

## INTERACTING SETS OF CONTRADICTORY HUMAN NEEDS AS DRIVERS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

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### Abstract

*Out of the many need theories, those of Abraham Maslow and David McClelland have long influenced our understanding of human behavior in organizations. Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis also included a set of needs. Maslow conceptualized a "hierarchical" arrangement of five needs; McClelland proposed an "independent" set of needs, and Berne also implicitly stated an independent set of needs. This paper examines these three theories to construct a model of human needs as a system of three "interacting" sets of contradictory needs. These three interacting sets are (1) a Need for Structure vs. a Need for Uncertainty; (2) a Need for People vs. a Need for Privacy; and (3) a Need for Satiation vs. a Need for Transcendence. The contradictory sets may explain why individuals show contradictory behaviors in real life. Need fulfillment may also result in the development of a person's self-image of competence, attractiveness and values, which in turn reflects in his or her behavior.*

### I. MOTIVATION AND NEED THEORIES

Psychologists have long addressed the question of motivation, i.e. what factors cause human behavior. The causal factors may be *internal* to the person or *external* to the person. Internal factors have been termed *needs* or *drives*. Goals as well as the accompanying positive or negative outcomes are considered *external* factors. Goals are end-states that can be achieved through a set of behaviors. These end-states may be defined vaguely or very specifically, and are usually accompanied by positive or negative outcomes for the person. In motivation theoretic terms, *expectancy* is the probability that a given behavior or set of behaviors as a path will achieve a particular goal, and *valence* is the positive or negative value of outcomes experienced by the individual as a result of goal attainment (See Figure 1).

Motivation theories differ in their treatment of the primacy of internal vs. external causes. Need theorists such as Murray, Maslow, and McClelland viewed

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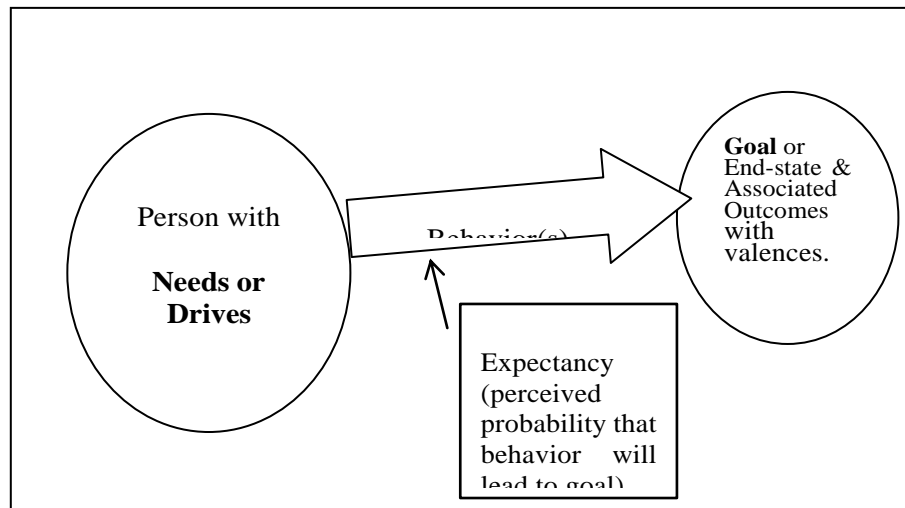
internal human needs as the primary driver of human behavior. Operant conditioning (Skinner, 1974), the two factor theory (Herzberg, 1966), and goal-setting theories (Locke and Latham, 1990) exemplify theories that focus on motivation by external factors.

Operant conditioning theory emphasizes only observable behaviors and consequences. It examines the intensity and probability of occurrence of a particular behavior when that behavior is presented with a desirable consequence called a reinforcer, a neutral consequence, or a punisher. Operant conditioning defines a *reinforcer* as an outcome that will improve the probability of that behavior occurring again. This completely eliminates the question of whether the subject organism or person *internally perceives* the outcome as desirable or undesirable.

Herzberg's two factor theory states that certain characteristics of work environments cause avoidance behavior on the part of employees, while a different set of characteristics promote greater job effort. He called those characteristics with the primary effect of causing avoidance behavior, Hygiene Factors, and those characteristics promoting greater effort, Motivators. Hygiene factors include company policy, salary, working conditions, status, supervision, relations with fellow workers, etc. Motivators consist of achievement, recognition, and advancement.

Goal-setting theories (Locke and Latham, 1990) state that the presence of specific goals motivates an individual to produce higher outcomes. Goal-setting theories are closely related to expectancy theories of motivation which focus on the path expectancies, goals and goal related outcomes, and valences of outcomes.

Figure 1: Motivation: Needs/drives, Behavior(s), Goal / Outcomes



Among need theories, the most prominent are those by Murray, Maslow, and

McClelland. Murray (1938) defined needs as motives toward specific patterns of behavior. The list of needs is long – there is a need for Abasement, Achievement, Affiliation, Aggression, Autonomy, Counteraction, Defendance, Deference, Dominance, Exhibition, Harm avoidance, Infavoidance, Nurturance, Order, Play, Rejection, Sentience, Sex, Succourance, and Understanding. Maslow (1954) defined needs as either a deficit of something - such as food, water, love or esteem from others, or growth needs to attain something - for example, self-esteem and self-actualization needs. His list contained five needs in a hierarchy of prepotency, viz. Physiological, Security, Love and belongingness, Esteem, and Self-actualization. Maslow later added the “need to know” and “need for beauty and aesthetics”. R. W. White (1959) developed his theory of effectance or competence motivation. Wright (1973) suggested that “competence needs” came after safety needs and before the needs for love and belongingness. This notion of need for competence extends into the Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) which proposes three psychological needs—the needs for competence, relatedness, and self-determination (or autonomy). McClelland (1961) posited a set of three independent needs need for Achievement, need for Affiliation, and need for Power. He contended that these needs are learned at a very early age.

Eric Berne in his book “Games People Play” (Berne, 1973) listed a set of three needs, which he called “hungers”. He posited that people have Stimulus Hunger, Stroke Hunger, and Structure Hunger. Stimulus hunger is a need for variety in the stimuli we receive. Stroke hunger is a need for recognition by others through touch or verbal interaction. Structure hunger is a need for structuring time through (a) activities in the material world, such as carpentry, (b) interactions with people in a social context, such as ritual greeting exchanges or pastimes (apparent exchange of information about some subject, with the psycho-social motive of establishing the knowledgeableability of participants), and (c) in “games”, to obtain psychological gratification of eliciting strokes that confirm the player as uniquely different, or uniquely better than others, or uniquely ill-treated in life. According to Berne, mentally healthy people exhibit creativity in the material world and authentic relationships devoid of games or pastimes.

In management literature, need theories, and in particular Maslow’s hierarchical need theory, have formed the theoretical base for research on job design and job attitudes (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). Principles of job design attempt to maximize satisfaction of the incumbent’s needs, particularly higher order needs in the hierarchy, so as to achieve high level of job satisfaction. For example, a job may be designed to allow the incumbent a higher or lower degree of autonomy and opportunity for creativity in the performance of job duties. A higher degree of autonomy and creativity can help the individual in satisfying his or her need for self-esteem and self-actualization.

Need theories rest on certain assumptions which have been criticized in literature (Tracy, 1986). Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) summarize these criticisms well. They contend that the concept of need is based on some unproven assumptions. The first unproven assumption is that needs exist. A need is not directly observable; therefore, a need should be considered as a construct invented to explain behavior. The assumption may be wrong and the construct not necessary if a behavior can be explained without the concept of need. The second assumption is that needs cause behavior. Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) challenge this assumption by suggesting that perceptions of need might be caused by behavior. That is, observers of a person's behavior might invent various needs as explanations of that behavior. Thus needs may exist only as attributions from behavior. A third assumption is that needs are relatively stable characteristics of persons. Maslow (1943), McClelland (1961), and Alderfer (1972) posited that certain categories of needs remain dominant over extended periods of time. Salancik and Pfeffer point out that the assumption of stable needs is belied by evidence of the effectiveness of various strategies for altering job attitudes through manipulation of needs. They argue as well that stable needs imply a lack of adaptability. Finally, there is the question of origin of needs. Some theorists, such as Maslow (1970), assumed that most basic needs are innate or instinctual, while others contend that basic need patterns are learned early in life (McClelland 1961). If needs are learned, then it may be argued that they can be learned later in life as well (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977), thus leaving the question of origin open.

Considering that there are so many different need theories and approaches, the basic questions remain as to (a) whether humans have needs, or whether they exhibit behavior only in response to environmental cues such as goals and rewards or punishment; (b) whether needs are innate or learned early as well as later in life; (c) whether needs, innate or learned, assume potency in a hierarchical or independent fashion or in some other way; and (d) whether the needs, or patterns thereof, remain stable or change over a period of time.

These questions may be answered as follows: (a) If human-beings are aware of their needs, then needs must exist. Human-beings themselves state that they need and want various things in life. People respond to the need by engaging in behavior that satisfies the need. A person feels thirsty and will therefore look for water. There may not exist any external cue about water, yet the search for water will occur when the person is thirsty. (b) Some needs are innate – such as those for air, food, and water. Need for people, whether it is innate or not, is a real need. Fictional characters like Tarzan or Mowgli aside, no human infant can survive without other human-beings taking care of it. Human touch is necessary for an infant's psychological and physical health, survival and growth. On the other hand, the need to hear good words from people may be a learned need. As Eric Berne put it, verbal strokes can become a substitute for human touch. (c) The question of whether needs assume potency in a hierarchical or independent fashion is not settled. However, this also makes the notion of interacting needs plausible. (d) The question of whether a person's needs stay stable or change over a period of time will remain unanswered because needs are not directly observable. The intensity of any need obviously changes as people engage in behavior that satisfies the need. Another need may then take priority and people will engage in behavior that satisfies the need that has assumed higher intensity than other needs. Physiological or psychological changes in a person's growth and ageing process may change the pattern of intensities of different needs.

Building on past theories, and recognizing that many of the needs in those models were in opposition to each other, this paper proposes a model of three sets of opposite needs that continuously interact and energize human-beings to affirm themselves through thoughts, through actions in the material world, and through interaction with people. In time, these affirming behaviors and interactions together form, as well as change, a person's self-image along three dimensions of competence, attractiveness and values, and result in a sense of self-worth as well as a sense of what an ideal human being should want and how he or she should behave.

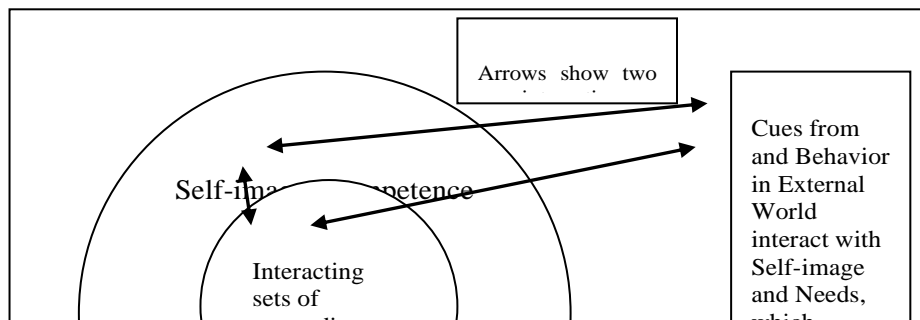
## II INTERACTING SETS OF CONTRADICTORY NEEDS

All experiences involve emotions. An emotion is defined as “a patterned bodily reaction of either destruction, reproduction, incorporation, orientation, protection, deprivation, rejection, or exploration, or some combination of these, which is brought about by a stimulus” (Plutchik, 1991). The stimuli may arise from within the individual or from the external world. Interpretation of stimuli is mediated by the intensity of needs as well as the person's self-image which includes mental models of an ideal person and ideal world (see Figure 2). Although physical phenomenon may cause a mirage, the intensity of thirst can make a person believe that he or she sees water in the desert, and drive him or her to running towards the imagined source of water.

The model rests on the assumption that human-beings are energized from within by needs that are contradictory. Needs themselves interact with one another through their basic contradictions. These needs also interact with cues from the external world. Three sets of opposing needs, described in detail in Proposition 1 below, can be conceptualized as taking part in this process. The notion that these needs push and pull the person in opposite directions is fundamental to the dynamic created by the needs that arise repeatedly through interaction with each other.

As human-beings affirm themselves through their behavior in response to internal needs and external cues to satisfy their needs, they create ideas, perform tasks, interact with people and develop a self-image of who they are. Self-image provides a partial answer to the question of “who am I?”, but the truth of the self-image is uncertain because the person must choose between believing self-perceptions which may be biased due to the person's emotions, or believing external evaluations of who he or she is – including the perceptions of the person's needs and compulsions. However, external evaluations can be incorrect because it is impossible for people to observe the individual's inner reality. Discrepancies between one's own perceptions and others' perceptions make the truth of oneself uncertain.

Figure 2: A schematic of Interacting Contradictory Needs and Self



**Proposition 1:** *Human-beings are born with three sets of interacting needs that contradict each other. These three sets of needs are – Need for Uncertainty (nUnc) vs. Need for Structure (nStr); Need for People (nPpl) vs. Need for Privacy (nPvc); Need for Satiation and Survival (nSas) vs. Need for Transcendence (nTra).*

This proposition is grounded in the systems concept of dynamic homeostasis. Systems exist by balancing opposite forces and processes. The nature of processes and their equilibriums characterize individual systems. People strike individual points of equilibrium between the following opposite needs and need fulfillment behaviors, and that is how each person is different from others. Through life experiences, the individual may learn to change the point of equilibrium between the opposite needs, thus changing his or her pattern of behavior directed at need fulfillment. This change in equilibriums constitutes the dynamic homeostasis in human-beings.

**Need for Structure** ←-----→ **Need for Uncertainty**

The concept of the Need for Uncertainty was inspired by Eric Berne's (Berne, 1973) notion of Stimulus Hunger which is a need for variety of stimuli in life. This seems to be an innate need. Even infants seem to get restless if they are not offered something different and new for quite a while. People want to know and experience what is unknown, and therefore uncertain, about themselves as well as about the world. They seek it out. When people experience the unexpected, they can be surprised and must deal with the uncertainty in order to survive and learn about the uncertain phenomenon. The Need for Uncertainty is also connected to the notion of human emotions of Surprise and Exploration (Plutchik, 1991). When people sense uncertainty in the environment, they are either surprised or want to explore the unknown. Those who have a strong Need for Uncertainty seek out situations such as

extreme sports, perform research on the cutting edge of science, go into outer space, test new airplanes, and dive to depths of the oceans where no one has gone before.

Everyone learns about the world while experiencing and coping with its uncertainties. Learning implies perception of causal and relatively stable relationships between different events and aspects of reality. For example, although an infant may have no idea what a thumb is, the infant may learn that sucking on the thumb produces a certain sensation which is not the same as the sensation produced by sucking on the blanket. This learning creates a structure of relationships that allows the infant to distinguish between a thumb and a blanket. Thus, the process of learning gives structure to one's world. Learning leads to theories of the world and self, and to improving one's "competence" which is the ability to produce desired outcomes in one's environment. This is perhaps the reason why the notion of Competence Need arose (R. W. White 1959).

Experimentation with one's world helps the person learn how to produce desired effects in his internal or external environment. As a person experiences success in such experiments, the person strengthens his/her sense of competence. Of course, there is the intervening phenomenon of attribution. Did the experiment succeed because of what the person did, or did it succeed due to some factors in the environment itself? This question has all the characteristics of evaluation of research results. In seeking the truth of it, the person may engage in experimentation with different actions under varying conditions to figure out the truth of whether it is personal competence or environmental variables that caused the desired outcome. This leaves the person in a dilemma of "I am (competent), I am not (competent)", and this dissonance can be a source of change.

The Need for Structure posited here refers to the need of an individual to have stability, routine and predictability in one's life, to have theories and preferably one grand theory of the world and self for an explanation of the past and current events, and predictability of future events, not just in life but prior to and beyond life. If this need is extremely strong for an individual, the individual may develop blind faith in a religion or in science, and/or exhibit superstitious or obsessive compulsive behavior in daily life in hopes of preventing any change or any uncertain events in their environment. Prayer may be considered the mildest, but perhaps the most widely practiced form of superstitious behavior either to prevent unpredictable or unwanted events, or to produce desired events.

Human-beings have teleological capability. They can imagine the future. Therefore, they ask the question "who do I become?" The answer is of course highly uncertain, but it usually builds in terms of "I should be (competent), I should not be (competent)". If this sounds like an internal contradiction, it's because it is. People often learn not to show their competence because the consequences for being competent can be negative. People often accept the definitions of an "ideal" person given to them by the external environment - from others, or from a book- religious or otherwise, or from images seen in the media. This does not mean the ideals will remain unchanged. Ideals do change for people, and that change is uncertain. Hedonists renounce worldly satisfactions, and priests become sinners.

Everyone strikes a different and unique dynamic balance between the Need for Structure and Need for Uncertainty. With six billion people on this earth today, there are probably six billion unique, dynamic equilibriums which will change in six billion ways to new equilibriums to explore new frontiers in the world while keeping some routines and stability in life.

The above discussion shows how the Need for Uncertainty and Need for Structure can act as a dynamic to keep a person searching for the true meaning and theory of self and the world. The Competence aspect of self may become a learned need so that people may seem to have a “need for competence or mastery”. But it must be noted that the higher the competence, the less uncertain the world is. Therefore, the “Need for Structure” appears to be a more fundamental need. To Maslow, this dynamic may have represented the need to know.

The discussion also leads us into the next set of needs. The Need for People arises because people provide structure to our lives through relatively stable relationships, yet people are also a source of great uncertainty – as in the case of all those instances where individuals have brought automatic guns to the workplace or to schools and shot innocent people to death. This uncertainty manifests itself as interpersonal anxiety. On the other hand, it is the mystery about a stranger that can attract us to find out more about them – because of the need for uncertainty, the allure of what we may learn, the curiosity to find something new in life.

Individuals, who as a rule avoid being with others or exhibit an aversion to meeting new people, may have a very strong Need for Privacy. On the other hand, even somewhat extraverted people may find it necessary to seek privacy when they have sensory overload due to dealing with people. In privacy, the person does not have to constantly deal with uncertain demands from other people. The person may reestablish their own routine when away from others.

### **Need for People ←-----→Need for Privacy**

Need for People has been variously described as need for “belongingness and love” by Maslow, “need for Affiliation” by McClelland, and “Stroke Hunger” by Berne. All the three imply a need for “people”, irrespective of whether we seek from people recognition of our existence, respect, a sense of belonging, security, touch, love or sex. In a larger sense, one could term it Need for “Sentient beings” who understand us, can communicate with us, help us understand the world and ourselves better, touch us and give us all those things that inanimate objects do not provide. This is why often individuals substitute pets for people, because many of the pets, particularly cats and dogs do seem to respond to our moods, understand our communication and communicate back.

An individual with strong Need for People may exhibit high levels of what Shutz (1958) called interpersonal needs - “expressed inclusion”, “wanted inclusion”, “expressed or wanted control”, “expressed or wanted affection”. Such a person is likely to include or want to be included by other people in various activities, may express or want affection from others. The Need for People may also be strong because the person may see others more or less as objects to be used, dominated, or subjugated rather than to be befriended.



Whether others include us in their activities or avoid us, whether they treat us with admiration or contempt, whether they want to be intimate with us or are repulsed by us – all these are highly uncertain. Thus, interactions with people are a source of information in developing our self-image in terms of our attractiveness. The difficulty in finding the true interpretation of other peoples' behavior lies in the fact that there are alternate explanations of why others include and admire us, or avoid us and treat us contemptuously. This leads to the fundamental issue for every individual then is "How attractive am I?" It results in the dilemma of "I am (attractive), I am not (attractive)". Along with this the individual may develop a sense of an ideal to pursue – "I should be (attractive), I should not be (attractive)". The "I should not be attractive" goal is often reflected in the behavior of people who receive unwanted attention for being attractive – whether physical or other kind of attractiveness.

Those with a high Need for People often find it hard to disengage from people – they are the ones can have the hardest time in solitary jobs or solitary confinement. But generally, most people will need privacy and quiet time so that they may rest. It is well understood that infants have sensory overload if they are too long in the company of people. Thus, everyone seems to need privacy and time away from others. Introverts, by definition, have a high Need for Privacy. It must be made clear that high Need for Privacy is not just equivalent to low Need for People. Those with very high Need for Privacy may proactively avoid contact with people.

Different cultures place different values on the Need for People and Need for Privacy. Western cultures generally value "independence", and therefore acknowledge and legitimize individuals with high Need for Privacy. Eastern cultures, with strong emphasis on the collective, tend to value "interdependence" and will expect its members to exhibit Need for People. Whatever the cultural preferences, everyone strikes a different and unique dynamic balance between the Need for People and Need for Privacy, and develops a unique self-image and public image of being attractive or repulsive.

### **Need for Satiation ←-----→Need for Transcendence**

The Need for Satiation subsumes satiation of all the physiological requirements for oxygen, nutrition, water, an appropriate temperature, and all the desires for comfort, beauty, pleasure and absence of pain. Many of these requirements, such as maintenance of appropriate level of oxygen in the blood, are met autonomously in normal individuals as evidenced by statistical evidence. Other desires may be fulfilled through the effort of the person or through the generosity of others. The individual feels a need to satiate all these desires and requirements, although the autonomous ones may not always be consciously on this list.

On the other hand, all individuals, at one time or the other, feel the Need for Transcendence, i.e. denying oneself one or more of the above mentioned requirements or desires. There is evidence that even very young children who can barely speak will offer whatever they have to another child who may be crying. Similarly, a child will repeatedly get up and attempt to walk even if it earlier fell down and hurt itself in the attempt to walk. Without some innate need to transcend its

desire for comfort and avoidance of pain, a child may never learn to walk on its own, nor share food or toys with another crying child.

Individuals often define their self-image in terms of what they consume and how much they have satiated their desires – because satiation is also related to the ability of the individual to obtain it from an uncertain environment – the person’s competence, or how the world eagerly provides everything to the person because the world desires to please this person due to his or her attractiveness. Conspicuous consumption is a way to announce to the world how “competent or attractive” the person is. On the other hand, renouncing consumables can make a statement about the person’s goodness or high standards of consumption.

Communities, societies and organizations reinforce individuals’ Need for Transcendence because a human society cannot achieve a semblance of civilization without individual members being able to transcend their basic, and sometimes base, desires. Almost all cultures, religions and societies exhort their members to make sacrifices and deny their own desires. Most religions have injunctions against certain foods that members may not eat, require members to fast or observe abstinence during certain times and days of the year.

The dynamics of these two needs and the behavior to satiate or deny the desires determine a continually changing aspect of the person’s self-image in terms of values. It is the answer to the question of what the person’s *values* are, and resolve the issue of “how good am I?” As individuals experience consumption and transcendence, they develop a dissonance of “I am (a good person), I am not (a good person)”. Most individuals are socialized through the development of their values – which represent what the person may deny himself or herself in order to get something else. For example, if a person has to choose between large meals versus fasting for religious purposes, the choice will indicate what the individual finds more valuable. Individuals are socialized into accepting societal values about appropriateness of satiation.

**Proposition 2:** *Due to the opposite nature of needs, the process of seeking to fulfill one need will at some point trigger its opposite need so that the process for fulfilling the first need will slow down or stop. The point at which this shift occurs or which internal or external cue triggers this shift is unique for every individual and every situation.*

This proposition is somewhat self-evident. The points of alternating shifts in the three sets of needs define the unique structure of individual self-image and public persona at those times. As the individual becomes aware of his or her “self”, the individual has the choice to change these shifting points or to respond rather than react to the cues that trigger the shift. In other words, with increasing awareness, the individual can choose to change the intensity of their needs and the shift points.

**Proposition 3:** *A need will energize the person to seek its fulfillment through thoughts or actions that result in development of the person’s self-image along three dimensions of competence, attractiveness and values. These aspects of self-image in turn affect the process of need fulfillment, i.e. how the person senses and evaluates aroused needs and chooses to behave.*

Part of this proposition is addressed under Proposition 1. Needs by definition will drive the person to fulfill any of the subsumed desires and requirements. As the person deals with uncertainty in a situation to bring some structure, any success will result in the person feeling a sense of competence. Repeated successes will reinforce that sense of competence. Competence may be defined as the ability to shape uncertain processes in the environment to produce desired outcomes. Interactions with people will produce a sense of both interpersonal competence (or lack of it) as well as a sense of being attractive (or repulsive). The balance attained between satiation and transcendence will produce a sense of what the individual's values are.

An individual's self-image therefore has these three aspects – Competence, Attractiveness and Values. Each person is unique in the combination of these three in their self-image. Together they constitute a holistic answer to the question of “Who am I?” The self-image includes some awareness of what the person needs, likes and desires. The self-image is at once a theory about oneself which affects the way the person approaches the world and behaves in it, and is also an outcome of the person's thoughts and behavior and resultant events and emotions. For any thinking person, the self-image is fraught with dissonance that can be stated as “I am, I am not”. As a person goes through experiences, the self-image will either be confirmed or will change depending how the person resolves the continuing dissonance.

Individuals use the self-image to evaluate internal cues from energized needs and external cues about possibilities of need-fulfillment. A highly competent person is not likely to see great fulfillment of Need for Uncertainty if the situation does not involve cutting edge problems. A person who thinks he is not very attractive may become too sensitive to comments or jokes from others about his likeability. A married man who considers himself “good” is unlikely to consider opportunities for one night stand based on his self-image, but may succumb if he has doubts about his attractiveness and believes the one night stand as proof of his attractiveness.

**Proposition 4:** *Despite the complexity of human-beings, with interrelated and interacting sets of opposites, most people develop relatively stable patterns of needs and need-fulfilling behaviors. Relatively stable interactions and mutual need fulfillment allow development of relationships, groups, organizations and societies.*

Without a semblance of relative stability in individuals, everyone in the world would be continually in turmoil. Fortunately, this is not the case, and we find ourselves constructing images of who people around us are as well as constructing an image of ourselves. These images give structure to the uncertain world of people and their behavior. Relationships are relatively stable patterns of interaction between two individuals so that their needs are fulfilled within “the range of their purposes” (Tracy, 1986) When individuals in a relationship find their needs unfulfilled, the relationship may change or break down. Relationships allow resolution of the questions of Competence, Attractiveness, and Values for the individuals.

### III CONCLUSION

This paper presented a model of human needs that rests on three fundamental axioms. First, the model considers three sets of opposite needs. Second, the

dynamism of human behavior is considered to be energized by the existence of contradictory needs. Third, human-beings develop self-image as a result of need fulfillment, yet the self-image also affects the process of need fulfillment. Human-beings are capable of dealing with such complexity to continue to survive, grow, develop relationships, work in groups and build organizations and societies.

It may seem difficult to develop testable hypotheses from a model that emphasizes the opposition of needs in driving a person's behavior. However, we do observe "normal" patterns in human behavior. Many of the theories in humanistic psychology are frameworks for making sense of phenomena that do not yield to empirical research. This model may be considered part of such descriptive frameworks.

It should certainly be possible to research whether a large percentage of psychological issues revolve around questions of (a) Am I or am I not competent?, (b) Am I or am I not attractive?, and (c) Am I or am I not a good, worthy person?. These three issues are also interlinked with questions of how strong each of the needs is, where the balance is between each set of needs, and how the answers to these questions match with those of a "culturally accepted ideal person". It may be possible to measure how different cultures place different emphases on the three aspects of Competence, Attractiveness, and Values as well as the equilibrium points between the opposing needs.

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