
Analysing 'people' within organisations

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Private, Professional and Organisational Roles

Schmid (2008) was honoured with the Eric Berne Memorial Award for his role concept, which he developed as "an expansion of the ego state model" (p.19) when dissatisfied with the lack of systemic concepts within TA that could be applied in organisational work.

He proposed a three-role model of organisational, professional and private roles, although he did concede (Schmid 2008) that other models had more roles. Schmid diagrammed the three roles within a ladder, which of course allowed for the addition of more roles at the top and foot of said ladder, although he precluded this somewhat by enclosing the ladder within a circle labelled 'personality'.

He defined a role as "a coherent system of attitudes, feelings, behaviours, perspectives on reality, and accompanying relationships" (p.20) and went on to say that roles are linked to specific realities and frames of reference. He also described various ways of analysing roles just as we do ego states; I summarised these in a previous article (Hay 2011).

Superior, Equal or Inferior

Crespelle (1998) had previously also written about roles and ego states. He referred to social roles and quoted Stoetzel (1960) in linking them to social contexts such as institutions and particular cultures. Crespelle also commented that roles are tied to activities, and played in ways that reflect relative role positions. He went on to describe how role positioning depends on external signs that serve as status indicators, such as rank (power), beauty, lifestyle (privilege or handicap) and experience, and performance (knowledge or sophistication).

Crespelle proposed that we adopt one of three interpersonal stances based on status indicators: superior, equal or inferior, and that we interact between role positions just as we transact between ego states. He diagrammed the roles like ego states except that he used three stacked diamonds, and illustrated equal and unequal complementary interactions, and superior and inferior crossed transactions.

He labelled equal complementary transactions as 'co-operation' (between the middle, equal, diamonds); unequal complementary as 'hierarchy' (one up and one down); crossed transactions where both seek to be one up as 'antagonistic'; and crossed where both seek to be one down as 'blocked'. The final two appear similar to Schiff et al (1975) material on competitive symbioses.

Internal and Behavioural Ego States

The third strand to this paper is that I have developed a model (Hay 1992, 2009) that incorporates internal and behavioural ego states rather than structural and functional. I did this as a pragmatic solution to the problems I encountered when seeking to teach 'ego states' to managers, as well as in response to ongoing differences of ego state definition within the TA community. In this model, I use dotted circles to

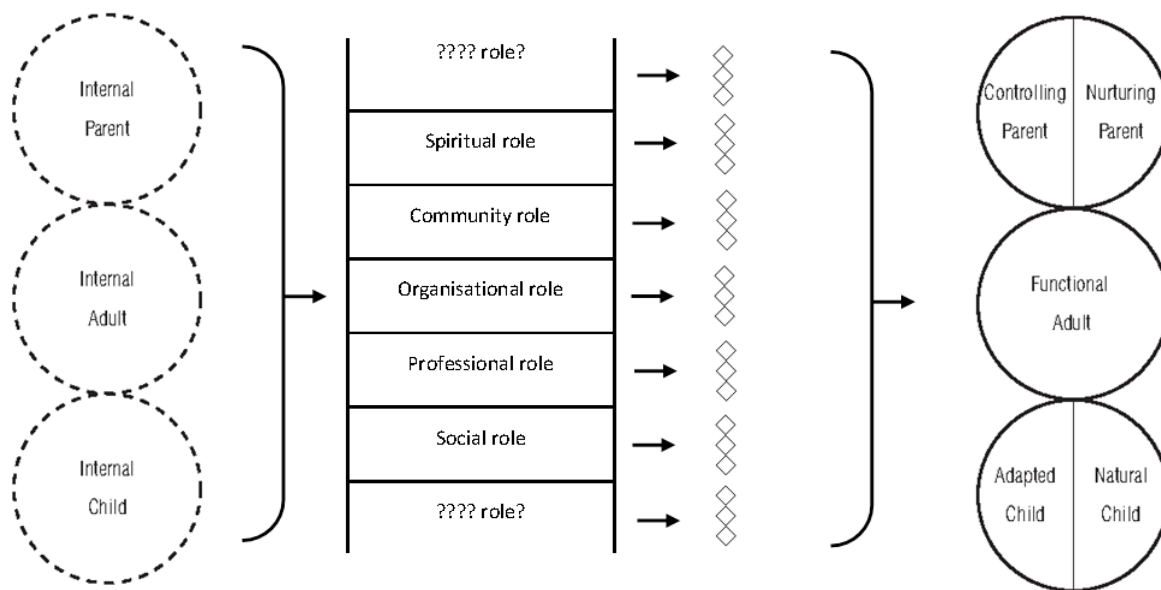


Figure 1: from internal ego states through roles via stances to behavioural ego states

indicate the inability to directly observe the existence within of Internal Parent, Internal Adult and Internal Child; we see only the resulting behaviours. I use the normal ego states circles to diagram behavioural ego states, with Parent and Child subdivided just as Berne (1961) did originally for the functional model. However, I rename Adult as Functional Adult to emphasise that it is not the same as here-and-now or Integrated/Integrating Adult. This also provides consistency as all behavioural ego states then have two-part labels; Functional Adult joins Controlling Parent and Nurturing Parent, Adapted Child and Natural Child.

Ego State Diagnosis

Putting these ideas together, I arrive at the representation shown in Figure 1. Our internal ego states, shown as dotted lines because we cannot directly observe them in others, contain our stores of recordings and our processing unit, as well as being the receptacles for our ongoing experiences. Script and autonomy are there.

These function within our roles. We may be neatly within one role or we may have role contamination, as in the recent case of a Christian airline stewardess seeking to show a religious symbol that the uniform requirements of her organisational role at that time precluded.

We may also have role conflict, such as when we want to be at work in our professional role and at home with our loved ones. In any role, or mix of roles, we may opt for the status of superior, equal or inferior – hence there are 3 stacked diamonds available for each role.

Finally, we display behaviour, for which I use the diagram of behavioural ego states. Drawn just as Berne (1961) drew functional, this has solid lines because it can be observed. Unlike several other TA models, it recognises that any behavioural ego state can be positive or negative. For example, Nurturing Parent from a superior stance will lead to ‘smothering someone in kindness’; Functional Adult may put someone down with logical precision when they needed support or encouragement.

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