

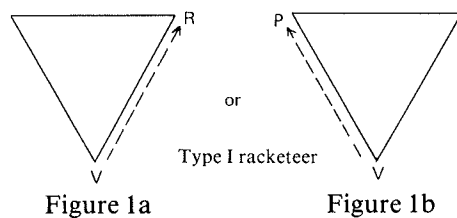
DIFFERENTIATING VICTIMS IN THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

Fanita English

In this paper, a sequel to "Racketeering" (English, 1976), I further differentiate type I and type II Victims of the drama triangle (Karpman, 1968) and suggest a diagram to show the difference.

RECAPITULATION OF EARLIER PAPER

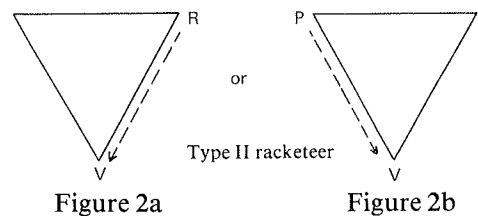
Type I racketeers are of two kinds: Helpless and Bratty. The Helpless type racketeer acts out of a Child ego state and addresses him or herself to a Rescuer (figure 1a). He racketeers for phony positive strokes. Bratty type I racketeers address a Persecutor Parent for negative strokes (figure 1b).



A type II racketeer operates in reverse: from the Parent ego state as either Rescuer (figure 2a) or Persecutor (figure 2b) and addresses himself to a Child ego state.

A type I racketeer will go for a game switch and a NIGYSOB payoff when strokes are not forthcoming for his racketeering—the partner having decided

either to cross the transaction (Karpman, 1971) or to abscond.



Type II racketeers get themselves "kicked." The game switch may be initiated either by themselves or by their partner, but it ends with their being in the Victim position of the drama triangle.

FURTHER DIFFERENCES

To contrast the beginning Victim role of type I racketeers with the achieved Victim role of type II racketeers, I use a variation of the drama triangle (figure 3):

Victim I. This person gets stroked as a constant complainer and as a patient long-sufferer. He may have somatic ailments to justify his racketeering, and although in some ways his life may represent a slow death, he manages to survive on his quota of strokes. He may frequently threaten suicide, but he is not likely to die that way. Most of the time he is careful to avoid taking too many sleeping

No matter what the son did thereafter, Mommy never fully pardoned him—and so he goes on taking on ever more tasks and good works, seeking a pardon that will never be granted.

When a child takes a position, for instance, "Yes, I am not OK," he has 15 degrees of action to choose from. There may be more, but 15 is sufficient to accommodate all of the games analyzed thus far. All of these degrees of action are used in some statistical distribution over the population of children.

It is possible that the very first decision used might be randomly selected. But over a long period of time, during which many transactions with a particular adult occur, the child may settle on one (e.g., "And there's nothing I can do about it") and develop this into "Wooden Leg." Or, the child may develop a whole repertoire of games, all within one of the three positions. Whatever works is filed away in the child's computer for reuse. If the result is unsatisfactory for the child, he or she will try another decision.

ADVANTAGES OF GAME CLASSIFICATION

Games included in the table were taken from the issues of the *Transactional Analysis Bulletin* and the *Transactional Analysis Journal* to date. In all cases, the classification is based on the position of the primary game player. Good games are not included.

Diagnosis. One advantage of the proposed classification is the facilitation of diagnosis and selection of a therapeutic approach. The therapist can listen for whether the client has accepted the not-OK position, has rejected it, or is unresolved about it. He or she can then determine the existential decision. This determination permits an assessment of how much energy the client can muster on his or her behalf and how much the thera-

pist must add in the way of Permission or direction. If the therapist "comes on too strong," he will probably be resisted; if too weak, he will be discounted. Finally, knowing the phrasing of the client's key decision, the therapist can be more alert for the proper timing of a confrontation.

Undiscovered games. Another advantage of the classification is that it reveals potential unidentified games. Locations of such games in the matrix are marked by a single question mark (?). Where a double question mark (??) appears, it is considered unlikely that a game will be found for this location.

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SUMMARY

Clinical observation and study suggest that a child can respond to a "You're not OK" stimulus from an adult in one of three ways: acceptance, doubt, or resistance. These can be combined with preferences for introjective, neutral, or projective behavior. All of the games analyzed thus far (excluding good games), can be classified in a 3 x 3 matrix based on decision and mode of behavior. The classification can facilitate diagnosis and reveal potential for as-yet-unidentified games.

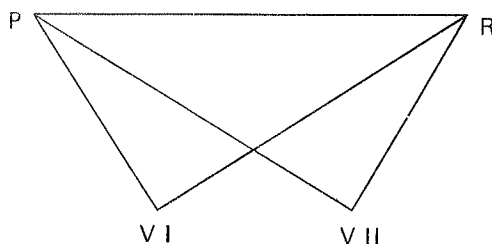


Figure 3
Drama Triangle Victims,
Type I and Type II

pills in an attempt, or he is sure to get himself found in time. His suicide attempts are more for blackmail purposes than because he really intends to kill himself.

If type I's marriage partner is no longer offering sufficient strokes for his racket, he is likely to request treatment in order to racketeer with the therapist. Often he is eager to bring his spouse with him to initiate a three-handed game whereby either he or the therapist assumes a role of Persecutor.

Victim II. This person is competent and brave in the face of disaster and does not seem a potential Victim. He tends to alternate between determined Rescuing (his preferred activity) and Critical Parent Persecuting (when frustrated).

However, behind the competence and the ability to "take it" with a "strong" Parent, there sits an unstroked Child—someone who in early childhood took enormous responsibility for the emotional burdens of his family. He has learned that his survival depends on his not "giving in" to his emotions. He appears healthy. If he has somatic ailments, they are hidden, perhaps ulcers or heart disease, and seldom discussed—whereas Victim I usually has a vast range of ailments that he is glad to describe.

SUICIDE

Victim II's racketeering is subtle. He is likely to seem to be exploited by people

who racketeer rather than to initiate such transactions himself. Often, he needs a certain amount of persuasion to enter the Rescuer role, and he talks as though he can take it or leave it, but his Parental values or early survival conclusions prevent him from taking care of himself as effectively as he claims.

The unwary therapist may not be very concerned about Victim II when first encountered because he appears self-sufficient. His "strong" Parent can even be intimidating to all but a pretty tough therapist.

However, when there are game switches, Victim II actually gets "kicked," either because his own racketeering efforts from Rescuer or Persecutor have failed, or because his partner has switched to NIGYSOBER. When either occurs, Victim II shows despair rather than depression, and becomes hopeless rather than helpless. He seems to bounce out of his hopelessness easily by initiating new Rescuing or Persecuting transactions. But finally—if he gets kicked once too often, he is a prime candidate for suicide (or for a violent homicidal act). Being the competent type, he is likely to succeed in killing himself on the first attempt. Friends and neighbors are likely to remark, "Who would have thought he'd do such a thing? He seemed so reasonable, successful, responsible, etc."

DISCUSSION

Why differentiate between Victim I and Victim II? To do so is especially useful in the therapy of couples. Victim II's drama triangle position is covert most of the time, covered over with a smile and brushed off lightly with apparently *very little actual time* spent in that position. Because of this characteristic, it is often useful for a therapist to plot a relationship along the lines of the drama triangle, not only in terms of role and ego state

shifts as the partners shift from racketeering to games, but also in terms of the *total quantity of time spent* by each partner in each position over a given period (say, several months).

Chances are that the one who spends the *least* amount of time as Victim is the one to be most concerned about in therapy. Chances are he's the Victim II type who, if he ever sinks deeply in that position, then becomes incapable of surfacing again into the reality of everyday life.

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SUMMARY

Drama Triangle Victims can be of two types. Type I Victims are those who begin as Victims and later switch. Type II Victims, "the competent ones," become Victims after being "kicked." The author contends that the Type II Victim is the one to be concerned about.

Summario en Español

Las Víctimas de triángulos humanos pueden ser de dos suertes. Las víctimas del primer tipo son esas personas que empiezan en calidad de víctimas y más tarde se cambian. Las víctimas del segundo tipo—los llamados 'competentes'—se vuelven víctimas después de «ser pateadas.» El autor arguye que la víctima del segundo tipo es el que más propiamente debería provocar preocupación.

Zusammenfassung auf Deutsch

Die Opfer von Drama-Dreiecke mögen von zwei Arten sein. Der Typ 1 beginnt als Opfer, danach aber lenkt um.

Der Typ II, "die Föhigen," werden Opfer nachdem sie "mit dem Fusse gestossen" werden. Wir sollen uns mit dem Typ II beschäftigen.