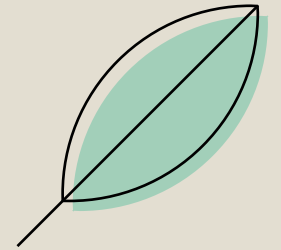


# The Most Important Part of Us: Vulnerability

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Noah  
Zelkin



# An Intuitive Case: Mark

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- Mark is a 30 year old man in good shape, well liked, and emotionally stable. He excels at his job and makes a healthy salary, taking home enough money to raise his children and support his wife. By almost all accounts, Mark is doing well.

# What is Vulnerability: A survey

- He also doesn't seem particularly vulnerable; per the dictionary definition. By being physically safe, emotionally sturdy, and socially adept, he seems to not meet the requirements for being vulnerable in a traditional sense.
- Dictionary : ""the quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.""
- Current literature\*

# Limitations with Available Views

- Highly idealized
- Inherently judgmental
  - Comes with negative connotations
- Aren't sufficiently comprehensive
- Fail to appreciate important agency – defining features

# The New Model

## Reductive Vulnerability:

- A state of being, action, or thing that is likely to detract from our capacity for agency.

## Enabling Vulnerability:

- A state of being, action, or thing, that has the potential to enrich our capacity for agency in ways which standard accounts of vulnerability might not account for

# Advantages of new model

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- Doesn't rely on rationality
  - Just is concerned with *capacity*
- Isn't necessarily associated with positive or negative evaluations
- Broader scope
  - Novel situations

## Reductive Vulnerability, *Kelly*:

Kelly is a 24 year old woman who is blind in both eyes, a disability she has dealt with throughout childhood. Kelly is also a mother of a 9 month old child, which she is raising by herself on a below average income.

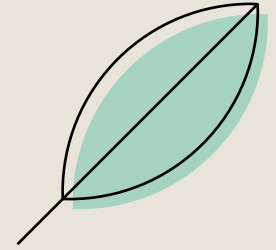
## Enabling Vulnerability, *Scott*:

Scott is a 23 year old man who is extremely emotionally open. He often discusses his personal struggles and emotional qualms with those around him quite quickly. People often criticize him for “oversharing”. But because of this emotional clarity, Scott is also very adept at empathizing with and assisting others.

# Theoretical Payoffs

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- Changes the light in which we view vulnerable agents
- More frequent recognition = deeper understanding of each other
- Shines light on new ways to assist others by making positive use of their vulnerabilities





# Practical Implications

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- Changes the way we look at every agent/situation
  - How we *treat* those who are vulnerable\*
- Might inform public policy
  - Juvenile Rights
  - Disability Rights

# Let's Apply It

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- Eli is a 14 year old male who has grown up in an exclusively, 100% Catholic neighborhood. All of his friends are Catholic, his teachers are Catholic, his parents, grandparents and entire family is Catholic. In fact, Eli has never once met a non - Catholic individual. I will also note that he (nor his parents) have not actively avoided interacting with non - Catholics, the enormity of his community has just never given Eli a reason to leave.