Transactions, Strokes and Time Structuring

Objectives
To understand and critically evaluate transactions and communication.
To discuss and understand stroke theory and relate to time structuring.
To critically evaluate the theoretical concept of stroking and time structure in clinical practice

Articles
White, T (1994) Life Positions. TAJ 24 (4)
Transactions
Definition & Key Points

- Berne refers to a transaction as ‘the basic unit of social discourse’.

- A transaction is ‘a two way communication’. This can be either internal (intrapsychic) or external (interpersonal). (Lapworth, Sill & Fish)
  - Transactions can proceed from the Parent, Adult or Child of one person to that of another.

- A Transaction consists of a stimulus and a response between two ego states.
  - In behavioural terms a *stimulus* is given to which a *response* is made.

- An **intrapsychic** communication is an internal dialogue within an individuals psyche.

- With an **interpersonal** transaction a communication is made from one person to another and a communication is returned.

- A conversation consists of a series of transactions linked together.

- There are three types of transaction and a rule of communication for each one.
Complementary Transaction (Parallel Transaction).

- Diagrammatically the transactional vectors are parallel and the ego state addressed is the one that responds.
- Communication remains open because the response is appropriate to the stimulus.
- Whilst complimentary the flow of communication will continue.

- **Parent** ‘You are always late’ (said critically in an accusatory way)
- **Child** ‘I am sorry I should have set off earlier’ (head hung down and a quiet voice) Child.
- **Adult** ‘What time is lunch?’
- **Adult** ‘Usually about 1 o’clock’
- In both these examples and any complementary transaction communication remains open because the responses given are appropriate to the stimulus. *This is the first rule of communication.*

**First Rule of Communication**
- Complimentary transactions have a quality of expectedness about them.
Crossed Transaction.

- A crossed transaction occurs when an unexpected response is made to the stimulus. An inappropriate ego state is activated and the lines of transacting between the people are crossed.
  - This may mean a withdrawal, turning away from each other or a switch in the direction of conversation. The person who initiated the conversation can often feel discounted or misunderstood.

- **Adult – Adult** ‘Did you remember to bring the money you owe me?’
- **Child – Parent** ‘Oh I’m sorry I don’t’ hesitates, eyes dart up and down.
- **Child – Child** ‘Let’s not go today and have some fun instead
- **Parent – Child** ‘Why can’t you ever take anything serious, I’m not missing today!’
Discount Crossed Transaction.

- An important kind of crossed transaction is the discount transaction.
- A discount transaction disregards what the other is saying.
- Discounts are not always obvious but are unpleasant and if repeated can make the other person feel upset and eventually crazy!

- Child – Parent ‘I feel really anxious about starting my new job.
- Adult – Child ‘Things like that never bother me.
  - Worry is discounted!

**Second rule of communication**
- Indicates that when a transaction is crossed a break in communication results and one or both individuals will need to shift ego-states in order for communication to be re-established.
Ulterior Transaction

- Ulterior transactions are more complex – two messages are conveyed at the same time, this type of transactions involves more than 2 ego states simultaneously.

- One message is an overt or social-level message. The other is a covert or psychological-level message.

- Most often, the social-level content is Adult to Adult. The psychological-level messages are usually either Parent-Child or Child-Parent.

- Ulterior transactions form the basis of psychological games.

- There are two types of ulterior transactions
  - Angular & Duplex
Angular Transaction.

- Three ego states involved and occurs when messages are sent simultaneously from one ego state of one person to two ego states of the other person.

- On both levels social and psychological transactions are complimentary

- Often the social level content is Adult to Adult. The psychological level message is usually Parent-Child or Child Parent.

- Berne – considered a sales person as particularly adept at this type of transaction.

- Social Level Stimulus
  - Adult – Adult (Therapist) Social ‘What are you feeling?’

- Psychological Level Stimulus
  - Adult – Child (Therapist) ‘Express how you feel’ (expecting a feeling response)

- Social Level Response
  - Adult – Adult (Client) ‘I’m fine’ Adult-Adult (don’t get into the ulterior)
Duplex Transaction.

- Involves four ego states, two in each person.
- Two sets of complementary transactions are occurring simultaneously, one on the social level and one on the psychological level.

**Social Level Stimulus**
- Adult – Adult ‘What do you think of my new hairstyle?’

**Psychological Level Stimulus**
- Child – Parent ‘I’m not really sure whether I like it or not (seeks reassurance)

**Social Level Response**
- Adult – Adult “Well, it’s different to how you normally have it

**Psychological Level Response**
- Parent – Child “You should never have had it cut, it looks awful

**Third rule of communication** - The outcome of the transactions will be determined on the psychological level rather than the social.
Special Types of Transactions

Carom
- The stimulus is sent to a second person but the intention is for the message to be caromed or bounced off them to a third person. The second person may not be aware of the first person’s intention and may or may not respond. The carom transaction is completed if the third person responds to the indirectly communicated message.

- Mother to father (in earshot of son)
- **Social level stimulus** ‘I think we’ll have your mum for Christmas she does not see much of her grandchildren these days’
- **Psychological level stimulus** ‘You should go and see your grandma she always sends you money’ **Carom - Mother indirectly to son**

- **Social level response (to psychological level stimulus)** Son to mother ‘I think I’ll go and see grandma over Christmas.’ (Son may however rebel and internally say “won’t get round to it,” or may just not pick up on the carom).
Gallows

- Any laugh or smile which accompanies a discounting transaction about either self or someone else.

- Gallows serve to reinforce the persons script decision and masks something painful.

- Mostly comes from Adapted Child or Parent (in reinforcing the script i.e. ‘I’m stupid’ or ‘show them how stupid you are’).

- Elicits approval from others by inviting them into a *gallows transaction*.

  - **Social level stimulus** ‘I didn’t do very well at school but think I can hold my own now (giggles)’
  - **Psychological level stimulus** ‘I still don’t really take myself seriously and neither should you’

- **Social level stimulus** ‘my father was really abusive when I was a child, I remember how he would beat me for being naughty (laughs/smiles)

- **Psychological level stimulus** ‘I deserved it, I shouldn’t have been naughty.’
Bullseye

- A direct Adult comment that effectively reaches all three ego states at the same time. It is an Adult statement that speaks to all three ego states in a way that invites new awareness.

- This is an effective way to cross the transaction when someone is stuck in a Parent or Child ego state.

- **Social Stimulus** ‘I can see you are really upset about how your father beat you as a child (Child)
- **Social Stimulus** And that you are working really hard to not show your feelings (Parent)
- **Social Stimulus** I’m wondering if you have any thoughts about why you suppress your feelings? (Adult)
Hungers

- Eric Berne identified six human hungers which need to be met in order to maintain physical, mental and emotional well-being.
- Stimulus hunger
- Contact-hunger
- Recognition-hunger
- Sexual-hunger
- Structure-hunger
- Incident Hunger

The fulfilment of these hungers is essential for people’s health and survival. If these hungers are not met directly, attempts will be made to meet them indirectly by the use of games.
Stimulus Hunger

- Our biological need for sensory stimulation of our 5 senses

- The arousal system of the brain needs excitation for the health and continuing functioning of the organism.

- Within 48 hours of full sensory deprivation, people begin to have delusions and hallucinations demonstrating the need for stimulation for mental and emotional stability.
Contact Hunger

- Comprises our need for touch but also our need for contact with another being's skin (physical strokes). Involves physical emotional warmth & contact with others.

- An exchange of infra red rays takes place which is both energising and pleasurable for the recipient.

- People who seldom or never have skin contact often develop symptoms such as arthritis requiring medical attention to fulfil their bodily-contact needs.
Recognition Hunger

- Verbal recognition and body language can substitute for physical contact.
- Physical touch can satisfy this hunger
- The need for acknowledgement of our existence and our sense of self may be met in a simple hello.
- We all have a personal preference for the quantity and type of recognition.
  - A smile may be enough for a sales assistant and a rock star may need the applause of thousands.
Sexual Hunger

- A specific form of contact-hunger which involves stimulation and contact of our sexual organs by self and others.

- Healthy human beings have these needs met with consent causing no harm, whereas people who do not do this healthily may use inappropriate means of gratification.
Incident Hunger

- Whereas in structure hunger we look for stability in incident-hunger we seek destabilisation.

- This is the need for excitement, the unexpected and new to avoid boredom.

- May be constructive i.e. doing a parachute jump for charity. May be destructive as in reckless driving.
Structure Hunger

- Organising our time and personal environment.

- We are concerned with how to provide sufficient certainty and security in our lives for us to feel safe enough in life to encounter all those things in life over which we have no control.
  - Structuring our time avoids boredom and provides the necessary sense of certainty and security.

- We can have too much / too little time structure.
Time Structuring

- Withdrawal
- Rituals
- Pastiming
- Activities
- Games
- Intimacy
Jody Mardula The Appetite Path Model

Unhealthy Appetite Paths leading to Tragic Outcomes

- Harm Self
- Go Crazy
- Harm Others

Script

Created in order to make sense of our inner experience (Mellor). Often a strong defence against experiencing the core self.

Experiences self in the moment, with full awareness of sensations.

Stimulus
Recognition
Contact
Structure
Incident
Sexual

Healthy Appetite Paths meet psychological hungers and nourish the core self.
Strokes

*Definition*

A stroke is a unit of attention which provides stimulation to an individual.
A stroke in TA is anything you do or say to someone, by which you give them recognition.
- Research indicates that it makes little difference whether the physical stimulation invokes pleasure or pain. Monkeys, cloth surrogate mothers, food and stimulation.

- Strokes are as necessary to human life as other primary needs, such as food & water, yet as children we may be told it is wrong to exchange a positive stroke (fear of harm etc.)

- Strokes are given /received daily.
  - Positive or negative.
  - A positive stroke invites I+ U+
  - A negative stroke invites the position U-
3 basic types of strokes

- Physical
- Verbal / non verbal.
- Non-verbal

  - These can be Positive and negative
  - Conditional and unconditional.
# Types of Strokes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conditional Positive</th>
<th>Conditional Negative</th>
<th>Unconditional Positive</th>
<th>Unconditional Negative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical</strong></td>
<td>Hug for doing a good job</td>
<td>Smack for not doing a good job</td>
<td>Hug for just being you</td>
<td>Hit for just being you/existing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal</strong></td>
<td>Thank you that was a lovely meal</td>
<td>That wasn’t your best meal</td>
<td>I love you! You are gorgeous just as you are</td>
<td>I don’t like you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You look lovely in that</td>
<td>That doesn’t suit you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Verbal</strong></td>
<td>Appreciative glance</td>
<td>Dirty look redundancy</td>
<td>Attentive Listening Smiling</td>
<td>Not listening withdrawal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pay increase</td>
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## House of cards

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conditional Strokes (for doing)</th>
<th>Unconditional Strokes (for being you)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
<td><strong>Diamonds</strong> Crystal clear, sharp, hard edged That was an excellent assignment</td>
<td><strong>Hearts</strong> Go straight to the heart Its good to see you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spades</strong> A bit of a dig!! Your assignment seemed a bit confusing in parts, and didn’t have a conclusion</td>
<td><strong>Clubs</strong> Deathly I don’t like your culture (prejudice) These type of strokes are harmful to the wellbeing of people and humanity</td>
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Stroke Reinforcement

- As we grow up we learn to adapt our behaviour to receive as many strokes as we can.
  - Strokes consequently reinforce our behaviour.
- We may reinforce strokes internally with our Parent ego state.
- Our natural hunger for strokes means we seek the strokes familiar to us, even if inappropriate to our current situation.
- Unconsciously repeat invitations for the desired stroke
  - i.e. passive undemanding person, waits patiently to be noticed and stroked
  - Child who learnt to equate achievement with recognition – becomes a workaholic
Stroke Economy
Steiner 1974

- Like an economy based on money. Once you make money scare people will work hard to earn some to get their basic needs met.
- One can be controlled / control by money, it’s the same with strokes.

- The stroke economy creates a scarcity of love and affection by imposing a set of rules that govern the exchange of strokes.

- Life position – will determine the type of strokes we give and receive.
  - People who feel ok about themselves and others tend to seek out exchanges of positive strokes.
  - People who don’t feel ok about themselves and/or others tend to seek out negative strokes which they use to maintain or increase their not-ok feelings.
Steiner – five restrictive rules

- Steiner lists five restrictive rules regarding strokes which many children are taught and suggests that one or more of these rules result in what he calls ‘a loveless script’

- Don’t give strokes if you have them to give
- Don’t ask for strokes when you need or want them
- Don’t accept strokes even if you want them
- Don’t reject strokes when you do not want them, or even if you do not like them
- Don’t give yourself strokes

- Unfortunately, most people follow some or all of these rules and so remain at least a little stroke deprived.