

SELF-CONTROL AND RELATIONSHIP: Toward a Model of Interpersonal Health



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Summary

Objections to pathology-based theories of human nature have led to efforts to develop views of positive personal health. In this article we posit the need for interpersonal intimacy as one context for health and suggest that there is a similar need for positive concepts of relationships. In an effort to address this need, a control model of psychological health is applied to relationships at different developmental stages, culminating in a vision of exceptional relationship health. A case example is also included, illustrating the clinical usefulness of conceptualizing relationship along the dimensions of assertive and yielding forms of control.

A major task of those in the helping and healing professions is to alleviate individual and interpersonal suffering. Implicitly or explicitly, the therapeutic approach selected to alleviate that suffering is embedded within a series of philosophical assumptions about the nature of health and disease (Shapiro, 1983a). In the past two decades, there has been increasing concern that assumptions regarding clinical diagnostic categories and treatment focus are exclusively pathology-based (e.g., DSM III, 1980; Rosenhan, 1973). This concern has led to attempts to develop a view of positive mental health for *individuals* (Jourard, 1968; Maslow, 1971; Jahoda, 1958; Rogers, 1961; Walsh & Shapiro, 1983).

With the increasing popular and professional acceptance of marital and family therapies (Green & Framo, 1981; Hoffman, 1981) it is possible that we may face a similar dilemma in that field as well. Although systems-oriented family therapy has been successful in removing the onus for family dysfunction from the identified patient, much of the therapeutic emphasis falls on remediation of dysfunctional or pathological behaviors (compare Minuchin, 1978). Although labeling, assessing, and dealing with human pathology are important, we need to complement these efforts by exploring the achievement of optimal interpersonal functioning. Prose and poetry proclaim the benefits of ideal, intimate relationships, but there has been a dearth of rigorous investigation into the positive aspects of relationship (Campbell, 1980). Thus, we need to develop a conceptual system that attempts to bridge the gap between day-to-day relational struggles and the ideal to which truly healthy relationships can aspire. This article undertakes this task and creates a cartography of relationships at different developmental stages. In

formulating this cartography we use a control model and drawing on the self-control literature (Mahoney & Arnkoff, 1979; Shapiro, 1983b, 1983c; Thoresen & Mahoney, 1974; Bandura, 1977; Mischel, 1968; Stuart, 1977) suggest that self-control, in its many guises, may be an important variable in accomplishing exceptional relational well being.

INTIMACY AS A CONTEXT AND VALUE

The extensive literature on awareness, consciousness, and "self-observation" is quite convincing that our reality in large part is a "constructed" phenomenon, and that what we perceive depends upon the "lens" through which we view the world (Tart, 1972, 1975; Goldstein, 1977; Walsh, 1980). The particular lens, in turn, depends upon the goals or purposes we are seeking to fulfill. In Table I we list goals or emphases that an individual may have in life—for example, development of the physical body; achievement in the professional realm; mastery or understanding of various aspects of mind (cognitions, perceptions, feelings); enhancement of self-image (ego); exploration and expansion of intimacy with various groups of significant others; accomplishment in the political, economic, or social spheres; and fulfillment or insight on religious, spiritual, or existential dimensions. At present, it is not clear from the developmental and life cycle literatures (eg., Erikson, 1963; Levinson, 1978; Vaillant & Mitofsky, 1980) whether all spheres are of relevance to everyone; and when and why a particular sphere loses primary salience for an individual, although another sphere rises in importance. However, it is clear that, at any given moment in time, an individual may be operating using any one of these dimensions as a context for his or her life, that is, as the lens through which reality is being perceived. These dimensions may simultaneously function as "content" within any given dimension; i.e., supply the day-to-day substance of an individual's life. Thus, an individual functioning within the *context* of the professional may engage in cognitive, professional, intimate, or spiritual behaviors; the *function* of these behaviors, however, at that moment, is to advance the context—in this case, the individual's professional life. As the context for the individual shifts, as it may day-to-day

TABLE 1
Multilevels as Content and Context

CONTENT	CONTEXT						
	BODY	MIND	EGO	PROFESSIONAL	INTIMACY	POLITICAL	RELIGIOUS
BODY INTERNAL: PSYCHOLOGICAL CUES SENSATIONS REFLEXES EXTERNAL: OUTRI BEHAVIOR							
MIND PERCEPTION ATTENTION COGNITIONS IMAGERY AFFECT							
EGO (SELF) IDENTIFICATION PROFESSIONAL CAREER							
INTIMACY WITH LONG TERM SIGNIFICANT OTHER WITH FAMILY WITH CHILDREN WITH MALE AND FEMALE FRIENDS WITH OTHERS							
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL							
RELIGIOUS, SPIRITUAL EXISTENTIAL							

or even moment-to-moment, the function of these behaviors relative to the individual's life will also change.

Sometimes there may be competition between contexts. In terms of intimacy operating as a context, a problem pointed out elsewhere (Shapiro & Shapiro, 1983; Veereshwar, 1979) is that many of the great religious traditions of the world seem to suggest that deep and selective intimacy between two individuals is harmful to pursuit of the spiritual path. Similarly, increased professional options and demands often appear to compete with intimacy. As countless popular and professional articles suggest, becoming couples in this generation is increasingly complicated as people's choices expand (Van Dusen & Sheldon, 1976). In contemporary society, professional careers and advancement may be more important than intimacy to many men and women.

Another area of potential context clash may be between self and intimacy. In our own research some of the most commonly mentioned barriers to intimate relationship include anxiety, fear of loss of identity, feelings of vulnerability, and fear of rejection (Shapiro & Shapiro, 1984). The possibility of intimacy forces us to confront our potential for being hurt (Kagan, 1975), for appearing foolish or inadequate in the eyes of the one whom we cherish and value the most. In playing by the rules of the conventional love game (Lundberg & Moravec, 1972) individuals seek to bolster their faltering sense of self through their partner's validation and are crushed by lack of reciprocity. Intimacy, in its truest form, may require the taking of great psychological risk and a personal strength that frees the participants from dependency on confirmation from the other.

On the opposite side of vulnerability of "self" may lie narcissism. In the past twenty years, much in our culture has reinforced the supremacy of personal growth. However, inflated love of self can be at the expense of relationship. People in intimate relationships today struggle to reconcile a longing for closeness with the desire for independence and self-realization (Bardwick, 1979).

Thus, intimacy as context may be reduced by the ways of the self, the ways of the world, the ways of professional advancement, even by the ways of the spirit. In this article, we consider *intimacy* as a context for the other levels, and explore the type of "self" and the type of "control" that are necessary to deepen the level of intimacy to one of exceptional health and well-being.

The value of such intimate relationships has been extolled by poets and philosophers for ages and need not be elaborated here. Fromm (1962) points out that true love and intimacy can unlock the human potential of both participants and stimulate them to increasingly creative and meaningful living. From the Eastern perspective, it has been observed in Bhakti, the Kaballah, Tantric Buddhism, and the Tao of loving that intimate physical relationship can provide a door to the transcendent (Cheng, 1977). It has also been pointed out that relationships, nourished and expanded over time, may provide safety and mutual understanding as a context for exploration and growth (Bardwick, 1979). Sullivan (1953) notes that valuing and experiencing affectionate and sympathetic feelings for others is a distin-

guishing trait of the healthy person. Characteristics such as mutuality, intimacy, loving, and ability to form deep lasting relationships commonly are identified as defining psychological health (Heath, 1983). Researchers such as Vaillant (1978, 1980) have found that psychologically healthy persons have warmer, more loving friendships and closer relationships with their children and spouses than do psychologically unhealthy persons. Further, there is now a well-substantiated research literature suggesting that there are negative medical consequences for social isolation such as longer rehabilitation or convalescence, and increased risk of illness and death (Lynch, 1979). Finally, it appears that most individuals, regardless of their social class, occupation, sexual preference, and religious or political beliefs, agree on the value of an intimate relationship, a close and loving relationship with one special person (Peplau, 1981; Branden, 1981; Campbell, 1980).

Thus, from several different perspectives, we suggest the importance of intimacy as a possible context, albeit one of many. We do not wish to imply that intimacy should be one's only context in life. In fact, as stated above, at different times different contexts will predominate. However, we believe that at least some of the time intimacy should be the context for other facets of our lives. Thus, we will look closely at the case for intimacy as a context, and in so doing develop an image of adult intimacy that to us represents an expression of exceptional psychological well-being.

CONTROL AND RELATIONSHIP

In other writing, the second author has developed a construct of "in control" and applied it to the individual (Shapiro, 1983b). This construct involves *trained attention, effort and perseverance, self-responsibility, regulation of the mind and body, conscious choice (increasing degrees of freedom), and flexibility to move among multilevels of reality* (compare Pheerson, 1981, for concepts of aware and intuitive love). Extrapolating from this, our vision of the exceptional psychologically healthy relationship is of a relationship "in control." In this context, the individuals involved in the relationship each exercise "self-control" on a per-

TABLE 2
A Four-Quadrant Model of Self-Control

QUADRANT ONE	QUADRANT TWO
ACTIVE CONTROL POSITIVE ASSERTIVE	LETTING-GO CONTROL POSITIVE YIELDING ACCEPTING
QUADRANT THREE	QUADRANT FOUR
OVER-ACTIVE OVER-CONTROLLING	OVERLY PASSIVE DEPENDENT, DIFFUSE

sonal level; and the relationship itself is characterized by self-control, in the sense of a relational *self* existing and being in control. At various times, this can be both a homeostatic and a transformational model (Andolfi, 1979), and thus can take many different forms, some of which we will label as lower forms of being in control in terms of the relationship and some as higher.

This construct of in-control also identifies two types of personal "control"—one an assertive, active control (Scale One and Three) and the other a yielding, letting-go control (Scale Two and Four) (see Schutz's, 1958, work positing an interpersonal need for control, which could be manifest positively or negatively on expressed [assertive] or wanted [yielding] dimensions.)

(Given this four-quadrant model, we see that control can be expressed as one of four possibilities: assertive-active control in a positive sense, that is, being effective, achieving, competent (Scale One); assertive-active control in a negative sense, an overcontrolling approach that constricts and manipulates the other, while simultaneously being unable to express or let go of certain emotions within oneself (Scale Three); positive, yielding, letting-go control, in which one yields, accepts, relinquishes, while feeling in control (Scale Two); and finally a negative yielding control,

which is passive, dependent, diffuse, manipulated, in which the individual feels like a victim (Scale Four).

Based on three different literatures (sex role—Bem, 1976; Type A and B—Friedman & Rosenman, 1974; Eastern and Western psychologies—Shapiro, 1978), we have formulated the following observations: (1) Some people generally only feel *in control* when “leading” and try to control the world by “yang power”—active manipulation; (2) some people generally only feel in control when “following,” and try to control the world by “yin power”—passive manipulation; (3) leading involves positive qualities—initiative, assertiveness—that are socially desirable and admired (Scale One); and also negative qualities—over-control, insensitivity—that are criticized (Scale Three); (4) following has positive qualities that are admired (Scale Two)—nurturance, sensitivity, yielding; and negative qualities—diffuseness, passivity, reactivity—that are criticized (Scale Four). Both leading and following use positive and negative, assertive and yielding control, and significantly influence the nature of a relationship.

A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL

Recently, developmental models have been applied to the individual (Levinson, 1978), the family (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980), and the couple (Cambell, 1980). Our thinking has been significantly influenced by this approach, in that we see relationship as having the potential to progress through a series of evolutionary stages. For the sake of illustration, we have somewhat arbitrarily selected three distinct stages, although acknowledging infinite gradations and overlap between stages. As a metaphor for our developmental model, we offer a Zen poem consisting of three stanzas. Each stanza represents a stage of relationship and shows a progression from lower to higher relationship control and well-being.

Stanza One (Stage One)¹

When a relationship is unenlightened, the snows of Mount Fuji
are the snows of Mount Fuji and the water of Tassahara is the
water of Tassahara.

Stanza Two (Stage Two)

When a relationship seeks enlightenment, the snows of Mount Fuji are no longer the snows of Mount Fuji and the water of Tassahara is not the water of Tassahara.

Stanza Three (Stage Three)

When a relationship attains enlightenment, the snows of Mount Fuji are the snows of Mount Fuji and the water of Tassahara is the water of Tassahara.

For the less poetically and more clinically inclined, we will also present sequences of a case study from our files.

STAGE ONE RELATIONSHIP: CONTROL ISSUES

To begin our discussion of Stage One, we refer to the story of Johannes the seducer, from Soren Kierkegaard's book *Either/Or* (1959). In the final chapter, Johannes successfully engineers the seduction of Claudia, and deflowers her. With the excitement of his conquest behind him, she no longer is of interest. Johannes turns to new women to conquer. Once mastery is achieved, interest in the relationship disappears.

How do control issues affect Johannes' and Claudia's relationship? We see that the male is dominant, assertive, and in active control. This exercise of power and active control represents a kind of Promethean urge (Skropps, 1978) on the part of the male, in which he challenges the omnipotence of God, pursues complete self-sufficiency, and makes as his foremost goal the mastery of every aspect of his personal and external life. This Promethean urge manifests itself in strivings to conquer, control, predict, and manipulate others. Yet, judging from Kierkegaard's story, in some respects this appears to be precisely what the woman wants, to be controlled, have someone provide order for her, get the powerful man to anticipate her, then manipulate her. There is a safety in being taken care of so that in this sense the woman also is in control, although it is a more giving-in control. Thus, the relationship has a homeostatic balance and relationship control exists.

Using the model of the four types of control discussed earlier, we see that Johannes' sex-stereotypic method of being in control

is one that involves the assertive side of the quadrant: analytical skills, lack of emotionality and sensitivity, assertiveness, even aggression. Claudia's stereotypic feminine role, providing fewer ways to control the situation actively, and being highly vulnerable, leads to a reliance on passive control and manipulative power (Spence & Helmreich, 1980).

The important point is that in traditional relationships, two individuals are protecting their vulnerabilities and maintaining their sense of control by limited means. Each tends to seek out the other for symbiotic purposes, one choosing protection through the aggrandizement of the self, the other in complementary fashion through the denial of self. Aggrandizement of self can be useful in developing Scale One assertiveness, but can lead to the over-control, domineering, and possessiveness of Scale Three. Similarly, denial of self can be positive in terms of nurturing and giving to others (Scale Two) but also can lead to negative diffuseness, passivity, being manipulated, and a lack of self-esteem (Scale Four).

In Stage One, men tend to control competency, but women tend to control feelings and nurturance. At best, by coming together in a relationship, each can benefit from the kind of control or expertise exercised by the other. Thus, in the first stage of relationship, both parties feel "in control", through the exercise of their prior social conditioning. Although on an external level, the male generally has more "power" in the sense of having more decision-making authority (Deaux, 1976), the relationship and the individuals within the relationship both may be in control.

An Unenlightened Stage

Based on the definition of the components of self-control, although Johannes is controlling, he really has a low level of control; thus we may think of the relationship as unenlightened. As Kierkegaard points out, Johannes is not really in control in the sense that he lacks the ability to commit himself to a long-term relationship. He is also acting in a determined and a conditioned way: he has little awareness of the nature and extent of his conditioning, or of the social and biological origins of his sex-stereotyped behavior. Further, he is able to maintain control only

in an active, conquering mode. In terms of Claudia, initially she feels in control because seduction by the man is part of the game plan set up by society, and perhaps, to some extent, by biology as well. Her control is also at a low level, however, similar to Johannes', in that she has little awareness or freedom of choice. Therefore, when Johannes does not follow through on his part of the happily-ever-after scenario, Claudia is out of control. Her yielding mode limits her and ends up hurting her. She does not have sufficient active control to prevent herself from being seduced and abandoned.

We suggest that the Stage One relationship is a somewhat primitive developmental stage (Maslow, 1954, 1968) in terms of being focused on basic needs. This stage also may be considered a somewhat low level of relationship because there are few degrees of freedom for the individuals in terms of the type of awareness strategies they use, the dimensions of the reality upon which they operate, their conformity to genetically encoded, conditioned, and enculturated sex-role stereotypes, and the lack of flexibility in the methods by which they maintain control either of the relationship. In our own research (Shapiro & Shapiro, 1984), in terms of power there is generally an unequal distribution of resources and decision-making, and power itself is defined in terms of "control over another."

Case Example

Jim and Laura are a professional couple in their mid-thirties. They have been married eight years and have two children. Jim holds a high-level managerial position in a computer firm. They entered conjoint marital therapy because of "constant bickering," and what they described as a deterioration in their marriage. A family history suggested that the couple originally had had a traditional relationship (Stage 1), in which Jim held all the assertive power (both negative and positive), and Laura exercised power in more passive, manipulative ways. In that period, Jim's career had come first, and Laura had made many material and emotional sacrifices to support him. Jim was the leader in the relationship, and Laura met her needs through their children and occasional art classes at a community college.

In the above example, despite the obvious differences, we can detect traces of Kierkegaard's ill-fated couple. Jim was not a seducer or a conqueror, but by common consent he was the leader in the relationship, and this leadership included mastery over Laura on sexual and other dimensions. Laura became an extension of Jim, a complement, a possession, who attempted to get her needs met through vicarious gratification and passive-aggressive manipulation. In their parenting, Jim was the problem-solver, Laura had a patent on care-taking. Unlike Johannes, Jim had a fairly strong level of commitment to the relationship, but like Johannes he was limited in the type of behavior and attitudinal options available to him. Laura, like Claudia, ended up feeling hurt and victimized in the relationship, and emotionally, if not physically, abandoned.

STAGE TWO RELATIONSHIP: OUT OF CONTROL

For some people, the relationship of Stage One will continue forever, and there will be neither reason, nor desire, to seek change. However, for many, as in the case of Johannes and Claudia, the exclusive reliance on one mode of control will prove dysfunctional, and cause the individual, and subsequently the relationship, to be out of control.

What happens when this homeostatic balance of relationship breaks down? What happens when one individual in the relationship begins to feel out of control in an undesired way, not yielding control (Scale Two) but a powerlessness and helplessness (Scale Four)? Not an assertive control (Scale One), but an uncontained aggression (Scale Three)?

In contemporary society, one possible consequence of losing control for those with an exclusively active mode is domestic violence (Strauss, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). Aside from actual physical violence, it is possible for the Stage One relationship to go out of control in other, more subtle ways. For example, in the Stage One relationship we find each individual daring to risk intimacy only within the range of acceptable stereotypic sex-role behaviors. In traditional marriage, the woman may risk intimacy only in terms of her own dependency and helplessness (her stereotypically assigned attributes), but the man may feel that

disclosures in these areas would violate his masculine stereotype. Conversely, the woman may not feel free to share intimately her aspirations to power and status, but the man may feel inhibited about sharing his more feminine feelings of gentleness and nurturance. These types of conditioned limitations may begin to feel restrictive and unacceptable to both partners in the relationship. As the possibilities of their human potential become clearer to both, they may be anxious to expand their range of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. There is a realization that norms and values are changing, or need to change. During this stage of transition and confusion, the old ways no longer seem adequate. Traditional ways of maintaining control seem limiting, or dysfunctional. There is a search for new ways of acting and new ways of being.

The Search to Regain Control: Prospects and Costs

Where do individuals turn to regain control of themselves and of their relationships? The influence of women's and men's liberation movements over the past fifteen years has encouraged women to develop their assertive, competent selves and men to develop their nurturing, yielding selves? (Cox, 1976), theoretically resulting in increased feelings of control for both parties. One consequence of these dicta is reflected in the modern dual-career couple (Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980; Bryson & Bryson, 1978) in which both the man and the woman excel in areas of achievement, initiation, assertiveness, and independence. The woman has rejected many of the traditional feminine attributes in favor of more socially desirable and socially rewarded masculine ones. Both partners adopt ways of being in the world that emphasize assertive mastery, active control, and competence. However, the very qualities that promote success in their careers may mitigate against successful relationship, because neither partner is adept at compromising, sacrificing, accommodating, or other yielding types of control (Heath, 1982; Nadelson & Eisenberg, 1977).

Another type of Stage Two relationship represents a complete role reversal in which the psychologically healthy woman is perceived to be more assertive and independent and the psycho-

logically healthy man is perceived to be gentler and softer (Shapiro, 1977). Unfortunately this reversal at times simply "reverses" the control problems and pitfalls of the Stage One relationship. In our own research (Shapiro & Shapiro, 1984), an interesting phenomenon regarding these new "liberated" stereotypes emerged. The "liberated male" was perceived to be sensitive, nurturing, in touch with feelings, but also dependent, passive and diffuse. The "liberated female" was viewed as assertive and achievement-oriented on the positive side but, on the negative side, as overly dominant, aggressive and controlling. Of course these are only stereotypes: Real people are more complex and rarely conform to the images we create of them. Nevertheless, the liberated woman, operating only on the level of ordinary reality and in the assertive quadrants, does run a risk of being hard, aggressive, and exclusively power-oriented (moving from Scale One to Scale Three), but the liberated man may feel his only recourse is passive acquiescence and denial of self (moving from Scale Two to Scale Four).

Thus, there is a danger that in looking for sex-role liberation, we still are unable to transcend dualistic and ego-oriented thinking. In Stage Two, either partners endorse the more socially desirable masculine characteristics, with the consequent loss of other qualities that enable a relationship to survive; or the male and the female switch sex roles, but end up feeling equally trapped.

During the second stage, there is concern about the inequality of the power distribution in Stage One. Because the relationship itself feels out of control, there may be ensuing struggles to gain more power, more dominance, more decision-making authority within the relationship. The central question asked in Stage Two, because the relationship path is out of control, becomes, "Who is in control of the relationship?" Thus, power in an active sense can become a confrontive issue, with partners struggling for dominance and effectiveness. Of course, both men and women need to know how to exercise power in an interpersonal context. But exclusive reliance on this modality, which often results in win-lose situations, can reduce intimacy.

Paradoxically, there is a simultaneous realization in Stage Two that one may have been treating the other more in an "I-It" relationship, and a concomitant desire to see the other more in

"I-Thou" terms (Buber, 1970). Often, the male feels threatened by the female's attempts to establish active control in the relationship, but realizes the importance of supporting these changes as growth for his partner. Similarly, the female may desire the male to become more sensitive and nurturing, but has difficulty giving up her need for a man who is in active control. Thus, there is ambivalence about whether the self should be the context or whether the relationship should be the context. Feelings of being out of control persist.

Case Example

When both children had entered school, Laura experienced a crisis of identity. This had resulted in her pursuing individual therapy, which had emphasized assertiveness training (Scale 1 assertive) and had culminated in Laura enrolling in law school. During this period, Jim had tried to be supportive of Laura's personal changes (Scale 2-positive yielding), but had often felt threatened, and found himself vacillating between Scale 3 behaviors (negative assertive) and Scale 4 behaviors (negative yielding). When the couple entered therapy, Laura had begun her career as a lawyer. Her self-image was invested in being a "liberated" woman, and she was afraid of gentler, nurturing behaviors as trapping her in a stereotypic feminine role. Laura and Jim engaged in frequent power struggles over housekeeping chores or child care responsibilities. Laura typically tended to engage in Scale 3 behaviors, but Jim parried at first with Scale 4 behaviors; then, feeling himself too weak and diffuse, he would move into Scale 3 and attack his wife.

Both Laura and Jim felt out of control of this situation. Little energy went into positive-yielding (Scale 2) behaviors on either side so that there was rarely gentleness or caring expressed in the relationship. Diagrammatically, we conceptualized the relationship as shown in Table 3.

From our point of view, the relationship clearly was stuck in the ambivalence, acrimony, and confusion of Stage II. Laura in particular was dissatisfied with the limits of their relationship once she lost the convenient role of child caretaker. Her return to school presaged a breakdown in the homeostatic balance of the relationship, a transformation in the expression of control be-

TABLE 3
Diagrammatic Model of a Relationship in Transition

		RELATIONSHIP		
		STAGE I (HISTORICAL)	STAGE II (CURRENT)	STAGE III (GOAL)
PERSON	LAURA:	SCALE 2 → SCALE 4	SCALE 1 → SCALE 3	SCALES 1 AND 2
	JIM:	SCALE 1, SCALE 3	SCALE 2 → SCALE 4 ↓ SCALE 3	SCALES 2 AND 1

tween the marital partners. As in many other contemporary relationships, what had happened was a reversal in the control issues, with Laura assuming the role of liberated woman, and Jim struggling to adapt to the more yielding, supportive role of the liberated male. However, it was clear that these roles were also limiting, unsatisfying, and conflict-producing.

**STAGE THREE RELATIONSHIPS:
A VISION OF EXCEPTIONAL RELATIONSHIP HEALTH**

This section attempts to provide one vision of what a more advanced developmental stage of relationship might be like. Such a vision needs to be seen along a continuum from the initial realization that more is possible in terms of relationship than Stages One and Two to an ongoing culmination of progressively higher visions. Further, we do not posit lightly such a vision, nor do we think it easily achieved. However, it is our feeling that posing such visions may be an important and necessary first step toward their actualization. It is in this spirit that we speculate on the nature of a Stage Three relationship.

Control Issues

In this third stage, when both the individuals and the relationship are enlightened, the relationship is back in control in a positive sense. In the third stage, with the relationship as the important contextual variable, issues of who is actively in control become less important. Individuals will have learned the flexibility to be in control when leading or when following. Both individuals will have learned the qualities of being at times in active control, and at times in letting-go control. Both parties will feel "in control" whether they are acting in an assertive way or in a yielding way, and are not afraid of going "out of control" (Veereshwar, 1979).

An illustration of this concept is two partners rollerskating with a rope between them. Sometimes one is in front and uses this leadership position to thrust the other person into the lead, then the other, using centrifugal force, takes the leadership role and

pulls the person from behind. On the content level, one is always in the lead at one point, having more decision-making power. On a context level, the relationship is one of mutuality, a kind of harmonious dance. Both individuals are in control. In fact, the very tautness and tightness of the *balance* between them is part of the beauty of the relationship. There is no need for power struggles to gain dominance over the other but a sense of harmony between the two. Being in the lead is not exercised for ego-inflating reasons, but as a way of giving and helping. There would exist in this relationship simultaneously a state of complete control and complete abandon (Globus & Globus, 1982). When the relationship is in control in this sense it can be both light, humorous, enjoyable, playful and deep, close, sensitive, and serious. There would be interpersonal interaction emphasizing qualities of balance, inner harmony, and androgyny (Bem, 1976; Schwartz, 1979).

Relationship as Context

In this stage, the relationship would be in control because the individuals would have chosen through active consciousness and awareness to affirm the context of the relationship. This is different than the in-control quality of the Stage One relationship because it has nothing to do with following external standards. Instead it follows its own internal standards. Each person in the relationship would have gained control over his or her conditioned way of responding to the world reflexively and would be choosing a path of heart (Castaneda, 1968). In this commitment, we imagine there would be room to allow for the freedom of expression of the other's desires, within a wide range of behaviors and covering a variety of dimensions. There would be intense caring, but also a nonattachment in the Eastern sense (Shapiro, 1978). This would not be a relationship of possessiveness as may occur in Stage One, but one of "holding with an open hand," a deep and abiding love that ultimately one realizes one can't control or grasp fully (Lundberg & Moravec, 1972).

Relationships in this stage would not be seen as a means for aggrandizing the ego, but an opportunity for giving and service (Walsh & Vaughn, 1982). The relationship would be pursued less

for what one could get, and more for what one could give. Further, this loving closeness with another would also serve to stimulate the personal process of awakening oneself to new heights of psychological health and wellbeing. Each relational interaction would be perceived as containing a lesson about the self to be appreciated and absorbed. Thus, difficulties and conflicts within the relationship, which undoubtedly would still exist in some sense, nevertheless would be transformed. Instead of struggles for ego enhancement, power, and status, there would be opportunities for growth and a source of feedback about one's own behavior and intentions.

Case Example

Marital therapy for Laura and Jim focused on developing self-esteem in both, independent of "winning" in the relationship, and of promoting supportive, positive encounters between the two of them on a regular basis. Using the control model presented here, we encouraged them to reconceptualize their relationship as a pioneering experience, with the possibility of evolving to a higher and more intimate stage. We also pointed out that often they appeared to be operating from the professional context, and that attention needed to be paid to developing a relational context for their lives as well. Through centering and visual imagery techniques, both partners were encouraged to develop feelings of being secure and in control while yielding and letting go. Role-playing was also used to help Laura be assertive (Scale 1) without degenerating into the more aggressive Scale 3, in response to Jim's Scale 1 behaviors; Jim had the opportunity to rehearse Scale 2 (positive-yielding) behaviors without feeling overly acquiescent. Both Laura and Jim learned how to reinforce each other for Scale 1 and 2 interactions, and to ignore and avoid engagement over more negative patterns. The intent of this approach was to shift the emphasis in the relationship from negative-assertive behaviors (Scale 3), to more mutually accepting, warm and loving behaviors (Scale 2), and in so doing to move the relationship along the continuum toward Stage III. During the therapeutic process, we also encouraged Jim and Laura to rediscover a sense of fun in the process of relationship, to enjoy exploring uncharted relational territory with each other.

At the end of formal therapy, both partners appeared able to demonstrate greater flexibility in moving from a professional to an intimate context, and greater awareness of when their interactions were in positive control, thus leading to a sense of greater relational control.

Jim and Laura did not achieve "relational enlightenment" during their therapy experience, and indeed it would be presumptuous to claim this as a therapeutic possibility. However, in our estimation, they moved along the continuum toward the Stage Three relationship, and did learn to actualize their partnership on more loving and caring dimensions. Controlling the relationship became less important than controlling themselves to learn to give and love in that relationship. It appeared in our observations that there was a significant increase in the flexibility with which each partner moved between quadrants 1 and 2, with neither owning exclusively one or the other. Perhaps most important, we felt that Laura and Jim had regained a sense of their relationship as an important context, and appreciated the enjoyment and growth that resulted from this conceptualization.

SUMMARY OF THE STAGES OF RELATIONSHIPS

As a summary of the different stages of relationships, we return to our initial premise, that individuals need to feel in control. Further, this need for control can occur across multiple levels of relationships and multiple dimensions within each level. We suggested that there are two modes of being in control, one assertive-active and one a yielding-letting go. Problems arise when individuals utilize one mode of control exclusively, and do not have the knowledge, flexibility, or skill to have an alternative mode at their disposal. Our developmental model of intimacy goes from fewer degrees of freedom, and those which are externally imposed, to increased degrees of freedom and those that are self-chosen, part of one's path of heart.

Stage One shows the stereotypically masculine effort to exert active control over relationships in order to make the self safe and the passive feminine effort to abdicate control to an idealized man. From a consciousness standpoint, masculine analytical awareness is being employed in an effort to develop active mastery and feminine yielding is used to develop passive manipulative mastery. Often in these modes there is a willingness to sacrifice. Often in these modes there is a willingness to sacrifice

people to personal gain, and a reliance on I-It rather than on the more responsible and vulnerable I-Thou relationship.

Unfortunately these modes, used initially to keep the relationship in control, may ultimately cause the partners to be out of control. Thus, active control may lead to its own destruction, the over-controlling of Quadrant Three. Similarly, letting go may lead to the dependency of Quadrant Four. There is mutuality in the Stage One relationship in the sense that both partners are getting something out of it, but both are reflecting very limited concepts of what mutuality means. Both are victims of their conditioning and their fear.

In the second stage, the relationship swings out of control and there is a search to regain control on a new level. With the woman's new awareness of the potential for exercising power in an active, in-control sense, and the man's unwillingness or inability initially to give up this active power, power struggles often ensue. Power struggles may also erupt if the male tries to develop more so-called feminine ways and the female is unwilling to give up the payoffs of dependency and passivity. Even though it may not be the intent of either party, conflict and acrimony result, leading both to feel out of control by being overcontrolling (Scale Three), or feeling too powerless (Scale Four). Even when the relationship reaches a power equilibrium, it may be characterized by both partners acting in an assertive, active-control manner, which limits true intimacy.

The third stage represents a vision of consolidating the relationship at a higher, more enlightened level of control. This stage would be characterized—not by ego independence or dependence—by an interdependence between partners, defined here as the ability to use both assertive-active control and yielding-letting go control strategies. Individuals would be able to relate to each other in both an active, precise mode of consciousness and with passive holistic awareness in the here-and-now moment. There would be an ability to give and receive unconditional love. There would no longer be power struggles, or issues of winning and losing. The worth of the other would be acknowledged and sensitivity to the other in an I-Thou context would flourish. A high value would be placed on intimate and enduring relationship as a context, as a gift, and as a responsibility by which one could express one's humanity.

We suggest that this third stage of relational well-being will be the product of two individuals who have been able to reach an extremely high level of individual psychological health. Without

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TABLE 4
Three Stage Model of Relationship

DIMENSION	STAGE ONE		STAGE TWO		STAGE THREE	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	*	*
BODY (SEXUALITY)	Conquer, overcome, active in control	Yield, seeking protection, passive in control	Role confusion: to seduce or be seduced?		Interdependence, sensuality, sexuality	
MIND	Analysis, low awareness of conditioning; goal oriented	Feelings, intuition, low awareness of conditioning; receptive	Sees the need to learn holistic, mindful awareness	Sees the need to learn more precise, active awareness	Ability to develop trained consciousness; see in a new way; third eye; ability to use both holistic and precise modes of awareness	
EGO/SEX ROLES	Traditional masculine sex roles; active attempts to be in control; gaining a sense of self by active accomplishment, mastery	Traditional feminine sex roles; yielding; gaining a sense of self through the other	Ego diffusion and unclarity, what are liberated sex roles? High importance on development of self		Strong ego in an active sense and in a yielding sense; non-attachment to the fruits of one's actions; transcendent harmony and nonself focus; androgynous sex roles; role flexibility	
POWER ISSUES	Has more assertive, instrumental power	Has less assertive, instrumental power; uses yielding mode	Power issues are highly salient for male and female; struggle often ensues		Power issues seen in a context, self-effacement, giving power to the other a high value; ability to be either assertive or yielding; holding the relationship with open hand	
	Both: relatively comfortable					
VALUE OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP	Relatively high (as conquest) conquer, ego enhancement; external conditioned	High (for protection) biological instinct, security needs, fear; vulnerability	Ambivalence — High desire and yet confused		Quite high, mutuality and reciprocity; relationship as context, path of heart, looking for the whole yet interdependence; high commitment relationship and enhancing the other's quality of life; relationship as service	
HOW IS CONTROL MAINTAINED	Scales One and Three	Scales Two and Four	Scales One and Three, and tries for Two	Scales Two and Four, and tries for One	Scales One and Two	

NOTE: This model is not designed to suggest that relationships are static and progress linearly from one stage to the next. We see them within a context of life as changing, evolving, harmonious dances—a co-creation by two strong individuals.

* In Stage Three, the distinctions between male and female no longer seem necessary.

individual work, people who on a personal level are controlled by attachments, greed, insecurity, and ego, have little hope of moving beyond these problems in a relationship. Paradoxically, by developing one's true self, one may be able to become like the mirror in Zen, more selfless, empty, and giving. In third-stage relationships, this selfless self might have the opportunity to move beyond rigid, stereotypic identities and roles to a type of karma yoga, in which the individual would participate in relationship to facilitate awakening and service.

SUMMARY

A first step toward formulating a developmental cartography of relationships was presented. A control model was utilized in order to suggest how, as relationships progress, they move from lesser to greater consciousness, from externally conditioned to increasingly self-determined choice, and from avoiding to accepting responsibility for one's own actions within the relationship. The importance of flexibility in using both different contexts and different types of self-control was emphasized. Different forms of control—assertive-active and yielding-letting go, positive and negative—were discussed, as was their potential interplay in a relational context. Three examples of possible stages of relationship, ranging from least to most enlightened, were described, along with their defining characteristics. It is our hope that such a conceptual framework may stimulate clinical, research, and personal activity on the part of professionals committed to a belief in the value of intimate relationship as a significant life context.

NOTES

- Note that we have substituted the word relationship for the word individual in this poem, as it was originally written. The original wording shows the implicit assumption, typical of many traditions, that enlightenment is an individual task, as opposed to offering any model of a "healthy" relationship.
- Interestingly, in the East, men for centuries have been trained in the positive skills of yielding, egolessness, and letting go of attachments. However, historically, it was men who were trained in these skills, rarely women!

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