Script Theory 2
Physis, Life Positions & the OK Corral

Objectives

To understand and critically evaluate drivers and driver behaviour.
To understand and critically evaluate impasse theory.
To critically evaluate impasse clarification and resolution in clinical practice.

Article List

Heraclitus
The nature of life and existence is in perpetual change.

All things in the universe as a whole are in a constant ceaseless flux. Nothing is, only change is real, all is a continuous passing away.

Pre-Socratics:
Physis is nature coming from the deepest biological roots of the human being and striving towards the greatest realisation of the good.
Unconscious Drives in the Process of Change

Freud began his theoretical work with the idea of two basic groups of antagonist instincts:

Those concerned with reproduction (sexual instincts) & those concerned with self-preservation (ego instincts).

He later came to believe in a more general life instinct. Eros.

Eros – made up of sexual, life preserving and creative drives, whose energy source is the libido.

As a result of his work on the natural mourning process in bereavement and depressive illness (1917b) Freud concluded people also have a fundamental death instinct. Thanatos.

Mortido - The energy of the death instinct. (Paul Federn 1870-1950)

An energy of withdrawal, disintegration, and resistance to life and growth.

The desire to destroy life, both in oneself and others.

When considering the process of change Berne accepted the importance of the work of Freud and Federn, and added Physis to Eros & Thanatos in human life.
Berne Physis

To describe the natural tendency of a human being’s drive towards health and growth Berne referred to the Pre-Socratic concept of Physis as—

“The force of nature which eternally strives to make things grow and to make growing things more perfect”

Physis and Evolution – Two Ancient Conceptualizations -

• Change as flux itself, without source or goal
• Change as cure, growth, or creative evolution

It is in the latter sense that Berne used Physis to represent the major motivating force of cure, individual aspiration and collective evolution.

Whatever is dealt out in life, Princes and Princesses can be borne out of frogs.
Homeostasis involves maintaining a balance, whereas Physis involves change & growth.

Change and growth can be perceived as threatening to homeostasis.

Physis is an opposing force to homeostasis, we are therefore pulled by two different forces.
Developed by Claude Steiner.

Script Matrix

Aspiration Arrow

Don’t feel
Don’t be close
Don’t be a child
Don’t be important

Don’t exist
Don’t get close

Be strong
Work hard
Life is hard

Please (people)
Be strong
Keep things tidy
Keep out the way

How to discount own needs & put others first

Don’t be important

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# Life Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Berne</th>
<th>Steiner</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The decision is made first and the life position reinforces this.</td>
<td>Identifies all children as beginning in the life position I’m OK You’re Ok and shift to another position only if something interrupts the mutual interdependence between child and mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life positions develop in response to early life experiences &amp; transactions with others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To justify a decision, the life position is adopted aged 3&amp;7.</td>
<td>The life position is adopted earlier than 3-7. Steiner argues it is adopted in the earliest months of nursing and the decision comes later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okness – Basic to TA theory &amp; philosophy is Berne’s image of the fundamental worth of the human being</td>
<td>The position I’m OK You’re OK reflects the comfortable, mutual interdependence between the feeding infant and mother (the position of basic trust).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In adulthood we arrive at a script based on one of four life positions. Whilst we favour one life position we don’t stay in that position every hour of the day! Minute by minute we shift between different positions!

Franklin Ernst developed the OK Corral, a grid to analyse these moves.
Social Operations

• In day to day life, a person has a series of encounters, one after another with a variety of persons. Each social encounter is resolved by one of four dynamic social operations.

• Get away from

• Get on with

• Get rid of

• Get nowhere with
Corralogram

GAF Depressive Position
- (Run – Suicide)
- Diffuse (fluid/thin/scattered) boundaries around self/others.
- Seeks confirmation of OK-ness. (OK if pleased with me) Please Other Driver.
- Tends to open up to anyone, rather than differentiate between who is safe and isn’t
- Takes criticism / negative behaviour rather than set boundaries.
- Feels Victimised

Sanguine Position
- Get On With.
- Ok-ness with Parents
- Clear sense of self and boundaries between self/others – doesn’t hurt/allow hurt
- Open to new information to grow.
- Will let others in.
- Game free. Give and take
- Effectively deals with relationships /activity in here and now way.

GNW Futility Position
- (Go Crazy)
- Diffuse boundaries self/others
- Seeks reassurance/confirmation but refuses to accept
- Unable to cope in real world, loss of interest in life.
- Withdraws, infantile behaviour/violence
- If I can’t be OK neither can you

Paranoid Position
- Defensive. May show off to pull others in (homicide)
- Rigid boundaries around self (I’m OK).
- Walls others out, doesn’t allow self to get close.
- Unwilling to accept new information or look at self.
- Projects problems onto others/blames/criticises/scapegoat etc.

GRO Get Rid Of
- You

Legend: Life Positions
- U+ You’re OK
- I+ I’m OK
- U– You’re Not OK
- I– I’m Not OK

Developed by
Franklin Ernst, cited in
Redrawn by Rob van Tol,
2011. TA Student

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Script Process

Scripts are lived out according to six patterns:

- Never
- Always
- Until
- After
- Almost (type I & type II)
- Open-ended.
People are forbidden to do (or get) the things they most want to do (or have).

They complain ‘I never get what I want’.

Like Tantalus who was condemned to suffer through eternity never eating or drinking, but with food and water just out of his reach, they are tantalised by temptations.

Ego State: Child
Working with a Never Script

• Stroke any autonomous steps a client takes

• If client withdraws initiate action – invite client ‘in’

• Avoid alternative contracts. Work out what needs to be done to reach decision
‘Why does this always happen to me?’

Like Arachne, who after unwisely challenging the goddess Athena to a needlework contest and was turned into a spider, they are condemned to continually spin out the same web for Eternity.

They are doomed to repeat the same mistakes, over and over again.

Ego State: Child / Parent
Working with an Always Script

Playfully invite client to change using spontaneity.

Watch for patterns of repetitive negative behaviours (e.g. relationships)

Invite Adult thinking (e.g. what evidence do you have that it is going to be different this time?)
Until – Be Perfect

Like Hercules, who had to live as a slave for 12 years before being promoted to a god an individual with an Until script will complete a series of unpleasant tasks before they take any reward or pleasure.

Typical slogan of an ‘Until’ script..........
‘I can’t do something fun, until....... I’ve completed this less fun thing.

Ego State: Child / Parent
Working with an Until Script

• Invite doing now rather than later

• Convey it is ok to change now rather than wait until entire script is worked out etc.

• Keep work short. Withdraw as soon as any significant move is achieved!

• Avoid temptation to hang on in there until you’ve got one more change!

• When contracting be ready for Child strategy of “going around the houses” to avoid saying what he wants. Offer a specific contract rather than wait for client to come up with one!
After Script – Please Others

This is illustrated by Damocles, who was allowed to enjoy the high life until he noticed the sword hanging over his head.

The message is ‘have fun today, but you’ll pay for it tomorrow’.

Ego State: Child
Working with an After Script

End work on a positive.

Anticipate negative escalations later and take steps to ensure the client has protection.

Stroke after positive statements (before the but!)

When a client makes a high (but) low statement get them to say it again in reverse order i.e. I enjoyed our session today but I am not sure I will feel better tomorrow (reverse this) or when client uses ‘but’ replace this with ‘and’.
Almost I - Please Others, Try Hard

Are like Sisyphus, condemned to push a huge rock up a hill only to find that it rolls down again just as he nears the top.

The classic pattern is: ‘I almost made it this time’.

Ego State: Child
Working with an Almost I Script

Confront almost pattern of finishing.

Ask for tasks to be completed and stroke for completion.

Don’t move onto anything new before a task is finished. If a piece of work cannot be finished (time etc.) ask for a summary of what has been achieved.
Almost II – Please Others, Be Perfect

Type 2 is illustrated by the high-achiever, who manages to push the rock to the top of the hill, but rather than enjoying the success merely looks around for the next hill and starts again.

Ego State: Child/ Parent
Working with an Almost II Script

Confront client’s desire to hurry onto next task opposed to noticing what they have just completed.

Invite clients to celebrate each achievement as it’s made.
Open Ended – Be Perfect

Follow’s the story of Philemon & Baucis, who were turned into trees as a reward for the good deeds of their lifetimes (almost literally left to vegetate).

People who live an Open-ended script are like actors who only have the first part of their script – they reach a certain point in their lives & find themselves lost.

E.g. ‘empty nest syndrome’ parent’s look forward to their offspring leaving home but are at a loss as how to structure their longed-for free time.

Ego State: Child / Parent
Working with an Open Ended Script

Confront open ended pattern by inviting client to use goal setting techniques.

Review goals frequently.

Reframe script patterns by pointing out ‘blank pages’ – a gift in disguise. Client can fill in blank pages however they want!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Script</th>
<th>Motto</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Main driver</th>
<th>Ego State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Until</td>
<td>I can't have fun until I've finished all my work</td>
<td>Stops self from getting something pleasant until something unpleasant has been achieved</td>
<td>Be Perfect</td>
<td>Child or Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>I never get what I most want</td>
<td>Doesn't get started, doesn't get anywhere</td>
<td>Be Strong</td>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>I've made my bed now I have to lie in it</td>
<td>Stays with situations even when negative</td>
<td>Try Hard or Be Strong</td>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>I can have fun today but I'll have to pay for it tomorrow</td>
<td>Gets something pleasant but then punishes self with something unpleasant</td>
<td>Please Others</td>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost I</td>
<td>I almost get to the top of the hill, but then I slip back down again</td>
<td>Gets started (on projects etc.) but doesn’t quite finish them</td>
<td>Try Hard and Please Others</td>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost II</td>
<td>I get to the top of the hill and immediately start off for an even higher hill</td>
<td>Finishes (project etc.) and goes on without pausing to another task.</td>
<td>Be Perfect And Please Others</td>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Ended</td>
<td>After a certain point in time, I won’t know what to do with myself</td>
<td>Reaches a certain point in life, in projects etc. and then “hits a blank”.</td>
<td>Be Perfect</td>
<td>Child or Parent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I never thought you were a fool
But darling look at you
You gotta stand up straight
Carry your own weight
These tears are going nowhere baby
You’ve got to get yourself together
You’ve got stuck in a moment
And now you can’t get out of it.
(Bono & the Edge, 2000)

Impasse Theory

• The Gouldings (1978) and later Ken Mellor (1980) describe how an impasse is a “stuck” place caused by a conflict between the competing needs and demands of the Parent and Child ego states.

• Failing to achieve a healthy resolution, the individual hurls himself backwards and forwards between ego states.

• In early TA literature, the term impasse was used only to refer to an intrapsychic conflict.
  – The term is now used to also describe the experience of being stuck in the working relationship.
The Gouldings developed the notion of three levels of impasse which result from decisions made while growing up (1978)

1\textsuperscript{st} Degree – Relate to counter injunctions and the decision made. They develop after the child is old enough to understand language.

2\textsuperscript{nd} Degree – Relate to injunctions and the early decision. They usually originate much earlier than 1\textsuperscript{st} degrees and are carried by feelings.

3\textsuperscript{rd} Degree – Relate to primal protocols (Berne 1972). They originate during very young experiences, possibly pre-natal.
Impasse Theory – The Goulding's

1st Degree

Be Strong

P2

Please Others

A2

People don’t like feisty girls

C2

Urge to stand up for self / fight back

Depression.

2nd Degree

Don’t Feel

P1

Don’t Think

A1

(Suppression of opinion/beliefs/feelings)

C1

I could explode with rage, I feel so misunderstood (hurt & upset)

3rd Degree

AC

Sense of emptiness (die)

FC

Sense of yearning (live)

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Structural Impasse (Mellor)

Type 1
Parent - You're a failure (Try hard)
Child - I am going to prove myself

Type 2
Don't Succeed
I want to be top of the class

Type 3
Just give up, you'll never be good enough (exhaustion)
I just want to be loved (agitation)

Note: Impasses were originally described as degrees, as in "First Degree Impasse", but Type is now used.