

SCENARIOS OF "ALCOHOLIC" RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

Paradigm case scenarios are used to give an integrated representation of relationships involving one alcoholic member. The scenarios show how these relationships develop over time and how they function at any given time. Questions addressed are: (a) What significance does alcohol use have to the abusing partner? (b) What are the bonds that hold the couple together? (c) How does the non-alcoholic spouse contribute to the problem? (d) How does the relationship change over time? (e) What treatment options are suggested by the answering of these questions? The two scenarios cover the cases of (a) a male alcoholic and a non-alcoholic spouse and (b) a female alcoholic and a non-alcoholic spouse. It is anticipated that these scenarios (and some variants discussed briefly) will be useful to those engaged in the treatment of alcoholic relationships.

PARADIGMS FOR RELATIONSHIPS WITH AN ALCOHOLIC MEMBER

There has been an increasing interest on the part of psychologists and other social scientists in understanding the phenomenon of alcoholic abuse.

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A generally accepted conservative estimate is that there are 9 to 12 million alcoholics in the United States (Steinglass, 1976), effecting an additional 20 to 30 million family members.

In this paper, I want to present a systematic account of the role that alcohol abuse can play in the lives of husband and wife pairs. My recognition of the need for a new, systematic formulation grew out of my work as a supervisor of alcoholism counselors and my own clinical work with alcoholic relationship pairs. What became apparent in this work is that none of the major systematic positions that take cognizance of relationship features of alcoholism do justice to the complex facts that are routinely encountered in treating relationships in which one member has a serious alcohol problem. A series of questions that need to be answered by a systematic formulation are: (a) What significance does alcohol use have to the abusing partner?; (b) What are the bonds that hold the couple together?; (c) How does the non-alcoholic spouse contribute to the problem?; (d) How does the relationship change over time?; and (e) What treatment options are suggested by the answering of these questions?

Thus, I concluded that a systematic account of alcoholic relationships was needed which would be *specific* enough to the dynamics of alcoholism to cover the range of facts relevant to that phenomenon, have a place for the changes that occur over time, and be sufficiently comprehensive to give a coherent account of alcoholic relationships.

In examining the family/alcoholism literature of the past 25 years, four major positions may be discerned. These are interactionism, systems approaches, stage theories and game theories. These are summarized briefly below.

Interactionism

Communication theorists, such as Gorad, McCourt, and Cobb (1971), have analyzed the interpersonal significance of drunkenness, describing it as a responsibility avoiding maneuver that places the drinker in an advantageous position. Gorad (1971) has also characterized the style of the spouse of the drinker as responsibility accepting. Their contribution lies in their focus on the instrumental value of drunkenness and a recognition of the conflict-ridden quality of the marriages.

Role theorists such as Sharon Wegsneider (1980) tend to characterize families with an alcoholic member in terms of particular family positions that such individuals hold. She offers six roles that characterize "alcoholic" families. She associates each of these roles with typical feelings and behaviors. They include: The substance abusing person, the chief enabler, the family hero, the scapegoat, the mascot, and the lost child.

Berenson (1976), who can be classified as both a role and a systems

theorist, utilizes Fogarty's (1976) characterization of the pursuer (non-alcoholic spouse) and distancer (problem drinker) in analyzing the dynamics and functioning of the "alcoholic dyad".

Systems Theorists

Steinglass, Weiner, and Mendelson (1971) discuss alcoholic behavior in terms of how it contributes to the maintenance of an ongoing system. It is described as an indicator of stress or strain in the relationship or family situation. Steinglass (1981, p. 213) also looks at the "developmental sequences" in recovering families, noting that many such families cycle between a stable wet and stable dry phase, after passing through a transitional phase. Alcohol is seen as a central organizing principle for interactions in such families.

Bowen (1974, 1978) describes families that are prone to alcoholic episodes as reciprocally responding to anxiety within their spousal system. Bowen also views the potential alcoholic as not yet fully differentiated from a primary relationship (usually mother). Such an individual responds poorly to stress (e.g., with counterphobic superindependence) and then drinks to compensate for this when under stress. The potential female alcoholic is described as "deselfing" in a marital relationship in order to preserve that dyad. Drinking for her is a reaction to this situation.

Bowen's conceptualization, although interesting in some important ways, does not succeed in distinguishing alcoholics from other diagnostic categories. His core concepts such as differentiation of the self, pseudo-self, etc. are utilized equally as explanations for the phenomenon of schizophrenia, as well as a family member's vulnerability to the loss of an important member. Hence, although his formulation captures some of the reactivity in relationships with an alcoholic member, his conceptualization is not specific enough to be sufficiently useful as an explanation for continuous excessive drinking in a family.

Thus, systems theorists have made significant contributions to the family-alcoholism field. They have brought attention to the fact that the individual drinker cannot be fully understood without reference to the circumstances and context within which he or she operates. What is lacking is a framework specific enough to the phenomenon of alcoholism to be effective in distinguishing these dynamics from those of other clinical phenomena.

Stage Theorists

A third group of family theorists take into account the "stages of development" in relationships with alcoholic members. Jackson (1954) in a

classic paper on the adjustment of the family to the crisis of alcoholism, divides the adaptation to excessive drinking into seven basic stages. These include: (a) Attempts to deny the problem; (b) attempts to eliminate the problem; (c) disorganization; (d) attempts to reorganize in spite of the problems; (e) efforts to escape the problem; (f) reorganization of part of the family; and (g) recovery and reorganization of the whole family. The emphasis here is on the alcoholic's contribution to the family disruption. There is little focus on the personal characteristics or influences of the spouse. Lemert (1960) disputed Jackson's sequence of events, making a case instead for two broad stages: (a) The reorganization of the problem, and (b) the transfer of the husband's role to the wife.

The stage theorists take into account the evolution of the "alcoholic" dyad through time. The basic premise of their arguments, however, is that whatever occurs in a family reflects the family's reaction to changes in the alcoholic. This analysis does not provide a full picture of the contribution made by the spouse in negotiating and renegotiating the relationship.

Game Theorists

Although Claude Steiner (1971) also analyzes the behavior of the alcoholic in an interpersonal context, and implies the notion of patterned development in such relationships over time, his formulation is sufficiently different from the interactionists and systems theorists to merit separate discussion. In what is suggestive of a drama-like format, Steiner, a transactional analyst, describes the behavior of an alcoholic as the "endless repetition of certain games" (p. 83).

He discusses three common alcoholic games, each representing an essential aspect of the unfolding of a particular script. Steiner's three games include: 1) "Drunk and proud", where the other participant is in the position of persecutor and/or patsy. This is a part usually played by the spouse or the employer of the drinker. The second game described is that of "lush". It is usually played with a partner "who is unable or for whom it is difficult to give strokes" (p. 92). The partner is characterized as switching from persecutor to rescuer. Lush is a game often played by women. The third paradigm is that of "wino". This individual is described as "getting strokes by making him or herself physically ill" (p. 96).

Steiner's characterization of the alcoholic's interaction with his/her significant others provides a way of articulating the facts of alcoholic behavior that includes many essential ingredients of a solid formulation. His work represents the development of a single coherent explanation of the drinker's interactions with his or her world. His theory is not anchored in any systematic way, however, with other concepts. In addition, he is somewhat weak in articulating the progression of relationships with an alcoholic member through time.

Summary

The four theoretical positions that have been presented on the preceding pages can be classified in terms of the size of the unit of analysis and the degree of closure and systematization of the formulation. The interactionists provide the smallest segment for analysis. They describe the significance of drinking in human terms, although their unit of conceptualization is small and fragmentary. Systems theorists provide a broader picture of relationships with an alcoholic member, being cognizant of the context within which the family is functioning. A somewhat systematic view of "alcoholic" relationships is given. Formal closure is provided, but as the existing formulations don't distinguish the phenomenon of alcoholism from any other, the closure is purely formal.

Stage theorists extend the scope of existing formulations, providing a description of the progressive and changing nature of relationships with an alcoholic member at different points in time. The theories are also constructed more or less in human terms. These theorists do not offer an explanation of the drinking per se, however.

Game theorists such as Claude Steiner provide a broad-based analysis of "alcoholic" scenarios and include some degree of systematization, as well as a motivational explanation of the drinking in their conceptualizations. Steiner's formulation is somewhat weak with respect to the developmental changes over time. The statuses of the other players in the scenario are also not developed. The work of Steiner and others suggests several important ingredients for an effective characterization of alcoholic relationships.

In the following pages, a new formulation of relationships with an alcoholic member is presented that incorporates the insights developed in the conceptualizations surveyed above. In addition, the explanation is systematic in nature, and formulates developmental and interactional aspects of the phenomenon.

In order to avoid stereotypical universal explanations, on the one hand, and excessive *ad hoc* explanations on the other, the Paradigm Case Formulation methodology is adopted here. As described by Ossorio (1981), a Paradigm Case Formulation (PCF) is a way of systematically dealing with a range of cases. A PCF is accomplished in two stages. In Stage I a Paradigm Case is introduced. The Paradigm Case description directly applies to some of the cases which are of interest. In Stage II a number of transformations of the paradigm case are introduced. Each transformation has the force of saying "Change it [the paradigm case] in *this* way, and you'll still have a genuine case." Ultimately, all the cases which are of interest are covered. The overall procedure is one which does justice to both the coherence of the entire set and the heterogeneity of its constituents.

Table 1
Paradigm Case Scenario 1: Male
Alcoholic; Female Nonalcoholic Spouse

<i>Time Line</i>	<i>Male Alcoholic</i>	<i>Female Spouse</i>
A	Special world construction →	← Special world construction
	↓	
B1	← Self expression drinking	← Pushing for relationship
	↓	
B2	Genuine remorse →	← Forgiveness
	↓	↓
C	← Self expression drinking	Disillusionment
	↓	↓
D	← Non-relation	Non-relation

Note: Arrows inward (→ or ←) indicate an affirmation of the relationship. Arrows outward (← or →) indicate a rejection of the requirements of the relationship to which both were committed. The letters in the Time Line (A, B, etc.) represent phases in the relationship history.

One variation on the basic Paradigm Case Formulation allows multiple paradigm cases rather than only one. The present paper makes use of this option. Two paradigm cases of alcoholic dyads are presented. The first is the case of the alcoholic husband and non-alcoholic wife; the second is the case of the alcoholic wife and the non-alcoholic husband.

Each of the paradigm cases is structured as a "scenario" (Ossorio, 1976). A scenario is a historical pattern having essentially the dramatic structure of a play. It is this structure that gives coherence and intelligibility to the behaviors of the participating individuals. In this way, the requirement, noted above, for "a conceptual structure which would make an historical account genuinely explanatory" is met.

PARADIGM CASE I: ALCOHOLIC HUSBAND AND NON-ALCOHOLIC WIFE

The scenario is presented schematically, rather than dramatically, in Table 1. Major characteristics and change points in the relationship are shown in the vertical dimension and cyclical changes are illustrated in the horizontal dimension. The arrows indicate whether or not an individual is operating within the relation (points towards the center), or outside of it (point directed away from the center). The developments in this scenario are as follows.

A Special World Construction

The Paradigm begins at Point A (Table 1; Special World Construction) where the potential mates meet and are mutually attracted. Both partners have a world construction which expresses a kind of fairytale outlook on life. The woman characteristically believes that she need only meet “Mr. Right” to have a “happily ever after”, magical, romantic existence. The man is seen as somebody who could provide her with that happiness. Even if at the onset of the relationship she recognizes that he has some rough areas, his potential is also quite obvious to her. She is fairly certain that, given time, she can help to change him for the better.

The male partner is also pleased to find a person to whom he is attracted, who validates and encourages him. He generally sees himself as a fairly special person who is not necessarily bound by the rules and constraints which apply to ordinary people. This has some similarity to Raimy’s (1975) special person misconception. Ossorio (1976) poses an image which he entitles “Two Mayors”. He contrasts the first mayoral candidate, who wants to be mayor in order to do the things that mayors do, with the second candidate, who rejects the activities and simply wants to *be* mayor. Similarly, the alcoholic male in the scenario is more concerned with *being* somebody important than with the actual job description.

If all goes well, these two unite as partners, forming a two-person community. This community is essentially structured by two myths. The first is that he, and therefore they, are quite special and superior to most other people. The second is that, primarily for her, the relationship is unique and superior to most others, having a “made in heaven” quality. At Point A, both share this common world construction, and each has the status with the other as validator and happiness provider in a “larger than life” romantic existence.

B1. Male Spouse Attempts Self-Expression via Drinking—Female Spouse Pushes for Relationship

As time passes, an increasing asymmetry develops. In order for the female spouse not to be living a pretense, she must work to make their world construction real. This may include striving to realize togetherness as a couple, or pushing for the development of some of his possibilities. The couple begins to function at cross-purpose. As the wife deals with actual accomplishments by requesting couple activities, chiding him about work performance, or encouraging certain business moves, the husband begins to experience these overtures as critical demands which interfere with his choices.

As related previously, the husband views himself as a person for whom the usual constraints don’t apply. For him, the verbal affirmation of the achievement of a plan has much the same significance as the enactment

of it, since it's essential function is to be an expression of who he is. Hence, he fights his spouse's attempts to control him, and does so with increasing vigor over time. Her overtures and her constant reminders pertaining to practical matters are experienced as personal assaults or defections and are resisted accordingly.

Hence, a mutual tugging routine is begun in which escalation of demands for attention, closeness, and time on the part of the female spouse, and rejection of these demands by the male, are the major features.

One way in which the husband manages his life is by drinking heavily. The drinker sees himself as constantly having to act under external constraints as contrasted with really being himself. In order not to be fenced in (to be himself), the alcoholic adopts drinking as a primary form of self expression. In addition, it affords him an opportunity to temporarily reject rules and limitations, as well as offering a buffer in painful and stressful situations. It is important to note that the drinker typically has utilized this doubly effective response since adolescence (a traditional period of limit testing and rebellion). At this point in his life, increased alcohol consumption has become a means of affirming who he is.

B2. Husband's Genuine Remorse—Wife's Forgiveness

As previously mentioned, the couple is now "at odds" with each other. Despite this "tugging" routine, the couple still maintains a particular kind of two-person community where both members are potentially validated e.g., a two person community with relational and specialness/greatness components. It is important to mention here that these two elements are not necessarily compatible. An individual's way of acting in accordance with one of them often negates the other. The drinker, for example, typically violates the spouse's version of the relational component, whereas she too frequently violates his version of the specialness aspects.

After some number of transgressions by either party, the relationship begins to change. The alcoholic is starting to become disillusioned with his mate. Whereas she was once his primary source of support and validation, she now seems impossible to please or satisfy. The female spouse, on the other hand, is beginning to question the drinker's credibility, as he appears to have made a lot of promises that he has not fulfilled.

At this juncture, the two-person community is becoming endangered. The alcoholic is being called upon to match words with action or to suffer a considerable status loss, since it is relatively unthinkable for him not to be a member of *that* two person community. Without his wife's validation and encouragement, he would lose significant behavior potential. It is also relatively unthinkable for the female spouse to not be a member of that community.

The drinker did not, of course, act without reason. It is of interest to examine the nature of his defense thus far, and the kinds of options that he has at this point. As previously noted, it is essential to the alcoholic that he *be* somebody. It was mentioned that what was sought by the second candidate in the image of the two mayors, i.e., *being* mayor, rather than doing what mayors do, describes his desires well. Although this is sufficient for him, any affirmation that he receives for *being* somebody carries with it a demand for later behavioral follow-through, and acceptance of that affirmation carries with it an implicit promise for such behavioral follow-through. Therefore, after a brief “honeymoon” period, he is often in the position of being under some pressure to make good on some of his commitments. From his perspective, though, the world is always making unreasonable and unfair demands on him.

Given that it is unthinkable for the problem drinker not to be “somebody”, evidence to the contrary is almost never taken as such. Instead, it is experienced as a reflection of the capriciousness and unfairness of the world. Hence, in order to maintain his sense of self-esteem, his difficulties in the world are rationalized justified and/or denied.

In some instances, the drinker is not able to deny or justify the accusations of his spouse or the community. In the face of this sort of confrontation, he may change the nature of his claim. In most instances, the drinker is sincere in maintaining that his destructive actions were not genuine expressions of his character. His major defense here is that his intentions were not adequately represented in the “misdeed”. “I really was planning to be home for dinner, but I had a chance to be in on a once in a life-time real estate deal. I had the family in mind when I looked into that situation.” Hence, the problem drinker tends to redescribe negative incidents positively, and whatever the outcome, is able to demonstrate that he had good reasons for the action that he had to take.

Another reason that the drinker is able to rationalize his behavior to himself and others for such a long period is that to some extent, for him, the future is merely an element in present being. Therefore, he readily makes commitments and promises, in spite of past performance, without doubting that he will honor them at a later time. The fact that he may not follow through is merely accidental and is explained away or denied in the manner of the above.

The net result of the foregoing is that at this point the alcoholic is maintaining, in the face of a mounting stack of IOUs, that his actions, as described by others who find fault with them, were not genuine expressions of his character. His spouse and others are becoming skeptical, and the alcoholic is therefore being called upon to demonstrate good faith.

Several options are available to him. He often experiences genuine remorse (accepting in part, the status claim of his critics that he has failed

in some significant areas). This acknowledgment is frequently accompanied by a public resolution to make up for past errors. He may make a sincere effort to renew his marriage vows when he becomes aware of what a good marriage he may be about to lose. The drinker may not be able to maintain this position for long, however, without concurrent changes on the part of his spouse, as some of the tacitly agreed upon demands and expectations for his behavior are unrealistic.

Another position that the husband can take that often results in the achievement of a status quo in the relationship, is to humor his spouse by doing anything he has to do to regain his former standing. The enactment of each of these stances is, of course, in most respects identical, and may include brief periods of alcohol treatment, presentations of candy and flowers and exceptional consideration in his treatment of her. He is honestly appalled that some people refuse to take him very seriously. This reaction is understandable in light of his being special and living, for the most part, in the present.

When his spouse sees her husband's efforts, she is usually quick to forgive him, since he has now visibly come over to her way of thinking. She, too, is very invested in this two-person community. Because her behavior potential (the sum total of a person's possibilities for behavior at a given time) has become increasingly dependent upon that relationship, she desperately wants the relationship to be successful. Despite potential misgivings, she too wishes to return to the spirit of their marriage vows, and to move forward with their plans as a couple. Status quo is achieved when the pair return to Point A (A Special World) after completing an entire revolution of the cycle A-B1-B2-A.

With the reaffirmation of the two-person community, the alcoholic is again in a position to act on his status as a special person, thus setting the stage for a reenactment of the cycle. The female spouse also returns to preserving the couple's standing in the community at large. She rises to the occasion of having to cover up for her husband by making excuses for him to friends and bosses, thus demonstrating to them that his misadventures were not genuine expressions of his character. The more that she is in a position of maintaining fidelity to this relationship, the more she limits her behavior potential elsewhere. At this stage, the spouses are taking an "us against the world" position, where police and other protesting parties are seen as meddlers and busybodies.

The A-B1-B2-A cycle is repeated some number of times as each time the greatness/specialness dimension again takes priority over the relational aspects of the arrangement for him. Over the course of these repetitions, his wife continues to actively cover for him, although in most instances, less and less willingly.

C. Male Spouse Attempts Self-Expression via Drinking—Wife Becomes Disillusioned

The old Spanish saying, “A cynic is a disillusioned idealist” summarizes some of the changes that have occurred here. The wife’s romanticism is rapidly being replaced by a biting cynicism. Her satisfactions are derived more from a sense of martyrdom than from a willingness to work to fulfill her dreams in the relationship. The statuses of saint and sinner are being more deeply etched in the dyad, as she continues to go through the motions of maintaining their appearance as a compatible couple.

At this stage, the wife is highly ambivalent about her marriage. As a result of her circumstances, she has been relying to a greater extent upon the support of the community. It may now be her coworkers that give moral support, provide child care, and give her shelter. In taking advantage of these options, the female spouse has acquired additional behavior potential outside the relationship. She is looked upon as a noble and sacrificing woman by many of her friends, a position that often provides her with more reason to “tough it out” with her husband.

At point C, the drinker continues to act more fully in accordance with his status as a special person. It has become increasingly difficult to reverse the negative cycle within the dyad. As the husband’s stack of IOU’s continues to accumulate, his credibility is now always in question. This is particularly hurtful for him with respect to his wife, who was once his foremost validator. His luck is bad and the world is against him. He blames his spouse for his lack of follow-through, and he accuses her of undermining many of his plans. She, as always, sees him as responsible for her unhappy life. His moments of remorse are less frequent, and he starts to feel really justified in his womanizing and other reactions to her.

If a couple evolves to Point C (self-expression via drinking-spousal disillusionment) in their relationship, they frequently remain at this stage for relatively long periods of time. The wife, although cynical and bitter, is still refusing to part with her vision of the ideal life and the fantasy that it is possible with him. Some wives are waiting to collect on some of their husbands’ accumulated debt, and others may wish to exact revenge. At C, it remains important for the alcoholic to be a member of that two-person community, for all of its drawbacks. Home is a roof over his head, and a mate who will, at least publicly, stand by him.

D. Bankruptcy of Relation for Both Drinker and Spouse

The spouses move to the point where the drinker can no longer maintain the status claim that his actions are merely accidental and not genuine expressions of his character. His wife decides that her husband’s debt

has amassed to a point which jeopardizes their relationship. The drinker's consistent failure to meet obligations has finally convinced her that they have been living a lie. The husband may leave his wife, and move in with another woman friend immediately. In many instances, the wife leaves the drinker, files for divorce or otherwise publicly renounces him. (In certain situations, this may be sufficient impetus for the alcoholic to make permanent changes in his way of life, thus revitalizing the marriage.) Many wives make repeated attempts to leave the relationship, but find themselves unable to do so, as most of their behavior potential is still centered in that dyad.

If the final sequences of this scenario is reached (with the alcoholic denouncing his mate or vice versa), each frequently seeks another mate. The individuals that they are drawn to are, unfortunately, often similar in outlook and personality to the characters that are described in Case 1. The former spouses enter the new liaison with a renewed sense of hope and appreciation. Against all odds, this relationship will *really* be different. The scenario has thus begun again for each at Point A (Special World Construction).

Clinical Implications

One of the most important uses of the paradigm is that it offers treatment personnel a distinctive method of assessing a relationship with an alcoholic member with respect to the particular stage of the relationship a couple is in. This information, as well as facts gathered in other ways can then be utilized in developing a working treatment formulation. Therapeutic strategies are often different for beginning, middle, and late stage "alcoholic" relationships, and the paradigm can thus provide some guidelines for both assessment and treatment.

Paradigm Case 1 can also be utilized with some spouses of drinkers to help attune them to the ingrained patterning of their relationships. Although the circumstances and details of each case differ, with certain individuals, this therapeutic maneuver can facilitate a spouse's disengagement from this nonproductive scenario. This might in turn alter the circumstances of the drinker, perhaps contributing to his accumulated reasons to alter his life course.

Paradigm Case 1 brings to light the fact that the drinker sees himself as constantly having to act under external constraints as contrasted with really being himself. In order not to be fenced in (to be himself), the alcoholic adopts drinking as a primary form of self-expression and rejection of constraint. Helping the drinker to appreciate acting from a restricted set of reasons as well as assisting him in being himself without the use of alcohol is therefore a promising strategy if it can be effectively implemented on a case by case basis.

The fact that any therapy effort would need to take into account the “alcoholic relationship” is strongly suggested by this paradigm. The spouse’s involvement initially as a prime motivator and later as an important contributor to the difficult family situation is obviously related to the treatment progress and outcome. Given the drinker’s personal characteristics, what seems to carry the most weight with him are modifications in circumstances such as job loss, the threatened loss of a significant relationship, and potential or actual negative shifts in social standing; changes here can produce transformations in his motivation for seeking treatment.

Once counseling has been initiated, the paradigm suggests that maintaining the drinker and his spouse’s continued motivation for making the necessary changes in values, priorities, competencies, etc., that would permit the couple to engage in the social practices of their community would be difficult. This question of continued accessibility to these clients has long been an area of interest and concern to alcohol counselors. Given the drinker’s sense of personal specialness, and his and his spouse’s “larger than life romantic” world construction, any significantly new position that is taken is seen as reflective of their (particularly his) true character. Therefore, any further change is seen as unnecessary. The spouse is either eager to “go along” with this “solution” or has long since stopped believing that he has it in him to change. In either case, she does not push for further change. Helping the spouse and drinker to maintain a hopeful outlook and to anticipate premature termination, by reiterating the notion that new behavior potential, outlooks and perspectives are only acquired through much practice and experience is in order here.

PARADIGM CASE 2: ALCOHOLIC WIFE AND NON-ALCOHOLIC HUSBAND

A paradigmatic scenario involving an alcoholic wife and a non-alcoholic husband is presented below. Table 2 outlines the major change points in this temporal pattern. As previously described for Table 1, shifts in the relationship across time appear vertically. Similarly, directionality of the arrows indicate whether or not the person is acting as a member of this two-person community or as a representative of another reference group.

A. *Shared World Construction*

The scenario begins at Point A, (shared world construction), where the prospective couple meet and are mutually attracted (Table 2). The female alcoholic, usually a non-self status assigner, is often drawn to a mate who has hypercritical tendencies and who easily assumes the position of the leader in the relationship. A non-self status assigner is an individual who accepts for him or herself the status other people assign. This is in contrast

Table 2
Paradigm Case Scenario 2: Female
Alcoholic; Male Nonalcoholic Spouse

<i>Time Line</i>	<i>Female Alcoholic</i>	<i>Male Spouse</i>
A	Shared construction of special world ↓	Shared construction of special world ↓
B	Fails →	← Criticism ↓
C	Retaliation ← Resists criticism etc. ↓	Criticism, etc. → ↓
D1	Retaliation ← Resists criticism ↓	Retaliation Renewed criticism ↓
D2	Degradation/ ← renunciation	Degradation → Possible renunciation

Note: Arrows inward (→ or ←) indicate an affirmation of the relationship. Arrows outward (← or →) indicate a rejection of the requirements of the relationship to which both were committed. The letters in the Time Line (A, B, etc.) represent phases in the relationship history.

to people who judge situations for themselves (assign themselves status) and resist the status or judgments assigned to them by others. The developmental history of a non-self status assigner usually includes a substantial history of degradation. Hence, a choice of a “supercritic” as a mate tends to represent an affirmation that the person does have eligibility as a self-status assigner.

The female in this pair is usually keenly aware of how people, including herself, go wrong, although she does not have a firm sense of direction for her own behavior. Hence, her judgements are readily superceded by an individual who is both a strong critic and a firm direction setter.

Her potential mate is often desirous of a companion who will agree with, encourage, and validate him. He is usually most comfortable in the position of leader, director, and initiator (high power position). The non-alcoholic spouse is attracted to the acceptance of and the acknowledgement of him as an authority that he usually experiences from her. Each seems to have a defined place with the other and tends to see the other as a person with whom a happy future is possible.

As in Paradigm Case 1, if all progresses smoothly, these two unite as partners, forming a two-person community with (a) relational aspects including defined high power and low power statuses, and (b) a shared world construction where a belief in the maintenance of high standards is of considerable importance.

The pair functions at Point A (Special World Construction) for some period of time. This arrangement continues to be mutually satisfying as long as the couple doesn't interact too intimately. It is only after they make a commitment to the relationship (via marriage or living together) that both have additional reason to take each other more seriously. This may be reflected in increased criticism from the husband, since it is now no longer as easy to overlook "less than acceptable performances" on the part of his mate. The wife may also be less willing to go along with her husband's requirements, and begins to register disagreement by behaving less competently.

B. Female Spouse Fails to Meet Requirements—Male Spouse Criticizes

The couple moves to B, when the female alcoholic is unable (or unwilling) to meet the previously mutually agreed upon standards imposed upon her. She then moves from doing something that she can't do (i.e., performing up to standard) to doing something that she can. One of the commonly utilized options that she has available is to drink. This action puts her in a position of being able to deny responsibility for her actions and to escape the arena.

A destructive cycle therefore has begun here. The female alcoholic tends not to live up to the implicit agreement "to meet joint standards", compensates by doing something that she *can* do (i.e., escaping through drink) thus, making herself ineligible to succeed and disqualifying the situation. The husband often responds by attempting to be helpful. He may reassert his position in the relationship, criticizing her even more strongly. She in turn frequently reacts with a repeat performance (i.e., failing and escaping the dilemma by drinking).

Another feature of B (alcoholic fails, spouse criticizes), is that the male spouse begins to shoulder more of his mate's load. This notion is similar to Bowen's (1974, 1978) characterization of the underfunctioning spouse (drinker) and the overfunctioning (non-drinker). The underfunctioning drinker deselfs as the relationship progresses. The non-drinker or the spouse rises to the occasion of protecting her and himself from public scrutiny as he justifies her irresponsible behavior to friends and associates in terms of illness, overwork, or lack of experience. These actions reflect the fact that both parties are committed to demonstrating to the world that they are a functioning couple.

The husband's public support of his wife is often followed by renewed private cajoling and criticism, as he feels that he is justified in being even more displeased with her. She has, after all, failed to live up to her side of the bargain and has humiliated and embarrassed him.

The female alcoholic is usually apologetic after one of her drunken episodes. Genuine remorse may be experienced, and forgiveness may be sought from her mate. When granted, it is often accompanied by pledges of change and improved performance. At this point, status quo is again achieved in the relationship, and the couple may renew their commitment to each other. The A-B cycle (A. shared world construction to B. female spouse fails to meet joint standards—male spouse criticizes) may then be repeated some number of times before the pair moves to the third stage of this scenario.

C. Female Alcoholic Retaliates and Resists Criticism—Male Spouse Continues Criticism

As the two become more solidified in their respective positions, both begin to lose hope that their shared world construction is negotiable. Point C (Table 2) marks the juncture at which the mates begin to become more cynical about the future of their relationship. The female spouse starts to doubt that she will ever really be appreciated. Her husband begins to wonder if she will ever stop embarrassing him and act more like a proper wife.

At this stage, her "failures" and apologies are looking more like retaliation. His criticisms are now taking the form of putdowns, as he responds to this retaliation by reasserting *his* position as chief status assigner in the marital pair.

A reasonable question to ask here is why the couples doesn't separate. Although a certain percentage of mates do so, this is not generally the case. As described in Paradigm Case 1, both spouses are sufficiently invested in this dyad to work for its continuance despite the ambivalence experienced by each party. Although the wife may have serious doubts about her situation, her husband remains the center of her life. She is unable to function independently, as her behavior potential is almost completely centered in that relationship. The husband also has a vested interest in maintaining the relationship. In addition to the considerable validation that he obtains from having a monopoly on being right, he is also concerned about preserving the image in the community at large of himself and his wife as essentially a normal couple. He has also, to some extent, burned his bridges in supporting the relationship and is stuck with the consequences of that action. For many husbands and wives, the prospect of living *without* each other is far worse than the familiarity of being together.

D1. Retaliation by Both Parties

The couple evolves to Point D1 (retaliation), when the female alcoholic adopts another position vis-à-vis her mate. At some juncture, retaliation via self-deprecation seems to count for less with her and she resists her husband's criticisms more directly. At this stage, physical abuse may be at a high pitch, and drinking episodes are frequent. The most salient change here, however, is the fact that the alcoholic is more openly defying her mate, and that he is reacting accordingly.

One strong move that she can make in this interaction is to go into alcoholism treatment. Although her husband has been dissatisfied with her drinking, this decision, if it is her idea, can be interpreted as a disqualification of him as high power person in the dyad. It can also be seen as an opportunity for her to humiliate and degrade him publicly. Hence, this is a difficult period for the non-alcoholic spouse.

At the far end of the spectrum, the spouse may be on the periphery of his wife's treatment involvement or other activities, as he has written off the marriage some time back. He may have reinvested himself in work, other interests, or in outside relationships. This type of husband may be difficult to involve in the family aspects of alcoholism treatment, as the prospects of investing energy in what he may consider a "hopeless situation" gives him more reason to maintain his distance.

The husband who is actively participating in the relationship is prepared to push for his former status as director and initiator. He usually attempts to enforce status quo in a number of ways. This may include establishing himself as the authority on his wife and her "condition," or the utilization of less direct types of criticism or disqualification. If the alcoholic permits her spouse to assume leadership of her life, and returns home under these conditions, the B-C-D1 cycle of criticism, failure, drinking, and re-entering treatment is usually resumed after a brief period of abstinence.

D2. Alcoholic Renounces Relationship—Spouse Renounces Relationship

If the wife continues to openly resist her husband's authority and directives, the couple will engage in a fairly symmetrical pattern of criticism-defense or criticism-counter criticism. This is a continuance of the trend that has been established in the relationship. The couple may now be engaging in open warfare. If the escalation is sufficiently great, one or both parties may renounce the marriage.

Another possibility (that may occur even as late as D2), is that one or the other may temporarily "win" his or her point, i.e., the male spouse may succeed in reasserting his high power position, or the wife may persuade her husband to join her in a constructive manner in treatment. If the husband "wins", he has reasserted his leadership, and this may again

cycle the relationship to Point B (mild criticism-failure cycle). As can be gathered from the above, status quo can be reestablished at any stage in this scenario. The relationship can also be terminated at any juncture. This response is unlikely prior to C (criticism cycle), however, given the particular personal characteristics of the mates and the sort of relationship that has been established.

This concludes the description of Case 2, a paradigm case scenario of the relationship of the alcoholic wife and her non-alcoholic husband.

DISCUSSION

Two paradigm case scenarios of alcoholic dyads have been presented. The cases are alike in a number of respects, but also differ in certain important ways. If we take these two temporally structured scenarios as paradigmatic, we can understand a substantial proportion of actual couples as going through all or part of these scenarios in one of their many versions. Two additional issues need to be addressed in connection with these paradigms. These include the dynamic of movement through the relationship, and the question of the degree of awareness of each party throughout the various stages and sequences of each paradigm case.

Couples tend to move through the scenario at different rates. They become stuck at certain points, sometimes temporarily, and at other times, permanently. In general, Paradigm Case 1 relationships have a tendency to move through the sequence at a somewhat slower pace than Paradigm Case 2 dyads. There is repetition in the various phases for both types of couples, however. For example, with respect to Case 1, some husbands and wives repeat the A-B1-B2-A cycle for a lifetime, while others move through the complete cycle in six months. In Case 2 relationships, the A-B cycle may be repeated some number of times before the pair enters a new phase. A larger percentage of both types of mates never move beyond Point C.

These variations can be explained, in part, in terms of differences in personal characteristics of the mates, and in circumstances that would enable some couples to more effectively negotiate their mutual world construction. A key to successful negotiation with respect to Case 1 relationships appears to be the degree to which the alcoholic is able to match his promises with appropriate follow-through. The personality characteristics of the husband and wife as well as the kind of financial and social resources available to the family are also relevant. For instance, if the alcoholic is fairly irresponsible, the wife not very forgiving, and the available financial resources of the couple are severely limited, chances are that the mates will progress relatively rapidly through the various stages of the scenario. If the non-alcoholic, on the other hand, is a sacrificer, the couple has adequate financial back-up (e.g., "helpful" parents), and the husband

comes through a respectable number of times, the pair may never move beyond the A-B1-B2-A cycle.

As was implied in the above paragraph, the level of satisfaction of the “victim” spouse appears to influence the speed with which the mates move through the paradigm. In Paradigm Case 2 situations, the husband is often not unhappy enough (at Point C, for example), to leave the dyad. This seems to be maintained as long as he is the chief status assigner in the relation and his wife doesn’t threaten his position in the community too much with public displays of incompetence. For his spouse, remaining in the relationship at this juncture (C) seems to depend upon how hopeful she is that things will change for her, and of course, upon how much of her behavior potential is invested in the dyad.

The satisfaction level is also relevant for Paradigm Case 1 relations. A great many of these relationships tend to remain at C for very long periods. Here, the wife seems to be the kind of person who derives fulfillment from the adoption of a martyr position. When this type of satisfaction is no longer meaningful for her, she may consider renouncing the relation.

In either paradigm, it appears that a central issue is whether or not the “victim” spouse remains sufficiently satisfied to maintain the dyad. Movement through the cycle and equilibrium achieved at any point therefore seems to be related to the satisfaction level of the “victim” spouse, the extent of follow-through of the alcoholic, and the respective personal characteristics of each member of the relationship.

The above variations generate a variety of specific historical patterns. Because the latter are merely variations they may be considered as transformations in the Paradigm Case Formulation. However, it may also be of some value to mention some of these important patterns. In certain Paradigm Case 1 relations, for instance, the alcoholic is very successful in his work for long periods of time. He may have greater intelligence than normal or possess exceptional talent. His degree of follow-through, at least with respect to his career, is greater than described in the PCF. Therefore his spouse is less likely to be dissatisfied than if this wasn’t the case. The relationship may become stuck in the A-B1-B2-A cycle or at point C.

An example of a transformation in Paradigm Case 2 relationships is a situation where the husband is less the supercritic and more the very logical and rational type. His spouse might conventionally be described as somewhat hysterical. In this marital pair, the husband attempts being helpful to his wife by providing logical solutions to all of her gripes, whereas she would prefer a sympathetic ear. Often, after a certain length of time, the non-alcoholic simply withdraws into his work or into outside relationships. His spouse feels rejected and abandoned and frequently begins to drink fairly heavily and usually in secret to ease the pain of her situation.

Her mate is shocked when he discovers that she is an alcoholic. Hence, two possible transformations have been indicated in the above paragraphs.

Another question that naturally arises relates to the degree of awareness of each partner at various change points in the scenario. In scanning the range of relationships that constitute the different versions of Paradigm Case 1 and Paradigm Case 2, it appears that individuals within each relationship operate with differing degrees of conscious decision. A participant may have partial insight, may be totally unaware of the significance of his or her actions, or may be entirely aware of his or her respective motivations. This tends to be the case throughout the course of the scenario, although at certain points an individual's level of insight about a particular issue or motive may change. One feature of these relationships is that those mates who are not attuned to their own motivations may nevertheless be acutely aware of the ways in which their partner is going wrong.

Hence, it appears that certain participants are entirely unaware of their actions or positions in the relationship, others have partial insight, while a third group acts with a great deal of conscious knowledge of the particular behavior.

SUMMARY

Two paradigm case scenarios of relationships with an alcoholic member have been presented. They included Paradigm Case Formulation 1, where the male was an alcoholic and the female spouse a non-alcoholic and Paradigm Case Formulation 2, in which the female was the problem drinker and the male spouse the non-alcoholic. The question of movement through the paradigms and the issue of awareness were also addressed. Some assessment and treatment possibilities of the first case were also discussed.

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