

WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ORGANISATIONS & WAS AFRAID TO ASK!

I want to bring to attention Berne's original insights into organisations. Most of us belong to at least one, even if we are sole traders and have left working in an organisation ourselves - perhaps because we didn't like it! And if you are reading this then it's likely that you belong to the ITA - and maybe discovered recently on receiving letters about resignations and changes that even if you have got out of working for an organisation the issues that can be generated by organisations have not got completely out of you!

I originally trained in TA psychotherapy, and on becoming qualified as a counsellor I went to a second training relating to TA and organisations. It was really only after my CTA qualification that I discovered what a wealth of TA focussed on how organisations work - and how important this knowledge was for both my own counselling and therapy practice, as well as in my work as a coach and a consultant to organisations. As most psychotherapists have clients who present with workplace issues, as well as belonging to a membership organisation that has its own difficulties, I believe it is crucial that we all have an understanding of the psychological energies of an organisation, and how these can impact on an individual. As we have moved into the 21st century we have moved increasingly into a national blame culture which uses an amateurish psychological perspective to point to any and every problem as being due to individual pathology - pick up any tabloid or broadsheet to read this in action! At the same time in our western culture, the tendency is for individuals caught up in organisational issues to make it all about themselves - again, check out the daily news!

And yet what Berne wrote in the *Structure and Dynamics of Organisations and Groups* in 1966 still stands today - sadly his writing was opaque, full of tangents and grandiosities (he clearly had fun analysing the role of the monarchy for England), poorly edited, and consequently probably misunderstood, as it hasn't had the influence the essential ideas deserve. The essence of it is brilliant, simple and accurate - an organisation's *structures* psychologically contain (or don't) an individual's interpersonal and intrapsychic processes. This is containment in the psychodynamic sense: we probably all have sufficient script issues that we can behave 'badly' ie act out, if either uncontained or if rigidly restricted. An individual will probably opt for, and be also be selected by an organisation because there is a 'script fit' (Rosa Krausz, a Brazilian transactional analyst has written beautifully about this in the TAJ). It is the interplay of two - the individual and the organisation - which for each can generate potential and effectiveness, or destroy autonomy and flexibility. Not unlike any 'marriage'.

I am passionate for every psychotherapist to appreciate the impact of an organisation on an individual, and their interplay. This is not only to avoid over-pathologising the individual (remembering we all have the capacity to act out if invited to do so) but also to educationally support the individual to understand how organisations work and the limitations of the power of the individual. I am equally passionate for people who work in organisations, especially in leadership roles, to also understand how organisations develop and behave - very few have any cognisance of this, and it is rarely linked into management education which in recent years has perhaps become over-focussed on the psychology of individuals without considering that the organisation itself has a history and culture that both reflects psychological inputs, is a container for projections and operates psychologically as a system in relationship with individuals.

Berne suggested that the first rule of an organisation is to survive at all costs. Implicitly his work suggests that the second rule of an organisation is that its structures impact psychologically to shape its dynamics, and the implicit third is that the resulting interplay between the structure and the dynamics creates the organisational culture, which includes an organisational 'script'.

Whilst an organisation is a system (just as a family is a system) made up of many individuals and there are endless permutations of relationships between them, it is these *dynamics* which are or are not contained by the organisation's systemic *structures*. At the end is a list of the different aspects of *structure* inferred or referred to by Berne - at a glance these look like dry sociological phenomena. Berne's genius was to investigate their psychological impact (ie psychodynamic containment) - which he described as providing (or not) *pressure* which then results in either *agitation* or *cohesion* in the individuals and the culture of the organisation. (Berne noticed the irony of the initial letters of these dynamics forces!)Effective holding and containment psychodynamically involves naming what is going on - hence the importance of everyone having the wherewithal to name the psychological features of organisations and noting their presence or absence or dominance - the internal Adult and TA itself can provide a useful vocabulary for naming these parts.

Whilst these *structures* evolve over time from the beginning of an organisation's life they are initially shaped by the founder (and this includes his or her script). The resulting early structures then generate the *culture* ie in Berne's terms this has three dimensions: agreements on how we behave (the etiquette -including the games we allow); how we resource these (the technics - which include justification of such games); and the character (including the shadow or the script of the organisation). This culture is carried by the individuals in the organisation - Pearl Dreger considers they are introjected into the Parent ego state. These enculturated individuals reinforce or change or add to the structures as they culturally and individually see fit - mostly out of awareness. Changing a culture to a pre-determined outcome is

probably impossible, just as in therapy it is not possible to prescribe an individual a particular future. External and internal pressures impact on the organisation's structures which might then either - out of awareness - shift or explicitly reform; and these movements will subtly or overtly re-shape the culture through their impact on the organisation's members. Culture includes the organisational script - and healthy aspects of the organisation.

If we consider that our TA organisations were originally founded by Berne then it's not surprising to find aspects of what we might consider his script shaping the culture - and some of this still influencing our culture in the ITA. In my 15 years of membership of the ITA I have noticed, and I have played my part either actively or as a bystander in, for example: a fondness for uproar; sex at conferences; a rebellious questioning especially in relation to 'the establishment'; a focus on individuals, independence and independent institutes rather than harmony, teamwork, and loyalty to the organisation; brilliant insights and intuitions with little evidence and research(and so not being integrated into the mainstream of universities); avoidance of intimacy (Berne and his 15 minutes in a lifetime!); a great set of concepts and not practicing what we preach; a stance of I'm OK and You are Not (and as for them....);splitting and yet desiring integration ;a sense of a global community alongside not belonging and almost everyone wanting to be a leader; wonderful humour and vicious backbiting; narcissism and grandiosity (Berne put International into the TAA with the addition of one Canadian member) and also momentary glimpses of real relationship; changing of the rules including criteria for exams to suit individual proclivities (Fanita English's story of her exam indicates the origins of this); informal power upheld over formal authority; trainers being important; numerous chairs leaving with feelings of hurt and a sense being unacknowledged and undervalued. I could go on - each of us will have resonant observations on the culture of our organisation.

Change in the culture comes about both through natural evolution impacted by external pressures and also through internal pressures to shift structures, plus occasionally through specific interventions by internal or external consultants or managers (Berne referred to this as organisational psychiatry)- and may well be met by resistance. This parallels individuals resisting change and giving up key assumptions from their script in psychotherapy, and refiguring their structural ego states. Yet it is only through a change of structural elements that an organisation might transform its culture. Our organisation, the ITA, had restructured in many ways through the work of internal consultants and council, over the year or so prior to the recent resignations - the uproar that has occurred in council could be seen as symptomatic of the unconscious resistance of the whole organisational system, so as to hang on to our old cultural habits: a flight from the health that the new structures might encourage .Notice the stress on the organisational dynamic here - although separate individuals made decisions at the time to resign or not, my

argument is that the structures were such that they both precipitated such actions and there seemed no alternatives.

The resignation letter circulated from the Chair described being unable to fulfil this role if the council does not ascribe authority to this position. This is clearly an issue about organisational structures even though it might seem to be about individuals, (especially to those concerned) - however this is a not uncommon structural issue, especially in the voluntary sector. The Chair is the equivalent to the chief executive of an organisation, and the council a management committee - if the committee does not place authority in their leader, then this role is rendered impotent and cannot be carried out effectively. The ITA is a voluntary organisation and it is common in such organisations for the management group not to have a contract with a clear job description with specified powers - indeed it might not be realised that they are the management group, and their gift time may go largely unacknowledged, and there may be no recruitment criteria delineating competence, nor any training for the tasks and roles involved. The ITA is made of half a dozen different membership categories which is currently not reflected in the structure of council (eg two members from each category - associate members, regular members, contracted members, CTAs, PTSTAs, TSTAs and perhaps some lay people). As a result many members of the organisation seem to feel greater loyalty to their training institute than to the ITA. Within the ITA at large it is the trainers who hold status and power - and even if not on council they have been known to influence the decisions of council.

A key element of structure is *role*. One of the great contemporary writers in organisational TA is Bernd Schmid who has just missed (2006) getting the Eric Berne Memorial Award for his ground-breaking paper on roles, which argues that personality is entirely constructed out of our relationships in the variety of roles that we have played since birth or even before. He, along with Gunther Mohr suggests that there are four clusters of roles that we individually may hold - private (or personal), community, professional, and organisational - and that both internal and external conflict can be caused by occupying an inappropriate role in a particular context. Thus ITA council members are in an organisational role in relation to the membership, and in a professional management role with regard to each other on the council, and there are (or should be) protocols and knowledge that are required in such roles which include developing strategy and policy, either out of consultation with members or through working groups or in discussion on council. Many managers learn that discussion with members of an organisation outside the management group creates agitation amongst the membership and that it is wise not to do this until there is a clear decision made in the group - which might include the decision to consult. From some of the correspondence sent to all ITA members it seemed that terminology was used to refer to this management protocol which related to other and different professional roles held outside of council by many council and other

members and this caused confusion - for example 'confidentiality' can become 'an ethical issue' or 'secrets' or many other things in other professional domains.

Excellent thinking about organisational games has been done by Os Summerton in several TAJ articles, including his concept the Game Pentagon - this includes the roles of sniper, saviour, scapegoat, spectators and (the usually invisible) stage manager. Whilst the dynamics of the drama triangle are in some ways mirrored in the first three of these roles, it is important to put these in an organisational frame - the inadequacies in the structures of the organisation will invite any available individuals to adopt these roles for an organisational pay-off such as an avoidance of reviewing and remedying the weaknesses in the organisational structures, and the muted effectiveness of the organisation in regard to its vision and mission. Individuals caught up in organisational games are likely to experience hurt and/or frustration and to take this very personally- without realising that they are in many ways mere players in an energetic system which is the organisation itself resisting investigation and change. It is extraordinarily important for any consultants, mediators and managers to recognise this dynamic, else they too will grandiosely play out a pentagon role - just as in a therapeutic setting a grownup from a family history of abuse might grandiosely believe it their responsibility to 'sort out' previous generations.

There are many other psychological aspects of organisations that could be explored with relevance to the ITA - this is why I run a one year programme for therapists and other practitioners who recognise their need to gain further insights into the psychology of organisations, and that TA has some gems way beyond the concepts everyone knows about, beginning with Berne! Most importantly however is to remember that people problems in organisations are usually more about unhealthy structures in organisations than the pathology of the individual concerned - and that individuals can become very hurt by organisations - and if we all had greater understanding of the psychology of organisations this could be reduced and - oh my grandiosity - the world become a better place!

As for the future of the ITA - it will survive (first principles) and could really thrive - if the leadership are willing to grapple with the remaining structural weaknesses which have been exacerbated by the growth of the organisation into a large entity, and if the membership are willing to have patience as this takes time.

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qualifications. She can be reached at Rosemary.Napper@TAmatters.com. The ideas presented here are her understanding of Berne and other organisational TA theorists with the intent to (i) enable ITA members to appreciate that individual hurt, frustration and other experiences in organisations, including the ITA, may be much less about the individuals psychology as the organisation's pathology (ii) for readers to recognise that relationships within and with organisations are for most of the population a hugely significant part of daily life and we all need to take responsibility in having greater and up-to-date understanding of how they operate psychologically and (iii) for practising transactional analysts to realise how whole tranches of quality TA may often be overlooked or misunderstood within TA as well as outside of TA.

This list of the key organisational structures (which are psychological as well as administrative and professional) that shape and *contain* the dynamics. The whole is the system which can be hard to conceptualise - it is if the collective organisation has a 'mind' of its own. The energetic interplay between the structure and dynamics gives rise to the organisational culture (including its script) - this is the way of the systemic 'mind' showing itself in awareness and unconsciously.

STRUCTURE

VISION & VALUES

Mission and canon

Objectives

tasks

ORGANISATION

sections and groupings

chart

membership

leadership

followership

representation

ROLES

definition and requirements

boundaries and overlaps

allocation and competences

authority and powers

PROTOCOLS

policy

eg equal opportunities

procedures

eg recruitment

evaluation

grievance

information flow

processes

eg learning and development

eg rewards

formal and agreed informal

RESOURCES

sites

equipment

finance

people

information

time

DYNAMICS

INTERPERSONAL

BEHAVIOUR

formal & informal

competence and experience

professional & personal

meetings, groups and teams

management styles

prioritising

strokes

assessment

COMMUNICATIONS

information flow - up down
around

decision-making

commands and instructions

mentoring and coaching

gossip and games

INTERNAL

CAPACITY

strengths & talents

learning & growth

autonomy and homony

(belonging)

THOUGHTS

motivation

expectations and wants

awareness and accounting

FEELINGS

emotions

experience

containment

OUT OF AWARENESS

transferences

projections

projective identification

imago

needs, desires and hungers