How do people develop in their important relationships, and how do two people come together to form a new, close relationship? These two questions should be central to the study of socioemotional development, but no framework or method has been available for analyzing development of people's relationships to answer these questions. Instead, theory and research have focused primarily on continuities across time, such as stability with age in attachment, relationship themes, and relationship models (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bretherton, Ridgeway, & Cassidy, 1990; Greenberg, Cicchetti, & Cummings, 1990; Horowitz, 1987; Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1990; Shaver & Hazan, 1992).

Even scholars who emphasize stability of relationships recognize that people show major developmental changes in their close relationships (Bowlby, 1969; Case, chapter 3, this volume; Gilligan, 1982, chapter 9, this volume; Main & Hesse, 1990; Noam, chapter 6, this volume; Noam, Powers, Kilkenny, & Beedy, 1990; Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). Indeed, because the changes that occur in relationships during development are so massive, they can easily obscure the continuities (Fischer, Knight, & Van Parys, 1993; van Geert, 1994). Progress in analysis of development and vulnerability in relationships requires a system for analyzing development of relationships and attachments so that both change and continuity can be detected and described.

A key characteristic of relationships is that people follow specific roles with each other, based on cultural norms, individual histories, and joint experiences. For close relationships, attachment theorists typically call these
role combinations working models\(^1\) (Bowlby, 1969; Bretherton, 1985; Shaver & Hazan, 1992). We have studied development of cultural and individual roles for a number of years and devised methods for describing and predicting their development (Calverley, Fischer, & Ayoub, 1994; Fischer, Hand, Watson, Van Parys, & Tucker, 1984; Kennedy, 1994; Lamborn, Fischer, & Pipp, 1994; Raya, 1993; Watson & Fischer, 1993). In this chapter, we describe these methods through detailed exposition of a couple who fall in love, get married, begin a family, and then develop serious relationship problems.

The system for analyzing change and continuity in working models of relationships analyzes development and use of specific relationship roles by individuals and couples. Development of these roles is molded by both experience in specific close relationships and emotions tied to those relationships, so that the developing roles are constrained to follow socioemotional scripts that are culturally and biologically defined as well as based in individual experience (Fischer, Shaver, & Carnochan, 1990; Frijda, 1988; Lazarus, 1991). Our system for analyzing the development of people's close relationships integrates these components to characterize both (a) individuals' working models of their relationships and (b) couple's coordination of their interactions to form a common working model.

### FALLING IN LOVE: A MESHING OF RELATIONSHIP MODELS

To illustrate how to analyze relationship development, we present the case of John Thomas and Susan Jones and describe how they developed models of close relationships and then meshed those models when they met. Our focus is on the working models rather than on the tools used to describe them. The tools and diagrams for representing the models are generally transparent and straightforward, so that a technical presentation of the concepts behind them is not necessary here. The general principles for developmental analysis have been explained in detail elsewhere in presentations of dynamic skill theory (Fischer, 1980; Fischer & Ayoub, 1994; Fischer & Farrar, 1987; Fischer et al., 1990). The cases described here are composites from several real cases, which were combined to protect the subjects' confidentiality.

Susan and John were both in their 30s and very much "in love." They had met a year earlier and had become intrigued with each other. John began to pursue Susan vigorously. He found her beautiful and pure, calling her "my Venus." He sent her flowers every day, dropped in unannounced in her art classroom at a local college, and periodically whisked her away to candle-light dinners and moonlight cruises. After some caution and resistance to his advances, she fell in love with him, too, enjoying all the special attention he gave her and finding that they shared intellect, artistic interests, aesthetics, passion, and much more. Their friends saw them as the perfect couple—intelligent, attractive, charming, and cultured. They decided to get married and remained intensely in love, in the sense that they were obsessed with each other and driven to be together, following a standard emotional script for love (Fischer et al., 1990; Shaver & Hazan, 1992). A year after the wedding, Susan gave birth to a baby girl, whom they named Amy. From her first marriage, Susan also had a 4-year-old son named Peter.

During the next year serious conflicts emerged and grew gradually worse. John acted paternalistic and all-knowing, frequently criticizing his wife and attempting to dictate her activities and how she, Amy, and Peter would dress and act, especially in public. His demands were often excessive, as when he insisted on having sexual intercourse while she was breastfeeding their daughter, despite her objections. At the same time, in public he praised Susan and the children to friends, calling them the perfect wife and children.

Susan enjoyed all the special romantic attention that John had showered on her, and she respected his obvious talents. With his shift to a more controlling, tyrannical approach to their relationship, however, she began to feel betrayed and to withdraw from him. In response to her withdrawal, he alternated between renewed romance and anger. Sometimes he would reassure her that she was his Venus, the perfect woman for him. Sometimes he would become enraged at what he said was her stupidity and lack of gratitude.

The situation deteriorated, with increasingly frequent disputes. John was sometimes violent, hitting his wife, shaking her, or dragging her across the room. Six years after their marriage, Susan separated from him and tried to exclude him from her, Amy's, and Peter's life. Because of the violence and the legal separation, they all became involved with mental health and legal workers, and so we came into contact with them.

### DEVELOPMENT OF MODELS OF CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

An analysis of the development of John's and Susan's models of relationships from early childhood illuminates how they formed their working models in childhood, how as adults they came to fall in love, and how their
relationship eventually disintegrated. It shows age-related progression through major reorganizations of each one's working models of relationships, followed by a meshing of their models to produce their romance, and then a disintegration of the relationship in ways explainable in terms of their relationship models. The analysis shows both stability and transformation in relationship models and highlights the pervasive effects of emotions in organizing relationships.

People construct their individual working models of close relationships based on the major role relations that they experience in their family and other close affiliations, and gradually they build complex models that connect multiple roles (Edelstein, chapter 4, this volume; Fischer et al., 1984; Gilligan, chapter 9, this volume; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Horowitz, 1987; Luborsky & Crites-Christoph, 1990; Luborsky et al., chapter 11, this volume; Noam, chapter 6, this volume; Noam et al., 1990; Watson & Fischer, 1993). These roles are organized in terms of not only the specific people and their role relationships but also the emotions experienced in the interactions and the contexts in which the interactions occur.

Cognition and emotion flow together in development of relationships. Emotions are not just internal experiences (feelings) but adaptive reactions. People evaluate how a situation relates to their goals and concerns in relationships, and they react emotionally based on that evaluation (Barrett & Campos, 1987; Fischer et al., 1990; Frijda, 1988; Lazarus, 1991). These emotional reactions bias or constrain activity to certain action tendencies or social scripts prescribed by the particular emotion. In this way, emotions mold both immediate activity and long-term development, and these molding effects are especially powerful in close relationships.

Of course, love is one of the central emotions molding relationships, with security of attachment being a major dimension of working models (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Shaver & Clark, chapter 2, this volume). Attachment theory in its most popular form treats working models as falling simply into three basic types, each based on a different constellation of love and other emotions—secure, ambivalent, or avoidant attachment. We believe that analysis of developing relationships requires descriptions much more differentiated than these three types, including other dimensions of role relationships besides security. Analysis needs as well to include the roles of context and culture in the development of working models of relationships (Fischer & Ayoub, 1994; LeVine & Miller, 1990). These diverse components of working models are all needed to describe the development of John's and Susan's romance and their ensuing troubles.

In characterizing the changes and continuities in development of working models, we start from a different assumption about the nature of developmental pathways. Contrary to the common assumption that development proceeds along a single ladder of stages, we assume that it forms a web of multiple pathways or strands. This developmental web is the norm for the full range of skills, from relationships to logic tasks (Bidell & Fischer, 1992; Fischer et al., 1990). Contrary to the assumptions of many models of the mind, including Piaget's (1957, 1975) and Kohlberg's (1969), people do not have integrated, fundamentally logical minds (Biggs & Collis, 1982; Feldman, 1980; Flavell, 1982; Noam, chapter 6, this volume; Selman & Schultz, 1990). Instead, people's minds are naturally fractionated, even while specific strands can potentially be integrated (Fischer & Ayoub, 1994; Fischer & Pipp, 1984; Noam, Chandler, & LaLonde, in press 1995). The diverse components affecting working models mold the organization of these strands, as becomes evident for John and Susan. Working models of role relationships develop systematically through a series of skill levels, but the skills vary across domains (strands in the web) and do not typically form a unified whole.

One of the central organizers of developing relationships is the positive-negative dimension of emotions, which produces natural affective splitting of development into separate strands. Figure 7.1 shows a developmental web of working models of positive and negative social interactions for many children between ages 1 and 8. Children develop along three emotionally distinct pathways or strands (bold lines in Fig. 7.1)—negative, positive, and

![FIG. 7.1. Portion of a developmental web for positive and negative models of interactions. Three strands (domains) of 1- to 8-year-old children's models for social interactions are organized around emotional valence: negative, positive, and negative coordinated with positive (Fischer & Ayoub, 1994). Thick lines mark the main strands, thinner lines mark connections among the strands, and dotted lines mark the approximate separation of the domains.](image-url)
integration of negative and positive—and they also show many connections between strands (thinner lines). Gradually, they become more able to integrate positive and negative in interactions (e.g., "I'll be nice to you if you're nice to me, but if you're mean to me, I'll be mean back"). At the same time, they also maintain the emotional tendency to split positive and negative interactions, which is retained throughout life. This tendency to split interactions emotionally is pervasive not only in children's interactions but in adults' working models of relationships, and it contributed powerfully to Susan's and John's relationship.

The web in Fig. 7.1 illustrates the general kind of developmental pattern that most working models show, but to be really useful, a web needs to be more specific—representing particular skills and strands, the interactions and feelings of real people. Our analyses describe the development of Susan's and John's working models from early childhood and their development of common working models during their courtship and marriage. Susan and John each organized their working models into two sharply distinct, emotionally split strands, for which distinct emotions and relationship styles were central. The third strand of integration across the emotional split was partly developed for Susan but essentially absent for John. When they met, they meshed their several strands of working models, forming a new joint model that was the basis for their romance and marriage. Understanding the several strands for Susan and John illuminates both how their working models meshed in romance and how the models eventually led to crisis.

Susan Jones: Development of Working Models for Attachment Loss

Susan's mother-to-be was a smart, attractive college student, just 18 years of age. In her first year in college, she fell in love with a charming fellow student, became pregnant with Susan, and dropped out of college. She planned to devote the next years of her life to being a mother and wife. Unfortunately, Susan's father died in an automobile accident before she was born, and her mother had to change her life drastically. Instead of devoting herself to her new family, as she had planned, she decided to continue her schooling.

Baby Susan lived with her mother's parents while her mother went to school, and she grew strongly attached to her grandparents. Around her first birthday, however, her grandfather had a stroke and became disabled. Susan and her mother moved to an aunt's house for several months, but that situation did not prove stable or workable. The following year, after the grandfather had partly recovered from his stroke, they moved back to her grandparents' home. Unfortunately, as a result of the grandfather's disability, the old couple proved unable to cope with their young granddaughter. Eventually, when Susan was 3 years old, she and her mother moved to an apartment of their own.

The frequent moves and changes in relationships were difficult for Susan. She was cared for occasionally by her mother but more frequently by her grandparents, her aunt, and various other relatives and babysitters. Instead of a few stable close relationships, Susan experienced recurring loss of attachments. By age 4, Susan was both independent and needy, alternating between withdrawal and clinginess. In her play she repeated themes of loss and hypervigilance: Little girls were constantly getting lost or being taken away by monsters.

Susan's working models of relationships at this age involved two prominent domains, shown as two distinct strands in Fig. 7.2. In the domain of disengagement, she felt alone and maintained a detached attitude. In the domain of caring, she felt loved and cared for; but she was constantly in fear of being left alone (shifted to disengagement)—losing her caregiver whom she loved, especially her mother and grandparents. These two domains were sharply split or separated emotionally, as indicated by the double dotted line in Fig. 7.2. Although the domains each had positive and negative aspects for Susan, caring was more positive than disengagement. Much of the time Susan coped by being detached, but when she was able to find a person and situation where she could feel cared for, she wanted to remain there and was anxious about being abandoned or forced to disengage from the relationship. Of course, she generally wanted to have her mother present, not only physically but also emotionally.

Susan gradually developed along the strands in Fig. 7.2. At the simplest level, the initial development of single representations, Susan represented each of the domains in terms of her own basic socioemotional state, with the caregiver's role being assumed as background (as is normal for young children when they focus on themselves). In the caring domain, she was a child loved, $M_{LOVED}$, while in the disengaged domain, she was a child alone, $M_{ALONE}$. She was clingy because she was afraid of being shifted from a caring relationship to a disengaged one:

$$
\begin{pmatrix}
\text{caring} \\
M_{LOVED}
\end{pmatrix} \Rightarrow 
\begin{pmatrix}
\text{disengaged} \\
M_{ALONE}
\end{pmatrix}
$$

(1)

Susan could also focus on her mother more than herself, and then her dominant working model was whether her mother was present or absent. She feared that her mother would shift from being present in a caring relationship to being gone in a disengaged relationship:
LEVEL Disengaged Domain Caring Domain

By age 4, Susan could sometimes sustain a more complex relationship model with her mother or grandparent. She related her own roles with those of her mother, coordinating them for each domain into a representational mapping (the second level of representational skills that children develop). She sought to sustain a caring mapping,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{caring} & \quad \text{ME} \quad \text{LOVED} \\
\text{MOM} \quad \text{PRESENT} & \quad \text{MOM} \quad \text{PRESENT}
\end{align*}
\]

and avoid a disengaged one,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{disengaged} & \quad \text{ME} \quad \text{ALONE} \\
\text{MOM} \quad \text{GONE} & \quad \text{MOM} \quad \text{GONE}
\end{align*}
\]

Just before Susan's fifth birthday, her mother married a journalist at the local newspaper, and a year later her first brother was born. Joe's birth drastically changed her life, increasing her emotional distance and his feelings of being different. She tried to show her mother that she could help with her brother, but when she was alone with him, she was mean and aggressive, repeatedly taking his toys away and drinking from his bottle herself or keeping him from drinking from them. As he grew older, he started to defend himself and tell his parents what she did, and her hidden anger became more public. She tried to blame Joe, with only minimal success.

As Susan grew older, she developed a working model for a disengaged relationship that combined anger and attributions of badness with the detachment she had developed earlier with her mother.

FIG. 7.2. Development of separate relationship models for disengaged and caring domains in attachment loss. *Level Ab 1 marks the emergence of a new kind of skill structure, an abstraction, which grows from the coordination of representational systems. A system of representational systems constitutes a single abstraction, as shown here. Note. In the diagrams, square brackets mark skill structures, italicized letters indicate representational sets, outline letters indicate abstract sets, and lines and arrows indicate relations between sets (Fischer & Ayoub, 1994). Numbers attached to the words indicate different but related representations or abstractions. The dotted lines between the domains indicate that the domains are affectively split but not rigidly dissociated. The dotted line marked "link" shows one case of a link across the two domains, involving positive evaluation of being smart. See text for explanation of specific skills.

When Susan went to school, she excelled academically, and her family was proud of her intelligence. Being smart became a central part of her caring relationships with her mother, stepfather, and brother, and especially helped her to engage her mother's pride and thus feel loved:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{caring} & \quad \text{SMART} \quad \text{CHILDL \rightarrow ADULT} \\
\text{LOVED} \quad \text{PRESENT} & \quad \text{ADULT} \quad \text{PRESENT}
\end{align*}
\]
Susan's friendships at school were also based on her academic competence. She formed primarily disengaged relationships with other children, relating around school projects and the other child's respect for Susan's expertise. In this way she developed a different, more positive kind of disengaged working model of relationships, based in another's respect for her intelligence:

\[
\text{disengaged} \\
\text{SMART} \quad \text{RESPECTING} \\
\text{SELF} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{OTHER} \\
\text{DETACHED} \quad \text{SEPARATE}
\] (7)

Because being smart was also central to her working model in the caring domain with her family, Susan began to make important links between her disengaged and caring working models. Although Susan retained a strong tendency to split her disengaged and caring models of relationships (marked by the double dotted lines in Fig. 7.2), she was capable under supportive circumstances of making some links between them. These links were strengthened further by a new kind of working model in the caring domain: In school, she occasionally formed a friendship based on one of the tasks she was involved in, and so she began to develop a working model for friendship founded in sharing specific tasks:

\[
\text{caring} \\
\text{FOCUS ON TASK} \quad \text{SHARE TASK} \\
\text{WORKER} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \text{COWORKER} \\
\text{FRIEND} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \text{FRIEND}
\] (8)

During high school, Susan coordinated several of these concrete working models to form the sophisticated combinations of role relationships that generally become possible at 10 to 15 years of age with the new level of systems of representational systems (Level Rp 4/Ab 1). Susan could combine several concrete working models to form an abstraction (what Inhelder & Piaget, 1955/1958, called “formal operations”), as shown in Fig. 7.2 for both domains. In the disengaged domain, she combined her angry model with her smart one to form an abstract personality role emphasizing her independence. She strived to coordinate detachment, separation, intelligence, and respect, and there was some anger and suspicion as well under the surface.

In the caring domain, she combined her smart/proud model with her task-sharing/friendship one, forming an abstract personality role emphasizing her commitment in caring relationships. She strived to coordinate intelligence, pride, love, connection, task orientation, and friendship, as shown in Fig. 7.2. When she felt secure and not anxious, she could begin to form such a caring relationship of commitment, but she was extremely cautious about extending the commitment beyond a specific task or project. She was concerned about being put in the role of a vulnerable child. In this way she shifted between a committed persona and an independent one, generally preferring independence as safer:

\[
\text{disengaged} \\
\text{PERSONALITY A} \quad \text{INDEPENDENT} \\
\text{PERSONALITY C} \quad \text{COMMITTED}
\] (9)

In high school and college, Susan continued to excel academically and to base most of her peer relationships in her academic work. Personally she strove to be academically competent, independent, and self-sufficient both emotionally and financially. Most of the time she avoided making commitments to people. When she did make a commitment to a task or person, however, she did so with intensity and total dedication. She believed that commitment required a special kind of loyalty, in which she strove to share her most important beliefs and values with the other person and maintain good faith and trust. Consistent with her general insecurity in close relationships, she tried to avoid any action or statement that could be seen as betrayal. In this way commitment and loyalty were strongly connected for her in a working model at Level Ab 2, an abstract mapping:

\[
\text{caring} \\
\text{PERSONALITY C} \quad \text{COMMITTED} \\
\text{LOYAL}
\] (10)

During her senior year in college, she developed her first intimate adult relationship. She began to work on a class project with a young man named Larry, and they gradually became close. Larry showered Susan with gifts and praised her femininity, a part of herself that she kept tightly guarded. Larry respected her for her intelligence, thus relating to the talents that were important for both her disengaged and caring models. Larry's respect helped her move from disengaged independence to caring commitment with him. Larry was self-confident and at times arrogant, and he swept her off her feet. He asked her to marry him after graduation, and not knowing her own feelings, she went along with him.

In the meantime, Susan's brother Joe was diagnosed with cancer, but her mother did not inform her of the seriousness of his illness. Blocking out any negative emotions, as she was accustomed to do, she moved ahead with the plans for her wedding. Only 2 weeks before the wedding she learned from a friend at the hospital that her brother was dying. Nevertheless, she was married on schedule, and 3 weeks later while she was on her honeymoon, her brother Joe died. Following her mother's suggestion, she did not return...
for the funeral but continued on her honeymoon. As evident from this series of events, Susan had a remarkable capacity to remain not only independent but uninvolved emotionally. When she sought independence, she would disengage emotionally to an extreme:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{disengaged} \\
\text{PERSONALITY A} \quad \text{PERSONALITY B} \\
\text{INDEPENDENT} \quad \text{UNINVOLVED}
\end{array}
\] (11)

Susan soon became pregnant and had a son, whom she and Larry named Peter. After a year or so, Larry had an affair with another woman, and Susan felt betrayed. She shifted to a disengaged pattern with Larry, and the marriage soon ended. She felt anger and loathing for him but instead of expressing these feelings to him directly, she sabotaged his visits with Peter. She built a sophisticated personality system for disengaging from him, which combined independence and uninvolved with loathing and a sense of betrayal:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{disengaged} \\
\text{PERSONALITY A} \leftrightarrow \text{PERSONALITY B} \\
\text{BETRAYED} \quad \text{LOATHSOME} \\
\text{INDEPENDENT} \quad \text{UNINVOLVED}
\end{array}
\] (12)

A few years after the divorce, Susan met John. Like Larry, he courted her intensely and swept her off her feet, but Susan felt that he was more of a soulmate than Larry had been. They shared great respect for intellect, an artistic sensibility, many interests, and an exciting sex life. Over the months of their intense courtship, she initially resisted, but eventually they built what she felt was considerable loyalty and trust. John showed an intense love for Susan, and based on it, she constructed a working model that she had never achieved with Larry, combining commitment and loyalty with a strong sense of passionate love:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{caring} \\
\text{PERSONALITY C} \leftrightarrow \text{PERSONALITY D} \\
\text{BELOVED} \quad \text{LOVER} \\
\text{COMMITTED} \quad \text{LOYAL}
\end{array}
\] (13)

John Thomas: Development of Working Models for Hidden Family Violence

Like Susan, John had a difficult childhood, but the difficulties were different for the two of them. Whereas Susan grew up with frequent disruptions of her attachments, John grew up in a family characterized by hidden family violence. His parents made a sharp division between private and public worlds, and in the private world they were tyrannical, especially John's father. Virtually all people in all cultures distinguish private and public spheres, of course, both contextually (home vs. community) and emotionally (e.g., Miyake & Yamazaki, 1995), but John's parents showed a separation so strong that it formed a dissociation, an unconsciously maintained isolation of the two spheres. When family members were operating in one sphere, they had difficulty even thinking or talking about the other sphere. Unfortunately such isolating dissociation is frequent in hidden family violence, in which violent families build a highly positive image in the community, as described elsewhere (Fischer & Ayoub, 1994).

This rigid dissociation is marked in Fig. 7.3 by the double solid lines separating John's private and public domains, which each show independent development of working models of close relationships. Susan had a strong tendency to split disengaged and caring relationships, probably because of her history of loss of attachments after her father's early death. Yet sometimes she could connect parts of the two domains, and often she talked and thought about both of them together. That is why the lines separating her two domains in Fig. 7.2 are not solid: They are partly permeable, like most domains divided by emotional splitting. After early childhood, John showed no such permeability in his dissociation of private and public domains.

When John was 4 years old, he was sitting at the dinner table with his parents and his sister. His father, whose company had just gone bankrupt, sat with stoic silence. His mother glared at her husband, upset that her world of community activities and charity functions was falling apart because of her husband's incompetence. Unknowingly John tried to talk about the life cycle of the turtle, a topic that his mother had proudly asked him to describe at several recent public gatherings to show off his intelligence. His father slapped his face without warning and said in a steely calm voice, "Not one word from any of you! You are all here at my request, and you will speak in this house only when I say you can." Mr. Thomas took pains to emphasize that even his wife stayed in his house only because he allowed it.

This interaction was typical of the tone of young John's household. His father was domineering and at times physically abusive, demanding strict regimentation of his children. John's mother was an active socialite who cared greatly about the appearance and presentation of her children but left their nurturing to a long series of nannies, few of whom remained in the household for long. Most of the positive attention that John received was for his public successes, especially his intellectual performance.

When John began to recite the turtle life cycle at dinner, he was not distinguishing between his family's public and private worlds, inadvertently
But his parents did not allow that kind of action in private, where his father was the boss and John was often treated as bad, $ME_{BAD}$, and expected to submit himself completely to his father's wishes. He needed to distinguish the public working model from this private one:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{private} & \quad \text{DAD} \\
\text{BAD} & \quad \text{BOSS}
\end{align*}
\]

During the next couple of years, John had to learn to dissociate these two working models of family relationships. Going beyond knowing when to act on the public model and when on the private, he had to make sure that the private model did not appear in public:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{private} & \quad \text{ADULT} \\
\text{BAD} & \quad \text{BOSS}
\end{align*}
\]

This form of the working models was more general than the ones specific to mom or dad. In Model 16, the relation of isolating dissociation is marked by the thick line through the symbol for shifting between skills; in Fig. 7.3 this same dissociative process is marked by the solid double lines. With development of isolating dissociation, children build more and more complex working models in each isolated domain, increasing their complexity and sophistication in a manner similar to that for more acceptable social skills (Fischer & Ayoub, 1994). Although hidden family violence may be pathological, it can produce complex, sophisticated working models, as John's development demonstrates.

The next major development in John's working models involved his adding components to the roles and generalizing them further beyond his own family situation. For each domain he began to take on either role in a relationship model, acting sometimes as follower and sometimes as boss, sometimes as child and sometimes as adult:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{private} & \quad \text{FOLLOWER} \\
\text{BAD} & \quad \text{BOSS}
\end{align*}
\]

In school at age 10, he demonstrated this role switching in his relations with other children, as he began to take on dominant roles in both domains: In the private domain, he became the boss dominating another child, and in the public one he became the adult proud of the other child. He built up these roles especially with a smaller boy named Bruce, who was timid but
When John found Bruce alone or away from the teacher's attention, he threatened the smaller boy, hit him, criticized his work, or belittled him. On the other hand, when the teacher was watching, John was especially attentive to Bruce, acting the role of the proud and helpful adult. He helped Bruce finish a routine in gym, worked with him on some arithmetic problems, or asked the teacher if he could sit next to Bruce to protect him from the other boys.

During adolescence, John coordinated several of these concrete working models in each domain to form sophisticated combinations of role relationships at the new level of systems of representational systems, which are shown for Level Rp 4/Ab 1 in Fig. 7.3. He thus formed abstract personalities in each domain. In the private domain, he combined two versions of the boss–follower model, one in which he was boss and one in which he was follower, and thus formed a persona of tyrant–victim (where he sought to be in the dominant tyrant position whenever possible). In the public domain, he combined the proud-adult/smart-child model with that of teacher/student, forming a persona of a competent, helpful person. As part of his dissociation between public and private domains, he shifted sharply between these two personas, just as he had earlier shifted between concrete role relationships for private and public:

\[ \text{PERSONALITY E} \quad \text{PERSONALITY F} \]

\[ \text{TYRANT} \quad \text{VICTIM} \]

John and his family moved to Chicago when he was 16, and he spent the last 2 years of high school there. Some of his teachers saw him as a highly gifted, charismatic young man, but others felt that he was sneaky and dishonest. He had no close friends and was seen as distant or devious by his peers. He saw himself as a star of the track team and the debate team, and he was often effective at impressing authorities, as evidenced by the teachers who were so impressed with him. He had built a working model in which he used his competence effectively to build relationships with important people by impressing them:

\[ \text{PERSONALITY G} \quad \text{PERSONALITY H} \]

\[ \text{COMPETENT} \quad \text{IMPRESSED} \]

In his second year in Chicago, he was accused of involvement in a cheating scandal. Other students strongly implicated him as an organizer of the stealing and circulation of tests. But he avidly and convincingly denied involvement, escaped suspension, and helped to provide evidence against other students. He clearly had mastered his public persona of being competent and impressive with authority figures.

Privately he continued to work to establish himself as dominant in relationships with his peers and siblings, and he became even more skilled at hiding these manipulations from the public eye, as evidenced by his success in covering up his cheating. He constructed a persona in which tyrant and victim roles were more clearly differentiated, so that he could more effectively manipulate them and take on the dominant role himself more of the time.

\[ \text{PERSONALITY E} \quad \text{PERSONALITY F} \]

\[ \text{TYRANT} \quad \text{VICTIM} \]

John attended college, interrupted by service in the U.S. Merchant Marine, and he joined the anti-Vietnam War movement. Although he was an active, public participant in the movement, he was unsuccessful in his efforts to become one of its leaders. In fact, throughout his time in college, the Merchant Marine, and the anti-war movement, he built no major long-term relationships and had no close friends.

In the ensuing years, he gradually established a career as an independent graphics designer and as a literary critic for the local newspaper. He continued to excel at impressing people in authority. His speech was lyrical and full of literary references, and he showed considerable knowledge of the cultural world. He exuded a sense of self-confidence, intellectual superiority, and entitlement. He spoke often of his work with famous actors and artists.

John reported that during these years he had many “great friends” with whom he shared lots of laughter, good times, and intellectually stimulating excursions to dance performances, plays, and other cultural events. Although he had multiple romances, he had no lasting intimate relationships. He talked proudly of dating daughters of famous generals and artists, and he described highly eroticized encounters with beautiful women:

\[ \text{PERSONALITY G} \quad \text{PERSONALITY H} \]

\[ \text{ROMANTIC} \quad \text{LOVELY} \]

Unfortunately, according to him, all the women lacked intellect or artistic interests, and he lost interest in them.

At age 38, John decided that he wanted to settle down, get married, and “have heirs.” He met Susan, who was an art instructor at a local college. He began his whirlwind courtship of her, describing her as his beautiful, pure
Venus, sending her flowers every day, surprising her with visits to her classroom, taking her on moonlight cruises and candlelight dinners, and trying to make love to her in the closet in her classroom or on the deck of the cruise ship at night. In this courtship he combined his earlier public models of competent/impressed and romantic/lovely to form a more complex working model that was highly effective in engaging Susan:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{ROMANTIC} \\
\text{PERSONALITY G} \leftrightarrow \text{PERSONALITY H} \\
\text{COMPETENT} \\
\text{IMPERSONED}
\end{array}
\]

Unfortunately, this complex working model was only for the public domain. As he and Susan became involved and intimate, they began to operate in the private domain, and his dissociated private working model gradually came to the fore. Although it too was complex and sophisticated and had a love relationship at its core, it was founded on the tyrant/victim model that John had been building since early childhood:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{LOVER} \\
\text{PERSONALITY E} \leftrightarrow \text{PERSONALITY F} \\
\text{BELOVED} \\
\text{TYRANT} \\
\text{VICTIM}
\end{array}
\]

Had John not developed such a powerful dissociation between his public and private models, the presence of love in both models (lover/beloved in the private and romantic/lovely in the public) might have facilitated his linking the two, in the same way that Susan had linked her disengaged and caring models through focusing on her intelligence (Fig. 7.2). Unfortunately John's dissociation prevented that linkage and so made it difficult for him to construct a new private model based on his relationship with Susan.

John and Susan had initially constructed a romantic relationship that successfully combined their working models. Now, however, they were faced with a pressing need to rework their relationship. Description of the joint working model that they co-constructed will help explicate how they fell in love and how the crisis in their relationship emerged.

**CO-CONSTRUCTION OF RELATIONSHIP MODELS**

**BY SUSAN AND JOHN**

Although Susan and John had different individual working models of close relationships, just as all couples do, they shared strong resonances between their models. Both had a focus on intelligence and competence, both were inclined to energetic courtship, both had a tendency to remain aloof until they felt safe, and both strongly split between more private, involved domains and more public, detached ones. These resonances allowed them to participate in and support each other's working models. It allowed them to fall in love.

Much research and theory on relationships treats working models as if they are a characteristic of an individual. For example, attachment theorists speak of internal working models as if people carry a model inside themselves and apply it to others (Bowlby, 1969; Bretherton, 1985), and many psychodynamic theorists talk as if relationship representations, while originating from intimate relationships, come to be so internalized that they function from within the person (Freud, 1936/1966; Greenwald, 1980; Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1977; for a creative extension of this work see Blatt & Bass, chapter 12, this volume). We have dropped the word internal because it misleadingly minimizes the ecological nature of working models. Other people are literally a part of a person's working models, just as people, objects, and events are a part of all skills (Fischer, Bullock, Rotenberg, & Raya, 1993; Levitt & Selman, chapter 8, this volume; Raya, 1993; Noam, chapter 6, this volume; Rogoff, 1993; Selman & Schultz, 1990). Some classic works such as those of Sullivan (1953), Meade (1934), and Vygotsky (1978) recognized the social-ecological nature of relationships and knowledge more generally. In social conceptions of psychoanalysis, concepts such as projective identification also build on the concept that people jointly construct their social models (Shapiro & Carr, 1991).

This contextual nature of working models explains how Susan and John fell in love with each other, because their working models resonated together, sustaining and providing support for each other. In general, people seek contexts (other people and situations) that support their working models because the models can fully function only with those contexts.

Susan and John supported each other's working models, and in building a close relationship, they co-constructed joint models. Growing from their individual models, the joint models were built separately and became an emergent characteristic of them as a couple (Allport, 1961). Figure 7.4 outlines how their co-constructed models developed in the course of their relationship. Because they were mature adults when they met, their co-constructed models did not begin at the early developmental levels that would be characteristic of children, but instead quickly assumed the sophisticated functioning of abstract persona, similar to the higher levels in the individual working models described in Fig. 7.2 and 7.3.

When Susan and John first met, their relationship was somewhat reserved in the manner of most initial adult relationships in the Northeast of the United States, where they lived. Susan responded to John in terms of her disengaged independent persona (Ab 1 and Ab 2 in Fig. 7.2), and John
As Susan came to trust John and feel affection for him, she changed her participation from her disengaged persona to her caring one (Levels Ab 1 and Ab 2 in Fig. 7.2). From her perspective, John and she were becoming friends and even soulmates, committed and loyal. John maintained his public persona, trying to impress her with his competence. Their co-constructed relationship transformed from coolly independent to warmly committed, mostly as a result of Susan's shift to her caring persona.

John also contributed to the growing closeness by sometimes functioning with his public romantic persona, the one that had led him to so many short-lived, intense romances (Model 21). Susan found his intense courtship highly attractive, and he persisted in his courtship because of his new concern for finding a wife to "make heirs." Together they built two co-constructed models, which they shifted between to fit the needs of the moment.

This kind of shifting between working models is a normal part of adult relationships, and often it is transitional to an integration of the two models to form one higher level, more complex model:

The strength of Susan's and John's attraction to each other would normally have led them to build such a sophisticated joint model. Susan would have used her caring model to contribute the beloved/committed component (Level Ab 3 in Fig. 7.2), and John would have used his public model to contribute the romantic/competent component. Unfortunately, John's contribution was only through his public model, and as Susan and he built their (private) life together, he began to shift to his private model. Because of his isolating dissociation between public and private, he was unable to build his private life around his public model.
As John's private tyrant model came to the fore, Susan and John experienced serious problems. Susan resonated to the lover/beloved part of John's working model (Level Ab 3 in Fig. 7.3), but she did not resonate to the tyrant/victim part. She therefore fought the new co-construction and changed to a different joint model, in which she was no longer caring but disengaged:

Susan disengaged John private

\[
\text{PERSONALITY A2} \quad \text{PERSONALITY E1}
\]

(29)

John could sometimes respond to Susan's disengagement and sense of betrayal by switching back to his public domain, engaging her in the romantic/beloved models (Models 26 and 28). As they accumulated a history of John's tyrannical, violent actions, however, Susan's attribution of betrayal solidified, and it became ever more difficult for John to accomplish the switch. The sharp dissociation of his public and private domains made it impossible for him to integrate across the domains: He was unable to move beyond his private personas in his intimate family relationships.

In the end, their relationship failed. John lived in the abusive model of hidden family violence, and Susan had the strength to reject that model and disengage from the relationship. The crisis ended their love and their marriage. Feeling totally betrayed (once again), Susan treated John as loathsome (Level Ab 3 in Fig. 7.2). She divorced him and sued for custody of their daughter.

In the public arena of divorce proceedings and custody disputes, John admitted that he had lost his temper with his wife and hit her, but he claimed that she provoked him by "trashing" his work room and "choreographing the whole incident." She stopped being the good wife and mother that she had been before, according to him, and now she was a tyrant and he was the victim in the relationship. He returned to maintaining his public persona of being competent and seeking to impress lawyers, judges, and social workers.

Although this unfortunate outcome makes sense in terms of Susan's and John's working models, it remains a great personal tragedy for both of them and for their children. Perhaps through analyzing how relationships develop and sometimes transform into such tragedies, social scientists may eventually learn ways to help people build joint working models that can overcome the bitter legacies of trauma such as hidden family violence.

**CONCLUSION: ANALYZING CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUAL AND JOINT WORKING MODELS**

Close relationships are fundamental to the fabric of human life and culture, yet there have been no tools available for analyzing how relationships develop—neither how individuals come to construct their own models of relationships nor how a couple, family, or small group co-constructs their own joint model of their relationship. The tools we have devised combine role relationships, emotion scripts, and individual experiences with developmental processes to produce a system for analyzing change and continuity in working models of relationships.

Development of working models does not occur along steps in any simple, linear ladder. Indeed, people do not usually have a single working model of close relationships. Instead development of relationships involves movement along several branches in a web. The strands in the web are organized by the context and culture of a person's close relationships as well as the emotions she or he experiences in those relationships. Although strands are separate, they can potentially be integrated, providing links between different aspects of relationships.

Both emotions and experience with close relationships naturally produce affective splitting between strands. In extreme cases, people can actively dissociate strands, keeping them so strongly separated that links between them are virtually impossible. Based on her early history of attachment loss, Susan affectively split the domain of disengagement/independence from that of caring/commitment. Based on his experience with a family that sharply separated a violent private life from a properly positive public life, John went far beyond splitting to actively dissociate his working models for private and public domains.

Through the case of Susan and John, we have shown how the set of dynamic skill tools for depicting developmental webs can be used to analyze both individual development of working models and co-construction of joint models growing out of individual models. Consequently, we have been able to describe three different aspects of relationship development, integrating them into a single account: (a) the enormous changes that occur in relationship models during childhood, (b) the significant changes that occur during formation of new intimate relationships, and (c) the continuities in content and approach that occur across these changes.
The combination of change and continuity is especially evident in the relationship of Susan and John. When they fell in love, Susan and John showed enormous changes as they co-constructed their romantic relationship. The changes in their individual working models were dramatic, and the emergence of a new kind of relationship for each of them was both striking and potentially promising for remolding their lives. Susan built a newly sophisticated working model of a mutual relationship. Her capacity to partly overcome her splitting and to integrate across domains facilitated the development of intimacy and commitment in her and John’s relationship. John became committed to a relationship with a woman for the first time in his life. He made major steps toward building a kind of intimate relationship that was new for him and potentially richly satisfying.

At the same time, the negative continuities in their relationships were dramatic, as they continued the separation of their personal lives into two disparate worlds—splitting of disengagement from caring for Susan and dissociation of private from public worlds for John. The continuities of these separations with the traumas of their childhood were evident. Unfortunately, John’s dissociation of private and public made it virtually impossible for him to move beyond his family history of hidden family violence. His progress in the relationship ultimately founndered upon his powerful isolating dissociation of public and private and his tendency to create hidden family violence in the private domain. Unfortunately, in this case the troubles from earlier working models undid the promises of the new relationship.

This book reflects the powerful movement in the social sciences toward a more relational approach to human nature: People cannot legitimately be viewed as isolated individuals functioning on their own. Close relationships are essential to human nature. For the centrality of relationships to move beyond argument and affect the nature of scientific research and explanation, we need tools for analyzing how people construct relationships and how they change those constructions during both early development of relationships and formation of new relationships. Through the case of Susan and John, we have shown how a few simple tools focusing on roles and emotions in working models can be used to analyze both individual models and co-constructed dyadic ones. The resulting rich qualitative analysis can both illuminate change and continuity in development of close relationships and move research and theory toward the goal of building a truly relational science of human development.

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