The New Johari Window
#27: Quadrant Three: The Locus of Control

William Bergquist, Ph.D.

There is a strong bias toward internal locus of control when it comes to Q3. We want to control what is given out to other people and often ignore the fact that information about our self (especially our feelings and attitudes toward other people) is leaking out all over the place (Q3:E to Q1). Furthermore, while Quad Three is often linked directly to an internal locus of control (Q3:I), there are many dynamics about Quad Three that are directly related to the social context within which the disclosure is being or could be made (external locus of control) (Q3:E).

Q3-I: The Withheld Self

There are several reasons why we choose to control our disclosure to other people. Some of these reasons make perfect sense in a postmodern world that often involves an invasion of our privacy and an overwhelming demand on our time and energy. Some of the other reasons are less justifiable and contribute to the destructive dynamics of misguided human interactions. I will specifically identify five reasons and frame them, as I have in previous essays, as different senses of self: private self, cultural self, false self, reticent self, deferential self, defiant self and prejudicial self.

Private Self

*P*articipants in a postmodern world—which includes most of us—are often in search of personal boundaries and, even more generally, personal integrity. I have already described the challenges of the saturated and overwhelmed self in a postmodern world. Like Greta Garbo, we sometimes "want to be alone." The world is intruding on our personal space and we don't know who we are or who we will become. We don't want to open ourselves up to other people

until we are clearer about our "true" self. We fear that by opening our selves up we will be obligated to take in the stories and needs of those people with whom we have disclosed. In other words, we fear that the movement of our Quad Three material to Quad One will mean that we will have to absorb the Quad Three of other people—and we are already filled to capacity (saturated and overwhelmed).

The resistance to disclosure can take several forms. It can be passive: "I don't want to show you." It can instead be quite active: "I don't want you to know." Both the active and passive modes of privacy require an assumption of internal control, though the active mode goes far beyond the passive mode. The active mode is based on the assumption that we can somehow control what other people learn about us (which may come from sources other than our own personal disclosure).

Cultural Self

The search for privacy can vary across cultures in both form and cause. We might choose not to disclose something because it would be rare in our culture to share these matters. "I don't want to tell you because it is against my tradition to talk about this." It is not unusual, for instance, in some Asian cultures, to opening talk about the amount of money one has earned in a year, whereas in most Western cultures it is almost as offensive to talk explicitly about earned income as to talk explicitly about sexual performance. Both money and sex are to be discussed indirectly in Western cultures, with subtle cues revealing the requested (or non-requested) information about financial or sexual achievements.

There are also major differences in levels of disclosure in American and German societies. Americans appear to be much more open and more disclosing when first meeting someone, but are much less open than Germans once the relationship is established. Much as in the case of American homes (and the American school of interpersonal relationships), the American psyche is apparently open to free disclosure on the outside, but it imposes major barriers regarding more intimate disclosure when the relationship is established. German homes and

societies tend to impose barriers at the front end of a relationship, but many fewer barriers to disclosure once the relationship is established.

As I noted earlier in an earlier essay, it is rare that one is invited to the home of a person from a Chinese culture until a relationship is very mature. On the other hand, once one is invited to the home of someone from a Chinese culture, a profound openness is experienced—"My home is your home." This is not the case in the typical American home. As a result of these cultural differences in type and level of social boundaries, Chinese immigrants or visitors may be quite disappointed to discover that being invited into an American home does not mean the establishment of a deep, committed relationship (as I discovered in my own life—and as I describe in an earlier essay). Similarly, disclosure by an American does not signal the establishment of a long-term, intimate relationship.

False Self

If disclosure by an American does not signal commitment to a long-term relationship, then why do Americans have a reputation for being open and gracious? I propose that this impression comes from the distinctly American skill of creating a "false self"—the Quad One persona I described in an earlier essay. Americans learn how to "fake" openness and disclosure.

We learn how to talk about something other than the weather, yet never really get far beyond the weather. We talk about our children, yet rarely say much about our own hopes and fears regarding these members of our family. We share information about our job and the struggles we are having with our boss or co-worker, yet don't disclose much about our underlying fears (or hopes) about the role we might be playing in worsening these struggles.

As the recipient of this disclosure, we listen attentively and seek to be receptive and understanding—yet often feel bored or even irritated that our time is being wasted. These feelings, in turn, are often accompanied by a pervasive sense of guilt, given that we should

care—and care deeply—about everything that this other person is disclosing to us. Perhaps, we are bored or irritated because this disclosure is actually trivial, often well-rehearsed and repeated many times over with many people. True and genuine disclosures often involve the sharing of perceptions and feelings about one another at this moment, rather than about third party interactions that occurred in some other place and at some other time.

Genuine disclosure often involves meta-communication about what we do and do not want to disclose—the kind of meta-communication in which Kevin and Sheila might engage. These conversations are rarely boring. They may be threatening and even disturbing, but they rarely evoke either irritation or guilt.

When does movement from a false self to a more genuine disclosure occur? Will Schutz suggests that we must first address the interpersonal issues of inclusion and control in our relationships before we can honestly disclose. We must first establish that we really want to interact with one another (inclusion) and establish ways in which we will each contribute to and influence the nature of our relationship (control), before our disclosures will cease to be superficial and distant from the immediate situation and interpersonal dynamics. In a parallel manner, I suggested in an earlier essay that shared trust in intentions, competence and perspective is a prerequisite to genuine disclosure. I will have much more to say about these elements of disclosure in latter essays.

Discrete Self

What about the person who refuses to engage a false self—who would rather say nothing than "chat" about unimportant matters? What about the person who is reticent to talk about much of anything with strangers or recent acquaintances? These people have strong external barriers (like our Chinese colleagues) and are quite discrete in what they say and who they talk to about personal and interpersonal matters. When they do disclose, the material that is moved from Quad Three to Quad One tends to be important. It is rarely boring for other people.

The discrete self is commonly found among older men and women. As I noted previously, adult development research reveals that older adults tend to nurture fewer relationships than they did at a younger age.[i] The relationships that they do nourish, however, tend to be deeper and longer-lasting. There is more genuine and sustained disclosure of important Quad Three material and less wide-spread (indiscrete) disclosure of superficial or well-rehearsed and distant material from Quad Three. We may find that the discrete self (as well as the selective self I described in an earlier essay) is being exhibited more often during the coming years given the "graying" of America (and many other countries in the Western world).

Deferential Self

We might assume that other people are indifferent with regard to our interests and needs—or even our stories. This is the case when I genuinely assume that another person (or other people in general) don't want to know much about me—or at least specific aspects of myself. I fear being "boring," "too talkative," "too self-occupied." This is different from the "false modesty" ploy in which we bring attention to our self indirectly by deferring in a rather public manner to another person ("Oh, I'm not important. You are the one who deserves accolades.") We are talking here about genuinely held assumptions of disinterest.

I serve as president of a graduate school. At a recent reception, I was asked to recount a story regarding the initial formation of the school. It is, in fact, an interesting story (dating back to the Haight-Asbury/Flower children period in San Francisco) and reveals much about the abiding values of my school; yet, I mistakenly thought that very few people would be interested in this story. It would "bore" them. I was surprised and delighted to notice the level of genuine interest, as a small group of current and potential students gathered around to hear me recount the school's founding story.

I was "obtuse" (Q3) with regard to this narrative and the impact which its disclosure would have on the listeners and on their relationship to me (as president) and to our interesting,

value-based graduate school. At times, we simply don't know that other people want to hear our story about something that is important to us.

Defiant Self

There is a third dynamic operating with the Q3:I that in many ways is the opposite of the deferential self. This is the defiant self that uses internal control to withhold information about self. "I'm not going to tell you!" This dynamic requires two assumptions. First, I have to feel some anger toward the other person—otherwise why be defiant. Often this anger arises from the violation of trust on the other person's part—or at least a seeming violation of trust. In many instances, even if the mistrust is unwarranted at the time of the defiance, it is soon warranted, because the recipient of the defiance is likely to become mistrustful of the defiant one and take actions that lead to reciprocal mistrust.

The second assumption in this defiant scenario represents the opposite stance from that of the deferential self. We have to believe that other people are actually interested in what we have to say. The defiant self can only "punish" other people if these other people truly want to hear what the defiant person has to say. In many cases, this is not true, and the defiance has very little effect. The recipient of the defiance may actually experience relief in knowing that they won't have to put up with the disclosure of a person whom they don't trust and have grown to dislike.

Prejudicial Self

The deferential and defiant selves concern specific relationships and my reticence to share parts of myself with specific people in the world. The prejudicial self is based on much less selective criteria. "I refuse to share information about myself with a specific group of people. I don't trust them (in terms of intentions, competence and/or perspective). I don't want to establish a relationship with them and don't want them to think that I am in any way interested in what they have to say or how they might react to my disclosures."

The dynamics of prejudice goes even further with regard to disclosure. As in the case of the defiant self, I might choose not to disclosure as a way of "getting back" at other people or as a way of establishing or reinforcing my position of power and control over "these people" or the interpersonal setting in which we must meet together.

At an even deeper level, this reticence to disclose might reveal a fear of becoming involved with these people or finding my prejudices disconfirmed. One of my colleagues is a long-time social activist, who is fighting for the rights of minorities in the United States. She indicated recently that she really doesn't want to get to know the people she opposes in her community, nor does she have any interest in empathizing with the other side.

"I can't continue to work against them and be passionate in my opposition to them if I get to know them as distinctive human beings. I am more likely to get to know them if I share something about myself with these people." While her resistance to disclosing with people she doesn't trust or like is quite understandable, it is also a form of prejudice and, ironically, represents the very dynamics of separation and distortion that she is fighting against in her work.

The reticence to disclose in a postmodern world is quite understandable. However, this reticence does come at a cost. System theorists suggest that high boundaries in any system eventually lead to the death of the system. Systems with high barriers or heavy boundaries—called "closed systems—generally are or soon become inanimate objects. Nothing enters or leaves a heavily bounded, closed system. There are closed-system people. They are men and women who are aloof and impersonal. They are "cold as a stone."

On the other hand, a system may have low barriers. Its boundaries are highly permeable. Things can easily move in and out of a low bounded system. It is known as an "open system." System theories suggest that low boundaries lead to a lack of system integrity. The system readily falls apart. As W. H. Auden suggests, the center can not hold. There are open-system

people. They are often inappropriate in their levels of disclosure. They dump personal information on everyone. They are the men and women on airplanes that tell you their entire life story and don't stop even when you pretend to fall asleep or put on the headphones. They are "warm-hearted" but scattered and insensitive to other people's needs for privacy.

Systems theorists would suggest in our postmodern world that we must have a strong self of self. However, it is hard to have clear sense of self in our postmodern world, given Gergen's description of the saturated self. We must therefore make a choice. We must either create high boundaries (and risk becoming inflexible, cold and aloof) or create low and more flexible boundaries (and risk losing our sense of self and our integrity). Ultimately, in our postmodern world, with the demand for flexible boundaries only the second option is viable. We must therefore continually identify very clear intentions and a clear sense of self.

We must be clear about our intentions, and must be selective in our disclosure and, more generally, in our engagement with other people. If we have low boundaries—if we are inclined to disclose everything to everyone—then we are likely to lose any coherent sense of self in a postmodern world. When we lose this sense of self, then we have also abandoned an internal locus of control, and come under the control of external forces. We become fragmented and expedient people who can't be trusted in any important human interaction.

Q3-E: The Obtuse Self

Just as there are several reasons why we choose to control our disclosure to other people, there are also several reasons why we choose to give up this control and allow the world around us to dictate the level of disclosure and the type of material from Quad Three that we share with other people. As in the case of the internal locus, some of these reasons make perfect sense in a postmodern world that requires us to adapt to changing social contexts and shifting social norms; however, some of the reasons for embracing an external locus of control with regard to disclosure are less justifiable.

As in the case of many reasons for internal locus of control, these irrational reasons for abandoning control over Quad Three disclosure can contribute to the destructive dynamics of externally-constrained human interactions. We will look at four externally-based senses of self: assumed self, ascribed self, coerced self, and conforming self.

Assumed Self

We often make assumptions regarding what other people know about us. This sense of self is help implicitly. It is not subject to much review and we often ignore its content. I assume you can tell something about me from my role (correction officer, boss, athlete) or the setting in which I find myself. This sense of self is particularly powerful in a highly conscribed setting – often called a highly enmeshed or high context setting—such as a jail, corporate board room or football field. In this setting, one's role occupies virtually all of one's public self (Quad One) and this self is so large and prominent that there is little need to share much of Quad Three.

While this conscription may not create much of a problem in societies where virtually all roles are ascribed and handed down from generation to generation (see discussion of ascribed self below), it can create major problems in a contemporary society where one is expected to be something more than his role. In modern and postmodern times, Quad Three may be very poorly developed in a person who lives primarily through a highly conscribed role. People who occupy these roles frequently find it very difficult to interact with other people outside their role or to abandon or retire from this role.

Ascribed Self

This sense of self is clearly and publicly assigned to each member of a specific society. In many societies, each citizen is born into a social-economic class and will remain in this class throughout their life. In many old European cities, for instance, each trade has its own section of town and its own church. I remember walking through the streets of Tallinn, an old Hanseatic-League city in the country of Estonia.

There was a church just for warriors and a church for merchants. Each class and occupational group lived in a specific part of the city, with the upper classes and more prestigious classes living on higher ground in Tallinn and further from the city walls that fortified the city than those in lower socio-economic classes. In many sub-Sahara African societies, newborn children are "dropped" into an existing social structure and given a specific role and set of social responsibilities from birth. All children in these societies are to learn how to adapt to their role in this social structure before venturing out to find their own individual identities.

Coerced Self

In some highly regulated and often punitive social structures, we are told who we are, what we are to say and what we are to do. This coerced sense of self is found in prisons, in concentration camps and in other settings that are heavily bounded and filled with potential or actual violence. At the extreme, we find brainwashing, when at some point, the coerced self actually becomes the true self—the external control is internalized and the "prisoner" no longer needs be kept in chains, since they have now placed the chains around their own "soul."[ii]

Conforming Self

We need not be coerced in order to seek conformity to the dominant rules and values of a society. We can choose to comply with these rules and values by picking up both obvious and subtle cues from our environment. We become quite sensitive to these cues so that we might "fit in" or "go along." This conformity, in turn, allows us to feel less anxious, allows us to be more successful in our career or family, and allows us to spend less time figuring out "who we are." This sense of self parallels the notion of false self with regard to internal locus of control.

We play out a role and espouse a set of values not because at some deep level we wish to do so, but because we have abandoned any sense of personal integrity and integration. When we embrace a conforming self, our third quadrant can become quite barren. We no longer have much to keep secret, because we have fully aligned our self with that which is acceptable in

our society.

Our public self (Quad One) becomes very large and malleable, while our private self (Quad Three) becomes small and often quite rigid. This, in turn, provides fertile ground for the expansion (and potentially destructive empowerment) of the unknown self (Quad Four).

Saturation and Disclosure

It is often hard to gain a clear sense of self in our postmodern world—whether or not we choose to embrace an assumed, ascribed or conforming self. Part of the Quad Three problem in our postmodern society concerns the "saturated self." It is hard not only to gain a clear sense of self in our postmodern world, but also to know what type of "self" we want to or should (if oriented toward a conforming self) convey to another person. We are inclined to sift through and shift among different senses of self.

How much should I disclose about myself and what specifically do I disclose? And how much time and attention do I devote to the other person? One more question: How much and what do I want to know about this other person? In traditional premodern societies and in most modern societies, the rules of engagement are clear and consistent. Social class structures make it even easier to know what and how to share with other people about ourselves. The assumed, ascribed and conforming selves are much easier to engage—and the coerced self is all-to-common in these societies.

From the perspective of our internal locus of control, we must always strike an uneasy balance between our desire for information from the other person ("I want to know": information flowing from the outside to the inside) and our desire to share information about ourselves with the other person ("I want to tell you": information flowing from the inside to the outside). We don't know the rules and often don't really know much about the person with whom we are relating. We are living in what Bennis and Slater many years ago prophetically called the "temporary society."[iii] We often must adjust our relationships because of the many different

roles we play in our multiphrenic, postmodern society.

A similar challenge faces each of us when we shift our perspective to an external locus of control. We begin to worry not about what we chose to share with or receive from other people, but instead about what information the other person wants to share with us or what information they want to receive from us. Once again, in our postmodern world, unclear rules, temporary relationships, and shifting roles, makes it difficult to *anticipate* what other people want and need.

We can try to somehow control the situation through *proactive communication* — convincing another person of what they want to share with us or want to receive from us. Many powerful psychotherapists exert this type of influence. They declare themselves to be "neutral" or "non-directive," yet through the few words they do offer and through their nonverbal expressions, they influence what their patients disclose.

Through their not-so-subtle reinforcements (head nodding, smiling, statements like "interesting" or "can you say more about this?"), many therapists (as well as coaches, counselors, radio talk show advisors and self-help gurus) have a major impact on what is said to them and asked of them. This may even be the case with the father of modern psychotherapy: Sigmund Freud. Some of Freud's recent critics have proposed (with some justification) that Freud got what he was looking for from his late 19th and early 20th Century patients:[iv]

> A consensus has begun to emerge among historians and critics of psychoanalysis about what really happened . . . It appears that Freud either bullied his patients into reporting childhood seduction episodes or foisted upon them such stories, and that he later lied about the whole seduction episode.

Could this same proactive communication pattern be found among skillful (and perhaps manipulative) men and women who sell us cars, homes, insurance or a "perfect" partner for life?

For those of us who are not very influential or skillful as proactive communicators, the alternative is *reactive communication*. We await the disclosures or requests from the other person and then decide how we want to respond to the discloser—o if and how we want to fulfill their requests. This is where Quad Two and Quad Three so closely interact. Someone (I'll call this person, "Sam") wants me to share something about myself (Quad Three): "So, tell me how you're doing. How do you like this conference? Have you met anyone who is very interesting?"

I don't know Sam very well, having bumped into him at a session of the conference and having gone out with Sam (and six other conference attendees) for lunch after the session. I find Sam to be a bit of a bore. He dominated the luncheon conversation, didn't seem to be listening to what other people said at the luncheon, and missed the point being made by the speaker at the session we both attended. So now I have the misfortune of bumping into Sam after another conference session.

He asks me to disclose something about myself ("How are you doing . . . How do you like . . . ?"). How much do I tell him? I don't think he will really listen, and, frankly, I have little interest in establishing a relationship with Sam. Even more importantly, how much of my Quad Two information about Sam do I share with him? This is the interesting and difficult part about the Quad Two and Quad Three interdependence.

Some of what I have to share in my third quad is information about Sam that probably exists in his second quad (opaque/blind self). Do I let Sam know that: (1) he is *not* one of the interesting people I have met at this conference, (2) he is actually disrupting my enjoyment of the conference and/or (3) I find him to be an insensitive, dominating boor! If I shared any or all of this information with Sam, his Quad Two would certainly shrink (perhaps at the cost of some psychic pain). We might diagram what would occur in the following way:
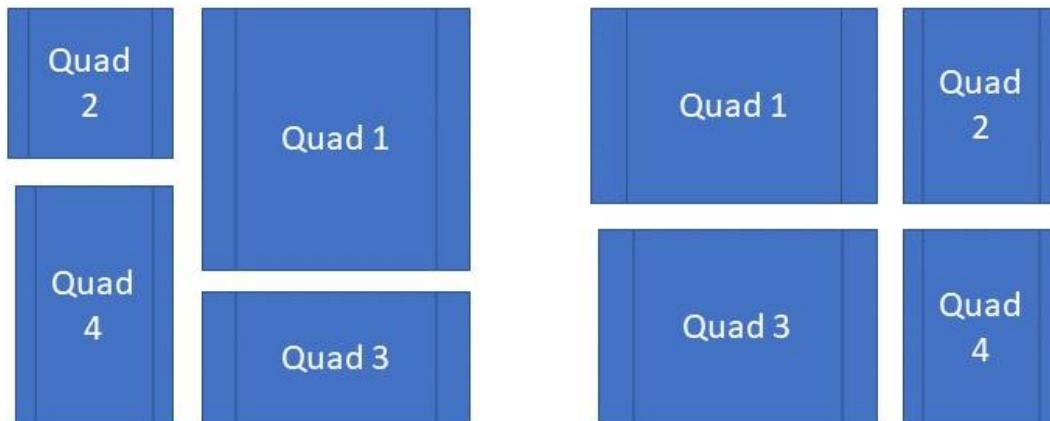
Relationship A [Before]

Bill   **Sam**

Quad 2   Quad 1   Quad 1   Quad 2

Quad 4   Quad 3   Quad 3   Quad 4
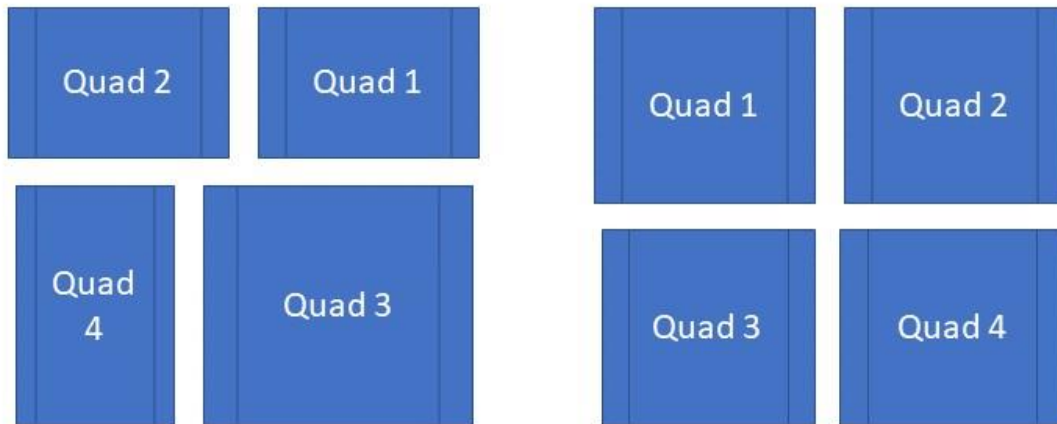
Relationship B [After]

Bill   **Sam**

Quad 2   Quad 1   Quad 1   Quad 2

Quad 4   Quad 3   Quad 3   Quad 4

In this case, my public self (Quad One) would have expanded from relationship A to relationship B because of my sharing of hidden impressions about and reactions to Sam (Quad Three). Sam's public self would have expanded because he now knows more about the way in which at least one person (me) perceives and judges him (Quad Two). Sam requests the

disclosure, yet I was the one, ultimately, who had the greatest influence on both Sam's window and my own window — unless Sam chooses to ignore or re-interpret my feedback to him.

It should also be noted that Sam's third quadrant (information regarding me) would no doubt expand. His Quad 3 could be filled with a lot of angry thought about me, along with some assumptions regarding by own bias and assumptions (especially with regard to him). Conversely, he might be appreciative of my disclosure about him and, therefore, incorporate some positive things about me in his third quadrant. If these are positive impressions about me, then he might move these impressions into his Quad One and share them with me. This could be the beginning of a more positive relationship between Sam and me (though perhaps one that becomes too much of "I like you and expect you to like me and tell me that you like me" – a bit of a "love fest.")

The interplay among quadrants doesn't stop here. If you look carefully, my Quad Two is now larger in size. This means that now there is a greater amount of information that Sam holds about me, which he has not yet shared. My feedback to Sam would, no doubt, evoke an impression of me by Sam. He might now see me as jealous, arrogant, insensitive, dangerous — at the very least a person to avoid in the future.

Alternatively, he might see me as a caring, sensitive person who is providing him with helpful feedback. It depends, in part, on how I deliver the feedback to Sam. It also depends on how Sam receives the feedback. My assumption (bias) is that Sam will not receive my feedback in a positive manner, and is likely to gain a very negative (and distorted) perception of me. As a result, I am unlikely to offer him the feedback, and if I do offer any feedback, I am unlikely to take his feedback to me (Sam's Quad Two) very seriously:

Sam: "Well, you're not very interesting either!" *or*

Sam: "What do you mean . . . you talked more than I did during the luncheon. You're the one who dominated the conversation!" *or*

Sam: "You know, I didn't need you to dump all of your own insecurities on me!"

So, for good reason, I will probably respond to Sam's request for disclosure (my Quad Three material moving to Quad One) with superficial statements that enable me to disengage quickly from this mildly disturbing relationship:

Bill: "I'm doing fine and like the conference. Sorry, I have to dash off to a meeting with an old friend [not another session, because Sam might join me.]"

Before we leave this disturbing (and disturbed) relationship, there are two other observations to make about the shift in windows after my (unlikely) feedback to Sam. You will notice that it is not only my Quad Two that increases in size. Sam's Quad Three also increases. He now must add further information to his hidden self (Quad Three)—information about the guy at a conference who verbally attacked him (or thoughtfully confronted him) with impressions of his behavior during an informal luncheon meeting with several colleagues. Does Sam share this experience with anyone else in his life? His wife? His best friend? His therapist or coach?

In sharing this information from his expanded Quad Three, might Sam find that there is some truth in what I said to him? Even though Sam might have wanted to kill the messenger (me), might he learn something about himself through his own disclosure to supportive people in his life, or through his own ongoing processing of this feedback? It is rare that we are *not* defensive when receiving difficult, negative or disconfirming feedback from other people.

This doesn't mean, however, that we don't learn, eventually, from this feedback. Perhaps, I should find a way to convey some of my impressions to Sam, even if this might evoke a negative reaction from Sam. I should be able to "weather the storm." Could I myself learn

from this encounter something that might be uncomfortable about my self? Maybe I am projecting on to Sam my own boorish behavior? Am I afraid of Sam's reaction to my feedback or of what he might say to me in response this feedback—reflections on my own behavior that might contain a seed of disturbing truth about myself?

This latter reflection suggests one other shift in the two windows—a shift that further encourages an honest exchange between Sam and me. In Joe Luft's original window, with it's highly interdependent pains, the fourth quadrant (unknown) in both windows decreases in size. Both Sam and I can learn more about ourselves, even if the personal learning is a bit painful for both of us. Both of us will gain access to potential areas of ourselves (Q4). My fears might be justified (but manageable). Perhaps some of Sam's feedback in reaction to my feedback is accurate. Maybe I am sensitive to his domineering behavior at lunch because I am also inclined to be domineering. Perhaps I am competitive with Sam (and anyone else who is verbally active) and am worried that other people won't find me interesting. Could these issues from my childhood and adolescence still be playing a part in my reactions to other people? There is still much I can learn—maybe I should interact with Sam in a way that can be of interpersonal value to both of us.

Q3-I: Direct and Indirect Disclosure

It certainly makes sense in most instances that Quad Three is governed by an internal locus of control. After all, don't I have the right (and capacity) to restrict what I share with other people? To a certain extent this is true. Under most conditions, Quad Three should operate primarily from the perspective of an internal locus of control. Obviously, we can share information about ourselves with other people (moving this material from Quad Three to Quad One). We can also let other people know of our Quad Three desire to find out more about ourselves from them (moving our Quad Three request to Quad One). If successful, this latter request precipitates a move of Quad Two material in the other person into their first quadrant and into my first quadrant as well.

I call the first type of Quad Three sharing, *direct disclosure* ("I want to tell you") and the second type *indirect disclosure* ("I want you to tell me—I want to know more about what you are holding in Quad Two about me"). This is an important distinction, especially when considering the interpersonal dynamics in many human service settings. The "helper" provides very little direct disclosure, but may provide substantial indirect disclosure by encouraging a "client" to disclose her own perceptions and feelings regarding the helper. This profile of disclosure is particularly common among those helpers with a strong psychodynamic orientation who explore the nature of a client's transferential perspectives and feeling regarding the helper.

In the case of men and women who are highly self-oriented (often called "narcissistic"), we may find both direct and indirect disclosure: "Let me tell you about myself and when I'm done talking about myself, I'll ask you to tell me about myself!" In the case of a relationship with an unequal distribution of power or a large dose of mistrust, we may find very little direct or indirect disclosure, or we will find direct disclosure regarding nothing but superficial materials from Quad Three (the false self). If there is any indirect disclosure (request for feedback), it is often engaged as a protective strategy to insure occurrence of the intended effect of a specific interaction. I say to myself (but not the other person): "I want to be sure that you see me, think about me, and feel about me, the way I have intended through the nature of my interactions with you." I will have more to say about these disclosure dynamics in a later shapter.

Q3-E: Proactive and Reactive Disclosure

The amount of direct and indirect disclosure from Quad Three is not entirely a matter of internal decision-making processes. As I noted above, with regard to external locus of control, the environment in which we are interacting with other people can have a powerful influence. I just identified an environment that has a powerful influence—namely, the therapy session. I also suggested that power differentials and levels of trust can influence the extent and balance between direct and indirect disclosure. In essence, the environment or, more specifically, the

interpersonal context within which Quad Three to Quad One disclosure occurs can be categorized in one of two ways (much as in the case of direct and indirect disclosure with regard to an internal locus of control). The interpersonal context can encourage or discourage *proactive disclosure*. It can instead encourage or discourage *reactive disclosure*.

An interpersonal context that encourages positive proactive disclosure is one in which people want to share information about themselves with others. This is a context in which there is considerable trust regarding both intentions and perspective. There is a bit of irony here, for only through honest disclosure of intentions and perspective can the trust be established. We have a "chicken-and-egg" dilemma that is not easily solved. Trust in competency is also important. Can this other person "handle" what I have to disclose?

Once again when we see competence, then we are more likely to disclose. When we disclose, others are more likely to see us as competent and we can more readily discern if the other person is competent enough to receive our disclosure in a constructive manner. Positive proactive disclosure is often found in temporary settings—personal growth groups, executive coaching sessions, spiritual retreat centers. These times and places serve as "sanctuaries" in which powerful norms regarding openness and safety can be established and reinforced, and in which interpersonal training can occur. Interpersonal contexts that discourage proactive disclosure often are filled with mistrust, power differentials, impending threat or unclear interpersonal norms.

An interpersonal context that engenders positive reactive disclosure is one in which we are encouraged by other people to share Quad Three information about ourselves. Other people seem to be genuinely interested in us. We find that our assumptions are proven wrong about what they already know about us (the assumed self) what they want to know about us (deferential self) or what they need to know about us in order to establish a trusting, effective and sustainable relationship. Trust, once again, is very important. We are still concerned with intentions (why do they want to know more about me?) and competence (can they take in

what I say without distorting it or making use of it in an inappropriate manner, such as "outing" me with other people)?

An interpersonal context will discourage reactive disclosure when other people seem indifferent to us, when it doesn't feel safe, or when norms regarding disclosure are unclear or inconsistent. Like many of my colleagues who facilitate groups, I often begin my work with a new group by offering a "warm-up" exercise that requires some disclosure ("What would you like to achieve in this workshop?" or "Share with us the worst job you have ever had"). If someone comes in late, I often give them a bad time by telling them that "everyone in the room has already shared their most intimate secret [or most embarrassing moment in their life] . . . you're next!" While they almost immediately realize that I am kidding them, there is that moment of sheer terror on their face when they confront an interpersonal context where the norms regarding disclosure are unclear. Am I a skilled group facilitator—or a sadist!

Internal and External Locus of Control in Interaction

Several important dynamics are revealed when we look at the Quad Three interplay between the direct and indirect disclosure that arises out of an internal locus of control, and the proactive and reactive disclosure that arises out of an external locus of control,. First, the direct disclosure that is engaged with an internal locus tends to create a positive proactive context (external locus): when I disclose things about myself (Quad Three to Quad One) then other people are more likely to disclose things about themselves. Direct disclosure also can create a positive reactive context in which other people want and ask for even more information about me. This relationship, however, is curvilinear in nature. I can disclose too much about myself (the narcissistic inclination), leading other people to be quite reticent about asking for even more disclosure.

Conversely, a positive proactive and positive reactive context (external locus) will encourage direct disclosure, whereas an interpersonal context that discourages both proactive and reactive disclosure usually makes a request for feedback from others (indirect disclosure) even

more risky and inappropriate. The relationship between interpersonal context and indirect disclosure is a bit more complex than that between interpersonal context and direct disclosure. On the one hand, we are more likely to ask for feedback in a positive, supportive context than in a negative, threatening context. On the other hand, we may be less in need of this feedback in a positive, supportive context, since other people are more likely to share their own Quad Two information about us without having to be asked.

Perhaps we have another curvilinear relationship: very negative and very positive interpersonal contexts will discourage indirect disclosure, while moderately positive contexts encourage our request for feedback (indirect disclosure). I will avoid feedback or even find a way (often nonverbal) to request that another person not give me feedback ("Don't tell me") if the context is threatening and non-supportive, and won't need to say anything if the context is positive. Ultimately, I may claim my internal locus of control when confronted with an interpersonal context that is negative by avoiding this interpersonal context all together: "if this isn't a safe place, if you don't really care about me, or if I don't really know what is appropriate or inappropriate to disclose, then I'm going elsewhere—to a place that is safe, caring and clear!"

[i] Bergquist, William, Greenberg, Elinor and Klaum, Alan. *In Our Fifties*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1992.

[ii]Foucault, Michael. *Madness and Civilization*. New York: Random House, 1965.

[iii] Bennis, Warren and Slater, Phillip. *The Temporary Society*. New York: HarperCollins,1968.

[iv] Leahy, Thomas H. *A History of Modern Psychology.* (3rd Ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001, p. 127.