

## **The New Johari Window**

### **#13. Quadrant One: Moving Beyond the Original Window**

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Having described the original Window and offered examples of how this window dynamically operates in the relationship established between two people, I will move further toward the new window. I consider alternative designs and the changing nature of interpersonal relationships in our 21<sup>st</sup> Century world. I will then explore how the new design plays out with regard to locus of control. In the next chapter, I continue this exploration into several aspects of and several different perspectives regarding the complex dance of interpersonal relationships

#### **Alternative Basic Designs of Johari Window**

Variations on the original Johari Window not only hold theoretical interest – they also suggest different ways in which to understand what occurs in complex human interactions. I will consider two alternative designs: disjointed interaction among the panes, and stabilized interaction among the panes.

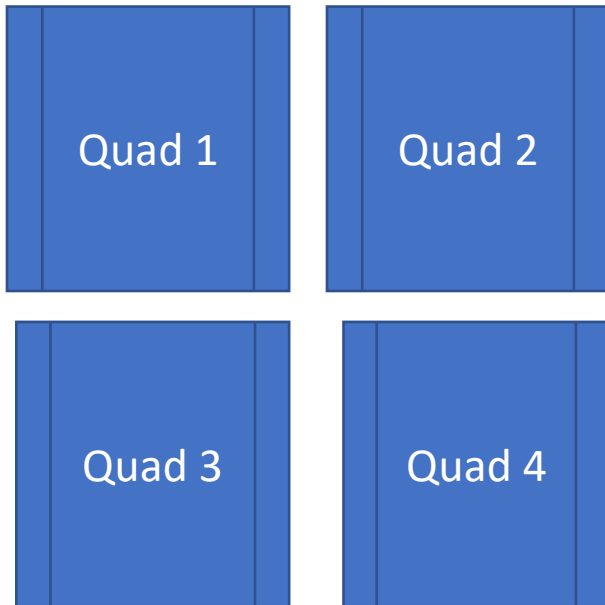
##### **Disjointed Interaction among Panes**

The most obvious readjustment of the Johari Window structure is to break the dividing line between the panes into two parts, so that the expansion or reduction of one quadrant only impacts on one other quadrant. Thus, the expansion of Quad One might result in the reduction of Quad Three – but Quads Two and Four wouldn't be influenced.

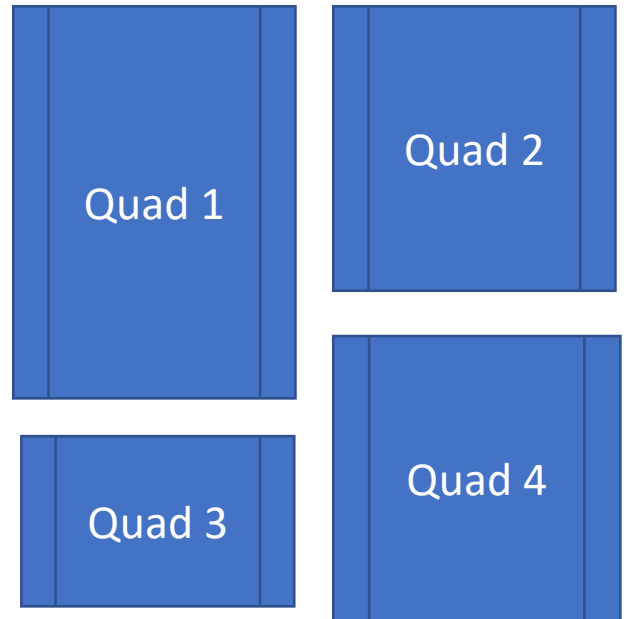
This would mean that this person (Sheila) has begun to disclose more of her private self (Moving from Quad Three to Quad One), but this disclosure has had no impact on either the opaque self (Quad Two) or the unknown self (Quad Four).

### Sheila's Window [In interaction with Kevin]

**BEFORE**



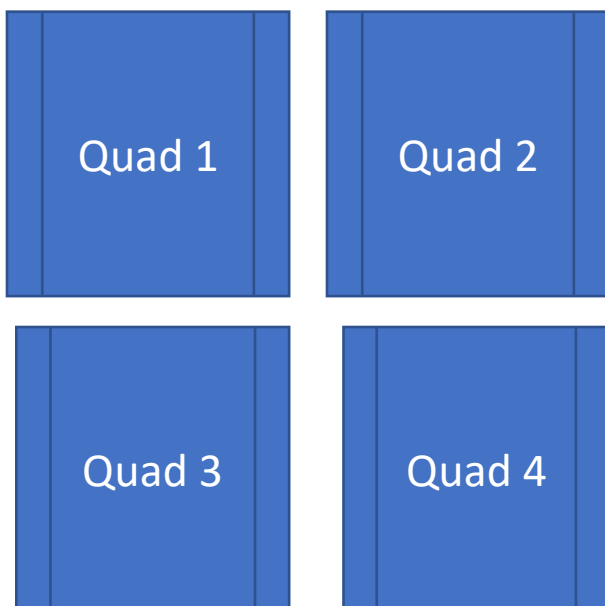
**AFTER**



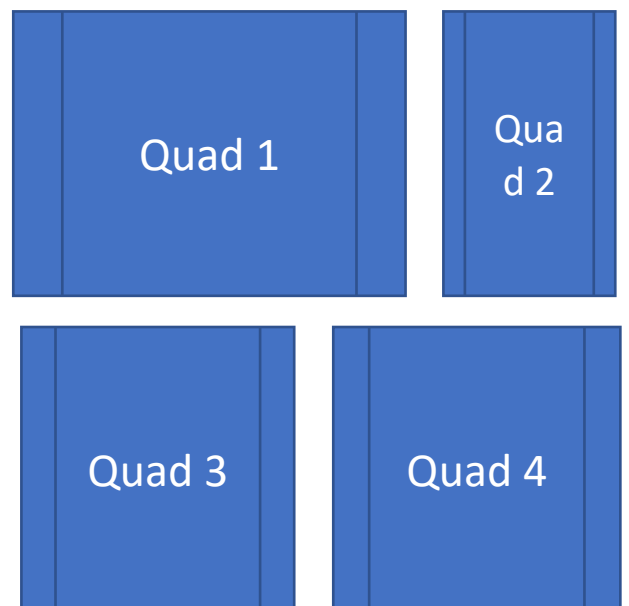
Similarly, the disjointed model could allow for a diminishing opaque self (Quad Two) and expanded public self (Quad One), without any impact on either the hidden self (Quad Three) or unknown self (Quad Four):

### Sheila's Window [In interaction with Kevin]

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



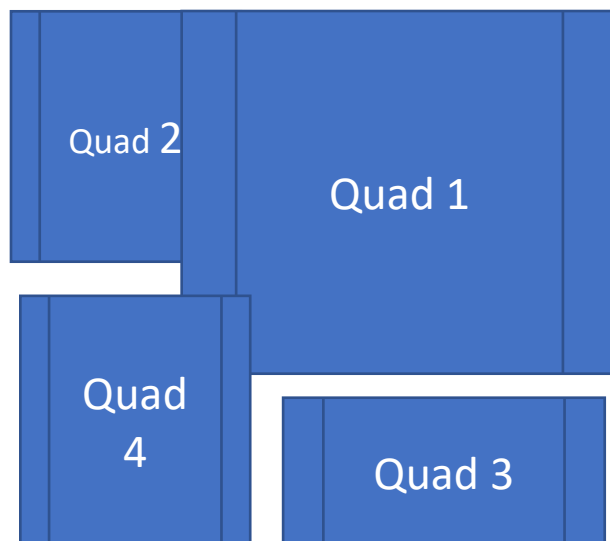
Quad Four could also expand or contract at the expense of Quad Two or Quad Three, without impacting on Quad One or either Quad Two or Quad Three

This disjointed model holds the advantage of being more “conservative” than Joe Luft’s “bold” model that requires tight interdependence among all four quadrants. It is a less dynamic model, however, and offers fewer intriguing insights than Luft’s model.

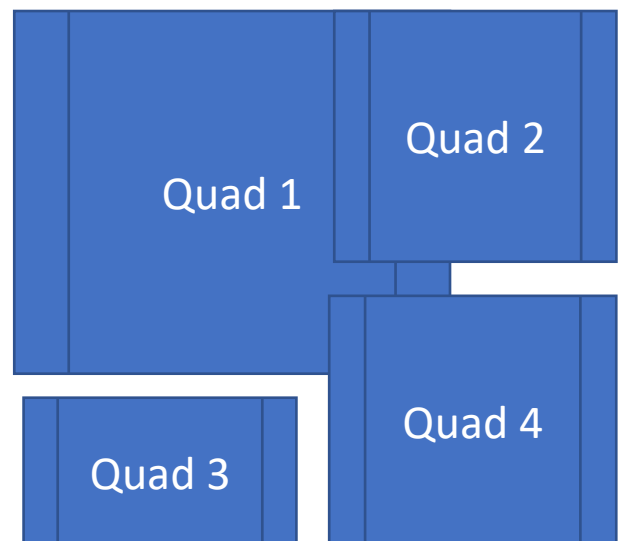
We are left with the almost tautological statement that we tend to become more open (large Quad One) when we disclose (smaller Quad Three) or receive feedback about ourselves (smaller Quad Two). There is one way, however, in which the disjointed model “comes alive” and is more than just a game of semantics. It’s dynamic if we assume that there is increasing tension in a relationship to the extent that the window panes are not aligned. Thus, relationship “A” is less aligned than relationship “B.”

### Relationship A

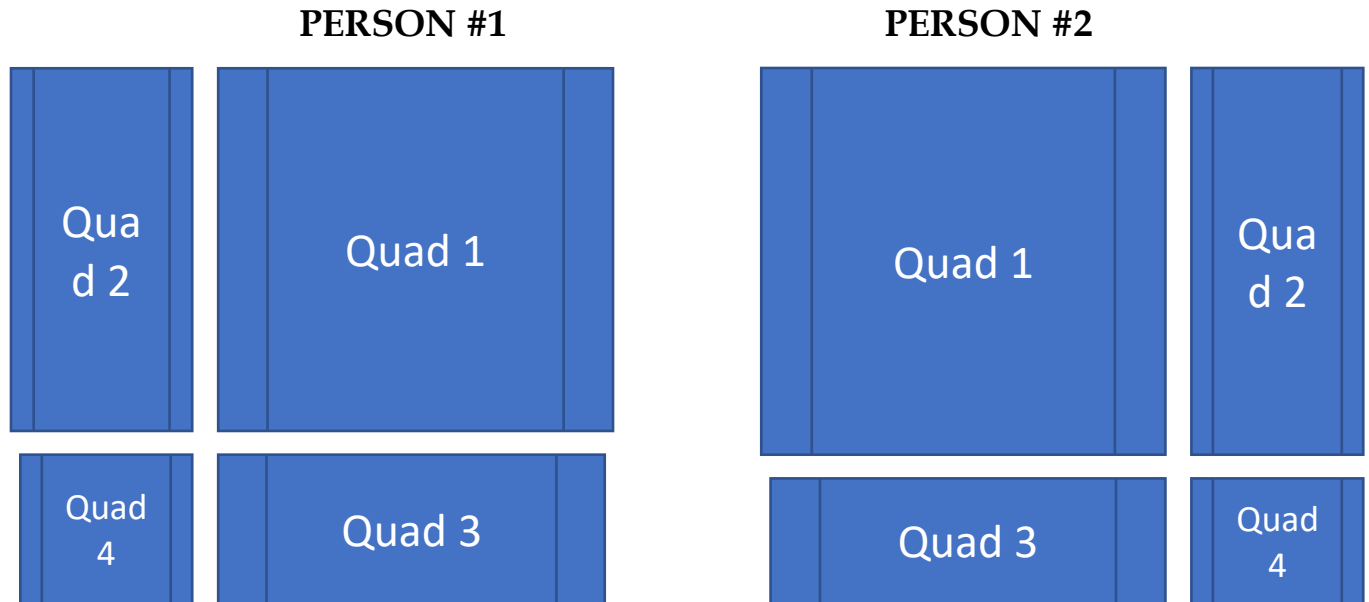
**PERSON #1**



**PERSON #2**

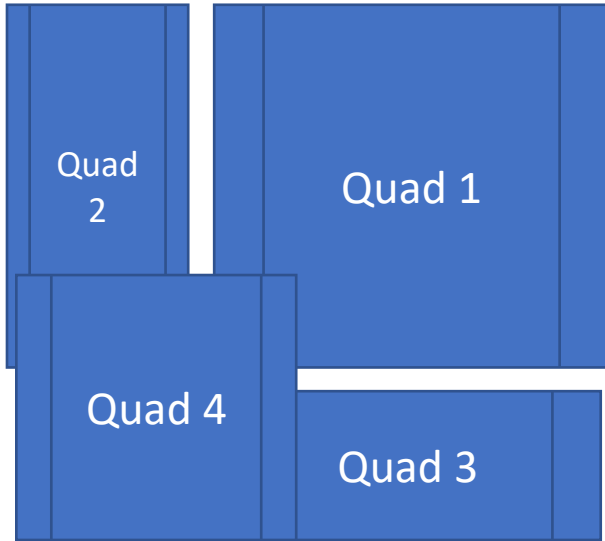


## Relationship B

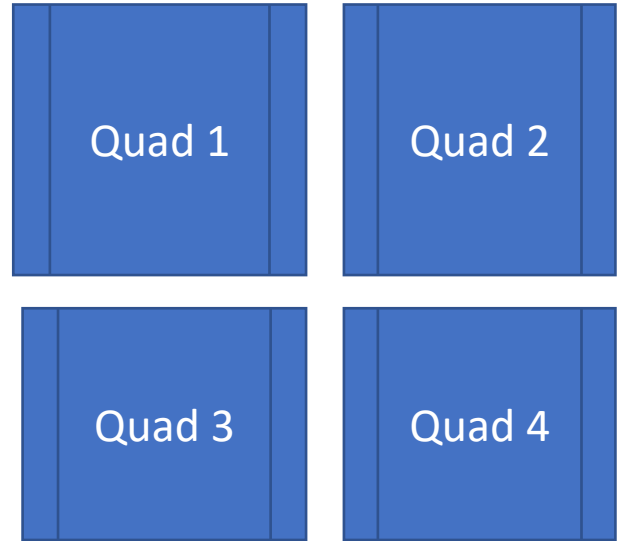


In relationship "A," both people are disclosing "like mad" to one another (Quad Three to Quad One), yet they are not disclosing anything about their perceptions of the other person (Quad Two to Quad One) (Quad Four remains unchanged). They are talking about everything except one another. It would be as if the person didn't exist, except as a recipient of the other person's disclosure. We could certainly hypothesize that there would eventually be tension in this relationship. This tension is likely to exist even if only one participant's window is disjointed:

**PERSON #1**

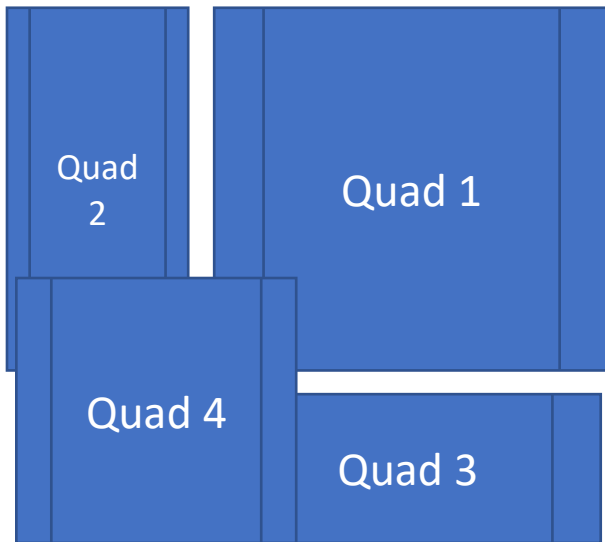


**PERSON #2**

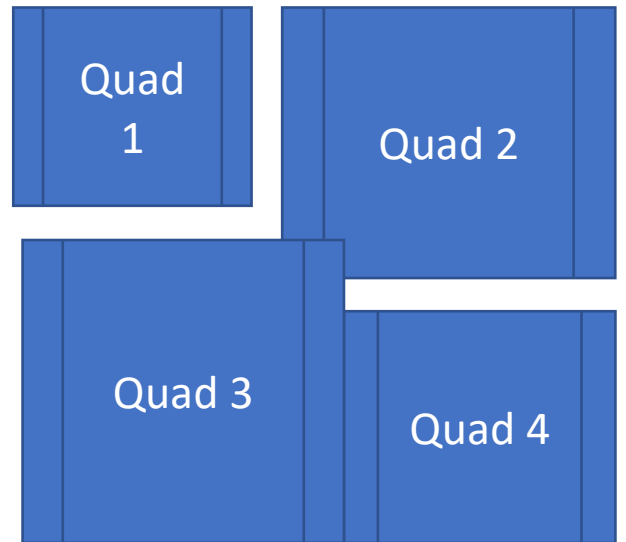


Even greater tension might exist if the two windows were disjointed in opposite directions:

**PERSON #1**



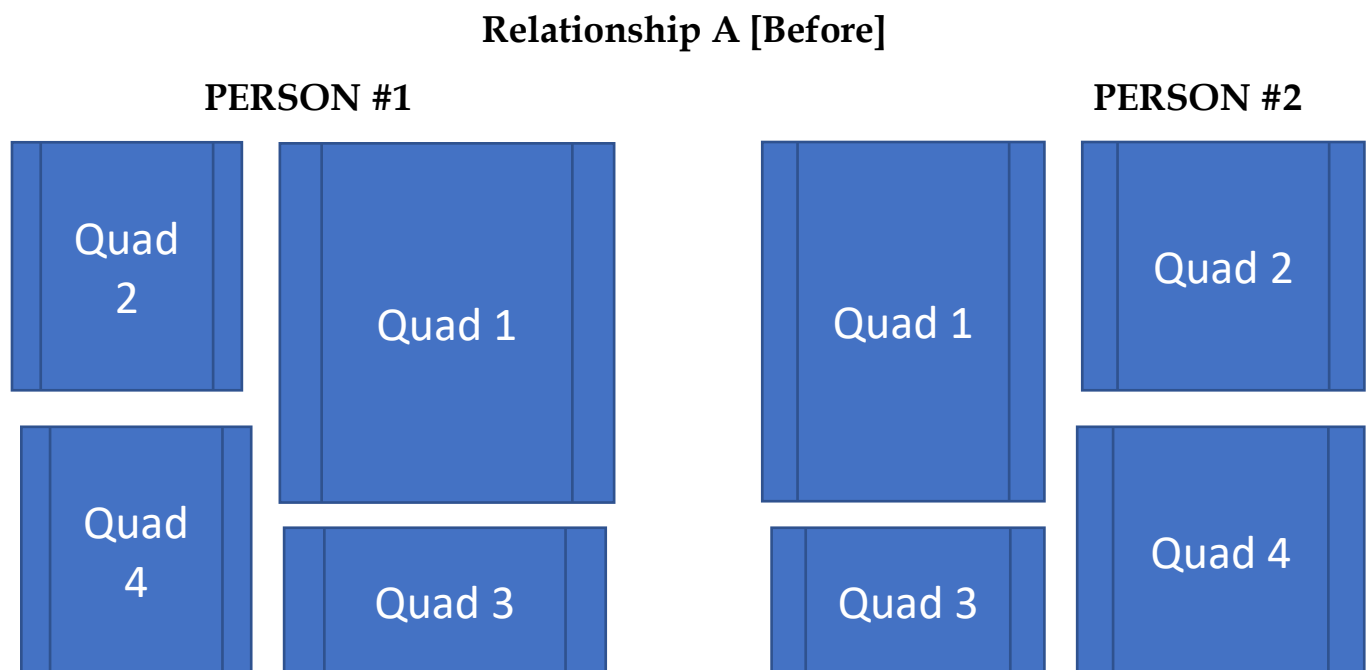
**PERSON #2**



This relationship would typify the traditional psychotherapeutic interaction, where Person #1 is doing all the disclosing (in the role of patient-on-the-coach) and Person #2 is doing very little disclosing (in the role of psychotherapist). This therapeutic relationship is filled with tensions and interpersonal projections (a concept I will explore in much greater depth in later chapters) that can be quite constructive if skillfully used by the experienced therapist.

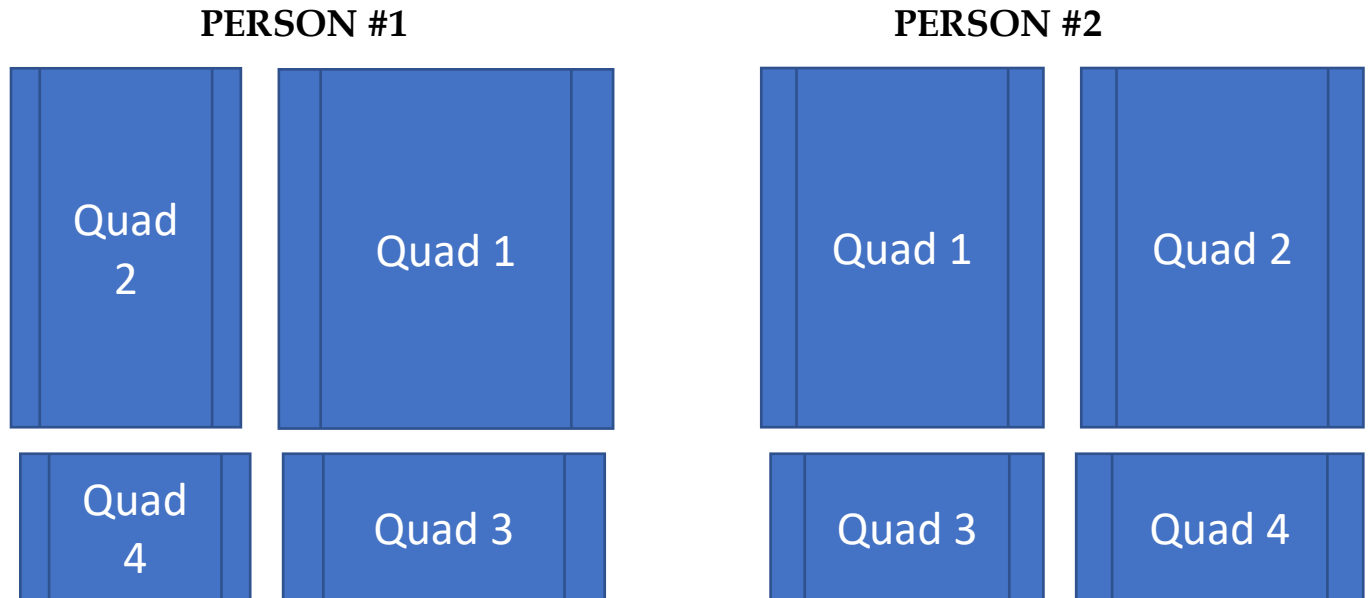
### **Stabilized Interaction among the Panes**

What if one set of panes of the Johari Window could move but not the other set? This would represent a compromise between the strict interdependence of the panes in the Original Johari Window and the relative independence of panes in the Disjointed model. Graphically, the windows of two people in interaction might look something like this:



Both participants can only go “so far” in their disclosure, until such time as they begin to provide each other with feedback (Quad Two to Quad One). Only then will the meeting point of the four panes move:

## Relationship A [After]



This meeting point becomes, in chaos theory terms (see Chapter Two), the “strange attractor.” It is the central point (or theme) in the relationship around which all other aspects of the relationship revolve. Until there is a shift in that central, stabilizing point, all other changes in the size of a window pane are partial (and probably temporary). System theorists often speak, in similar terms, of the powerful role played by the dynamic they label “homeo-rhesis.” While there is a pull in any system toward “homeo-stasis” (return to the same state or level of functioning), there is an even stronger pull toward “homeo-rhesis” (return to the same pathway or mode of functioning).

Thus, a pendulum will exhibit homeo-stasis when it tends to swing the same amount “to” as it does “fro” and when it eventually returns to a state of “zero to” and “zero fro.” However, the pendulum is even more inclined to always move back and forth along the same pathway when swinging “to” and “fro.” This is homeo-rhesis. The analysis conducted by Paul Watzlawick and his colleagues of the relationship between George and Martha (*Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), is based on this principle of homeo-rhesis. As I noted in the earlier quotation from Watzlawick, “the variables that here define stability [in the relationship between George and

Martha] are those of relationship, not content, and in terms of their relationship pattern the couple demonstrate an extreme narrow range of behavior.”<sup>i</sup>

In the case of an interpersonal relationship, the pathway or mode of interaction is powerful and tends to remain unchanged. Danielle may become a bit quieter and Sylvia may speak up a bit more in a specific setting; however, the fundamental manner in which they interact doesn't change. Danielle will always start the conversation and Sylvia will always look to Danielle to determine the acceptable level of disclosure and feedback in the relationship. Sydney may decide one day to be a bit more open with Betty and Betty may accept this temporary openness (a “phase” that Sydney is going through or “it’s what Sydney always does after he has gone on a retreat [or has drunk a couples of beers.]”) This central point of the window changes very slowly, even if there is a partial and temporary change in the dimensions of one or more of the four panes.

### **Alternative Structures and Dynamics**

There are obviously many other ways in which to redesign the Johari Window. Further play with the design might hold some theoretical interest and I encourage others to engage in this restructuring process. I would suggest that the two alternative models I have offered each yield important insights about the nature of complex human interactions – far beyond the brief analyses I have already offered. I will be pointing to some of these additional insights as we turn in subsequent chapters to the other three quadrants, as well as to the two fundamental interpersonal processes: disclosure and feedback. Right now, however, before leaving the first quadrant, I turn to the New Johari Window and to the additional insights that can be gained from looking at Quadrant One from multiple perspectives.

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<sup>i</sup>Watzlawick, Paul, Beavin, Janet Helmick and Jackson, Don D. *Pragmatics of Human Communication*. New York: Norton, 1967, p. 185.