THE JOHARI WINDOW: A RECONCEPTUALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The Johari Window- is a conceptual tool for illustrating the interaction between what is known/unknown to oneself and to others. It has been used in its original form as a basis for classroom exercises since its introduction in 1955. This paper argues that limited attempts to operationalize the model have been relatively unsuccessful An alternative to the classic Window is developed that focuses on four roles crucial to attaining greater openness and personal growth- feedback solicitation, self disclosure, providing feedback, and facilitating disclosure. It is presented as a practical tool for experiential student usage in the domain of interpersonal relations.

INTRODUCTION

When two parties interact, they initiate a relationship whose quality is determined by the contributions each makes, and how these contributions are received by the other. An adequate degree of self knowledge and a substantial amount of self-disclosure to the other person are essential to the development and maintenance of a sound interpersonal relationship. These dimensions of an Individual's impact on the exchange of such information have been combined in, and popularly expressed by a 2 x 2 matrix labeled the Johari Window (see Figure 1) (Luft, 1969).

FIGURE 1

THE JOHARI WINDOW

	KNOWN TO SELF	UNKNOWN TO SELF
KNOWN TO OTHERS	ARENA	BLINDSPOT
UNKNOWN TO OTHERS	FACADE	UNKNOWN

There exists a set of data about oneself, part of which is known to the individual, and part of which is unknown. Similarly, the other party has access to information about the individual and also may be deprived of some relevant facts. As described by the axes of the Johari Window, the interaction of these two fields of knowledge/ignorance forms the foundation for any interpersonal relationship. The overall quality of that relationship may be enhanced or inhibited, depending on the quantity, quality, and relevance of the data available, and whether the parties choose to use them or ignore them. The intersection of the extent of self knowledge and disclosure creates four quadrants or panes describing differing states of knowledge about the individual:

1. The Arena is formed from the interaction of information known to both the individual (self) and others. From a normative stand point, the Arena is the most desirable domain for ongoing relationships.

2. The Blindspot is a product of information that is unknown by the individual, but known by others. Large Blindspots can limit one's interpersonal effectiveness by obscuring potential contributions and factors which can affect the quality of interactions.

3. When an individual has knowledge of oneself, but others do not have access to it, the result is termed a Facade. Facades may be maintained because of feelings of vulnerability if the data are disclosed, or out of a desire not to unduly bias the other party. Consequently, they are often consciously constructed.

4. The fourth domain is termed the Unknown. In this interpersonal space, the parties lack conscious awareness of relevant data. This absence of awareness by both parties may still have an impact on the quality of the overall relationship.

An assumption underlying the Johari Model is that as the Arena becomes proportionately larger. the potential for "good" quality relationships Increases. Since the model is believed to be dynamic, this domain may change in size and shape as a product of expansion or contraction of knowledge by either party. The Arena may be enlarged in one of two ways. Exposing useful data to others (in an honest and open fashion) that was previously unknown to them will reduce the size of the hidden (Facade) area. Alternatively, actively taking the initiative to obtain the reactions and feelings of others will shrink what was previously unknown to oneself, thereby decreasing the Blindspot. Both processes generally require active effort on the part of one or both persons.

APPLICATIONS AND RESEARCH

The Johari Window has been used extensively as a training tool and as an experiential exercise in a variety of settings directed at enhancing individual awareness and understanding. Given the frequency with which this model has been applied there has

been surprisingly little research reported concerning the basic concepts on which it is built or its applications in training, counseling, or the classroom.

The available materials do include some research examining the basic assumptions and variables on which the model is developed (Hall, 1974 and Hall, 1975). There have also been a number of studies reporting applications of the Johari Window to evaluate learning experiences (Holloman, 1973; Esposito, 1978; Crino and Rubenfeld, l982) or comparing the effectiveness of alternative methodologies or pedagogies (Conyne, 1974). In addition, other authors have discussed the potential of the Johari Window in a variety of self discovery, training, and communications situations (Johnson, 1972; Newstrom, l982; Lorey, 1979; Bell and Keys, 1 1980).

One characteristic of many of the applications of the Johari Window is that the operationalization or assessment of the relative areas of the four quadrants is left to a graphic or point distribution assessment by the respondent. While conceptually this may allow individuals to consider themselves along the relevant dimensions, these approaches have created questions relating to data-based applications of the model. Concerns include the degree of reliability of alternative methods of measuring the relative size of the quadrants and the test-retest stability of those measurement techniques.

Another characteristic of the majority of reported applications of the Johari Window is that they have been primarily introspective in their application. That is, they have not sufficiently evaluated the impact that other individuals might have on the respondents' willingness to receive feedback or disclose relevant personal information. To this end, most applications of the Johari Window have had limited value in assessing the dynamics of the nature and evolution of relationships.

RECONCEPTUALIZATION: A FOCUS ON PROCESS

Hanson (1973) attempted to overlay the processes of feedback solicitation and self-disclosure/provision of feedback on the Johari Window. He argued that increased amounts of each would result in an expansion of the Arena. However, his discussion, like others before him, focused primarily on an introspective view and thus on only one party to a relationship. While his approach does provide a method for measuring or evaluating the size of the four quadrants for an individual, it lacks utility for assessing and describing interpersonal relationships.

Our model provides for the consideration of an expanded set of portraits useful for understanding the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. To do this, it builds upon two sets of perceptions. The first set explores an Individual's self-perception, and the Individual's perception of the other party in the relationship. The second set mirrors the first, in that it explores the Other's self- perception, as well as the Other's perception of the Individual. These twin perceptual sets are graphically displayed in Figure 2. In addition, our model allows an assessment of interactive effects of the relationship on each of the parties to the relationship.

FIGURE 2

CROSS PERCEPTIONS IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS
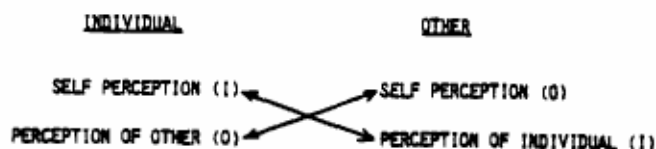
In judging the quality of an emerging relationship, a person would find it useful to look not only inwardly, but also at the degree to which a reciprocal relationship exists. That is, does the Other play a useful role for the Individual, and does the Individual make a contribution to the Other?

To clarify this interactive process, we have identified four roles which, when appropriately played by the two parties, would facilitate their achievement of greater openness and personal growth. The four processes revolve around bi-directional feedback (giving and receiving) and disclosure, defined as follows:

1. Feedback Solicitation--the frequency with which the Individual actively seeks feedback from the Other, and expressly conveys that s/he wishes to know how the Other views him/her.
2. Self Disclosure--the degree to which the Individual discusses persona' feelings, attitudes, thoughts, and emotions with the Other, and lets him/her know where s/he stands on important issues between them.
3. Provision of Feedback--the degree to which the Individual freely gives data and information to the Other, such that s/he regularly knows how s/he is perceived and reacted to.
4. Disclosure Facilitation--the degree to which the Individual actively solicits personal feelings, attitudes, thoughts, and emotions from the Other, and creates a receptive atmosphere toward such expressions.

The mechanisms for recording these judgements *are* shown in Figures 3 and 4, where the dimensions have been placed on ten-point scales, with behavioral anchors for each ranging from "never" to "always" (or "readily"). The Individual makes a self assessment on the two scales in Figure 3, recording the degree of perceived self-disclosure and feedback solicitation. The Individual then chooses a significant Other, and assesses that person's skills at providing the Individual with useful feedback and facilitating the Individual's self-disclosure (Figure 4).

The relationship between this dual perception-recording process and the original Johari Window is portrayed in Figure 5 (Part A). To the degree that an Individual seeks feedback from another, and interacts with another person who readily gives meaningful feedback, the Known-to-Self domain will increase. Similarly, if the Individual engages In self-disclosure behavior while the Other actively facilitates it, the Known-to-Other domain will be expanded. As a consequences the Arena becomes larger for the Individual.

FIGURE 3

SELF-RATING SHEET - SELF

FIGURE 4

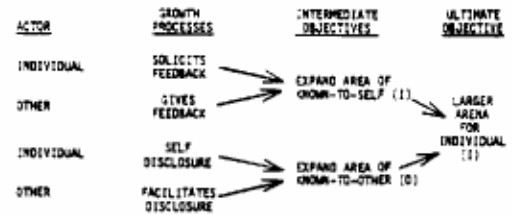SELF-RATING SHEET - OTHER

FIGURE 5

RELATING GROWTH PROCESSES TO THE JOHARI WINDOW

At this point, the original Johari Window has been adapted in two ways. First, a set of concrete behavioral processes have been identified (feedback and disclosure). Thus, instead of being forced to make a highly subjective and global assessment of "openness," or to answer the impossible questions of "how much do I know about myself?" or "how much do others know about me?", the reconceptualization described here allows an individual to examine WHY a relationship may or may not be healthy. Second, the modified process shifts the emphasis from an individual one to an Interpersonal one.
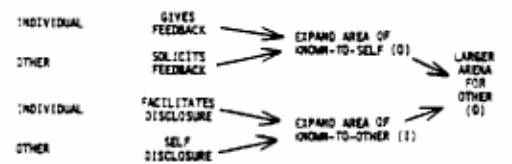
The analysis presented thus far can be conducted by the Individual working independently, with a referent person simply in mind. For the adventuresome, the process could be further expanded to provide even more elaborate introspective experiences. For example, the Individual could also complete Figure 3 on the Other (assessing the Other's feedback solicitation and self-disclosure) and Figure 4 on the Individual (assessing the degree to which feedback is given, and the Other's disclosure is facilitated). These assessments combine to indicate the degree to which aid is provided in helping the Other's Arena expand. This process is illustrated in Part B of Figure 5.

Finally, the process can be made even more dynamic in an experiential setting by having dyads actually exchange their self- and interpersonal perceptions with each other. For example, the Individual might complete Figures 3 and 4 on him/herself, and again as a set of perceptions of the Other. The Other does the same. After exchanging (duplicate sets of) the data, they may examine the degree of convergence not only on parallel processes (e.g., provide/solicit feedback; facilitate disclosure/self-disclose) but also on cross-perceptions of the same process (e.g., self- perception on a dimension vs. the Other's perception of the Individual). Where disparities exist, further discussion between the two parties is suggested to ascertain the cause of the different opinions, and strategies for change.

CLASSROOM USE OF THE REVISED WINDOWS

In the classroom, there are a number of alternative uses of the process described above. One is to use the instrument as a before-after assessment to determine (albeit superficially) whether the pedagogy used in a class had an impact

on students self-knowledge, and disclosure to others.

A second approach is to use the instrument as an attention-getting device, preceding class discussion (or lecture) that generates a set of guiding principles for each of the four processes (for example, the classic guidelines for feedback that is descriptive, data-based, specific, positive, suggestive, continuous, need-based, verified, and well-timed) (Pareek, 1977).

A third approach is to use the instrument as a mini-technique for needs analysis in an interpersonal relations course, wherein the thrust of the course is either adjusted to the group level (e.g., most work is needed on facilitating the self disclosure of others), or encouraging individuals to utilize their self-insights to develop personal action plans for self-improvement. The revised model can be used in its basic form or in any of the expanded applications described above.

SUMMARY

The Johari Window has served a useful rote for more than two decades by focusing our attention on the need to be more aware of ourselves and the degree to which others know us. Its practical utility has been limited, however, by its limited scope and by the difficulty in operationally measuring its two dimensions. This paper has retained the original thrust of the Johari Window model, while expanding and redirecting it to include four dimensions of critical Importance to the parties in an interpersonal relationship. The product is a more specific focus on four dimensions of two-directional feedback and disclosure. Using this mode' it can be seen that growth of the Arenas of the two parties to a relationship can best occur under four critical conditions: L increases in self-knowledge (through soliciting feedback), 2. self-disclosure, 3. observation of the Other (and provision of feedback), and 4. facilitating self disclosure by the Other. Preliminary classroom experimentation with the mode' discussed here has demonstrated that students become more interested in the theoretical constructs when they can experientially relate them to themselves, and to others around them.

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