

Why do we need to know about research?

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Most people who study TA will learn that Berne (1961, 1963, 1964) referred to a study by Spitz (1945, 1946) to support the notion that people need strokes, and that without them our spinal cords shrivel up. Many other TA authors (Harris 1969, James & Jongeward 1971, Steiner 1974) have made similar comments, following after Berne and often quoting Spitz also. However, if you access the original paper by Spitz, you will find that it does not support Berne's conclusions. It may be that Berne is correct but the particular research quoted so often within TA does not provide the necessary evidence. Hobbs (1984) points out that:

- Spitz 'measured' the children using a Developmental Quotient which is not defined.
- Spitz said children had more illnesses in the Foundling Home but gave no comparative figures for the children in the Nursery, nor for the general population – he wrote that it was an *assumption* that the circumstances had caused them to be less able to resist disease.
- Spitz noted that the homes were similar in terms of hygienic conditions, housing, food, clothing and medical care but then wrote that several differences were either irrelevant or *assumed* to have a positive impact on the Foundling Home infants – these included differences in: the backgrounds of the mothers; the timings when

infants were moved in and out of individual cubicles; the lighting; the finances; and how long breast feeding continued. Each of these probably had an impact on the children.

- Likewise, Spitz noted several differences, any of which could have had an impact – these included: access to toys; what surrounding activity could be seen by the babies, such as mothers and other babies being there versus empty corridors, and sheets blocking any view through the sides of the cot; how much time spent in cots; and the ratio of staff to children.

Finally, it seems that Spitz was prone to experimenter bias – he appeared to ignore other possible explanations and decided the problems were due to lack of human contact when it could just as easily have been the lack of perceptual stimulation.

The above comments are included here to demonstrate why TA practitioners need to know about research. We need to be able to study source documents and make up our own minds what the studies prove – or fail to prove.

Another interesting tale is provided by Gale (1992). He used Interpersonal Process Recall (Kagan & Kagan 1990) as a way to take a couple through an analysis of therapy they had experienced – and found that the couple rated the research interview more useful, from a therapeutic viewpoint, than the therapy had been. Gale hypothesised that the difference might have been due to:

- Different relationship – with the researcher the focus was on understanding rather than solving issues;
- Different constraints – the researcher asked them to talk about

the therapy process and hence they were discouraged from talking (and arguing) about their problems;

- Collaborative telling of their story using metaphor allowed new meanings and new understandings to emerge;
- Talking about the process appeared to allow the couple to observe themselves as if from outside the process, so they could laugh at themselves and identify new behavioural options.

Whereas the comments on Spitz are about a poorly-conducted research study, the Gale example reminds us that research is cocreative (Summers & Tudor 2000) and cannot be conducted without taking into account the impact of the researcher.

Research Ethics

As DTA practitioners, we already abide by various national and international codes of ethics within our work but there are several additional considerations when we decide to undertake research. For some large scale studies, there may even be an Ethical Committee which must give approval to our plans before we can start. Even if there is no such committee, we still need to ensure that what we propose to do will be ethical. This usually means getting some supervision that is directly focused on our research plans, as well as supervision of what is happening once the research is underway – and possibly supervision on what happens afterwards as well.

The TA approach to contracting (see the workbook for *Professional Intervention*) is particularly relevant here because our research is so often done as part of our normal practice. This means that we need to consider carefully the relationships between the contract for our work as a practitioner and our contract as a researcher. Contracting also provides a

way of ensuring that our research is meeting ethical guidelines such as those described below; we can check our contracts with the various stakeholders to ensure that all involved are aware of the ethical considerations.

The British Psychological Society (2010) provides a useful list of four factors to consider (the following uses their headings but with explanations that relate to DTA research):

Respect for the dignity and autonomy of persons - this naturally relates to the principles of transactional analysis. In terms of research, it involves factors such as getting informed consent from subjects, ensuring there is no coercion involved, and giving them the right to withdraw at any time. We would expect that these aspects would all be included within the contracting for the research. For example, if there are multiple parties to the contract, such as when running a training programme within the organisation, it is important to ensure that all participants know that they can opt out without any negative consequences from their employer.

Scientific value - this principle reminds us that our research should be designed and conducted in such a way that it will make a valuable contribution to knowledge and understanding. Submitting our research proposals to a committee, or at least to a group of our peers and supervisors, can help ensure that what we are going to do will be a useful addition to existing knowledge, as well as checking that our proposed research processes are robust. We also need to guard against doing research simply because we need to demonstrate that we know how – the link back to practice means that we avoid the trap of setting up research merely to provide a submission to get a qualification.

Social responsibility - we need to be aware that our research, and our practice,

is conducted within human society. This means that we must take into account the circumstances of our subjects and not do anything which would put them at a disadvantage. For example, if we are researching the qualities of effective managers, we need to be sure that an organisation will not use our findings to justify dismissing some of their employees.

Maximising benefit and minimising harm - this relates to elements such as ensuring that the research will not interfere with whatever 'service' you are providing to the client(s), ensuring that you provide protection (Crossman 1966), that you have ongoing supervision to monitor the research as well as the practice, and that you maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

What TA Research has been done

There are various papers that have appeared in the *Transactional Analysis Journal* but until recent years these were often of dubious quality. Thomas Ohlsson (2010), a TSTA Psychotherapy in Sweden, provided us with what he calls 'The Big List', which is a listing of all the TA-based research reports which he regarded as meeting adequate standards of research method, and which he had been able to trace over the period 1963-2010. This is an invaluable resource that can be accessed free of charge at www.ijtar.org, which is the website for the International Journal of Transactional Analysis Research (IJTAR).

The list also challenges the oft-repeated complaint that there is no research to support the credibility of TA, although most of the studies relate to psychotherapy rather than developmental TA. This situation has changed: IJTAR has now been published for 6 years and, out of a total of 37 papers, 18 have been related to psychotherapy, 16 to developmental applications of TA, 2 have been about research methodology generally, and 1 was the original list of all TA studies. Specific

topics that set the pattern for broad coverage in the early years of publication included the impact of drivers on mathematics teaching (Fregola 2010); on students' locus of control linked to learning TA theory (Mei 2010); and on TA and acculturation of immigrants (Korneyeyeva 2011). Abstracts of those articles which have particular relevance to developmental TA are shown below; to see the full list go to <http://www.taresearch.org/ijtar-abstracts-english.html>

IJTAR Abstracts Vols 1-7

Note: for references in the following Abstracts, please see the original papers at www.ijtar.org

Volume 1 Issue 1 July 2010

Mathematical Calculation Procedures and Drivers in Action in the Learning Environment

© 2010 Cesare Fregola

The paper reports on the qualitative results of the experimental phase of a study to examine the links between children's learning experiences associated with two digit division and the transactional analysis concept of drivers. The author presents results obtained from a process that used a questionnaire developed during a prior heuristic phase of research, combined with undergraduate student observations of the children, drawings produced by the children, and teacher observations on permission transactions used. Examples are provided for each of the five drivers.

Scientific evidence base for transactional analysis in the year 2010

© 2010 Thomas Ohlsson

The International Journal of Transactional Analysis Research, IJTAR, has been created to stimulate research and support the continued effort to build a scientific evidence base for transactional analysis

(TA). This article is an attempt to locate the starting point for the journal, to identify, evaluate and draw conclusions from what has already been done, and to articulate the existing scientific evidence base for TA in the year 2010.

The Relationship between Teaching Transactional Analysis Theory and College Students' Locus of Control: an Empirical Research

© 2010 Yang Mei

An investigation, through empirical research, of the relationship between education in Transactional Analysis theory and the Locus of Control of college students. Two questionnaire surveys were conducted before and after the Transactional Analysis classes, and personal narrative reports by the students were collected. It was found that psychology education in Transactional Analysis correlated with a reduction in scores for the External Control proclivity of the 81 students, and their assignments displayed similar proclivity. Transactional Analysis knowledge was shown to help students discover and explore their own potentials and liberate their creativity. It is proposed that an increase of transactional analysis theory in the education of college students should be considered.

Volume 2 Issue 1 January 2011

Studying Acculturation using Transactional Analysis Theory: the Interplay between Existential Positions and Acculturation Styles

© 2011 Lena Kornyeveva

This article is a partial report about quantitative research on the role of the Negative Existential Position in Authoritarian Personality formation (reported on elsewhere) and acculturation features among immigrants with

authoritarian backgrounds in a democratic milieu (Germany). Data were collected among respondents of different backgrounds: immigrants in Germany from Turkey, the former Soviet Union and Western countries, and native Germans as a quasi-control group (N=1318), with each subsample encompassing at least 200 respondents. Various statistical analyses were performed in order to validate the empirical outcomes (from correlation analysis to structural equation modelling). The hypothesis that a Negative Existential Position is more articulated among individuals who were exposed to an authoritarian socialization was confirmed. The hypothesis that a Negative Existential Position serves as a predictor for the so called Acculturation Dysfunction was confirmed as well. The conceptual analogy between Existential Positions and Styles of Acculturation was examined and the hypothesis that four possible styles of acculturation (Berry et al., 1987, Berry & Kim, 1988; Berry et al., 1989) are correlated with correspondent Existential Position found support.

Case Study Research Methodology

© 2011 Mark Widdowson

Commenting on the lack of case studies published in modern psychotherapy publications, the author reviews the strengths of case study methodology and responds to common criticisms, before providing a summary of types of case studies including clinical, experimental and naturalistic. Suggestions are included for developing systematic case studies and brief descriptions are given of a range of research resources relating to outcome and process measures. Examples of a pragmatic case study design and a hermeneutic single-case efficacy design are given and the paper concludes with some ethical considerations and an exhortation to the

TA community to engage more widely in case study research.

Volume 2 Issue 2 July 2011

The Impact on Self Perception of Ego States of a Transactional Analysis Introductory Training Course (TA 101)

© 2011 Traian Bossenmayer

The research examines the effects of transactional analysis (TA) 101 training upon self perceptions of ego-state dynamics, using the model of ego states incorporated into the Adjective Check List (Gough & Heilbrun, 1980). Subjects completed the questionnaires at the beginning and end of the training and one month later. The only statistically significant change was that Critical Parent decreased after the training and was still lowered one month later, although not as much. It was also found that gender was significant, but age was not.

IJTAR Volume 4 Issue 1

This issue contained the papers from the EATA TA Research Conference.

Volume 4 Issue 2

An Analysis of Dominant Working Styles in Different Professions in Macedonia

© 2013 Marina Pavlovska

A convenience sample of 90 employees working as Economists, Legal Advisors or IT Experts within three companies in Skopje, Macedonia completed the Working Styles Questionnaire (Hay 1992) and it was found that there were statistically significant differences in working style preferences between the professions. These differences are discussed in relationship to the National Nomenclature of Professions of Macedonia (State Statistical Office 2011) and implications for human resources management are briefly reviewed. Limitations are identified relating to the size and specific location of the subjects. It is concluded that the hypothesis that there

will be differences between dominant working styles of the professions is accepted. An explanation is included which clarifies the distinction between drivers (Kahler & Capers 1974, Kahler 1975, 2008) and working styles (Hay & Williams 1989, Hay 1993, 2009).

An Analysis of Working Styles in Different Professions in Russia

© 2014 Dmitry Kasyanov

A convenience sample of 861 people (451 female, 410 male) working in a range of organisations and professions in Russia completed a translation into Russian of the Working Styles Questionnaire (Hay 1992). Statistical analysis indicated adequate discrimination between styles and it was possible to create norm tables based on the full sample. Average patterns are presented for each of 15 occupations including engineers, information technology, public relations, secretarial, sales, accounting, economists and HR roles. It can be seen that Be Perfect style predominates in every occupational pattern, with Please People a close second in most and Hurry Up least evident in most.

Application of Redecision Therapy in Executive Coaching Workshops: Part 1 – the Workshop

© 2014 Mil Rosseau, Rik Rosseau & Mark Widdowson

First in a series of three, this paper describes how the rededecision approach (Goulding & Goulding 1979) has been applied over many years within executive coaching workshops internationally. The potential controversy about using a therapeutic approach in a business context is addressed, participant profiles and leadership characteristics are described, the impact of the group environment is considered, and the links between working on 'problems' and Berne's (1961) stages of cure are explained. The stages of working are related to those described by Goulding

& Goulding (1979) and supplemented with material from McNeel (1999-2000) and Allen & Allen (2002). This paper describes the interventions that are evaluated qualitatively by Widdowson & Rosseau (2014) and that will be further evaluated quantitatively in the future.

Application of Redecision Therapy in Executive Coaching Workshops: Part 2 - A Qualitative Exploration of Participants' Changes

© 2014 Mark Widdowson & Mil Rosseau

This is the second paper of three and describes an investigation into the way that executive coaching as a growing field of organisational development can be based on transactional analysis theory and methods. Twelve participants who had attended a coaching workshop based on Goulding & Goulding's (1979) rededecision therapy approach completed a follow-up Change Questionnaire adapted by the first author from material by Elliott et al (2001) and responses were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). Participants reported experiencing a wide range of personal growth experiences, positive interpersonal change and growth in their business, managerial and leadership skills as a result of participating in the workshops. Limitations are described including the possible impact of the transference artefact of wanting to please the workshop facilitator. The thematic analysis findings suggest that such an approach can provide an effective framework for executive coaching workshops.

IJTAR Volume 5 Number 2

Systemic Transactional Analysis Coaching: A study of effective conditions, consequences and effects on organisational culture

© 2014 Günther Mohr

The paper describes content and process of an ongoing in-house 'individual coached

within a group' coaching programme run over many years in Germany, utilising various concepts including classical, systemic and systemic organisational transactional analysis and three sequential research studies covering the perceived usefulness of the coaching programme to individuals and their organisation, the correlations between attendance at the programme and professional advancement within the organisation, and the factors identified by participants as contributing to the effectiveness of the programme.

The initial survey-based study identified the primary factor as the extent to which participants had been able to deal with their personally-identified most important individual issue or problem. The second study applied QCA (Qualitative Comparative Analysis) (Ragin 1987, 2000, 2008) and showed a correlation between the autonomous variables of participation in the group and the interdependent variable of 'additional empowerment' by the company. The third study used frequency and valence analysis of responses to a questionnaire completed by 38 managers to identify the key elements that they believed contributed to the effectiveness of the coaching programme.

The author concludes that such programmes are effective but complex so require the coach to have psychological, pedagogical, leadership and management expertise and that this be applied within an organisational learning culture.

IJTAR Volume 6 Issue 1 January 2015

An action research project aimed at raising social consciousness amongst women attending transactional analysis group psychotherapy in Brazil

© 2015 Jane Maria Pancinha Costa

Based on awareness of material by Gramsci (1978, 1982) on hegemony, Freire (1979a, 1979b) on cooperative contact, and Steiner (1975) on radical psychiatry, action

research methodology was used by the researcher, who was also a psychotherapist, with 12 women attending two ongoing weekly psychotherapy groups in Brazil in order to raise their social consciousness of culturally-based oppression of women, particularly relating to work; to apply life script analysis as a therapeutic intervention within the groups; and to facilitate recognition by the women of the benefits of cooperative contact when seeking to liberate themselves from oppression. Individual structured interviews were conducted and the data from these was discussed within the groups, leading to the development of a model containing 6 levels of consciousness of oppression. Examples of oppression identified by the women are provided, with only 17% relating directly to sexual discrimination at work. Although the research was conducted many years ago (1987-1989), it is shown that problems still exist and the research methodology could usefully be applied elsewhere.

Integration of Psychodrama and Transactional Analysis Methods in psychoeducational work with school-age children in Russia

© 2015 Marina Solomonovna Sokovnina and Viktor Nikolayevich Aleshin

Beginning with a comparison of the concepts and methods of psychodrama and transactional analysis, the authors identify similarities and present their experiences of combining these approaches in order to conduct workshops for 5th grade (11-12 years) students within the Russian educational system. They provide their rationale for this work, details of the content of the training and an example of the work of the students in the form of an agreement on cooperation between students and teachers. They provide an analysis of the reported emotions during lessons for 78 students compared to 38 within control groups, showing increased positive emotions and decreased negative

emotions for those in the transactional analysis/psychodrama lessons. They conclude that the role-play method used was more effective than traditional educational methods within Russia for the development of autonomy, motivation and involvement of students.

An investigation into the factors that influence the perceived experiences and outcomes for students training in Transactional Analysis Psychotherapy in the UK and USA

© 2015 Cathy McQuaid

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1995) was applied to data from 21 out of 50 participants who had shared their training experiences during semi-structured interviews. Subjects were chosen from trainees and trainers in the USA and UK, to include 'generations' from those trained by transactional analysis originator Dr Eric Berne through to recently qualified transactional analysis psychotherapists, and including some who had ceased training before qualifying.

Results suggest that TA psychotherapy training is experienced by some as a transformational, life enhancing and reparative experience that culminates in a satisfying and rewarding career, whilst for others it is perceived as an abusive, punitive and punishing experience, bringing disillusionment, disappointment and dissatisfaction. The main contributing factors were the students' personal belief systems, motivations for undertaking the training, and relationships with the trainer, peers and the profession as a whole.

Analysis of the themes suggested that subsequent anxieties raised by participants concerned lack of information, inconsistencies in training offered by different establishments, reasons for trainees entering training and trainers' reasons for accepting them, and the significant time and resource requirements of the training. The paper includes

recommendations aimed at making the training experience one that upholds the basic philosophical principles and values of TA, and promotes, develops and enhances TA psychotherapy training.

Reducing teacher stress and burnout in high-risk secondary schools in South Africa using transactional analysis

© 2015 Sharon Mary Johnson

One of a number of articles arising from PhD research, this paper focuses on the results of applying transactional analysis as one of three approaches to reducing stress and burnout for teachers in high-risk secondary schools in the gangland areas of the Cape Flats, Western Cape, South Africa. The other approaches were Trauma Release Exercises (TRE) and Transpersonal Psychology (TP), and related articles on these and on the quantitative statistical analysis elements of this research are being disseminated elsewhere.

A total of 43 teachers in three different schools took part in one intervention held weekly over 10 weeks for one and a half hours (15 hours in total) at their school as part of staff development, with a control group of 20 teachers at a fourth school. Qualitative TA intervention questionnaire coding analysis and focus group post-intervention thematic analysis of the mixed-methods study are presented. Coding analysis focused on the intra- and inter-individual tools that impacted teachers, and it was found that TA generated self-awareness, self-help tools and a strong group connection. Thematic analysis gave insights into the physical, emotional and cognitive responses to stress and burnout interventions on the individual, interpersonal and organisational levels and revealed new perspectives on classroom competency, with teachers taking more responsibility for discipline in the classroom.

The study gave insights into the well-being and coping of educators who survive in

these challenging contexts, and it is proposed that TRE, TP and TA approaches can be incorporated, and possibly combined, into integrative and eclectic ways of dealing with complex psychological challenges of stress and burnout reduction in traumatic environments.

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Research into professional outcomes for psychotherapists trained at a centre for psychotherapy and transactional analysis in Italy

© 2015 Ugo De Ambrogio and Carla Dessi

The authors developed a questionnaire and analysed professional outcomes for 98 former students who completed trainings in psychotherapy and transactional analysis, recognised by the Italian Ministry of University & Research, during the past 15 years at the Centre of Psychology and Transactional Analysis in Milan. Statistical results were discussed with others and factors reviewed included how students managed in the world of work, and the positive results and critical elements of applying transactional analysis in psychotherapy. Professional life facts emerge in terms of a recognisable identity, ethical attention and satisfaction with the application of tools learned. Flexibility in coping with stimuli and issues met in professional practice, and the desire to have an exchange with colleagues and between different theoretical models, are also identified.

Two empirical research projects into the impact of teaching the concept of drivers to preschool children in Italy

© 2015 Cesare Fregola

Fourth-year student teachers on a degree course at Roma Tre University were supervised as they conducted empirical research to introduce transactional analysis to primary schoolchildren, with the aim of developing their own self-efficacy and autonomy whilst demonstrating that the

teaching of drivers (Kahler 1975) to children led to progressive development for those children of the metacognitive capabilities and self-awareness needed to make their own decisions about behavioural choices. The limitations of small sample groups are acknowledged as is the fact that the supervision came from authors whose previous work had provided the basis for the questionnaires designed and used by the students.

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