



## **Transactional Analysis: A Critical Literature of Review**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Transactional analysis is a theory of personality and relationship based on the study of specific ego states, a theory of social interaction or interpersonal communication and a system of group or individual psychotherapy used as a tool for personal growth and personal changes. Transactional Analysis also involves the identification of the ego states behind each and every transaction, life position.. The analysis of Social Transaction is known as Transaction Analysis.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ego States, Life Positions, Transactional Analysis.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Transactional analysis was developed by Berne (1957), who was trained as a Freudian psychoanalyst and psychiatrist. Eric Berne first developed theory of personality including theories of child development and psychopathology, which form the basis of a theory of psychotherapy, and also a theory of communication for understanding groups and organisations (Berne, 1963, 1966). Ordinary interactions was popularized by Berne(1957), Harries(1969), and Jongeward(1971). Berne, E. (1964) postulated instead three "ego states", the Parent (P), Adult (A) and Child (C) ego states, which were largely shaped through childhood experiences. It is used primarily as a therapeutic tool though it also has relevance for facilitating a deeper understanding of behaviours which affect relationships in a wide range of settings (Heyer, 1979). By Shaskan, Moran and Moran (1981) and Shaskan and Moran (1986) provide a perspective which is historically interesting to Transactional Analysts, although limited from a research perspective. Transactional analysis helps the patients to change their immature and inappropriate ways of communicating with others (Sdorow, 1998). The emotional understanding for the final change is achieved with personality states after logically accepting it(Alton, 2007). Transactional analysis is a way of inquiring into what goes on between people and inside people in order to help them make change (Singh and Jain, 2014).

### **Studies related to theory of Personality**

In transactional analysis theory of personality, we discuss upon the ego state, contamination and exclusion.

Berne developed this definition of an ego state to include the element of observability (Berne, 1961) that posited that an internal shift of an individual's ego states might be directly observed by an external observer.

Parent, Adult and Child ego states were first systematically studied by transactional analysis, and they are its foundation stones and its mark. Whatever deals with ego states are transactional analysis and whatever overlooks them are not' (Berne 1972: 223)

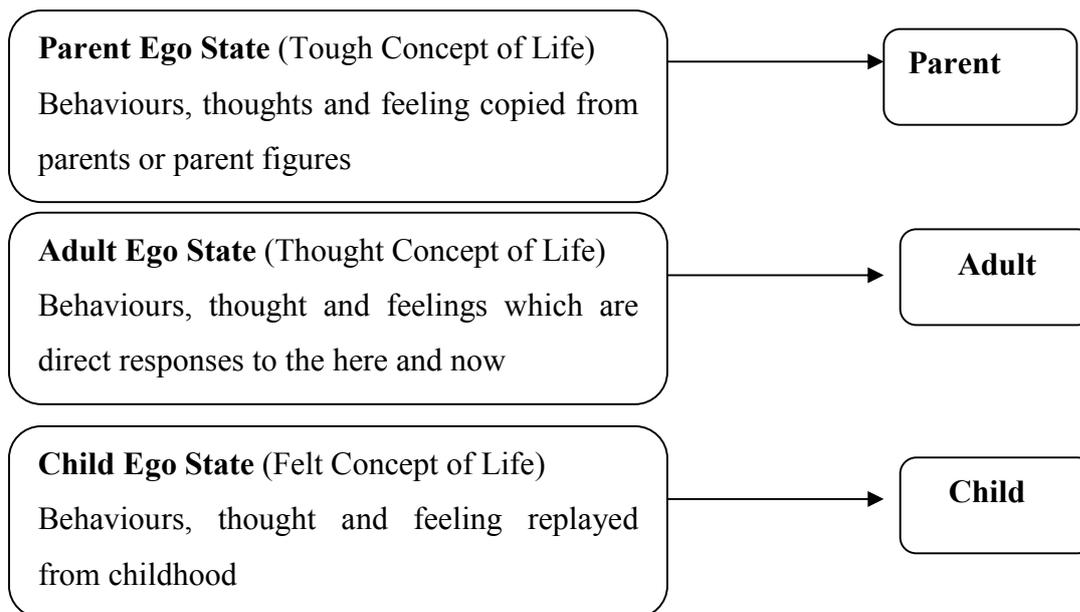
Transactional analysis is based on a model of three categories of ego states – Parent, Adult and Child, a theory of social interaction based on a model of transactions between the ego states, wherein the origins of the client's problems reside (Steiner 1974).

Ego states are divided into three categories which are called Parent, Adult and Child. The Parent ego state is a repository of *introjected* 'others' - usually primary caregivers but also influences from the social and cultural environment which were internalised by the infant during personality development (Stewart & Joines, 1987). Berne defined the Parent ego state as '*a set of feelings, attitudes and behaviour patterns which resemble those of a parental figure*' (Berne, 1961: 66) - a definition he later extended to include aspects of the individual's personality which were 'borrowed' from others (Berne, 1966: 366).

Adult ego state stems from here-and-now reality and was described by Berne as '*an autonomous set of feelings, attitudes and behaviour patterns which are adapted to the current reality*' (Berne, 1961: 67).

Berne defined the Child ego state as '*a set of feelings, attitudes and behaviours which are relics of an individual's own childhood*' (Berne, 1961: 69).

Berne ultimately defined the three ego states as: **Parent, Adult, and Child**



Fairbairn's theory of the ego proposed a tripartite structure (Fairbairn, 1952) which Berne described as being '*one of the best heuristic bridges between transactional analysis and psychoanalysis*' (Berne, 1972: 134). A key difference between Fairbairn's theory and Berne's was that Berne's theory included nurturing and caring functions within the Parent ego state (Clarkson, 1992). Also, Berne's asserted that ego states are directly observable phenomena rather than abstract theoretical constructs (Stewart, 2010).

Methods used for identifying ego states have ranged from intuitive, and thus subjective, assessments of behavioural and linguistic indicators (Klein, 1980; Solomon, 2003; Steere, 1981) to the use of projective tests (Turner, 1988) and the development of instruments which empirically measure ego state functions (Heyer, 1979; Thorne & Fargo, 1980; Doelker & Griffiths 1984). However it is noted (Loffredo & Harrington, 2008) that there has been little published literature on measures of ego states since the early 1980s. Therefore, this review is largely concerned with work between the 1970s and mid 80s.

A popular method for identifying ego states is the *Egogram* (Dusay, 1972), which presents an individual's ego state energy distribution in the form of bar charts of five ego state functions (Nurturing Parent, Critical Parent, Adult, Free Child and Adapted Child). In defence of the client making a self-assessment, Dusay (1977) found high levels of concurrence when the *Egogram* was used with clients in group settings (Dusay, 1977). Also, Heyer (1979) suggests that most clients can be „trained“ to judge the ego states they are employing.

As a response to the need for more objectivity, Heyer (1977) developed the *Heyer Ego State Profile Questionnaire* designed around the concept of *Egograms*. He suggests that the advantages of using an objective measure are to improve diagnoses, to provide a standardised measure which can be used to compare groups and individuals, and to help locate TA theory within a scientific paradigm (Heyer, 1979). The scale is nonetheless, suggested to have convergent construct validity as Heyer (1979 p11) identified a significant correlation between it and a range of related psychological constructs - a ten item self esteem scale based on Rosenberg, (1965); a 6 item test of acceptance of others (from Fey, 1955) and a ten item dogmatism scale (adapted from Trodahl & Powell, 1965). Thus, Heyer (1979) argues that these results support T.A. theory and practice.

The *Ego State Profile Questionnaire* method is extensively used in a wide range of settings, self report measures are prone to social desirability biases, and subjective self assessments. Heyer (1987) reports that some items did not fit the predicted ego states. He attributed this to individual differences in perceptions of word meanings.

A range of other scales have been developed to assess ego states. Doelker & Griffiths (1984) devised The *Ego State Inventory* (ESI), based on Heyer's *Ego State Profile* (1979). The scale was developed using test items from two standardised personality tests – the *Personal Orientation Inventory* (POI) (Sholstrom, 1964), which assesses levels of self- actualisation and Cattell's 16PF (1967), which identifies a wide range of personality dimensions.

Raters were provided with definitions of the five ego state functions identified by Dusay (1972) and asked to categorise questionnaire items into specific ego states.

Swede (1978) also suggests that ego states and transactions are recognisable phenomena. He developed the *Group Ego State Measure* (GEM) to facilitate the identification of ego states and transactions in social interaction.

Thorne & Faro (1980) suggest that earlier attempts to measure ego states in a systematic and quantifiable manner were fraught with methodological problems. They also suggest that although Heyer (1979) attempted to address these limitations, his scale did not particularly relate to pathological issues (Thorne & Faro, 1980), and therefore it may be limited in its clinical application. They thus, developed the *Ego State Scale* (ESS) to measure ego states and to examine the relationship between ego states and pathology (e.g. depression, schizophrenia and hysteria).

TA have been identified by Dusay and Dusay (1989). He decided that the way to study personality was to observe here-and-now phenomena such as the client's voice, gestures, and vocabulary.

In response to the lack of recent empirical studies identifying ego state functioning, Loffredo & Omizo, (1997) developed the *Ego State Questionnaire* (ESQ) based on content validity, and sampled on a „normal“ population of undergraduates. Test-retest reliability with a two week interval was high (.90). The ESQ is a forty item forced choice instrument using a five point Likert scale, and consisting of five subscales which separately measure NP, C P, A, FC and AC. Cronbach Alphas of over .7 confirmed the internal reliability of the measure. Loffredo & Omizo (1997) employed the ESQ to identify any differences in ego state functioning dependant on gender and ethnicity.

A later study (Loffredo, Harrington & Okech, 2002) analysis revealed that the ESQ showed good construct validity as a measure of NP, AC and A, but poor construct validity as a measure of CP and FC. This supported the findings of Williams et al (1983) and thus, suggested that these theoretical constructs may need to be re-evaluated. The ESQ – Revised (Loffredo, Harrington, Munoz & Knowles, 2004) was later created to provide an ego state measure with construct validity for all five ego state functions.

Loffredo & Harrington (2008) suggest that their finding that females tend to be higher in NP are consistent with Heyer (1979) but contradict Williams & Williams (1980) who found no gender differences on NP in their study. However it could be that as nurturing is considered a stereotypically female characteristic (Taylor, 2002; Rane & Draper, 1995) self report biases may have come into play. Clarkson (1992) and Hargaden and Sills (2002) also argue that it is probable that some deconfusion (as part of the process of forging the therapeutic relationship) *needs* to take place before decontamination can proceed effectively.

### **Studies related to theory of psychotherapy**

In theory of psychology, we discuss about life position and nature of behaviour.

Transactional analysis was originally developed by the late Eric Berne (1961). Berne's major objections to psychoanalysis were that it was time consuming, complex, and poorly communicated to clients. Historically, TA developed as an extension of psychoanalysis with concepts and techniques especially designed for group treatment. Berne discovered that by using TA his clients were making significant changes in their lives. Berne parted ways with psychoanalysis to devote himself full time to the theory and practice of TA (Dusay, 1986)

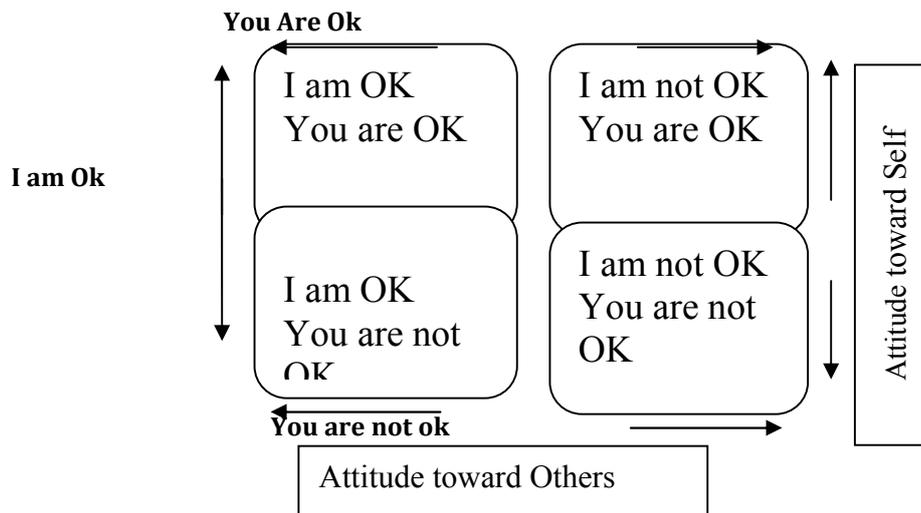
Transactional analysis has roots in psycho analysis but also cognitive behaviourist and humanist traditions, essentially combining some tenets of cognitive behaviourism and psychoanalytic insight "Within a Humanist value system" (Clarkson & Gilbert, 1988).

Be that as it may, therapeutic contracts, first seriously proposed by Berne in 1956, and suicide contracts, a later development, are now an accepted part of modern psychotherapy especially cognitive behavioural therapy. (Heinssen, 1995. Levendusky, 1983, 1994)

To the extent that behavioural therapy is, at this point, considered the most effective method of psychotherapy, Ted Novey's (2002) excellent and rigorous research on the effectiveness of transactional analysts as evaluated by their clients is a powerful, corroborating study.

The concept referred to as the OK existential position in Transactional Analysis is represented in the wider behavioural culture by the concepts of "positive psychology", "flow," "human potential," "resiliency," "excellence," "optimism," "subjective well being," "positive self-concept," as well as "spontaneous healing," "nature's helping hand," "*vis medicatrix naturae*," "the healing power of the mind." These concepts, until recently deemed unfashionable and "soft-headed," have taken center stage in psychological research. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) have reviewed the field in a special issue on positive psychology of the *American Psychologist*.

Figure Frank Ernst developed these into the OK matrix (1981).



Matlin and Stange (1978) shows that human beings strongly tend to be selectively positive in their language, thought, and memory and that people who are psychologically healthy show a higher level of positive bias. The research also indicates that people with a OK/OK attitude are likely to be healthier and live longer. Tiger (1979) postulates that optimism has driven human evolution and is an innate adaptive characteristic of the species and a part of evolutionary developed survival mechanisms, a view that coincides with Berne's.

As a psychoanalytically trained psychiatrist, Berne had a historic and cultural bent toward psychodynamic thinking. Even though he focused on transactions between visible ego states he was well aware of the fact that, as (Freud, 1977) had discovered, a great deal occurred behind the scenes. However, with the years, as many of Freud's concepts were widely questioned (Crews, 1997) Berne's psychodynamic thinking became less and less psychoanalytic.

Norcross and Lambert (2011) shows the variance in psychotherapy outcome in which 40 % is attributed to unexplained variance. Therapeutic relationship (12 %), therapist (7 %) and client (30 %) account for over half of all factors, while treatment method accounts for 8 %.

Novey (2002) suggests that the assessment of therapeutic interventions generally falls into two categories, effectiveness or efficacy studies..

Lundh (2006) points out that the common factor, to a large extent, can be specific, as the different therapeutic approaches advocate different attitudes based on their theories, techniques and philosophies..

Johansson (2006) expressed that this emotional, relational aspect is complemented by most researchers with a rational goal-oriented working alliance e.g. Luborsky (1976), Bordin (1979), Gaston (1990) and Horvath and Bedi (2002). The latter aspect can be identified in the contract concept in TA (Berne, 1961). Transactional Analysis Psychotherapy 27 analysis, but it includes both aspects of the alliance in the message "no contract without contact" (Ohlsson, Björk & Johnsson, 1992) Lambert and Norcross (2011) argues that the contrast between researchers and practitioner's world sometimes is expressed in polar reasoning.

Khalil, Callaghan & James (2007), however, note a paucity of research within the TA paradigm to have employed either method with much rigour. Importantly, they also suggest that most of these were published in specialist journals and "...not subjected to quality reviews from the wider academic and health communities" ( Khalil et al, 2007 p20), thus limiting the ability of TA to gain credibility within these fields. So many studies were initially identified as relevant to positive effects of TA on client

outcomes (Smith 1977; Prothero, 1978; Payton, Morris et al, 1979; Olsen, Ganley, Devine & Dorsey, 1981; McNeel, 1982; Talob, 1994; Wissinck, 1994; Novey, 1999; Novey, 2002; Boholst, 2003, Bledsoe & Grote, 2006). Four studies were inconclusive about the efficacy of therapeutic interventions (May & Tierney, 1976; Fetsch & Sprinkle, 1982; Greene, 1988; Grunewald – Zemsch, 2002), and the remainder only indicated possible beneficial outcomes (Windell & Woollama, 1976; Childs – Gowell, 1977; Thunnissen, van Delft et al., 1998).

Five of the above studies affected a comparison of TA and other forms of therapy (Smith 1977; Prothero, 1978; Olsen, 1981; Novey, 1999, 2002; Bledsof, 2006). Of these, three suggested TA outperformed other therapeutic treatments (Prothero, 1978; Novey, 1999; 2002), whilst two determined TA to be less efficacious than other methods (Bledsof, 2006; Olsen, 1981). The remaining study (Smith, 1977) indicated that whilst therapy generally appeared effective, no method outperformed any other.

Positive psychology may be able to provide research evidence for concepts from transactional analysis. This comparison highlights the contradictions deeply embedded within transactional analysis theory between a philosophical framework based on the empirical scientific paradigm of the 1950s, which focuses on “objectivity,” and a more contemporary constructivist philosophy, which focuses on “subjectivity.” (Napper, 2009)

## CONCLUSIONS

In my opinion “crossed transactions” are no more than a graphical phenomenon. The proposed new classification (cooperative/non-cooperative as well as complementary/parallel transactions) is more anchored to reality, to the phenomenon that we have to focus to.

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