

Kehe Article: *Scarcity: Not Having Enough of Something*

Pre-reading exercises

Before you read the article, look at the box below. In the box, Readers A and B wrote reflections telling how they felt about the article. Read their reflections. Then do Exercise 1 under the box.

Two readers' reflections (feelings) about this article.

Reader A: *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life. I notice I make a lot of mistakes when I don't have enough time. ...*

Reader B: *I found some interesting information in this article. I like how the author compared the bandwidth in computers to our brains. ...*

Exercise 1 Pre-reading: Read the reflections of Readers A and B and answer questions below.

1. What reflection type did Reader A use?
 - a) She explained what was important in the article.
 - b) She told how the article is connected to her life.
 - c) She told how she agreed / disagreed with the author.
2. What reflection type did Reader B use?
 - a) She told what surprised her.
 - b) She explained what was interesting in the article.
 - c) She told about research that she'd like to do about this topic.

Exercise 2 Pre-reading: While you are reading the article, think about your reactions to (feelings about) the information. At the end of this study guide, you will write a reflection. In your reaction, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting / important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about / read more research about / ...)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me / my family / my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*

Exercise 3: Quick reading. Read ONLY

- (1) the first paragraph,
- (2) the first sentence of each paragraph
- (3) the last paragraph

Scarcity: Not Having Enough of Something

¹ This is *not* surprising: If you go on a diet, you might lose weight.

² This *is* surprising: If you go on a diet, you might lose some **mental abilities**. In other words, dieting can make you more stupid.

³ Similarly, if you don't have enough time to do something, or not enough money, or even not enough friends, your mental abilities might decrease.

⁴ In their book, *Scarcity*, the authors Shafir and Mullainathan say that when we don't have enough of something, our mental abilities can be negatively affected.

⁵ Scarcity means having less than you feel that you need. In other words, you feel that you lack something. College students often are affected by scarcity, and a student named Randy was an example of this. He was putting himself through college with the help of scholarships, loans and part-time work. Unfortunately, the organization which had been giving him a scholarship told him that they could no longer do this, so he became very concerned about how he was going to be able to pay his next-term tuition and fees. At this same time, he had an important exam coming up, but because of his worries about money, it was difficult for him to focus on his school work. In fact, he

was so preoccupied by his scarcity of money that he missed an important pre-exam, study-group meeting. During the exam, he tried to focus his attention, but his mind was elsewhere. As a result, he missed some easy questions and failed the test.

⁶ Shafir and Mullainathan use the term “*bandwidth*” to explain what happens to people like Randy, who are experiencing scarcity. “Bandwidth” is our mental capacity. When it is filled with thoughts about our problems, we don't have any leftover bandwidth to think about other aspects of our lives.

⁷ Imagine that you are sitting in front of your computer, but you are unable to do any work on it because it is extremely slow. You think something is wrong with it until you suddenly realize that the computer is working very hard downloading an enormous video. Actually, there is nothing wrong with the computer; it's doing a lot of work, but it seems slow to you. We could say that the computer's bandwidth is overloaded, so it cannot perform other tasks.

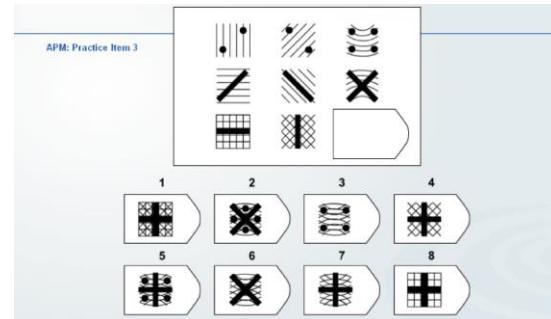
⁸ This is similar to what was happening to Randy. His bandwidth was so overloaded with thoughts about money that he didn't

have enough mental capacity to think about his school work.

⁹ When we see a poor person, we might think that the reason why they are poor is because they are less intelligent than others, so they waste their money, or they didn't study hard enough in school, so they can't find a job. The authors of *Scarcity* do not believe that poor people are less intelligent. Instead, poor people are likely to suffer overloaded mental bandwidth. These people are constantly thinking about money challenges such as these: "Can I afford to buy food for my family?" "Will I be able to pay the rent?" "What will happen if I lose my job?" "What will I do if my kids get sick or if my car breaks down?" With all these concerns on their minds, they have less mental capacity to think about other things. In fact, researchers have found that a person who is preoccupied with money problems can lose the ability to think in a way that is similar to a 13-point drop in their IQ.

¹⁰ Researchers studied sugar-cane farmers in India, who will feel either rich or poor, depending on what season it is. Once a year right after they have harvested and sold their crops, they feel rich. However, after a few months, their money runs out and their experience of being poor returns.

¹¹ To find out what effect feeling poor had on these farmers mental abilities, the researchers gave them an intelligence test (IQ test) one month before harvest, when they were feeling very poor, and one month after the harvest, when they were feeling rich. The test that they gave the farmers did not involve reading, writing or language skills. Instead, they gave them a "Raven's Matrices" test, in which all of the questions involve geometric forms like this:



¹² They found that their pre-harvest IQ, when they were feeling poor, was about 10 points lower than it was after the harvest (when they were feeling richer). To give you a perspective about what "10 points" means, if you stayed awake for 24 hours and then took this test, your IQ would probably be 10 points lower than it usually is after you have had a good night's sleep.

¹³ These poor farmers were not less intelligent. The reason their IQs dropped when they were feeling poor was because

they were experiencing overloads in their bandwidths; they were so concerned about not having enough money that, in general, their thinking skills dropped.

¹⁴ In the examples of Randy and of the Indian farmers, a problem they had was focusing on what they needed to do. When we focus on only one thing, it means neglecting other things. For example, when we are focusing very hard on a very exciting movie or video game, if someone who is sitting next to us asks us a question, we might not even hear it.

¹⁵ Similarly, students who are extremely focused on studying for an important exam might make bad decisions in other areas of their life. For example, they might neglect their health; they might not eat properly, might not get enough physical exercise, or might ignore their friends and family. In other words, studying for the exam consumes their mental bandwidth.

¹⁶ Lonely people can feel a scarcity in their lives too: a lack of friendships. Alex is a 26-year-old man who recently moved from his hometown, where he had many friends, to a new city, where he knew nobody. After a few days, he starts to feel a strong need to talk to someone. He calls his friends back home, but it doesn't help his loneliness. Every day, he eats by himself while

watching TV because he feels embarrassed about going to a restaurant alone. How can he meet friends? He decides to try an online dating site and after exchanging some emails, he sets up a date. But as the day approaches, he becomes very nervous, more than he has ever been before a date. He very much wants this dating experience to be successful. Unfortunately, it goes badly. He tries to make jokes, but he doesn't tell them naturally, so the girl only smiles. He is trying so hard to think of what he should say next that he doesn't pay attention to what she is saying to him. He realizes that he is trying too hard to be a good "conversation partner." In the end, the evening is a disaster.

¹⁷ Studies have shown that lonely people tend to focus too much on trying to be liked. In the first of two studies, researchers found people who rated themselves as "lonely" on a questionnaire, and the researchers then asked these "lonely" people to record themselves. The people could talk about any topic that they chose, for example, just describe themselves or talk about something interesting. They were told that someone would later listen to their recording and rate it. The researchers were not surprised to find that, generally, the information that the lonely people had said on their recordings was not very interesting. The researchers thought, "That's the reason

why they don't have many friends, and it is probably the reason why they are lonely too."

¹⁸ In the second study, everything was the same, except that this time, the lonely people were told that probably nobody would listen to their recordings and judge them. However, some assistants did listen to and did judge them. They rated this second group of recordings by the lonely people to be just as interesting as recordings by (other) non-lonely people. The problem for lonely people is not that they are boring or not likeable. The problem is that when they are trying too hard, in other words, when their bandwidth is overloaded, they do not use those skills that they, in fact, truly have that can make them interesting.

¹⁹ As we saw in the example of Randy, the college student who was worried about the fact that he lost his scholarship, when people's bandwidth is overloaded, they tend to make bad decisions. A person who is worrying about having enough money to pay his rent might smoke more. People on a diet may think about food so much that they actually make poorer choices about what they eat. In fact this happened in a study. A group of dieters were given a choice about whether to eat some fruit or some cake. But before choosing, half of them were asked to remember a seven-digit number (e.g. "9647305") and the other half were asked to remember a two-digit number (e.g. "81"). Those who used more bandwidth trying to remember the seven digits were 50% more likely to choose the cake.

Exercise 4: Answer these questions after doing a quick reading.

1. Answer True (T) or False (F).

- 1) This article is mainly about people who are trying to lose weight.
- 2) According to the article some people don't have enough money to buy a computer.
- 3) Researchers conducted a study of some farmers.
- 4) They studied which farmers had gone to school and which ones hadn't.
- 5) The article also talks about students.
- 6) The researchers also conducted some studies with lonely people.

Part 1

Exercise 5: Read ¶ 1-13 of the article.

Exercise 6: Answer the study guide questions below.

1. According to ¶ 1-4, what happens when we don't have enough of something?
 - a) We use techniques to try to get more.
 - b) We make more effort in our life.
 - c) We are unable to think clearly.
2. In ¶ 5, it mentions scarcity. What is a scarcity that a student could probably experience?
 - a) Not having enough wives.
 - b) Not having enough blankets on his bed in winter.
 - c) Not having enough cars.
3. This is about ¶ 5. If the underlined words are a mistake, write the correction above them. If they are not a mistake, write "OK" above them. (Notice: these are not grammar mistakes.)

don't feel satisfied

If you are experiencing scarcity, it means that you (1) feel satisfied. Randy was paying for his college fees (2) without his parents help. He started to have some money problems because he lost his scholarship (3) because of bad grades. Because of his problems with (4) his parents, he found it difficult to think about (5) his assignments. This caused him to forget that he had (6) an exam and he missed it.

5. Challenging Question. You don't have to answer it if it's too difficult for you.

- According to ¶ 6, how do we fill up our bandwidth?

6. In ¶ 7-8, what was Randy's problem?

- a) His bandwidth was filled with too many thoughts.
- b) He didn't have any bandwidth.
- c) The bandwidth on his computer was too slow.

7. What was the problem with the computer in ¶ 7?

- a) It had a virus.
- b) It didn't have enough bandwidth to do the work and download a video.
- c) Its Internet sever wasn't good.

8. According to ¶ 9, what do many people assume about poor people?

- a) The reason that they are poor is because they are stupid.
- b) The reason that they are poor is because they can't find a job.
- c) The reason that they are poor is because their mental bandwidth is overloaded.

9. In ¶ 9, what does it say about poor people?

- a) Poor people have problems in their life because they are less intelligent than richer people.
- b) Poor people make poor decisions because they have too many things that they worry about.
- c) Poor people should try to save more money.

10. In ¶ 10-13, the author discusses a study involving sugar-cane farmers.
Write True (T) or False (F) for each of these.

- 1) Some of the farmers were rich and some were poor.
- 2) After the harvest, farmers can sell the crops, and then they will have more money.
- 3) Before the harvest, the farmers have less money than after the harvest.
- 4) The researchers gave an IQ test to find out if farmers were less intelligent than other people.
- 5) The researcher gave the farmers a Raven's test instead of a traditional IQ test because some of the farmers probably couldn't read.
- 6) The farmers had higher scores when they were not worried about money than when they were worried about money.
- 7) The study found that the more intelligent the farmer was, the more money he made.

11. **Challenging Question.** You don't have to answer it if it's too difficult for you.

- What do you think people or governments can do to help farmers have better mental capacity?

12. Write a short reflection about the information in ¶ 1-8. You can write just one or two sentences. In your reaction, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting / important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about / read more research about /...)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me / my family / my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*

Exercise 7. Academic Vocabulary Definition Exercise Look in the article and find the words that have these meanings.

Word	¶	Find the word that means . . .
1. (two words)	look at paragraph 4	describes something that is changed in a bad way
2.	5	describes how you feel when you think about something a lot, and as a result, you don't pay attention to other things.
3.	9	all the time
4.	11	include something as a necessary part
5.	12	a way of judging something or a way of looking at something

Exercise 8. Vocabulary Fill-in Exercise: Choose the words in Exercise 5 to fill in the blanks below.

1. Being a good driver _____ paying attention to the traffic.
2. You will probably be _____ during a test if two people near you start whispering to each other.
3. I wanted to get a PC, but my father thought I should get an Apple. After hearing his _____, I decided to get an Apple.
4. While walking along a street, Dan was so _____ with his smartphone that he almost got hit by a car.
5. Cindy is _____ checking her messages, even when she is having dinner with her friends.

PART 2**Exercise 9: Read 14-19¶**

1. According to ¶ 14-15, what did Randy and the farmers in India have in common?
 - a) They were thinking so much about things they were worried about that they didn't pay attention to other things.
 - b) Compared to other people, they were not very intelligent, so they made some mistakes.
 - c) They weren't very good at listening to the advice that people around them were giving them.
2. This is about ¶ 16. If the underlined words are a mistake, write the correction above them. If they are not a mistake, write "OK" above them. (Notice: these are not grammar mistakes.)

friends

The scarcity that lonely people feel is a lack of (1) time. Alex was a young man who was quite (2) unpopular in his hometown. Every day, in the city that he moved to, he spent a lot of time alone because (3) he hadn't made any new friends. He found a woman to have a date with (4) after a co-worker introduced them to each other. He was very confident in his ability to have a good time with his date even though (5) this was the first date that he had ever had. During the date, sometimes he didn't pay attention to what she was saying because he was thinking too much (6) about his girlfriend in his hometown. As a result, he and the date (7) did not have a good time.

3. Look at ¶ 17-18. Paraphrase these paragraphs by filling in the blanks with the words in the box.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • would later listen to the recording • is because they are boring. • was boring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anything that they wanted to • considered themselves • before the lonely people started to talk
--	---

Researchers conducted some studies to help us understand why lonely people don't have many friends. During the first study, the subjects of the study, who ¹ _____ to be lonely, made a recording in which they talked about ² _____ ³ _____, the researchers told them that someone ⁴ _____ and judge it. After all the lonely people made their recordings, some people judged how interesting the recordings were. According to the "judges," what the lonely people had talked about ⁵ _____ ⁶ _____. After hearing this result, some people might conclude that the reason why lonely people don't have friends ⁶ _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wouldn't be judged • neglect other social skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bandwidth isn't overloaded • interestingly
---	---

However, this conclusion might not be correct. In the second study in which the lonely people were told that their recordings ⁷ _____, they actually spoke just as ⁸ _____ ⁹ _____ as people who had friends. In sum, when the lonely people try too hard to be interesting, they fill their mental capacity with those thoughts and ⁹ _____ ¹⁰ _____. Lonely people actually have the ability to be interesting when their ¹⁰ _____

• Questions 4-6 are about ¶ 19. Circle the letter of the correct answer.

4. People whose bandwidth is overloaded ...

- a) aren't intelligent enough to get scholarships.
- b) need to spend more time thinking about their problems.
- c) do foolish things.

5. Compared to the dieters who had to memorize 81, the dieters who had to memorize a number like 9647305 ...

- a) probably overloaded their mental capacity more than the other dieters.
- b) probably were more worried about their problems than the other dieters.
- c) probably were more lonely than the other dieters.

6. **Challenging Question.** You don't have to answer it if it's too difficult for you.

- What bad decision did the dieters whose bandwidth was overloaded make?

Exercise 10. Write a reflection about the article. Try to write a paragraph with several sentences. In your reaction, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting / important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about / read more research about / ...)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me / my family/my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*

Part 2 of the article ¶14-19

Exercise 11. Academic Vocabulary Definition Exercise Look in the article and find the words that have these meanings.

Word	¶	Find the word that means . . .
1.	look at paragraph 14	not doing something you should do or not noticing something you should notice
2.	15	uses time or energy or things etc.
3.	16	comes near in time or physically
4.	16	a terrible event

Exercise 12. Vocabulary Fill-in Exercise: Choose the words in Exercise 5 to fill in the blanks below.

1. Because of _____ what time it was, Jennifer left her apartment late and missed the bus.
2. Whenever the holidays _____, my children become very energetic.
3. The _____ that many people still remember clearly was 911, when the planes crashed into the buildings in New York.
4. Tod wants to get a new, more economical car because his old one _____ too much gas.