognize that darkness and light are opposites that, between them, create every possible color in existence. Each opposite is complex, and if examined more closely, breaks apart into a spectrum of human relationships. Figure 3 is the visual I created as an icon to represent the full model as described here.

Figure 3. The Dynamic Interpersonal Model Visual Representation



Application

A scarcity mindset that results in dichotomous thinking is appropriate in a certain context. If we were out in the forest camping, and a bear happened upon our camp, thinking in black and white will help us make the best decision as quickly as possible for life saving reasons. Because we can feel the same level of physiological responses from a life-threatening moment (like an attack by a wild animal) as we might experience from a moment of exhilaration and excitement (such as a first airplane ride), we might respond to the moment as though there will be a negative outcome, such as death. However, if we evaluate a moment as having the possibility of a positive outcome, the fear response in scarcity can be a motivating factor.

In their book, Mullainathan & Shafir (2013) outline several research studies that show that giving an individual a task with either a long or short deadline will affect their productivity. It was consistently found that having a longer deadline to complete a task led to being less

productive, experiencing more distractions, and being less effective; whereas having a shorter deadline led to an increased focus on the task, becoming more productive, and completing it more effectively (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). This highlights something that researchers have discovered about our brain's ability to react in a more beneficial manner by changing how we think about a situation. For example, in a study done in 2014, researchers found that by reappraising their beliefs about a physiological stress response, participants experienced better cognitive outcomes, as well as a positive affective display, which was reflected in more positive social responses to the stressors they were experiencing (Beltzer et.al, 2014). In other words, if we simply recognize there is a positive outcome to a struggle we may be enduring, the struggle itself will be more beneficial and we will be able to think more clearly, respond with more positive emotions, and increase our social connection with others.

My favorite example of this is the physiological response I feel when I am about to step into the car of a tall, fast, and winding roller coaster. Even though it may result in the same physiological autonomic nervous system response you would get from an event in which your life is threatened, because we perceive it as adventurous we might respond with joy, have more fun, and make better connections with those who dare to ride it with us. This is key in cultivating and increasing self-efficacy as well as a sense of trust and safety. As we build a foundation of recognizing that overcoming one struggle increases our confidence, we will be able to get through subsequent struggles, trust in ourselves increases. When we trust our self, we present our affect as positive and trusting. People automatically react by mirroring our energy and will be able to feel trust in themselves as well. This will create subsequent positive emotional associations. When our sense of self-efficacy is challenged again, we go through the

cycle of the model until we have learned the lesson the challenge has offered, continually increasing our trust and self-efficacy.

We live in a dog-eat-dog world. Many people might share this perception. If we think of other people in our world as competition, we treat them like either predator or prey, and respond in dichotomous survival responses meant to either scare away the predator or entice the prey. If we instead think of other people as adaptable humans who are capable of overcoming adversity, instead of amplifying their fear, we can cultivate a perception of trust. In much the same way as trusting that the rollercoaster will not kill us, if we evaluate a situation from a larger context, say a universal one, we can cultivate a trust in ourselves to recognize that we can handle whatever is thrown our way. We can take it a step further by recognizing struggling and pain are necessary components of experience meant to help us progress and grow. If I trust everything we are going through as humans is meant to make us better creatures, I then choose to see life as an exhilarating and adventurous rollercoaster in which I am grateful and closer to individuals who choose to accept the challenge and get on the ride with me.

Relationships and Complex Trauma

Relationship is complicated because we not only engage in relationship with each other, we also engage in relationship with ourselves and with the environment in which we are having any experience. The interesting aspect about engaging in relationships is that, not only do we need relationships in our lives to give us a sense of connection, we also need relationships to survive. Thus, there is a primal aspect to our relationships as well. Many people believe that we live in an individualistic society, which would dictate that we must be able to "take care of ourselves," or be "independent". Considering this within a context of scarce resources is the impetus that leads to the sentiment of a dog-eat-dog world, where everyone is in competition

with each other for resources. Living in survival mode, or extreme scarcity, cultivates a permeating belief that there is simply not enough to go around; thus, we must fight, compete, and power our way to the top. This perpetuates the belief that safety only exists at the top of a hierarchy and can only be achieved through power or force. When we live in that belief, we treat everyone as if they are competitors. This creates a culture of disconnection and separation that permeates throughout society and creates an environment rife with complex trauma. People begin wearing masks instead of presenting an authentic version of their experience. This makes the interpersonal experience that much more difficult. The literature on authenticity in relationships has shown that transparency is a key element of authenticity (Lopez & Rice, 2006), and authenticity is often a key indicator of trustworthiness (Wickham, 2013). Given that transparency in one's motives is a central feature of authentic relationships (Lopez & Rice, 2006), perception of their partner's authenticity likely serves as a key indicator of trustworthiness.

Complex trauma is defined as repetitive, prolonged, severe experiences that "undermine a child's personality development and fundamental trust in relationships" (Ford & Courtois, 2009; Mooren & Stöfsel, 2015). Experiencing complex trauma can lead to symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) ((Ford & Courtois, 2009; Mooren & Stöfsel, 2015). Individuals who suffer from symptoms of PTSD, as a result of experiencing complex trauma, tend to feel very isolated and alone, with no awareness or understanding of how to cultivate their own sense of safety due to their lack of trust in all relationships (Ford & Courtois, 2009; Mooren & Stöfsel, 2015). I propose that individuals who have suffered from complex trauma may also present with a lack of trust in their own inner experiences, leading to a deficit in experiencing a sense of internal safety. In other words, the general lack of safety leads to a reduction of trust for one's

self; thus, a lack of trust for others. If an individual is holding this belief, they will broadcast a feeling of untrustworthiness (whether they are aware of it or not). If that is the signal being broadcast, others will believe it; therefore, believing that individual is indeed untrustworthy.

Consider the following: If you are consistently taught, by a primary caregiver or an influential individual, during the most formative years of your life that you are untrustworthy by being abused, neglected, betrayed, labeled such things as a liar, a thief, lazy, stupid, unworthy, and/or invalid, you will believe these labels. Unfortunately, if anyone looks hard enough into their experience in the world, they can find confirmatory evidence that these labels are true. Anyone can find behaviors they have been pushed to engage in, take them out of context, and use these examples to verify that their misperceptions about themselves are true. This belief permeates an individual's understanding of who they are as an individual; thus, creating dissonance within, an inability to recognize strengths, a lack of distress tolerance (due to a hypervigilant response to all stressors that lead to emotional or sensory overload), and a limited ability to develop a sense of self-efficacy. This in turn can lead to an obsession or hyper-focus on deception and a need for a sense of authenticity. This sense is heightened due to an adaptive response to one's environment in hiding their experience from themselves and others because they have deemed their experiences as invalid. This leaves them in a place where they can feel that deception of their own experience is necessary; however, deception by another person is unacceptable. At the same time, relationships are limited due to a fear of being vulnerable often because vulnerability is seen as having insight into their experience, which again, is deemed invalid. This occurs for many individuals who have a history of very few resources, support, or direction, and are living in scarcity.

As an example, I could label myself as lazy if I were to hold the value that my household needs to stay clean and in order. Because I have been dedicating so much time and energy to my education, my house is often messy, and I am unable to fulfill that value, thus leaving me with a sense of laziness. If I expand my view to consider both values of cleanliness and education, I could hold the truth that I am situationally prioritizing one value over the other. If I am labeling myself as "lazy" by comparing myself to others whose contexts are vastly different than my own, then I am creating unnecessary and fruitless suffering for myself.

Now, imagine that you are an individual who has suffered a lifelong experience of invalidation by your environment and by the people within it. Given the previous example, I may not just label myself as "lazy," I may also label myself as "not enough," "not loveable," or especially, that I am "not of any value to existence itself." This line of thinking is one avenue that can lead individuals into acting out in roles of scarcity by either fixing it via becoming a hero (to prove self-worth), fighting it (accepting the label and retaliating against the world that has rejected them as a villain), by giving up (as a bystander), or submitting to a life of victimhood.

Relationships can also be described as the emotional rollercoaster of life. If I imagine that each relationship I engage in is an adventure, I will respond as if I'm about to embark on a rollercoaster that I know I will either enjoy or dislike, but that I will ultimately be able to walk away from, intact. Not only does one walk away with their metaphoric life, they also walk away with a newfound sense of confidence and trust in their own ability to not only rise to a challenge, but also benefit from the experience of the challenge.

Method

The purpose of this study is to apply the Dynamic Interpersonal Model as a template to personal interactions by teaching participants the archetypical roles that play out in both scarcity and abundance. By recognizing roles people play in their relationships, they are freed up to acknowledge and be aware of their context and if they are in scarcity or abundance. Not only will this allow them to change their interactions, it will help participants see their interactions from outside of themselves, while also giving them the space to accept the interactions they have already engaged in; thus, letting go of the fear that their interactions are not acceptable. This will allow the participant to begin establishing a more authentic sense of self, as opposed to a false one. The Dynamic Interpersonal Model is helpful, first and foremost, in its ability to help individuals recognize where they stand (in real time), where they would prefer to be, and how to get there. This allows them to establish goals that are meant to assist them in their transition into a more beneficial mindset. A beneficial mindset means the individual can navigate their experiences and pain without creating more unnecessary suffering. By acknowledging roles they keep finding themselves in, they can validate their own experience (context) and act in accordance with their true values (intention). I offered this information in a workshop format, which was appropriate given this was a psychoeducational approach. The workshop was open to the community.

Participants were initially supposed to participate in 4, weekly, ninety-minute workshop sessions, plus a 5th follow up session one month after the 4th workshop. Changes to the format are discussed in the results. At each session, participants were given 2 separate assessments: Authenticity in Relationships Scale (AIRS; Lopez & Rice, 2006) and a general relationship

satisfaction survey (RSS). These measurements were completed at the beginning of each session.

For analysis, I conducted a pre- and post t-test for both the AIRS and RSS, as well as correlations between the post- group AIRS and RSS. I hypothesized participants would report experiencing an increase in authenticity in their most important relationships. I also hypothesized participants would report an increase in relationship satisfaction overall. Finally, I hypothesized individuals who report a higher level of authenticity in their relationships would also experience an increase in satisfaction with their relationships.

Participants

I offered a free workshop on the Dynamic Interpersonal Model at the east Gresham office of Western Psychological & Counseling Services (WPCS) in a group room. Participants were recruited through online advertisement (email and social media), and flyers. They were made aware that the study was not affiliated with the services of WPCS.

Measures

Authenticity in Relationships Scale (AIRS).

The Authenticity in Relationships Scale-Short Form (AIRS-SF; Lopez & Rice, 2006) is a 22-item, self-report questionnaire that instructs the participant to consider their current (and most important) intimate relationship and rate to what degree each question describes them on a scale of 1 to 9 with 1 being “Not at all descriptive” and 9 being “Very Descriptive” (see Appendix A). Authenticity in relationship is separated into two subscales: Unacceptability of Deception (UOD) which measures an individual’s intolerance to partner deception in relationship or a presentation of a “false-self,” and Intimate Risk Taking (IRT) which measures an individual’s willingness to show vulnerability and to self-disclose in relationship (Lopez & Rice, 2006). The authors of this

measure defined authenticity as: “A relational schema that favors the benefits of mutual and accurate exchanges of real self-experiences with one’s intimate partner over the attendant risks of personal discomfort, partner disapproval, or relationship instability” (Lopez & Rice, 2006, p. 364). The authors completed an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis that resulted in the 22-item questionnaire that reliably represents the 2 main subscales UOD and IRT. “These findings suggest that a strong endorsement of the value of accurate and nondeceptive exchanges with one’s partner along with high levels of reported intimate disclosure risk taking may function as critical contextual features for the experience of relationship authenticity” (Lopez &Rice, 2006, p. 369). The authors also found strong internal consistency, and reliability (Lopez & Rice, 2006). Test retest reliability estimates were .89 for the total scale, .82 for the IRT subscale, and .89 for the UOD subscale (Lopez & Rice, 2006).

Relationship Satisfaction Survey

I developed a relationship satisfaction survey (see Appendix B) which asks participants to rate current relationship satisfaction within various relationships on a 7-point Likert scale from ‘very unsatisfied’ to ‘very satisfied’. Participants rated several types of relationships including self, intimate partner(s), close friends, co-workers, and family.

Procedure

At the first session, participants were given information on confidentiality and informed consent. They were made aware that data collection from their participation adheres to Institutional Review Board guidelines through Pacific University. They were also made aware that all data and information collected is held in strict confidence. Physical paperwork used is stored in a locked file cabinet and information that is transferred to digital format is password protected and secured by an SSL encryption feature.

Using the tenets of the Dynamic Interpersonal Model as described above, I developed a workshop guide (see Appendix C) that began with teaching the roles present in each side of the model (scarcity and abundance). We then examined historical and current relationship dynamics with others or with internal processes (with self). Using the model as a map to recognize what patterns the participant found themselves in, we examined what may be sustaining the pattern by focusing awareness on internal/external negative evaluations, rewards that come from sustaining the dysfunctional pattern, and the fears that come with changing one's relational experiences in the world.

The first two workshop sessions were in person at WPCS's group room. By the third workshop, COVID-19 had reached the United States. The workshop had to be temporarily halted until I was able to obtain IRB permission to continue workshop sessions via the Zoom video conferencing platform. There was a 3-month gap between the 2nd and 3rd sessions. Finally, due to time limitations, the follow up session was held one week after the 4th session rather than one month later as originally intended.

Results

The workshop began with 8 participants. Only 4 completed the full study. The other 4 dropped out due to personal time constraints. The four participants that completed the study, ranged in age from 30-51. There were 3 females and 1 male. Two participants identified as heterosexual, one identified as bisexual, and one asexual. Two participants were in a committed romantic relationship

Initially, the workshop was scheduled to run once a week, for four straight weeks with a fifth follow up a month later. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, there was a 3-month break between the 2nd and 3rd sessions. The four that dropped out either expressed an inability to

commit to the days we would be continuing the online meetings, or a discomfort around attending through an online venue. Also, due to researcher time constraints, the 5th and final session was completed only a week after the 4th session. All analyses were completed on the IBM program SPSS. Table 1 offers an overview of AIRS and RSS results for each workshop session.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for AIRS and RSS measures

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Authenticity In Relationships (AIRS)			
Session 1	53.50	11.387	4
Session 2	53.00	14.652	4
Session 3	52.25	19.939	4
Session 4	50.25	14.221	4
Session 5	53.75	9.777	4
Relationship Satisfaction Survey (RSS)			
Session 1	24.75	7.932	4
Session 2	25.25	7.632	4
Session 3	28.75	8.461	4
Session 4	32.50	6.351	4
Session 5	33.00	5.888	4

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare AIRS scores pre- (prior to 1st session) and post- intervention (prior to 5th session) to examine the first hypothesis, that participants would report an increase in overall authenticity in their most important relationship. There was not a significant difference in scores before the workshop (M=53.40, SD=11.40) and after (M=53.75, SD=9.78); t(3)= - .062, p = .95.

A paired-samples t-test was also conducted to compare RSS scores pre- and post-intervention to examine the second hypothesis, that participants would report an increase in overall relationship satisfaction. Although there was a positive change in relationship satisfaction, the results indicate that differences in scores are not statistically significant; pre- (M=24.75, SD=7.93) and post-intervention (M=33, SD=5.9); $t(3)= - 2.4$, $p = .09$.

Finally, for the last hypothesis, that increases in authenticity would be positively related to increases in relationship satisfaction, I ran a Pearson correlation between post- test AIRS and post- test RSS. AIRS and RSS scores were found to be positively correlated, however these results were not statistically significant, $r(4) = .46$, $p = .54$.

Discussion

The results of this study seem to indicate that although there was an increase in relationship satisfaction, as well as a positive correlation between authenticity in relationships and relationship satisfaction, they were not statistically significant. This may be due to several varying factors and limitations of the study. These will be discussed following a brief discussion of each analysis.

For the first hypothesis, that participants would report an increase in overall authenticity in their most important relationship, the results were not statistically significant; however, due to having a small sample size of only four, the statistical power of these analyses may not be fully representative of clinical changes that may have resulted from attending the workshop. Looking closer at the means and standard deviations for the AIRS over each session, there appeared to be a decrease in authenticity until the final session, where the mean returned to baseline with a very slight increase.

The second hypothesis, that participants would report an increase in overall relationship satisfaction, was also not statistically significant; however, the same applies here as with the previous hypothesis. Due to having a small sample size, the power of these statistics is negligible. Examining the data across all 5 sessions, there seems to be a more consistent increase in scores with gradually smaller standard deviations for the RSS as opposed to the AIRS. This suggests that there was an increase in relationship satisfaction and a decrease in differences between participants. Considering the resulting p-value of .09 with only four participants, had there been a larger sample size, these results may have been statistically significant.

The final hypothesis, that participants who report a higher level of authenticity in their relationships would also experience an increase in satisfaction with their relationships was also not statistically significant. Although there was a positive correlation between authenticity and relationship satisfaction, the same may apply here as with the previous two hypotheses, that the sample size may have been too small to see statistically significant results.

It is interesting to notice that changes in relationship satisfaction, although not statistically significant, seem to consistently and gradually increase over the 5 sessions. Also, the differences between participants decreased over all 5 sessions. Looking closer at the data, it seems that at least 1 participant's relationship satisfaction did not change; however, they began the workshop with high satisfaction scores. The increase, therefore, may have been more significant had all participants started at lower baselines. As for the AIRS scores, the standard deviation seems to be more variable, however, the first and last session's standard deviation shows a similar story as the RSS. Although the overall mean did not change from pre to post, the differences between participants did decrease, suggesting a change in scores for some of the participants.

Limitations

As can be evident from the analyses, one of the first major limitations of this study is the small sample size. Since this study is a pilot study and the first time examining if this model increases authenticity and relationship satisfaction, the small sample size was warranted. Unfortunately, this lends very little to the statistical power behind these analyses. Having a small sample size does, however, has some advantage in being able to look more closely at changes at an individual level, for example, being able to see just what did change for each participant. Looking at scores individually showed that participants with low relationship satisfaction in the beginning of the workshop, endorsed an increase; whereas those with high relationship satisfaction to begin with, did not change at all.

The other glaring limitation is the change in environment from an in-person to an online workshop. It is hard to say if changes would have been more drastic had the workshop continued in person or started online in the first place. Similarly, it is not clear if having a 3-month break in the middle of the workshop affected the outcomes. As all clinicians understand, consistency with any intervention affects the outcome. Having a 3-month break may have decreased the efficacy of the workshop due to the very fact that any gains from the first two sessions may have potentially been lost. Along these same lines of reasoning, experiencing a global pandemic and social unrest across the nation may have also affected participants' scores. It is hard to say if any of these changes were due to the workshop, or due to the intense pressure that comes from experiencing a global life-or-death situation.

Beyond context, another limitation of this study may have been in the measurements I used. The RSS may have been too simplistic in determining actual relationship satisfaction. On the other hand, it may have also been too convoluted due to asking about several different types

of relationships. It is hard to say if the scores would be significantly different if I had focused this survey on the closest relationship as opposed to categories of relationships. This is a limitation because it suggests that satisfaction would not be highly variable for different types of relationships. In other words, satisfaction with a primary partner may have changed or increased, however satisfaction with other distant relationships (co-workers, extended family), may not have changed at all or even decreased.

Future Directions

It would be interesting to redo this study in its current form to determine if values would be drastically different if it was completed in a consistent environment without interruptions. I might also make changes to the RSS by focusing on one relationship (closest) in the same manner as the AIRS. Having them consider different categories of relationships may have affected how they think about their closest relationship considering that there might be a mental comparison happening between categories of relationships when considering satisfaction.

Another consideration may be that this model may affect more than an individual's relationship satisfaction or authenticity in relationships. The one comment that has been expressed most often towards learning about the model is that it helped the individual see their relationship dynamics from a different perspective. Having a new perspective seems to give a measure of clarity to the importance or unimportance of all relationships. For example, one participant claimed that although her satisfaction with her relationship did not increase, she stated that her resolve in trying to understand her partner's perspective and empathy for her partner and his behavior increased. Perhaps examining participants perspective taking (PT) and empathic concern (EC) such as with the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) that looks at both created by Davis (1983) would be fruitful. The IRI examines empathy as a collection of the

following constructs: social functioning, self-esteem, emotionality, and sensitivity to others. He separates questions into two categories of PT and EC. It would be interesting to compare Davis's measure with the AIRS results to determine if there is a correlation between perspective taking, empathic concern, and authenticity.

Clinical Applications

The most apparent application of this model seems to be geared less towards a clinical population, and more towards a population of clinicians; primarily due to how the model is described and presented in its current state. In other words, it seems to have had a greater impact, anecdotally, on clinicians. Remarks about the model itself, by colleagues, has been that this model helps them conceptualize client cases from a broader and more encompassing perspective. Clinicians from a variety of orientations including, Psychodynamic, Gestalt, Integral/Integrative approaches, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectal Behavior Therapy (DBT), and Bio-Psycho-Social approaches often describe seeing many of the theories and tenets of their orientation within the model itself. For example, "spectrum thinking" is akin to dialectics in DBT. Another example is the focus on 'context', which is akin to an integrative approach to therapy. The consensus amongst several clinicians is that because it is a visual tool, it helps them conceptualize more complicated situations from a place of empathy as opposed to a place of judgment.

It also seems to have been beneficial for clients and participants alike, although it may not be related to authenticity or relationship satisfaction. Many clients and participants expressed being able to look at their complicated relationship dynamics from another perspective in "real time" due to the easily remembered visual cue of the model itself. One participant stated that this model helped him build a skillset that broadened his ability to examine his relationship

dynamics in real time. This, in turn, allowed him to be more mindful and aware of the environment as well as others' perspectives that may be affecting his own experience, particularly during difficult and emotion-laden encounters.

Finally, is the possibility that this model is effective in increasing one's sense of trust in their own experiences. Like suggested previously, individuals who have experienced complex trauma, often struggle with their own sense of trust in their own experiences, or more precisely, their reactions and relationship with their experiences. Chronic invalidation often seems to work towards creating chronic mistrust in either extremes of one's own perspective or others' perspectives. In other words, consistent invalidation throughout the lifespan can often lead to individuals responding in extremes by either questioning every sense of their own evaluation of relationship dynamics, or the other's sense of relationship dynamics. These extremes often look like symptoms, behaviors, and attributes of either Narcissistic Personality Disorder or Borderline Personality Disorder.

If anything, perhaps the visual representation that the model encompasses helps people expand their ability to acknowledge additional, and often times crucial, information pertaining to the interactions they are experiencing as they occur, thus increasing one's sense of mindfulness, empathy, compassion and understanding. When one's evaluation of a relationship dynamic considers all other variables that are affecting those within the interaction, it is more difficult to demonize or dehumanize one side over another, thus creating less cognitive dissonance when there is a disagreement.

Conclusion

Considering the context in which this workshop series was conducted (global pandemic, social unrest due to blatant systemic racism, and resulting disruption in the workshop schedule), I

am not surprised to find results that are not statistically significant. What I was, however, surprised to find, was a community of clinicians who were excited about this model and interested in learning to use it for their own practice. Also, using the model (supervised) with clients throughout my own training, including doctoral internship, resulted in many clients making similar claims as workshop participants in that it changed their perspective and ability to navigate triggers and stressors in a way that facilitated a sense of self-efficacy and trust in their own experiences. I also found it useful in supporting individuals who have experienced systemic racism, who expressed a lack of trust in most authority figures (including mental health professionals). The model gave them a representation of interactions that allowed them to disentangle their experiences and perspectives from others. It also supported them in validating their own struggles while simultaneously thinking of more pro-social ways to interact with the least amount of harm and the most amount of growth.

All things considered; I have found that the Dynamic Interpersonal Model has the potential to connect many psychological theories and therapeutic orientations. Due to the model's integrative foundation, it seems to be especially helpful in multicultural and diverse settings by giving people with vast differences in perspective a common ground of archetypal interactions that occur for all humans, regardless of differences in cultural perspective. It would be worthwhile to continue evaluating its effectiveness in cultivating trust and connecting people who find themselves feeling polarized.

Finally, the Dynamic Interpersonal Model is a visual representation of elements within all basic human stories or history that has been passed down generation after generation. There is a reason we love drama and storytelling. Stories tell us about who we are as humans, our limitations, our strengths, and the wisdom that comes from experience. Our stories often follow a

pattern that includes archetypical characters and interactions that are often associated with physiological responses. Schnall (2014) pointed out this connection beautifully in the following passage:

> According to the theory of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the body is a source of knowledge, and by means of conceptual metaphors, very basic "embodied" concepts are mapped onto more abstract concepts. For instance, the spatial metaphor of verticality is used to contrast good and bad things, such as emotional feelings. For example, I might say that "I'm on top of the world", or "feeling up", or in contrast, note that "I'm down in the dumps", or "fell into a depression." Those mappings of physical body states are not arbitrary but are correlated with what happens with the human body when one feels a certain emotion: An upright, relaxed posture when feeling happy, vs. a slumped, drooping posture when feeling depressed. Thus, metaphors systematically create similarities between source domains and target domains by mapping abstract concepts onto basic perceptual states (Schnall, 2014).

Our stories have consistent elements in them. There is always a villain, a victim, a hero, and a bystander, or a creator, challenger, observer, and mentor. Sometimes, all roles can occur in one individual. These roles and dynamics are apparent as early as infancy when a child is either swaddled safely in their parents' arms or dropped off at the nearest orphanage. We often forget just how meaningful our stories are to us as a species. Stories convey information in a way that helps us make sense of our experience and evolve or grow in ways that are often inherently difficult due to the confusion that emotional experience creates in or ability to remain rational. Our stories are our way of making sense of our struggles.

References

Davis, M. H. (1983). Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 44(1), 113–126. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.44.1.113

Dethmer, J., Chapman, D., & Klemp, K. (2015). *The 15 commitments of conscious leadership: A new paradigm for sustainable success*. United States: Conscious Leadership Group.

Diaz, C. R., Farley, L., & Shimek, P. R., (2016, March 28). *Trauma, Relationship Polarities, and Returning to Compassion*. Poster presented at 13th Hawai'i International Summit on Preventing, Assessing & Treating Trauma Across The Lifespan in Honolulu Convention Center, Honolulu.

Emerald, D. (2016). *The Power of TED: The Empowerment Dynamic*. Bainbridge Island, WA: Polaris Publishing.

Ford J.D., Courtois C.A. (2009). *Defining and understanding complex trauma and complex traumatic stress disorders*. In: Courtois CA, Ford JD, editors. Treating complex traumatic stress disorders: an evidence-based guide. New York: The Guilford Press. p. 13–30.

Johansen, R. (2020). *Full-spectrum thinking: How to escape boxes in a post-categorical future*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Joseph, T. (2009). The Pantaloon. On *Twenty one pilots*. Self-Released.

Karpman, S. (1968). Fairy tales and script drama analysis. Transactional Analysis Bulletin, 7(26), 39-43.

Karpman, S. (2014). *A Game Free Life*. San Francisco, CA: Drama Triangle Publications.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). Metaphors we live by. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Langner, C. A., & Keltner, D. (2008). Social power and emotional experience: Actor and partner effects within dyadic interactions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 44*(3), 848-856. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2007.08.002

Lopez, F. G., & Rice, K. G. (2006). Preliminary development and validation of a measure of relationship authenticity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology,53*(3), 362-371. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.53.3.362

Mooren, T., & Stöfsel, M. (2015). *Diagnosing and treating complex trauma*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Parker, A., & Scarfe, G. (Directors). (1983). *Pink Floyd: The wall* [Motion picture on DVD]. United Kingdom: Goldcrest Films International, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), Tinblue (as Tin Blue).

Schnall, S. (2014). Are there basic metaphors? In M. Landau, M. D. Robinson, & B. P. Meier (Eds.), The power of metaphor: Examining its influence on social life (p. 225–247). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/14278-010

Schwarz, L., Corrigan, F. M., Hull, A., & Raju, R. (2017). *The comprehensive resource model: Effective therapeutic techniques for the healing of complex trauma*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Thoreau, H. D., & Dircks, W. (1902). *Walden*. Bussum: Grentzebach.

Wilber, K., & Wilber, K. (2008). *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Appendix A

Authenticity in Relationship Short Form (AIRS-SF) (Wickham, et.al, 2015)

Authenticity in Relationships Scale (AIRS)

Considering your current, ***closest relationship*** *(intimate partner, family member, or friend)*, rate to what degree each of the questions below describe you by using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

1) I am totally myself when I am with the person in my closest relationship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

2) I share my deepest thoughts even if there's a chance they won't understand them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

3) In my relationship with the person I'm closest to, I answer questions about me honestly and fully.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

4) I disclose my deepest feelings with them even if there's a chance they may not share them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

5) When I am hurt by something they said, I will let the person in my closest relationship know about it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

Considering your current, ***closest relationship*** ***(intimate partner, family member, or friend)***, rate to what degree each of the questions below describe you by using the scale.

6) I openly share my thoughts and feelings about other people to the person in my closest relationship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

7) I consistently tell them the real reasons and motivations behind doing the things that I do.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

8) My life is an "open book" for them to read.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

9) I feel free to reveal the most intimate parts of myself with them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

10) I will confront the person in my closest relationship if I suspect they are not being completely open with me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

11) In my closest relationship, I would rather they have a positive view of me than a completely accurate one.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

Considering your current, ***closest relationship*** *(intimate partner, family member, or friend)*, rate to what degree each of the questions below describe you by using the scale.

12) I'm willing to tell a "white lie" about myself if it will keep them happy.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

13) I avoid raising certain topics for discussion with them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

14) I purposefully hide my true feelings about some things in order to avoid upsetting them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

15) Sometimes I find myself trying to impress them into believing something about me that isn't really true.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

16) If the person in my closest relationship knew the real me, they would probably be surprised and disappointed.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

17) I would rather be the person they want me to be than who I really am.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

Considering your current, ***closest relationship*** *(intimate partner, family member, or friend)*, rate to what degree each of the questions below describe you by using the scale.

18) To avoid conflict in my closest relationship, I will sometimes tell them what I think they want to hear, even if it's not true.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

19) There are certain things about them I'd rather not know much about.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

20) If I knew their true feelings about some things, I'd probably be disappointed or hurt.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

21) I'd rather think the best of them than to know the whole truth about the person in my closest relationship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

22) I'd rather the person in my closest relationship keep certain thoughts and feelings to them self, if this will help us avoid an argument.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Descriptive						**Very Descriptive**

Appendix B

Relationship Satisfaction Survey

Participant #_____ Session #_____ Date _____

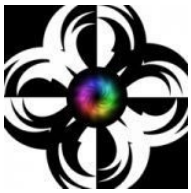
RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION SURVEY

Circle your current level of satisfaction in each type of relationship on the scale below.

TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP	RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION FOR CURRENT RELATIONSHIPS							
Intimate partner	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	NA
Immediate Family	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	NA
Extended family	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	NA
Close friends	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	NA
Casual friends/ Acquaintances	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	NA
Co-workers/ Colleagues	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	NA
With yourself	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	NA

Appendix C

Workshop Curriculum



= Dynamic Interpersonal Model =

SESSION 1

Introduction to the Model: Scarcity

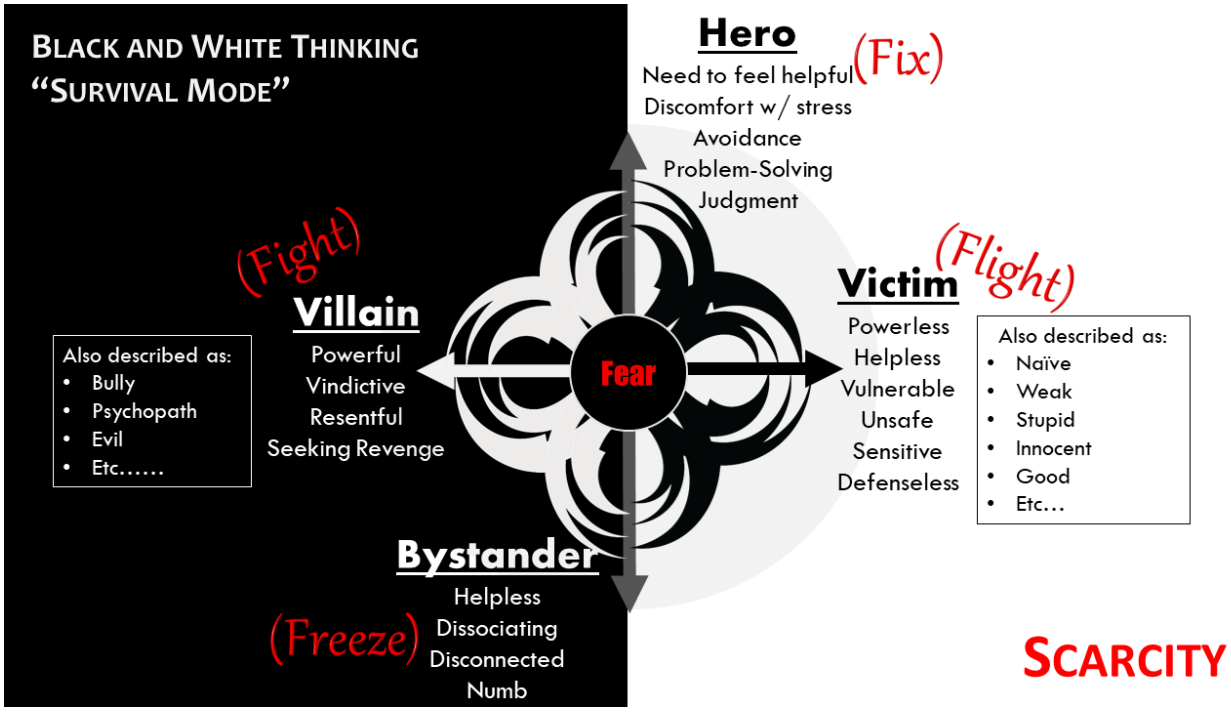
SCARCITY

SURVIVAL MODE

Scarcity can refer to resources, experiences, opportunities, respect, emotions, or any possible human experience in which one's needs are not met. Importantly, scarcity can exist due to an inability to cultivate abundance in any one area of one's life, rather than scarcity as determined by external factors. In the book *Scarcity: The New Science of Having Less and How it Defines Our Lives*, the authors discuss different ways in which scarcity itself may affect us and includes both negative and positive outcomes within a scarcity mindset (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). They discuss a scarcity mindset by calling it a lack of cognitive or mental bandwidth in reaction to having your mind taxed by stressors (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). One anecdotal example they offer is of an individual who has experienced an event that has a negative emotional connotation (such as a fight with a partner). The negative emotion will affect their cognitive ability by over taxing it, which then lowers their bandwidth with which to think, react, or respond efficiently or even appropriately (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). In terms of extreme polarities, this also highlights that too much scarcity (maybe even too much of anything, including abundance) can be detrimental, adverse, and harmful. When discussing scarcity mindsets in this paper, I am often referring to extreme experiences of scarcity as opposed to beneficial aspects of scarcity. I will discuss the beneficial aspects of scarcity below.

Figure 1 offers a visual of an extreme scarcity mindset in relationships. At the end of each axis is a role that each of us may embody throughout our experience, depending on how we are relating to an event and the context in which that event is occurring. Each interaction is a push and pull of emotional experiences. Each role pulls away from its opposite counterpart to avoid the discomfort that it represents. These interactions then create a tenor of fear within the individuals that are playing the roles to extreme reactions.

Figure 1: Reactions in Scarcity



Villain.

This role is often someone or something we tend to want to separate ourselves from, or that we have difficulty recognizing within ourselves. We "other" the Villain and hold them as someone we are incapable of being. We can go as far as to dehumanize them or label them as "evil." This often happens in situations involving categorizations of "us" and "them" like politics or religion, but the

Villain can be activated whenever we encounter individuals who are engaging in behavior different than that to which we are accustomed, and our reaction to their difference is one of fear.

Villains are often Victims who are demanding (usually out of a sense of fear) to get their "power" back after it has been taken. According to Van der Kolk, "most interpersonal trauma on children is perpetuated by Victims who grow up to become perpetrators or repeat Victims of violence" (p. 402, 2014). To regain their power, childhood Victims may attack another person out of rage. They may attack the Villain (who has stolen their power) out of revenge or vengeance, thus victimizing the Villain. If the Villain is not accessible, they may enact their anger toward an individual who is perceived as weaker, creating more Victims in the cycle of Victim/Villain responses.

The Villain end of the horizontal axis of the model corresponds with the stressor response "***fight***" of fight or flight. When we are pushed into a corner and perceive a threatening interaction, we respond to it by either fighting (which can look like an ardent defense of one's belief or could be taken to the point of harming another), or running away (which can look like avoidance, quietness, shrinking, or disappearing), when in the role of Victim. An individual can perceive an interaction as threatening when it is different from what they are comfortable with, even if their comfort zone is harmful to them. This is to say that an individual can feel comfortable with extreme scarcity interactions and reactions (regardless of negative outcomes) and may feel threatened when confronting an interaction that comes from an abundance or spectrum mindset of trust. Growing up in extreme scarcity predisposes one to perceiving abundance as a threat to their comfort zone. In the Villain role, one may feel justified in reacting to stressors out of anger or rage when their "way of life" feels threatened.

Victim.

The Victim, on the other hand, is often seen as someone who is of a weaker status, someone who is harmed by the Villain. We often see Victims as vulnerable. We may even label them as naïve, innocent, sensitive, etc. We also often think of Victims as an individual who is inherently good as opposed to bad. They represent the white, of black and white thinking, yet are also often derided for perceived weakness. Thus, the right end of the horizontal axis is where the Victim role is and corresponds with the stressor response "***flight***". When we feel threatened, we can react from the Victim role by creating extreme boundaries (walls) between us and the world due to our experience of a sense

of terror. As we know, boundaries are useful and adaptive; however, as previously noted, anything in extreme can be problematic. Extreme boundaries can be confining, secluding, and disconnecting; sequestering us from relationships. When examining the Victim role, I often picture the film Pink Floyd, The Wall (Parker & Scarfe, 1983). The main character in the film goes through years of complex and traumatic relationships in which each encounter is described as "another brick in the wall." The wall effectively separates him from intimacy in his relationships with others and himself. He becomes separated from his own sense of self by continually staying in complete darkness. We know that when an individual is isolated in either complete darkness or complete light, their sense of reality becomes distorted. Regardless of light or dark, isolation itself can be devastating to a person's psyche. We only know ourselves in relationship when our personality is reflected by another (whether it be human, animal, or object). Extreme separation can lead to an experience of dissociation and a loss of connection to an individual's own experience and physiological reactions (Schwarz, et.al, 2017).

In the film, when Pink is fully isolated by his wall, his entire personality and psyche dissolves into a chaotic state. The main character then becomes Villainous to the point of enacting atrocities stemming from a totalitarian mindset out of a sense of rage. This chain of events highlights the interaction between the Villain and the Victim and how the roles can be reversed (from Victim to Villain) if pushed to the extreme.

HERO.

or mock hero?

The Rescuer in Karpman's Drama Triangle is labeled the Hero in the TED, R2C, and Relative Models. The Hero is often someone who is engaged in the interaction between the Victim and Villain. In an event of extreme scarcity, to the extent that one's life is in danger, we imagine a Hero who might come along, just in time, to save the day. We imagine an individual who is confident, strong, daring, bold, brave, and courageous. They arrive just in time to curtail atrocious acts against humanity by rising to the challenge and overcoming it. I will refer to this aspect of the Hero role as the *Authentic* Hero. In a moment of extreme horror and vast scarcity the *Authentic* Hero is one of the most valued roles. The *Authentic* Heroes are individuals who step up in extreme circumstances to stop harm from occurring. We've seen some of the bravest people step up in moments of terror and horror. Therefore, we idolize this role and attempt to replicate it in ourselves. We believe, that if we mimic the role of Hero, we will

feel the bravery and mastery that we imagine comes from rescuing, saving, helping, and supporting. What we fail to recognize is that during the moment of extreme scarcity, an *Authentic* Hero is feeling ***fear*** just like every other role; however, they are responding to the fear in a courageous manner through action.

On the other hand, the Hero that is mimicking acts of heroism is holding a "fake it until you make it" strategy in confronting any moment of scarcity. This adaptation is useful in certain circumstances as long as the moment of scarcity does not surpass the individual's threshold for psychological pain. Most acts of adaptation (such as mimicking what is modeled) work well in allowing us to practice responding in a favorable manner until we are able to cultivate our own sense of self-efficacy and courage. Unfortunately, adaptations only work well in a specific context in which the individual who is mimicking is not feeling overwhelmed. Therefore, I propose that the acting Hero, or *Mock* Hero, when overwhelmed, will become stuck in the Hero role in contexts that are not adaptable, and are instead harmful. *Mock* Heroes respond to an illusory moment of perceived fear based on previous traumatic experiences that left them with an exaggerated sense of vigilance, or hypervigilance. Their skewed reaction to perceived danger comes from a place that is incapable of holding the reality of the experience due to feeling overwhelmed. Therefore, a *Mock* Hero may be pulled to rescue, repair, or correct the issue that is causing pain for the Victim, getting stuck in a "***fix"*** mindset which may not be helpful within the context. The "***fix***" mindset is not necessarily part of the traditional fight-flight-freeze-faint reactions in an autonomic nervous response; however, I would argue that the "***fix***" instinct comes from our need to find homeostasis and cultivate a sense of safety. Thus, the *Mock* Hero responds by attempting to "***fix***" either the perceived threat or by rescuing the Victim. The *Mock* Hero's attempt to "***fix***" can instead debilitate the Victim's ability to rediscover self-efficacy that may have been stolen. In other words, a *Mock* Hero is the individual who would give a hungry person a fish, as opposed to teaching them how to fish, in order to engage in an activity that creates a false sense of bravery and courageousness. However, it also takes away from the Victim's ability to become a Creator of their own sense of self-efficacy in overcoming a painful experience. This interaction between the *Mock* Hero and Victim may continually exacerbate a Victim's experience of fear.

Bystander.

The Bystander, like the Hero, engages in the interaction between the Villain and Victim, but in a passive way. The Bystander response can be linked to the

"***freeze***" stress response, otherwise known as the "deer in headlights" reaction. The Bystander may begin the interaction in the *Mock* Hero role but is not able to ***fix***, rescue, correct, or repair a situation. When a hero is unable or feels insufficient, they can instead feel more like a Bystander. They may experience a sense of helplessness or shame in being unable to alleviate the fear that is a result of the interaction between the Villain and Victim. The Bystander response can also be adaptive or debilitating depending, again, on the context. A Bystander who has not had their senses overwhelmed can become an observer of the event and can feel similar experiences as the Victim (vicarious victimization). They can either learn to overcome the stressful moment in an adaptive manner (grow and learn) or get stuck in the "***freeze***" response. When stuck in this response, an individual will experience a sense of learned helplessness. This means they will continually respond to any aversive moments with an extreme feeling of helplessness.

Summing up Scarcity.

We may find ourselves drawn to a role depending on the interactions we have experienced and the roles we have played throughout our lifetime. For example, if we have experienced trauma, we are more likely to view ourselves as a Victim and may react to the stressor by isolating ourselves away from all possible stressors (including the stress of new relationships). A reaction like this results in isolation as well as stagnation; as without challenge, we would never grow. On the other hand, if we often find ourselves in a caretaker role for, say, a parent who lives on the Victim/Villain axis, we may find our reactions tend to fall on either the Hero or Bystander orientations, leading us toward a desperate desire to change the current or future adverse interactions. This can lead to positive outcomes (such as learning and growing), or we can become stuck in either a fix or freeze mindset. When stuck in a fix mindset, we can see where the *Mock* Hero might cause harm through their desire to perceive themselves as helpful by seeking out and holding Victims in their fear reaction to an adverse event. When stuck in a freeze mindset, the Bystander may cause harm to themselves by becoming consumed by an experience of learned helplessness, where they believe that no matter what they do, they will not be effective. Scarcity, in and of itself, is not necessarily bad, counterproductive, or problematic unless experienced in its extreme. Too much of anything is unhealthy. There is also a positive component to scarcity. We have a threshold of stress in which we are able to grow. Once that threshold is breeched, we then become overwhelmed by the experience and may shut down in response to any further interaction. However, prior to exceeding the threshold we can

experience scarcity as an impetus to grow, that increases our adaptability and cultivates a personal sense of knowledge, self-efficacy, and wisdom.

SESSION 2

Introduction to the Model: Abundance

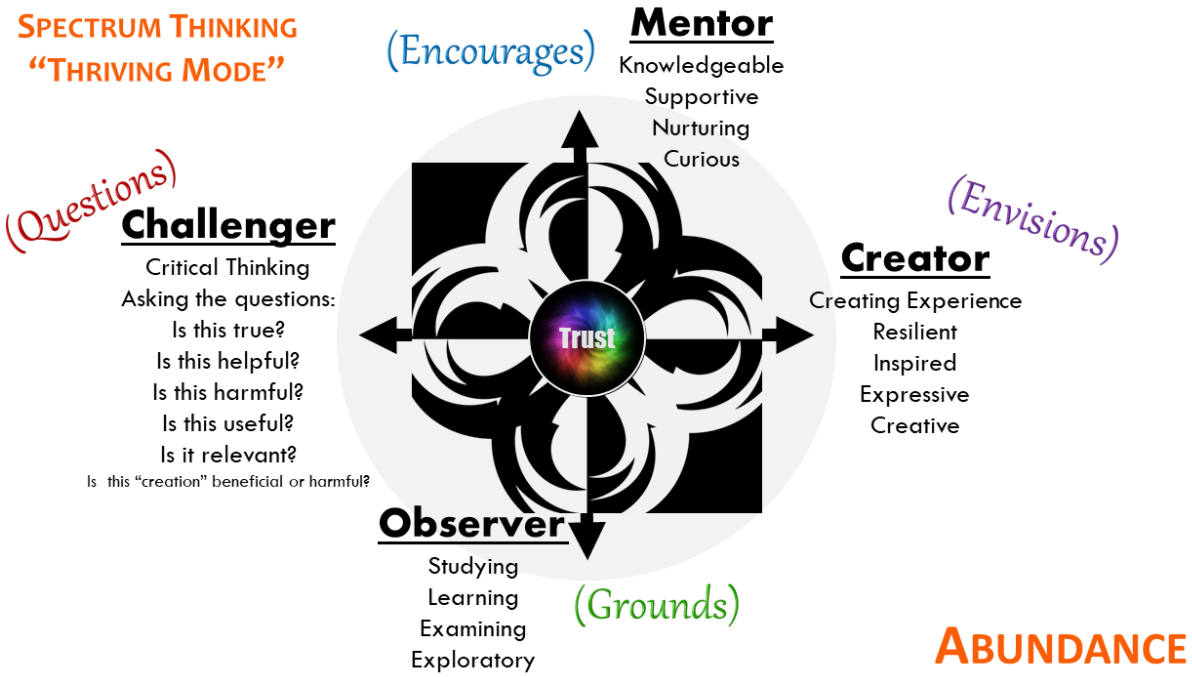
ABUNDANCE

THRIVING MODE/SPECTRUM THINKING

Existing within an abundance context does not imply that every possible need is met. Instead, what it means is there is a perceived abundance of resources to successfully navigate challenging moments, based on a cultivation of trust in oneself and in others. Trust in oneself occurs when an individual can recognize that they have the capacity to overcome life's obstacles. This recognition results in an internal sense of safety and self-efficacy. For example, I may trust that I am able to handle a moment when I have failed, that my failure is not permanent, and that it does not mean I am incapable. In other words, failure is only temporary and is meant to increase your understanding. Holding this belief, I can recognize my efficacy in overcoming painful experiences. This recognition cultivates a mindset which insures that for every situation there is a spectrum of emotional, mental, or physiological responses and reactions that are both appropriate and true, depending on the context.

Within an abundance mindset, the roles that are active in an extreme scarcity mindset transform (see Figure 2). The Villain can be perceived as a Challenger; a Victim can be perceived as a Creator; a Hero can be perceived as a Mentor; and finally, a Bystander can be perceived as an Observer.

Figure 2: Reactions in Abundance



Challenger

The Challenger embodies critical thinking; they do not accept every answer as the inherent truth, as doing so can lead to groupthink, which in extreme cases will manifest into atrocities. A Challenger is interested in seeking truth and growth for all parties involved. They ask the questions: Is this right? Is this relevant? Is this harmful? And, what does this mean? In order to understand, connect with, and grow any creation, the Challenger elicits a response from the Creator. We may often play this role in ourselves as we hone a new skill. The Challenger reacts to new information through a curious lens to seek clarity and understanding. The difficulty for the Challenger is recognizing that they may cause pain to the Creator (in much the same way that the Villain causes pain to the Victim), as growth is often very painful. However, the difference is that a Challenger seeks to offer the most amount of growth with the least amount of harm possible. The difference between the Villain and the Challenger is that the Challenger knows that the Creator has a limit of experiencing a challenge before they become overwhelmed. Remember the threshold of stress described in scarcity? There is a threshold of stress in abundance as well. The Challenger knows how to back off and let go of a disagreement or misunderstanding as they can recognize when the Creator's capacity has been reached. This might be manifested by an individual walking away when they notice either the other person, or themselves, becoming agitated. It can also involve letting go of a challenge that you are trying to overcome after you have

reached the threshold that is conducive to growing, as to go further, without rest, would cause suffering, inhibit growth or roll back what you have previously learned.

Creator

We are all Creators. Every moment of the day, we create our environment inside of ourselves. Our brain consistently envisions which aspects of our internal and external environments to focus on and expand, thus creating a new experience in the world. Our created experience is part decision (to focus on a particular aspect), part genetic predisposition toward a type of reaction (with either a heightened or reduced physiological reaction), and part individual context (past experiences, past responses, modeling, etc.). We decide either to share or hide our created reality within our relationships. We may even decide to share or hide a created reality from ourselves. When we share our experience, we will often elicit a response that may be encouraging (Mentor), challenging (Challenger), grounding (Observer), or reflective (Creator). These responses illicit growth toward understanding self and others. When encouraged by a Mentor, the Creator can learn what was cultivated (wisdom, knowledge, reactions) from the Mentor's previous experiences while the Creator can recognize their own novel reaction (i.e., their created, diverse experience). When confronted by a Challenger a Creator can hone or focus their creation. Emerald (2016) describes this well by writing, "A Challenger calls forth a Creator's will to create, often spurring him or her to learn new skills, make difficult decisions, or do whatever is necessary to manifest a dream or desire" (p.103). The Challenger can also help the Creator learn that there are other contexts with which to examine their experience. The Challenger reminds us that there are other possible reactions based in their individual historical contexts, that are equally true and give us a greater understanding of any event. A Challenger's need in this interaction is to be recognized or seen by the Creator (reflected). In other words, when we are being challenged, we are being asked to translate into the Challenger's language and recognize that the Challenger understands the situation from their own context. When grounded by the Observer, the Creator can take a non-judgmental, non-biased look at their creation from outside of themselves. This allows them to see the grounded, factual aspects of their creation separate from their personal relationship with it. In other words, with an Observer's help, Creators can objectively see their creations. Finally, when reflected by the Creator (the self), the act of reflecting is like an esoteric moment where we examine ourselves in the mirror. We learn more about ourselves and our own creations (reactions) as we internally reflect on our experiences. The more we

reflect, the more capacity we have available to recognize and understand our own experience in the world.

Mentor

In the TED model, as well as the R2C model, this end of the vertical axis was named Coach (Emerald, 2016; Diaz et. al, 2016). I originally renamed it Mentor, primarily because the word Coach has an emotionally charged context for many and is often only associated with sports. A mentor is an individual who is sharing their passion by freely expressing what they are truly passionate about. They approach a moment of fear as if it is an adventure to overcome, grow, and learn from. They may still feel fear but are overcoming it by sharing what they know with other's freely. A mentor may be viewed as experiencing, or having experienced, the same things as the individual they are guiding and supporting. Remember that in moments of extreme scarcity, the *Authentic* Hero is experiencing fear, just like all the other roles that appear in scarcity. In terms of being in an abundant mindset, the Mentor has the capacity to recognize that they may feel fear, but also recognize other moments of fear that they have overcome, thus giving them their own sense of abundance with which to pull from. Like a Hero, the Mentor is not courageous because they acted the part, they are cultivating courage because they approach the moment with the belief that each experience is an adventure, a rollercoaster, and a moment to grow and learn from. A Mentor wants only to share the wealth of knowledge they have discovered in their adventures with others. The Mentor does not seek support from the other roles; their intention is to support growth for the other roles while reaping the reward of sharing their experience in the world. In other words, they do not fret if a Creator or Challenger accepts or rejects their offering of support; it is the act of offering that is its own reward to a Mentor.

Observer

When we are asked to observe something, what we are being asked to do is pay attention in service of seeing or learning something. We ask children to do this constantly; however, in adulthood, we are often filled with such a large sense of responsibility that we forget to take the opportunity to simply observe our own experiences, with as few preconceived notions as possible. We forget that many of our reactions to most situations have been colored by our past and are saturated in subjectivity. In scarcity, when I have felt like a Bystander, I will often remind myself that I feel frozen because I have no precedent from which

to pull a response to this situation. If I stay frozen without attempting to observe the experience, I will keep myself in extreme scarcity, continually cultivating fear for myself and others who are looking for grounded reality. If I instead attempt to learn from my frozenness by examining it, I can become an Observer who can recognize the grounded reality of any situation.

Summing up Abundance

In an Abundance context we may find ourselves having an affinity for one role over the others, just like we can within a Scarcity context. We can also hold all four roles in any interaction depending on our context and intention. The Challenger interacts with the intention of understanding; the Creator interacts with the intention of growing a sense of self; the Mentor interacts with the intention of sharing what has been learned; and the Observer interacts with the intention of grounding information in objectivity. Together, all four roles are symbiotic. They do not wish to take away from an interaction, but instead to grow, nourish, and develop it.

On the other hand, there is such a thing as too much abundance. We get stuck in extreme experiences of abundance just like we get stuck in extreme experiences of scarcity. Each role holds a threshold that, prior to meeting, holds the most beneficial returns. Once that threshold is surpassed, Abundance can be unhelpful and eventually damaging. Imagine having every need met, as you live in childlike wonder and imagination. To most adults that sounds like heaven but stay in that mindset for too long and you will end up with a sense of underwhelm (as opposed to a sense of overwhelm in Scarcity). Abundance loses its capacity to delight and encourage growth, and instead becomes stagnant. For example, if you are a parent, you may have perpetually heard your child lament how bored they are by the end of a long summer break that had been excitedly awaited just a few months before.

As an important part of the Model, it is necessary to reiterate that both Scarcity and Abundance have beneficial and detrimental aspects to them. If we examined the beneficial vs. the detrimental aspects to each side of the Model, we would find that there are even further unfolding concepts that appear between those extremes. In other words, as you begin to drill down into the core concept of the Model itself, you begin to recognize that darkness and light are opposites that, between them, create every possible color in existence.

Each opposite is complex, and if examined more closely, breaks apart into a spectrum of human relationships.

SESSION 3

Examining Context

BLACK AND WHITE THINKING

It is a natural tendency for us to categorize information or individuals into two different categories, such as "one of us" or "outsider" (Billig & Tajfel, 1973).

Darkness is bad; Light is good = Darkness is good; Light is bad

- Many people automatically associate black with bad and white with good. There is a useful reason our brain makes these associations, particularly when we need to make a quick decision in a life-threatening situation. Unfortunately, not everything is purely good or bad. Human's especially are not that easy to categorize. Humans are beyond a grey area, they are instead, full of variation and color.

Why do we need black and white thinking?

- As humans, sifting information into two categories when we need to make a quick, lifesaving decision, is adaptive for a specific environment (context).

SPECTRUM THINKING

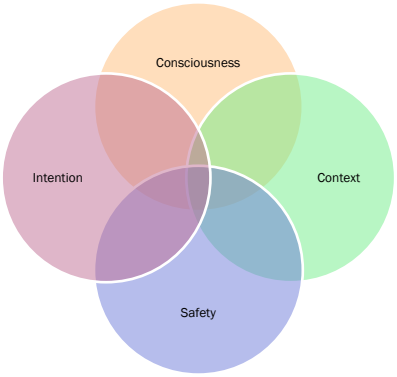
CONTEXT

Context is…. background of the self (past, present, perceived future), of the other in the relationship, and of the present moment (environment). Individual context can include all the intersections of diversity: age, ethnicity/culture, race, gender, nationality, SES. Context in any moment is made up of the environment both inside and outside of us. What is outside of us is sometimes out of our ability to effect or change. You can, however, change your relationship (or reactions to a relationship) with your own and other's context.

CONSCIOUSNESS

Ability to observe, have awareness, be curious, and be accepting of the present moment while recognizing context, intention, and sense of safety.

- Our perception of context is mitigated by our sense of safety. If we do not feel safe, our perception of context will affect our ability to be authentic in that moment (as we intend to feel safe in the moment before we are willing to be vulnerable with another).
- When we feel safe, we have more capacity to be aware of our context and intention, resulting in a more objective mindset (outside of an intense feeling of fear).



> ***"Rational argument can be conducted with some prospect of success only so long as the emotionality of a given situation does not exceed a certain critical degree. If the affective temperature rises above this level, the possibility of reason's having any effect ceases and its place is taken by slogans and chimerical wish-fantasies." -C.G. Jung 'The Undiscovered Self'***

- Our awareness (consciousness) is proportional (relative) to our recognition, understanding, and acceptance of the intersections of context (ours and others) and intentions (ours and others). Consciousness is relative to context and intention. In other words, when we can own and hold our own context and intention (our goals in life, who we want to be, and what we wish to model in the world); while recognizing that other's will not share our unique context or intention; we will be more open, understanding, and curious about how other's perceive their world, while recognizing that another's perception may or may not tell us something about ourselves.

Scarcity as Context

This can mean scarcity of anything – not enough resources, money, time, space, emotional support, mental support, or connection. Our biology responds to scarcity from a primal mind-set first and perceives danger while reacting out of fear.

Autonomic Nervous System – Stress Response – How we react to scarcity based on our primal instincts.

- Fight and Flight (Villain and Victim)
- Fix and Freeze (Hero and Bystander)

Abundance as Context

Abundance can be found anywhere. Like scarcity, it can show up without you even recognizing that it is within your grasp. If there is scarcity in resources, you may have abundance in relationships, or an ability to create lasting relationships. If you have a scarcity in relationships, you may have abundance in resources. In abundance, the four automatic responses (roles), look different

- Villain and Victim become instead, Challenger and Creator.
- Hero and Bystander become Mentor and Observer.

Intention

Ability to recognize one's values, importance, strengths, weaknesses, and the things we want to learn or become in our lifetime. Desires, goals, things we are pulled to, who we wish we were – these are all intentions and are individually bound. In other words, we all have our own intentions that may or may not be in sync with the goals or intentions of those around us. When they are not in sync, it produces discomfort that is perceived as either villainous or challenging. We can decide to avoid and cower in victimhood or accept the challenge to grow and connect in the world around us while learning from our relationships.

Session 4

Application and Wrap-Up

Information for the workshop facilitator in addressing context in session

A scarcity mindset that results in black and white thinking is appropriate in a certain context. If we were out in the forest camping, and a bear happened upon our camp, thinking in black and white will help us make the best decision as quickly as possible for life saving reasons. Because we can feel the same level of physiological responses from a life-threatening moment (like an attack by a wild animal) as we might experience from a moment of exhilaration and

excitement (such as a first airplane ride), we might respond to the moment as though there will be a negative outcome, such as death. However, if we evaluate a moment as having the possibility of a positive outcome, the fear response in scarcity can be a motivating factor.

Examples in research.

In their book, Mullainathan & Shafir (2013) outline several research studies that show that giving an individual a task with either a long or short deadline will affect their productivity. It was consistently found that having a longer deadline to complete a task led to being less productive, experiencing more distractions, and being less effective; whereas having a shorter deadline led to an increased focus on the task, becoming more productive, and completing it more effectively (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). This highlights something that researchers have discovered about our brain's ability to react in a more beneficial manner by changing how we think about a situation. For example, in a study done in 2014, researchers found that by reappraising their beliefs about a physiological stress response, participants experienced better cognitive outcomes, as well as a positive affective display, generally changing their social interactions to reflect a helpful and satisfactory response to the stressors they were experiencing (Beltzer et.al, 2014). In other words, if we simply recognize that there is a positive outcome to a struggle we may be enduring, the struggle itself will be more beneficial and we will be able to think more clearly, respond with more positive emotions, and increase our social connection with others.

My favorite example of this is the physiological response I feel when I am about to step into the cart of a tall, fast, and winding roller coaster. Even though it may result in the same physiological autonomic nervous system response you would get from an event in which your life is threatened, because we perceive it as adventurous we might respond with joy, have more fun, and make better connections with those who dare to ride it with us. This is key in cultivating and increasing self-efficacy as well as a sense of trust and safety. As we build a foundation of recognizing that, once we have overcome one struggle, we know we will be able to get through subsequent struggles, this increases our trust in ourselves. When we trust our self, we present our affect as positive and trusting. People automatically react by mirroring our energy and will be able to feel trust in themselves as well. These will create subsequent positive emotional associations. When our sense of self-efficacy is challenged again, we go through the cycle of the Model until we have learned the lesson that the challenge has offered, continually increasing our trust and self-efficacy.

We live in a dog-eat-dog world. Many people might share this perception. If we think of other people in our world as competition, we treat them like either predator or prey, and respond in black and white survival responses meant to either scare away the predator or entice the prey. If we instead think of other people as adaptable humans who are capable of overcoming adversity, instead of amplifying their fear, we cultivate a perception of trust. In much the same way as trusting that the roller coaster will not kill us, if we evaluate a situation from a larger context, say a universal one, we can cultivate a trust in ourselves to recognize that we can handle whatever is thrown our way. We can take it a step further by recognizing that struggling and pain are necessary components of experience that are meant to help us progress and grow. If I trust that everything that we are going through as humans is meant to make us better creatures, I then choose to see life as an exhilarating and adventurous roller coaster in which I am grateful and closer to individuals who choose to accept the challenge and get on the ride with me.

Becoming Aware of Context

Relationships and Complex Trauma

Relationship is complicated because we not only engage in relationship with each other, we also engage in relationship with ourselves and with the environment in which we are having any experience. The interesting aspect about engaging in relationships is that, not only do we need relationships in our lives to give us a sense of connection, we also need relationships to survive. Thus, there is a primal aspect to our relationships as well. Many people believe that we live in an individualistic society, which would dictate that we must be able to “take care of ourselves,” or be “independent”. Considering this within a context of scarce resources is the impetus that leads to the sentiment of a dog-eat-dog world, where everyone is in competition with each other for resources. Living in survival mode, or extreme scarcity, cultivates a permeating belief that there is simply not enough to go around; thus, we must fight, compete, and power our way to the top. This perpetuates the belief that safety only exists at the top of a hierarchy and can only be achieved through power or force. When we live in that belief, we treat everyone as if they are competitors. This creates a culture of disconnection and separation that permeates throughout society and creates an environment rife with complex trauma. People begin wearing masks instead of presenting an authentic version of their experience. This makes the interpersonal experience that much more difficult. The literature on authenticity in relationships has shown that transparency is a

key element of authenticity (Lopez & Rice, 2006), and authenticity is often a key indicator of trustworthiness (Wickham, 2013). Given that transparency in one's motives is a central feature of authentic relationships (Lopez & Rice, 2006), perception of their partner's authenticity likely serves as a key indicator of trustworthiness.

Handout

Examining One's own Context

The question you should be asking yourself is, 'How can I carry my context in a way that won't destroy me AND gives me strength?'.

-A comment made in a discussion with a friend on context

I'm using the experience of complex trauma as an example of how we can get stuck in an old context (such as survival mode), where we are unable to recognize the obstacles we have overcome in our lives, thus unable to be aware of our own strengths.

Complex trauma is defined as repetitive, prolonged, severe experiences that "undermine a child's personality development and fundamental trust in relationships" (Ford & Courtois, 2009).

- Complex trauma can lead to symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Individuals who suffer from symptoms of PTSD, as a result of experiencing complex trauma, may feel very isolated and alone, with no recognition or understanding of how to cultivate their own sense of safety due to their lack of trust in relationships.
- I propose that individuals who have suffered from complex trauma may also present with a lack of trust in their own inner experiences, leading to a deficit in experiencing a sense of internal safety. In other words, the general lack of safety leads to a reduction of trust for one's self; thus, a lack of trust for others.

- If an individual is holding this belief, they will broadcast a feeling of untrustworthiness (whether they are aware of it or not). If that is the signal being broadcast, others will believe it; therefore, believing that individual is indeed untrustworthy.

Consider the following: If you are consistently taught, by a primary caregiver or an influential individual, during the most formative years of your life, that you are untrustworthy by being abused, neglected, betrayed, labeled such things as a liar, a thief, lazy, stupid, or are taught that you are unworthy, or that your needs are not valid or relevant. This conditioned perception permeates your understanding of who you are as an individual; thus, creating dissonance within you, an inability to recognize your own strengths, a lack of distress tolerance (due to a hypervigilant response to all stressors), and an inability to develop a sense of self-efficacy.

Unfortunately, if anyone looks hard enough into the external experience of the world, they can find confirmatory evidence that these labels are true. Anyone can find differences within and around them, take them out of context, and use these differences to verify that their misperceptions about themselves and others are true. This occurs for many individuals who have a history of very few resources, support, or direction, and are living in scarcity.

As an example, I could label myself as lazy if I were to hold the value that my household needs to stay clean and in order. Because I have been dedicating so much time and energy to my education, my house is often messy, and I am unable to fulfill that value, thus leaving me with a sense of laziness. If I expand my view to consider both values of cleanliness and education, I could hold the truth that I am situationally prioritizing one value over the other. If I am labeling myself as "lazy" by comparing myself to others whose contexts are vastly different then my own, then I am creating unnecessary and fruitless suffering for myself.

Now, imagine that you are an individual who has suffered a lifelong experience of invalidation by your environment and by the people within it. Given the previous example, I may not just label myself as "lazy," I may also label myself as "not enough," "not loveable," or especially, that I am "not of any value to existence itself." This line of thinking is one avenue that can lead individuals into acting out in roles of scarcity by either fixing it via becoming a Hero (to prove self-worth), fighting it (accepting the label and retaliating against the world that has rejected them as a Villain), by giving up (as a Bystander), or submitting to a life of victimhood seeking out others who will be their villains.

Relationships can also be described as the emotional rollercoaster of life. If I imagine that each relationship that I engage in is an adventure, I will respond as if I'm about to embark on a roller coaster that I know I will either enjoy or dislike, but that I will ultimately be able to walk away from, intact. Not only does one walk away with their metaphoric life, they also walk away with a newfound sense of confidence and trust in their own ability to not only rise to a challenge, but also benefit from the experience of the challenge.

Context Handout and Activity

Go over the context handout and examine context of known information of a famous person as an example to help individuals visualize and recognize the extent of how context may affect our perceptions.

Session 5

Booster and Check In (4 weeks later)

Participants will repeat surveys at the beginning of class to determine if there is any significant increase or decrease in authenticity in relationships, and relationship satisfaction over the previous month.

We will discuss experiences in applying the model.

- Difficulties?
    - What was most difficult in applying the model.
    -
- Benefits?
    - What went right?
    - What positive changes occurred if any?
- What did you notice? About self? Others?

I will address participant's questions and/or concerns.

Offer community resources and numbers to participants.