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## CHAPTER 7

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# Control and Healthy Relationships

**A**CROSS THERAPEUTIC approaches, there is general agreement that control is an important aspect of intimate relationships (Boorstein, 1979, 1996; Cordova & Jacobsen, 1993). Marital conflict accounts for some 40% of mental health referrals (Budman & Gurman, 1988; Donovan, 1995), and power and control issues are often an issue (Jacobsen, 1989, Gottman, 1994). In fact, when 50 leading marriage counselors were asked the most frequent problems seen in couples, they noted that the majority of issues faced in couples' therapy deal with issues of power and control (L.A. Times, 1988).

Some conceptualize control and intimacy as opposites (e.g., Fromm, 1956a; May, 1969). A second position is that control is a middle way station toward intimacy (Schutz, 1958). The third view is that control can enhance intimacy (Shapiro & Shapiro, 1984). Our position is that all three have merit, and can be understood and integrated by and as part of our larger control theory.

Understanding control profiles and control issues in relationship can assist clinicians both in conceptualizing healthy relationships, and in developing means to help clients attain such relationships. In this chapter, we explore how insights from a control profile of a man and woman can facilitate our understanding of interpersonal relations. (Although we focus on heterosexual intimacy, research suggests that same sex intimacy raises similar issues (e.g., Pepleau 1981).

1. The four modes of control, including efforts to change or accept one's partner, the risk of surrender, avoiding misplaced efforts at control.
2. Control-related motivations, including desire for control and fear of loss of control.
3. Agency of control, encompassing power issues of how and by whom decisions are made, and how balance between self and other is addressed.

4. Sense of control, including how modes, desire, and agency differ in men and women and affect their sense of control.

These control profiles can be contexted in a control-based model of healthy relationships consisting of three stages (Table 7.1):

1. *The traditional stage.* In this stage, males and females follow culturally approved patterns. The male is higher in Quadrant 1, assertive, and Quadrant 3, overcontrol; and the woman higher in Quadrant 2, positive yielding, and Quadrant 4, negative yielding. The woman gains a sense of control through interdependence and emotional closeness; the man through competent action; a strong, autonomous sense of self; and a hierarchical model of control in which he is the leader.
2. *The transitional stage.* In this stage, the traditional gender role styles and means of gaining a sense of control begin to break down, but skills in new modes are embryonic and not trusted. There is an increase in control battles, about such things as decision making, sexuality, employment, and childrearing.
3. *The balanced stage.* As the traditional model breaks down, there is more freedom than ever before. The once-fixed roles are changing. Self-development is important, and the self is no longer defined only through relationship. Both individuals in a relationship have to figure out who they are. But the balanced stage is a way to deal with the confusion without running back in fear to the traditional model or moving into complete narcissistic selfishness. There is a balanced and integrated use of the two positive modes of control, a balance between needs for personal autonomy and needs for interpersonal closeness that helps reduce or ameliorate the control battles with a loved one. There is an ability to blend asserting rights and needs without backing down: forgiving hurts and letting go of pain and anger toward our loved ones (Worthington et al, 1990).

A couple caveats and comments about the model (Table 7.1) are in order. First, it is not without variation. Not all couples begin at the traditional stage. Because of cultural changes, some begin in transition and some begin actually seeking the goal of the third, balanced, stage. Second, the stages are heuristic, offering both a way to understand control issues and guidelines for addressing those issues. They are not absolute, and therefore, overlap between issues in stages can and does occur.

Third, developing a control profile of males and females within the context of the model can help clinicians pinpoint different control-based intervention at different stages. (Campbell, 1980).

TABLE 7.1

A THREE-STAGE CONTROL-BASED MODEL OF RELATIONSHIP:  
CONTROL PROFILES OF MEN AND WOMEN

Dimension	Stage 1		Stage 2		Stage 3	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
How Control is Maintained: Modes	Quadrants 1 and 3 (Positive and Negative Assertiveness)	Quadrants 2 and 4 (Positive and Negative Yielding)	Quadrants 1 and 2, and tries for Quadrant 2	Quadrants 2, 3, 4, and tries for Quadrant 1	Balance of assertive and yielding modes	
Power Issues: Desire for Control	More assertive instrumental power. High desire for active control. Both: Relatively comfortable	Less assertive instrumental power; yielding mode	Power issues are highly salient for male and female; struggle often ensues		Power issues seen in a context; self-effacement; empower the other highly valued; can be assertive or yielding	
Ego/Sex Roles Agency: Self and other	Traditional, masculine sex roles; assertive; gaining sense of self by active accomplishment and mastery	Traditional female sex roles; yielding; gaining sense of self through the other	Ego diffusion and lack of clarity; what are "liberated" sex roles? High importance placed on development of self		Strong ego in an active and yielding sense; non-attached to the fruits of one's actions; androgynous sex roles; role flexibility	
Value of Intimate Relationship: Sense of Control	Values relationship as conquest and ego enhancement	Values it for protection and security	Ambivalence—desire for intimacy yet there is confusion		Quite high; mutuality and reciprocity; interdependence; high degree of commitment; relationship as service	
Body (Sexuality)	Conquer, overcome, active control	Yield, seek protection, passive control	Role confusion: seduce or be seduced		Interdependence, sensuality, sexuality, channeling arousal for intimacy and closeness, beyond "self" and "other"	

## POWER AND CONTROL: THE TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIP

In this section we examine the traditional relationship. We first explore the modes of control utilized, and then show how problems arise due to unequal power. These problems occur not only in suboptimal relationships where actual abuse is occurring, but also in normal relationships that seem to be working.

### THE TRADITIONAL MODEL AND MODES

In the traditional model, there is an evolutionary advantage for the female to look for the most powerful male as provider. Research shows that traditionally, in terms of age and social status, women tend to marry up in society, and divorce rates are higher for couples where the male makes less money and has a lower rank than his mate. Men tend to marry women slightly below them in age, education, and occupation (Wright, 1994; Buss, 1995). In the traditional model, the male's status on the social hierarchy is one important criterion for women. The wife, if possible, does not work, but takes care of the children and household. Each has an area of competence, but the husband has more control because he holds more power and prestige (Jacobsen, 1989).

Control—causing an influence in the intended direction—involves addressing the question How do you attract and hold onto a partner? Research has shown that in the traditional model, men tend to use the assertive mode (both Quadrants 1 and 3), have a higher desire for control than women, and use self, more than other, as source of agency. Men are socialized to use power and control directly. Women develop indirect passive means of controlling interpersonal interactions, including utilizing the yielding mode of control (Quadrants 2 and 4), have a lower desire to be in control, and use others' help as a way to gain their sense of control (Tannen, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Shapiro, & Shapiro, 1984, 1992).

The traditional stage of interpersonal control is defined by stereotypical gender roles for both men and women. There may be some truth in the adage that opposites attract. We see clinical evidence of this in a case study we present in Chapter 13, where a traditional couple had opposite mode-of-control profiles. The most traditional gender stereotypes profile is that of the assertive male who achieves a sense of control through the assertive Quadrants 1 and 3: decisive action, analytical skills, initiative (Quadrant 1); and lack of empathy and sensitivity, manipulation, aggression, looking for the other's weakness (Quadrant 3).

In the traditional stage, women seek a sense of control through a yielding mode, letting the male be in active control, taking her cues from him, and being (or acting) naïve, and fitting into his plans. Her receptivity, acceptance, and yielding mode of control (Quadrant 2) also leave her vulnerable and passive (Quadrant 4). The traditional woman is willing to suppress her need for a separate identity and vicariously takes on the male's identity. Her reward for these behaviors is to "gain control" of the male so she can be taken care of and provided for, as well as gain some degree of interpersonal closeness.

Some have argued that this behavior may be partly a vestige of our animal heritage (Wright, 1994; Buss, 1995). The powerful male ape fights off other males for the female(s). The female's taking care of the male—sexually and through grooming—is reciprocated by his keeping her fed and protected. Why do women prefer men with more knowledge and money? Why do female apes choose stronger, more aggressive males? Because the "macho ape" appears more adept at resource control, which is another way of saying the fellow is a good provider and protector (and his genes will make a good contribution for her offspring). In gorilla and chimp societies, the modes go hand-in-hand: female submissiveness appears to be a function of male assertiveness.

Even after women in Western civilization acquired the right to make their own decisions about who to marry, they instinctively picked the strongest male. Until the present era, the only career open to a woman was as nurturer and caregiver. Her happiness and physical well-being were directly dependent on her skills in making the human interaction work (Kaplan & Bean, 1976).

#### UNEQUAL POWER HURTS BOTH PARTNERS

As noted, historically women have been attracted to male power, which can be protective. However, this power can also be turned on them and thereby make women feel vulnerable. For example, Cynthia was a client we saw in conjoint therapy with her husband, Mark. They had been married 8 years. He was a well-established orthopedic surgeon. In their traditional marriage, she took care of their three young children. She had help with the cooking, cleaning, and childcare, and most of her financial needs and wants were met. However, she felt that she was constantly at the mercy of her husband's whims. If he felt generous, she was graced both with material goods and freedom. If he was in a bad mood, her "allowance" would be cut and he would demand that she stay home more with the kids, criticizing independent pursuits that Cynthia undertook.

We can see in Cynthia's case why the one with less power and control would be more unhappy. However, Kipnis (1984) found that the presence

of power is also a problem for the one using it, and ultimately for the relationship. He studied influence tactics of 195 couples, as well as who controlled the power in the relationship (e.g., final decision about how and where to spend money, sex lives). He found that dominant spouses use "strong tactics: ordering, threatening, getting angry" (p. 32). The partner not in power uses "soft tactics: being nice, flattering, pleasing" (p. *ibid*). Power holders exploit those they control, make them into objects.

Kipnis then examined how who has the power affected the degree of affectionate feelings of the couple. He thought perhaps having a compliant and obedient partner promoted harmony and affection, but

What we found was just the opposite. People who unilaterally controlled decision making had a less satisfactory relationship than those who shared power. Dominant partners (usually men) described their companions in less flattering terms in regard to intelligence, success or skills than those who shared power; they also expressed less love and affection and were generally unhappier. (p. *ibid*)

#### CONTROL AND ABUSE

As discussed, unequal power can hurt normal relationships. It can also become pathological, leading to actual abuse. The control profiles that contribute to this violence are an extension of the traditional one. The man has a high Quadrant 1/Quadrant 3 mode. He is both assertive (Quadrant 1) and overcontrolling (Quadrant 3); he has a high need for control, and adheres to rigid gender roles views. (Dutton, 1995): The man expects the woman to serve and obey, wants to know his wife's every move, and interrupts and monopolizes conversations. Often his violence stems from an overwhelming need to feel in control and to avoid feeling powerless. He is in fact very dependent on women and believes and fears that women have more power. When he senses he does not have control, he acts out. But he denies that the abuse is his responsibility (Dutton, 1995). He blames others for his problems, and everyone else is responsible for his feelings (e.g., "you make me angry"). Also, although some men may have trouble controlling their anger, for many it is not a question of impulse control. Rather, they use anger and violence as a way to maintain control.

The profile for the woman who is abused is often high Quadrants 2 and 4: both nurturing and too passive. Often this woman goes from one domineering and controlling partner to another. Abused women often rationalize and make excuses for their lovers (e.g., he has migraines, family stress, or business problems). She may blame his abusive behavior on herself, saying she provoked it, doesn't give him enough attention, is not responsive

enough to his needs. This is a misplaced attribution of responsibility. She needs to see that she contributes to her own victimization by excusing the man's behavior as something she provoked. Her response is "I'm sure I can change my husband if I can learn how to please him." Pleasing and forgiving, male or female, is not the answer to an abusive relationship. Healthy relationships do not involve one person seeking to control another through fear, intimidation, and physical abuse. Staying in an abusive relationship is Quadrant 4, not Quadrant 2.

## GENDER-BASED MODES OF CONTROL IN TRANSITION

Thus, there are several potential problems with the traditional model. There is the danger of unequal power, which hurts intimacy for both, even in normal relationships. Such unequal power can also lead to actual abuse, which is clearly an egregious misuse of control. As men and women begin to see the limits of the traditional model, they are more open to moving out of their stereotypic roles (Cancian, 1987).

The questioning of the traditional model has also been catalyzed in part by the profound social and technological transformations in the past 40 years. For example, the birth control pill in the 1960s enabled women to plan pregnancies and helped separate sex from procreation. Further, a postindustrial service and information economy drew women into the workplace, allowing them greater economic independence (Albino-Gilbert, & Rachlin, 1987; Price-Bonham & Murphy, 1980).

These new models involve issues of partnership in family life, equality between husband and wife, and collaboration in decision making. If a couple can't find work in the same area, whose career takes a secondary role? There are career dilemmas, gender role dilemmas, and gender role tension.

## ANDROGYNY

In this transitional phase, the woman needs to learn more assertive Quadrant 1 skills, the man more yielding Quadrant 2 skills. The concept of androgyny (from the Greek *andro*, meaning male, and *gyn*, meaning female) involves a synthesis, a shift away from polarities (Bem, 1979; Spence & Helmreich, 1979). Both men and women can be nurturing and assertive, dependent and competent, and protective and tender, without feeling their self-image threatened (Bakan, 1966; Kaplan & Bean, 1976). In this view, the androgynous self is the most highly developed self, and androgynous lov-

ing is the highest form of emotional/sexual intimacy—a self open to tenderness, nurturance, assertion, and passion (Margolin, 1983).

The transition for the more traditional woman involves learning assertive skills (Quadrant 1) to move beyond the victim posture. As one woman said early in therapy, "I was pressured and manipulated into going against my good judgment to provide for his male ego satisfaction." And as a wife said to her husband in couples therapy, "You made me cave in and do what you said. You intimidated me so I cannot decide."

In both of these cases, the women acknowledged that there was no threat of force. They recognized that they felt angry when they let themselves be intimidated and did not stand up for their rights. In the transitional phase, it is important for women to own their power and take more responsibility, changing from "you caused me" and "you made me" to "I chose, and I do not like the choice I made." They should not feel guilty about getting control of their lives: Their health and well-being depend on it.

In the transitional phase, the primary task for the traditional man requires the development of Quadrant 2 yielding skills. Deepening intimacy requires that making one self vulnerable to another, learning to become thoughtful and accommodating to another's needs.

#### AMBIVALENCE

In the transitional phase, integration is difficult, reflecting both ambivalence and the newness of the task. The move away from stereotypes is not easy. According to classic research and cultural views, men who were not sufficiently aggressive and dominant feared that they were not really men; women who sought to be more active and fight against passivity were considered too aggressive and not really feminine.

For example, a man in therapy acknowledged that he was egocentric and had high control needs. His stated goal was to be less controlling and more giving. However, when he yielded to his wife, he often felt taken advantage of: "I feel that when I don't argue my side and say how angry I am, she thinks me a pushover and walks all over me. I feel she is trying to make me fit into her world." For many men, making this transition is difficult, fraught with frustration and fear of losing control.

In a case cited by Kaplan (1979), Susan was unable to integrate assertion and caring. She was assertive in her work environment, but yielding and accommodating in intimate relationships. She was afraid that if she were to become caring at work, she would lose her assertive edge, and if she were to become assertive in her intimate relationships, she would lose her caring side. Women may fear that if they become powerful and successful, they won't be loved.



## CONTROL BATTLES

When both individuals in the relationship are strong and assertive, control battles regarding equalizing power and decision making are inevitable. Two of the greatest areas of difficulty are trust and dominance as both partners work to balance the personal egoic needs of the competent self with the relational we. In this transitional phase, there can be an increase in control battles in everything ranging from money, to sexuality, to employment, to childrearing. Winning the war of gaining control and showing one's autonomy can become more important than the relationship. These arguments are really battles over who controls the relationship. The issue in these arguments is often not who's right or who's wrong, but who's going to win. Issues of keeping score occur more frequently (i.e., who does most for whom).

Sometimes these egoic battles can be relatively subtle and involve envy. Two male psychiatrists (Nadelson & Eisenberg, 1977) wrote about their experiences of being married to professional women. One of the psychiatrists was ignored at a professional meeting of his wife's. He became jealous, feeling his wife stayed too long while others talked with her about her presentation. Afterward, when discussing where to go to dinner, he felt she was too demanding and "castigated her character as controlling." Subsequently, he realized he had acted out of wounded pride, and shared that with his wife. "Yes I know," she said. "She didn't soothe or comfort, didn't give him support for his [honesty] and strength in admitting he was jealous, and wouldn't reassure him of his dominance and her submission." Often when a man complains about the way the house or children are being cared for, what's at stake may be his disguised fear that his own need to be taken care of will not be met, a fear of loss of control of his previous high status position (Budman & Gurman, 1988; Gurman & Rice, 1975; Pleck & Rhyner, 1984).

## SELF NEEDS VERSUS PARTNER'S NEEDS

One of the most common control battles is that between self needs versus partners' needs, called variously closeness/distance, affiliation/independence, and demand/withdrawal pattern (Jacobsen, 1989). The partner who wants more closeness defines it as greater expression of feeling, more conversation, and more time together. The fending-off spouse wants more time alone to pursue autonomous activities. "She hugs, I hate being hugged; she talks, I hate being cornered; she needs lots of attention, I am generally solitary." Or "I loved his attentiveness, but now he doesn't give me enough space."

In transitional times, there can be a pathologizing of the other's position.

The one who wants more time together can be called dependent and needy (Quadrant 4). That person can also be called intrusive and overcontrolling, always interfering, smothering, never allowing for space (Quadrant 3). The one who wants less time together can be called withdrawn, aloof, narcissistic, and self-absorbed.

As a couple's intimacy increases, there is often a corresponding increase in a desire for distance, particularly for those who fear they can't create space when they want to, who question whether they have good personal boundaries, or who are afraid of being used or abandoned. Further, growing dependency on another may cause resentment. As one woman noted, "I realize that at some level I fear men, so I want to ensure my independence." And as a male client commented, "I fear that I may be too dependent on my wife. Sometimes I intentionally create distance to show I am still me."

#### GETTING SOMEONE TO CHANGE: FIXING THE OTHER PERSON

Another area where control battles occur is when one spouse tries to get the other to change. Assertive individuals know what they want, and they seek to correct that which does not meet their needs or expectations.

There is a fine line between caring and meddling/nagging. Control battles can easily erupt when one seeks to use assertive strategies (Quadrants 1 and/or 3) to change or "fix" the other person, particularly if that person does not feel the need to change. As one wife said, "I believe he can change if he really wants to. What is so difficult about stopping those annoying habits—nail biting, putting dishes in sink—or saying he loves me?" To this her husband responded, "If she really loved me, she'd get off my back and stop complaining."

There are obviously several problems with this "fix the other" model. As one female client noted to her spouse, "You're trying to control me too much. I feel like I don't have any control. I sometimes feel controlling my weight is the most important thing to you in our relationship." Further, even when it works, the loved one (being helped) might feel an invasion of privacy, pressured, or harassed. Those who offer support may feel drained, frustrated.

Inappropriate low-level strategies involve trying to change and fix the other person's mind or behavior by making him or her feel guilty or afraid by strongly disapproving through criticism, threats, or lectures. In this style a person is really saying to the other, "You are wrong and I won't love you until you do things my way." This bullying element can also be seen in the message "If you really loved me you would change for me (e.g., have dinner ready on time)."

A variation of getting the other person to change can involve a Quadrant 4, too little control, strategy of collapsing into tears to make the other person feel guilt and portray (or feel) oneself as a victim.

One additional dynamic regarding fixing the other person needs to be mentioned. Sometimes people become angry at their spouses because they feel powerless to help them. All of us want, at some level, to be competent problem solvers. When we see our partner in pain and are not able to help, we feel out of control and may in turn become angry and resentful.

### SOMETIMES IT DOESN'T WORK

In any relationship, there is at some point almost inevitably a power struggle phase, a time of disappointment, disillusionment, and recognition of differences. For a relationship to move forward, this time can be an opportunity to assess and appreciate individual differences. To gain stability those in the relationship need to learn to tolerate and use differences creatively, as opposed to trying to fix or change each other.

However, it is important to emphasize that we are not saying that all relationships necessarily can or should follow an inevitable developmental pattern from Stage 2 to Stage 3. Sometimes, there are deep-seated differences that can't be overcome. There may indeed be a wrong match. The problem may have nothing to do with control-related fears of intimacy. The solution is not more work or better strategies within the context of the relationship, but rather recognizing that it is time to let go of this relationship, a Quadrant 2 response.

There also may be irreconcilable differences where neither is wrong, but the situation will not work. For example, a 38-year-old woman does not want children, and her fiancé, 30, does. He sees children as fulfilling; she sees them as imprisoning. There is no right or wrong here, but unfortunately there is no room for compromise, either. Unless one of them has a change of heart, marriage will not work. If either party feels trapped or deprived by the other, chances for a successful relationship are next to nil.

If there is a breakup, control issues strongly surface (e.g., who broke up with whom?). Couples in the process of divorce often don't care as much about possessions as they do about the effects the arguments have on the former spouses. For many couples, it's who's going to win the last game, who's going to be defeated for the last time. Although these feelings and battles are understandable from the standpoint of control, they are generally unproductive and keep the individual connected to a lower-level sense of control through anger and attack. Eventually, the goal has to be letting go of the relationship and the dream (Quadrant 2), owning one's individual self, learning from the experience, and moving on (Quadrant 1).

## TOWARD INTEGRATED BALANCE

As old, external reasons for staying in a relationship—such as economic security—break down, new reasons of connecting more deeply with others, self, and life—such as shared companionship, self-awareness, transcendence, understanding, and/or spiritual growth—need to arise to sustain the relationship (Brothers, 1992).

Each relational interaction can be perceived as containing a lesson. A man, when he feels passive and helpless as a result of his wife's actions, can learn about the limits and fears of letting go of active control. A woman afraid of a man's strength can use that fear as an opportunity to reexamine her own little-girl passive Quadrant 4 fears. Thus, difficulties and conflicts that exist within the relationship can be transformed. Instead of struggles for ego enhancement, power, and status, they can be opportunities for growth and feedback about one's own behavior and intentions.

A healthy relationship involves integrated, balanced control profiles for both men and women. As noted, this does not mean homogenized profiles without differences, but it does mean that both men and women have the ability to use the assertive and yielding modes of control, are able to balance self and other agency, and have awareness of and are able to effectively modulate their desire for control and fear of loss of control.

## TOWARD BALANCING MODES OF CONTROL

As pointed out in Chapter 5, there needs to be an integrated balance between the assertive (more traditionally masculine) and yielding (more traditionally feminine) modes of control. Research has shown that those who are high on masculine and feminine qualities (high androgyny) are healthier than those who are undifferentiated (the least healthy), or high on neither (Bem, 1977; Spence, 1979). However, as pointed out in the last section, a person can be high in both masculine and feminine traits but express them in inflexible, inappropriate, and dysfunctional ways. Each mode needs to be tempered by the other; the modes must be integrated and balanced.

Further, Kaplan (1979) noted that the

concept of androgyny can also be seen as replacing a prescription to be masculine or feminine with the double incarcerating prescription to be masculine and feminine. The individual now has not one but two sources of inadequacy to contend with!

So even as individuals work toward balance and integration of the two positive modes, we also need to have a certain acceptance of themselves as they are and their loved ones as they are (Quadrant 2) in that process.

Jung (1925, 1930) talked of the need to integrate both sides: the masculine, animus, with the feminine, anima. For both men and women, the task is to learn to accept and befriend their fears of the two negative quadrants—being too passive or too overcontrolling—and to honor, enhance, and integrate the two positive quadrants. For men, this integration means being the lover who is open, receptive, and vulnerable, yet passionate; and being a socially responsible individual who can undertake forceful action not only with resolve and discipline, but also with compassion and sensitivity. For women, the integration involves blending assertiveness and yielding to minimize both aggressiveness and passive victimhood. Such an integration helps in setting boundaries and going beyond the self-less rescuer who must give to others and not to the self. True giving can only occur when one has a strong self.

#### INTEGRATING ACCEPTANCE AND CHANGE

Our research shows that the psychologically healthy male and female have skills in both assertive and yielding modes of control, have low levels of over-control (Quadrant 3), and have few feelings of too little control (Quadrant 4). This balance does not mean that there are no differences in style and communication between men and women (Tannen, 1991). The goal of the control profile for men and women is one involving choice and flexibility. Kipnis (1984) suggests that couples get along better and have closer relationships when males are free to express what generally are thought of as feminine qualities (Quadrant 2) and females are able to express masculine qualities (Quadrant 1).

Assertive/change and yielding/acceptance modes are interwoven in healthy relationships. Trying to change the other person, as we saw, can lead to control battles. Neither men nor women like someone telling them how to live their lives. But receiving feedback from someone in a context of love can be an invaluable gift. Each partner can learn, gently and slowly, to give and receive criticism (seeking to create change in the other—Quadrant 1), but doing so within a context of love, caring, and acceptance (Quadrant 2). In couple's work, both partners need to be sensitive about when to give feedback to the other, and be willing to listen to the feedback nondefensively (Wellwood, 1990).

#### WHO'S IN CONTROL: SELF AND OTHER AGENCY

In an integrated mode, both partners have an equal share in making major decisions. At times, one partner may be the leader and the other follows, but the roles can and do change during the course of the relationship. Further, one may take a primary lead in one area, and the other in a different area.

Kantor (1979) suggested the helpful metaphor of rollerskating to illustrate interdependent (shared) control. In this metaphor, two people are connected by a rope. One person leads, pulling the other ahead. The new leader, by dint of centrifugal force, is going faster, and, in turn, pulls the partner still faster. At a higher-level sense of control, the relationship can be one of mutuality, a kind of synergistic integration between not only the two positive modes of control, but between self and other agency. In fact, the very tension in the balance between them can be part of the beauty of the relationship. Being in the lead is not exercised for ego-inflating reasons, but as a way of giving to the other.

Thus, within certain areas, and at different times, a hierarchical model with one in control and the other following appears to exist. But for a relationship to be healthy, the overall contextual model of control needs to be interdependent. If one person gets stronger at the other's expense, the relationship will not succeed. Both may feel victimized. The follower may criticize the leader for being too controlling. The leader may feel resentful at having to be responsible for making the decisions and taking the initiative.

A loving relationship requires cooperation between self and other agency. If both feel stronger and more in control, then there is an important foundation for a healthy relationship. To lead requires the Quadrant 1, assertive skills; to trust and hold on to the rope requires the ability to surrender and utilize Quadrant 2, yielding skills.

## CONTROL MOTIVATION

Control motivation involves the desire for control and the fear of losing control. Men and women both desire control in their relationships, and, as we have seen, may fear a loss of control in their intimate relationships. For a relationship to be successful, the partners need to be aware of and be able to effectively modulate their desire for control and fear of loss of control. They need to overcome the primitive freedom reflex (e.g., "No one will tell me what to do"). Individuals in a healthy relationship need to go beyond having their own control desires fulfilled and be willing to recognize the partner's control needs and preferences. Thus, a high desire for control can be antithetical to intimacy because intimacy depends in part on the ability to surrender active control of one's own wants and needs.

Fear of losing control revolves around losing one's identity and self-determination on the one hand, and being abandoned on the other. A major barrier to intimacy is the fear that if one overcomes his/her concern about loss of self, and commits to a relationship, then the other person will change the rules, vanish, or not be there. To use our rollerskating metaphor again: What if our partner lets go of the rope?

Consider, for example, the male bachelor in therapy with high control needs, who stated, "I don't need anyone, I'm self-sufficient." During a later part of therapy he confided that "I realize that I'm painting a portrait of myself, and I don't want anyone to get a good look until I'm finished: Sometimes I think I'll never be where I want to be and I should accept myself as I am and allow someone to accept me." With this client, we pointed out that although there are always real problems that need to be addressed, it is also possible that fault finding may be a defense against intimacy. We worked on issues of how perfectionism, both of himself and of others, could be a ploy to avoid intimacy.

On the other end of the control continuum, there can be a desire to possess the loved one, a belief that happiness can only occur through catching the person. As another male client complained, "If I could just get her to love me and accept me, I could finally feel good about myself, too." With him we discussed the importance of first finding one's self before surrendering it. As Erickson (1959) noted, "only after a reasonable sense of identity has been established is real *intimacy* with the other sex possible" (p. 95). Or as Engler (Wilber, Engler, and Brown 1986) commented, "You need to have sense of self before you can relinquish it" (p. 24) Individuals need to learn how to make themselves happy before they can expect that someone else will be the answer to their happiness. When they can appreciate aloneness, they are ready to give themselves most fully to another, for they no longer need others to save them or make them feel good about themselves.

Yet even if the relationship works "perfectly," there are still times when there is a basic existential ache, what Buber (1958) called exile, in which no matter how close two people are, it is never possible to fully share different worlds. Further, each of us is aware at some level that nothing is forever, that from one perspective life is change, and the ultimate cost of love is loss. No matter how much we—client, therapist, human—care, there is nothing we can do to shield either ourself or our partner from all aspects of life or from the inevitability of death. In healthy relationships at the deepest level, individuals are willing to open themselves to this knowledge, face it, and continue to love fully.

The Buddhist text the Dhammapada says that "In this world hate never yet dispelled hate. Only love dispels hate. This is the law, ancient and inexhaustible. You too shall pass away. Knowing this, how can you quarrel?"

#### OPTIMAL CONTROL, INTIMACY, AND SEXUALITY

In this section we examine the three views of control and intimacy and explore their relevance in terms of sexuality. Sexuality is an area in which many men and women have control issues. For example, in one study of

control concerns for normal men and women (Shapiro & Shapiro, 1984), 15% of women felt they exercised too much self-control in their sexual lives, 5.2% said they feared losing control in sex, 2.9% felt out of control of their sexual lives, and only 22.2% felt able to give up active control—positive yielding—in their sexual lives. For men, only 6.3% said they were able to give up control in their sex lives; 15.8% felt they exercised too much self-control; and 19% felt out of control of their sex lives.

*View One: Control and Intimacy are Opposites*

As noted, some state that love and power (the desire to exert control over others) are opposites (May, 1969). For example, Fromm (1956a) posited intimacy as a human need, pointing out that if individuals cannot find love, they may turn to domination and overcontrol. We agree that suboptimal control strategies and profiles can inhibit communication, constructive problem-solving, and the openness needed to develop intimacy. For example, excessive efforts to control a relationship can often smother its spark. Further, one can't ever control another with Quadrant 3 strategies in an intimate, caring relationship.

Often the sexual arena is one in which power struggles can occur, and in which one or both partners can feel victimized or be labeled a victimizer. Those who see women as using sexuality as a way to control men—using sex as a tool to win his affection and commitment—see him as the victim, her as the victimizer. Jacobsen (1989) noted that it is not uncommon for women to want less sex, and men more: "Women withhold sex because it is their last bastion of power in a relationship where they hold few resources" (p. 31). Those who see men as using women as sex objects for their gratification see him as the victimizer, her as the victim. There are truths in these views from the perspective of Stage One and Two. But they are not the entire picture, for they do not show how control can in fact *enhance* intimacy, rather than be antithetical to it.

*View Two: Control as a Middle-Way Station toward Intimacy*

Schutz (1958) saw control as the middle stage in the development of intimacy. His three-part model involved inclusion, control, and intimacy. He used a boat analogy. First, there is inclusion (Are we going to be together? Who is going to be in the boat?); then come control issues (Who will be the leader in the boat?); and finally, after those two issues are resolved, come questions of intimacy (How close are we willing to be in the boat?).

We agree with Schutz in that a hierarchical model of control certainly can be an important element in relationships (i.e., who is the leader, who is the follower). Indeed, the power struggles inherent in most relationships are based on this hierarchical model. Some see men as totally responsible and powerful in sexuality. In the traditional model of male assertiveness and fe-



male passivity, the man is responsible for her sexual satisfaction. If his partner is unhappy, it must be related to something he did wrong. He may seem unmanly in her eyes if he doesn't initiate sex, and often nothing will happen because she won't fill the vacuum by assuming the assertive role.

But Schutz's view does not consider an interdependent model of control, in which reciprocal, interconnected control exists, and where one person's leadership in one area does not mean another person's loss of power. Further, by using only a hierarchical model of control, he fails to address the importance of the positive yielding quadrant two mode of control in intimacy.

### *View Three: Control Can Enhance Intimacy*

In our view, control can in fact enhance and deepen interpersonal connections (i.e., the level of closeness in the boat) rather than be antithetical to or a middle-way station. Certain control profiles are essential for promoting healthy relationships. For example, assertive and yielding modes of control, agency of control, and fear of loss of control/desire for control are critical in the area of sexuality.

The task is to shift beyond victim and victimizer roles in sexual relations (Quadrants 3 and 4) to giving and receiving love (a Quadrants 1 and 2 integration and balance). Sexuality is an opportunity to learn lessons of both assertive and yielding modes of control. On the Quadrant 1 side, each partner needs to take responsibility for expressing his or her sexual needs and desires. On the Quadrant 2 side, eros can be seen as part of the mystery of life (Anand, 1995, Sovatsky, 1985), and sexuality can provide an opportunity to experience vulnerability and surrender (Rumi, 1994).

Thus, in terms of optimal control, a successful sexual relationship is one that is desired by both partners, one that either party can initiate, and one in which no one feels pressured. Each person is taking an emotional and physical risk, opening himself or herself to the vulnerability of trust and surrender to the other.

There are three criteria for closeness in a relationship: emotional intimacy (feeling tender, supported, acceptance), verbal intimacy (disclosure of emotions, feelings, fears, opinions), and physical intimacy (satisfaction with compassionate and sexual touch). At the deepest level of intimacy, sexuality emerges from and builds on the first two and involves learning to control and channel desire and arousal.

Masters and Johnson (1966), in their early work, described "sensate focus" in which the partners shifted from the "goal" of orgasm to exploration of the process of sensuality. Some traditions, such as Tantra and Taoism (mentioned in Chapter 5) also emphasize the "process" of sexuality, teaching one to control and channel sexual energy (Anand, 1995; Chia, 1984; Free John, 1978). In these traditions, sexuality is seen as a way of honoring and connecting with "the divine" essence of the partner. These techniques

involve using arousal to experience a depth of tenderness, and even "oneness" with one's partner—sometimes there can be a sense that self and other boundaries disappear, and one feels one's partner as one's self: "I am my beloved and my beloved is mine" (Song of Songs 6: 3). In the Kama Sutra paintings, there is no struggle for dominance or supremacy over another. Rather, there is a mutual caring.

From this perspective, control is not antithetical to intimacy (View One) and control is not a middle-way station to intimacy (View Two). Rather, each person seeks to control and channel his or her energy for the service of the other. Each recognizes the bond of interdependent control. The hurts and joys of one's intimate relationships are really one's own. Control is a way to enhance and deepen intimacy.