



# SAJTA

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## **THE SOUTH ASIAN JOURNAL OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS**

*Theme: “Impact of Culture  
- on an Individual, Community, Organization”*

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## **EDITORIAL SECTION**

## Editors' Note

Welcome to the sixth issue of the SAJTA (formerly SAATA Journal).

As I write this note, I sit with mixed feelings. The guilt of delaying this issue, feeling of completion of a conference amidst the Kerala and Coorg flood disasters, gratitude for the editorial team who pulled this off with minimal contribution from me. This issue has been truly an experience of Indian culture for me. The culture that comes together during a crisis. As I was preparing for an important milestone and got busy, my co-editors jumped in and took over the work that had to be done, with few explanations. This is not unusual for us in India. I am aware of the emphasis on contractual method of working in TA world; while in crisis, we come together and hold hands!

I acknowledge that power in the culture we have and also acknowledge my gratitude to my co-editors - Nisha Rao and Ragini Rao. As I speak about my journal experience, the world was able to witness similar holding hands in an unfortunate crisis – the Kerala and Coorg floods. Help is pouring in, keeping the differences away at individual levels and at a national level. This is one of our core essence of culture; I like to call this “We have your back!”

Wish you enjoy this issue!

Deepak Dhananjaya, Managing Editor, SAJTA

The ITAA-SAATA 2018 Conference with the theme ‘The Dance of Culture’ recently concluded in flood-hit Kochi. This edition of SAJTA reflects the same theme. We acknowledge the effort taken by all those who managed to reach the conference safely and used limited

resources to make it happen; all those who attempted to get to Kochi, but were stuck or rerouted; all those who would've loved to be there, yet couldn't! We would also like to mention, that three authors of this SAJTA volume - Gunjan Zutshi, Khushali Adhiya-Shah & Meenakshi Kirtane, were to present their article papers at the conference and were among those who couldn't make it. At SAJTA, we strive to expand and be inclusive, hence this is our first issue with an article written by a Non-TA author in the mental wellness space.

This is the first article by Anando Chatterji, which looks to understand the culture prevalent within group therapy in India. While setting the framework of commonly used methodologies and newer advancements in conducting group therapy, the author shares the dynamics of a group session he has facilitated. Here, he highlights three dilemmas, which he commonly faces in a group setting and provides some explanations. Through this article, he leaves us with some considerations about the influence of an individual's culture in a group and the interplay of that along with the therapist's own culture, creating a unique 'group culture'. Anando questions if therapists and governing bodies which create therapy manuals, actually take into account all of these cultural nuances in their diagnostic approach.

The second piece of work, is a study of organisation scripts (as influenced by organisation culture) and their impact on organisation dynamics, by Gunjan Zutshi. She offers readers an understanding of how culture is permeated within organisations, using literature to explain this phenomenon. With limited availability of similar literature to explain organisation scripts, Gunjan builds a case for the same using Krauz, Berne and Drego's work, to bring out the valuable relationship between an organisation's culture and its script. This, she elaborates through a Case Study, where she emphasizes the need for deeper understanding of an

organisation's script. In conclusion, Gunjan has created a questionnaire, which she hopes may capture this script, to enhance organisational change at a deeper level.

Steff Oates is our third author. She begins with a reflection of her own internal process when invited to write for this journal and connects this with the cultural differences that she holds, as a result of her upbringing. Steff shares her understanding of her own Cultural Parent (Drego, 1983), explaining it idiomatically (Bollas, 1993) and of the subsequent development and expansion of her capacity for curiosity and wonder (Berne, 1972). The author deliberates to understand herself through her script decisions, the cultural norms of her community and the influence each has on the other, in who she is today. She speculates like Mazzetti (2010), on the question of 'What has Culture to do with Script?'

Next, we have Khushali Adhiya-Shah's article, which elaborates two generic paths for understanding culture: individualism and collectivism. She further distinguishes between societies that are horizontal and vertical, explaining traits of individuals and groups, which propagate those cultures. Using the lens of Transactional Analysis, the author explains the limiting influence of a vertical-collectivistic Indian culture on her own self-concept and shares her efforts of formation of a healthy self, using the 'TA Culture'. Khushali proposes this TA culture and flexible boundaries, as a way to encourage a horizontal-individualistic-collectivistic culture for humankind. She leaves the reader with a few questions to mull over, for personal and collective growth.

The fifth piece, by Meenakshi Kirtane, ponders over age-old Indian culture and traditions, especially the state of being 'centered'. The author's delves into an exploration of Indian history and plausible links to formation of Loveless, Joyless, Mindless scripts (Steiner, 1974). She draws

references to some present-day challenges in the Indian sub-continent and attempts to understand the connection between them and these scripts. Categorizing her analysis, she has created a socio-cultural Script Diagnosis detailing aspects of Injunctions, Attributions, Counterscript, Script Decisions and Somatic Component as she sees fit. Finally, the author has suggested the antithesis for each type of script as she has herself tested out and encourages her audience to propagate script cure, beginning with the individual and collectively impacting the nation.

Last, but not least, is an article from Krishnan Madhabushi, who is in his first year of studying Transactional Analysis. We are heartened by his personal account, as we hope new entrants into the TA community will be encouraged by this, to write and submit their own works. Krishnan expresses his nervousness to write and then assesses the origin of it, leading into his understanding of his own Life-Script and Racket System. He explains the culture he grew up in and the subtle influences it had on the decisions and choices he did/didn't make. The author shares how this deeper understanding and awareness has given him more options to empower himself, while also developing more empathy for self and others, using Transactional Analysis.

Our sincere gratitude to all these authors who collaborated with our review team, accepting our comments, challenges and strokes. We hope you enjoy reading the journal, as much as we did bringing it to you.

Happy reading!

Nisha Rao, Co-Editor, SAJTA

Ragini Rao, Co-Editor, SAJTA and VP – Research & Development, SAATA

## Guidelines from the Editorial Board

From our experience in editing the SAATA journal thus far, we have put together some guidelines for contributors to future editions of the journal:

- Write on topics – experiences, opinions, research - which can be explained primarily using transactional analysis concepts.
- Keep sentences short and precise. Where there are multiple ideas, construct them as two or more sentences.
- Use simple and easy-to-understand words. Remember that your audience may not be transactional analysis literate or even use English as their first language.
- Avoid the use of casual phrases, expressions and slangs, unless quoting verbatim.
- Follow APA style of formatting, references, citations and bibliography (<http://www.apastyle.org/>).
- Review the paper for redundancy, where the same idea is expressed multiple times.
- Double-check transactional analysis terminologies and their definitions, e.g. names of games, components of script, drivers, injunctions etc.
- Quote the original authors of the concepts.
- Provide English translations to any vernacular quotation that are made in the article.
- Total word count should be less than 2000 words.
- The article should not be published anywhere before.
- Figures should be grouped as one image. Label figures and tables.



- Submit the article in word format.
- As part of our learning, we have now decided to only accept single part articles that align to the theme of the issue. Multi-part series will only be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the relevance and timeliness of the topic.

We hope this is useful as you all contemplate contributing to the journal.

For queries, feedback and suggestions, write to us at [journal@saata.org](mailto:journal@saata.org).

Theme for January 2019 Issue

**“TA Training in India –  
Impact on Personal and Professional Self”**

Deadline for submissions: **December 15<sup>th</sup> 2018.**

Email : [journal@saata.org](mailto:journal@saata.org)

Please follow the [guidelines](#) before you submit.

## Editorial Board

Volume 4, Number 2, July 2018

Deepak Dhananjaya, CTA (Psychotherapy), Managing Editor

Nisha Rao, Trainee (Education), Co-Editor

Ragini Rao, TSTA (Psychotherapy), Co-Editor, VP Research & Development, SAATA

## Guest Reviewer

Smita Chimmanda Potty

## **PERSPECTIVES FROM THE WORLD OUTSIDE TA**

# Cultures influencing Group Therapy

Of the Therapist, Members, Group and World

*Anando Chatterji*

## **Introduction**

As I begin to write this article, there isn't a clear, single point of beginning, to share my experience of working in groups. I work with those who have complex diagnoses and it seems even more complex to explain my work within a theoretical framework which combines psychiatry, psychology, neuroscience, sociology, systems thinking, political and economic theories, language, race, gender, class, caste, religion and perhaps many more aspects that define our existence within our cultural context.

I am not an expert in any of these fields and yet, as I sit in my group, (I am a group therapist, more from experience and supervision than qualification), I am often aware, that we are all individuals with our own past experiences and at the same time part of a larger whole, the group.

In this article, I share my theoretical frame of reference along with the following three dilemmas using a group example:

- 1. Is western methodology, in this context, group psychotherapy, an effective intervention in the Indian cultural context?**
- 2. Should I or not, as a therapist, express my personal thoughts, ideas, opinions and beliefs in the group?**

**3. As a therapist, is it not my responsibility to question social constructs, which perpetuate oppression and neglect as part of the therapeutic process in the group?**

I invite you to join in reflecting on your own experience of culture in the therapy room as you read about this journey of mine.

**Group therapy methodologies**

In my practice, I have drawn influences from two methodologies - group analysis and therapeutic communities. Developed by S.H. Foulkes, "the method and theory of **group analysis** is concerned with a dynamic understanding of the inner working of the human mind as a social, multi-personal phenomenon" (Foulkes 1975). Key group analytics concepts such as free-floating discussions and interpretations are relevant to this article. My goal in the group is to trust the group and to trust the process, the methodology is group psychotherapy, the method is in providing the space and ourselves to become aware, give each other feedback, ponder over insights, allow for reparation, open up to confrontation, learning from each other's stories, shed tears, have laughs, be furious and dare to bare ourselves as vulnerable souls, depending on the culture in the group to carry us from one session to the next.

On the other hand, **Therapeutic Communities** (TCs) are structured, psychologically informed environments – they are places where social relationships, structure of the day and different activities together, are all deliberately designed to help people's health and well-being. (The Consortium of Therapeutic Communities, UK). Defining TCs is not as easy as defining a technique and so I describe it here as an atmosphere. In fact, in some forums it is known as 'milieu therapy'. This helps my practice be conscious of the culture in the group contributing to the therapeutic process.

Five essential principles of TCs - attachment, containment, communication, inclusion and agency (Haigh, 1999), contribute to creating:

- **a culture of belonging** - every member is allowed to 'be' rather than 'do' for as long as they wish to.
- **a culture of safety** - by allowing deep distress and overwhelming emotions to surface.
- **a culture of openness** - thoughts and feelings that are taboo in our respective cultures to be expressed and explored.
- **a culture of involvement** - members actively relate to each other in genuine and honest ways
- **a culture of agency** - individuals and the group encourages the power of choice and strategy like learning how to not be silenced, even by sometimes staying silent.

In my experience, adopting a western methodology in running groups has led to an interesting phenomenon where there is always an interplay between two cultures - one of the group and the other of the larger social context we exist in. My belief is that it is this interplay between the two cultures, unknown to each other, that has led me to the three dilemmas I mention. I explain this further through the narration of a session that stands out in my memory, of an 18 month group I ran, whose members were kind enough to allow me to use their experience, after having gone through this article.

**Excerpt from a Session:**

At the time, we were a 6-member group of three women and three men, including me. All having crossed borders and cultures to be here together - five people from various parts of India and one from a patriarchal island nation with a very complex political scenario. All from the

struggling middle class; most having complex roots, born somewhere, parents from somewhere else; speak a language which is different from our? Native; mostly anti-religious (except one), though most from fairly orthodox families; the men free to do what they want, the women having to check with their parents for every little move they made; suppression, oppression, abuse and most of all, neglect being a sanctioned and normal part of their lives.

In one of the early sessions in this group, a simple conversation about a puppy evolved in to a complex experience. One of the members talked in the group about how she walked by a lone puppy on the street and as she went by she felt quite sad that it was whining, no mother around. The next day she went by the same route and it wasn't there. She went back home and wondered if it was all right and said she wished she could do something for the little helpless creature. It was a very busy road, other dogs around, she recounted; it looked hungry and shivered in the cold and it was getting dark. One member asked her why she didn't take it with her. Another joined in to say how insensitive she was to just walk by and then in the comfort of her warm room, deliberate the plight of the starving, freezing, terrified puppy. 'Pretences of the privileged', he said. I blurted out 'What if it was dead now?' only moments later wondering, what an insensitive thing to say as a therapist. A fourth member said she could have taken it with her but then the college they studied in wouldn't allow it in. And she would have nowhere to leave it all day. One member then went on a tirade about the institution which was heartless and cold and we did not understand the dilemma of the member under attack here in the group. There was a pause. We wondered whether we made her the cold, hungry, frightened puppy. And the rest of us, the world outside who didn't have time or heart for the weak and vulnerable.



On the other hand, were they all puppies having to depend on me, all of them hungry and cold and frightened, competing to get their needs met from a single male parent whose own survival was being threatened by several external factors. For a long time I could not find the group a stable place to work from, we had to shift four times and our organization was going through a financial crisis, almost on the verge of closing down. So these puppies saw the parent struggling and were they frightened that it could be possible that either their parent would not survive or would abandon them to himself survive, or we would all together perish in somewhat of a traumatic death of the whole group.

### **Three Ethical Dilemmas**

#### **1. Is western methodology, in this context - group psychotherapy, an effective intervention in the Indian cultural context?**

The first dilemma was of working in a group rather than individually. I share two examples to elaborate on my view.

a) **Building a culture of speaking as freely and as honestly as one can** in the group, as informed by western group psychotherapy methodology. The challenge is in doing this in front of others, without feeling guilty of letting out family secrets.

This comes from a cultural expectation of most households of several patriarchal states, ‘what happens inside the house stays inside the house’, speaking about it in a group is equal to bringing disrespect to the family. This is an example of how confidentiality can cause and perpetuate psychological distress. The concept of trusting strangers in a group with our personal stories seemed alien to us.

b) **Having free-floating culture within the group.** Members questioned how, simply relating to each other for 90 minutes once a week without setting personal goals, was going to help them solve the problems they wanted therapy for in the first place. This is associated with being aimless in our culture - vagabonds and waifs get nowhere. From the moment we are born, even before we can understand language, we hear “you must have a goal in life to be successful”. This follows that the relationship one expects from a therapist is similar to what one would expect from a wiser, more sorted preferably older individual, preferably male, to provide the answers to the ‘whys’ and the solutions to the ‘hows’.

As in the session, the members were looking to me for direction and lost without it, like the puppy. And though they were angry with me for their situation, the overwhelming external pressures I was facing could have caused them to suppress their anger towards me, for being insensitive to their need for stability, for fear of being insensitive themselves and the possible consequence of me getting angry back at them. Here is the interplay between culture formed in the group and culture the group members are from. This brings me to my second dilemma.

## **2. Should I or not, as a therapist, express my personal thoughts, ideas, opinions and beliefs in the group?**

In the traditional western group therapy situation, the therapist is trained to be in the group “without memory or desire” (Noreen Giffney, 2013), so as not to bring in much of themselves in the process. As much as I recognise the merits of this stance, I have also found myself valuing the therapist actively participating in the group process. The dilemma is about when and how much of each position should I be taking in our cultural context. In the session I write about earlier, I say to the member under attack “maybe the puppy is dead”. As I wondered about why I

said that, this dilemma surfaced. It did seem I was quite angry that she neglected the puppy and was saying to her “how could you?”! Though this was a personal judgement, yet what transpired out of this blurting was the talking about and reflecting on the very serious issue of neglect in each of the members lives and my neglect towards the group. It provided space for me to say to them that it was natural for them to feel angry with me for neglecting their need for a stable and safe environment, an anger that they could have never before recognised in themselves as valid. And therefore, I find it valuable to be involved and participative as a therapist, though perhaps I could have arrived at the same issue in another way. And this continues to be a dilemma through my work, I find myself being able to contain these experiences only through my supervision and my own personal therapy.

**3. As a therapist, is it not my responsibility to question social constructs, which perpetuate oppression and neglect as part of the therapeutic process in the group?**

The third dilemma is whether social concerns are matters of therapy in the group. The social fabric that has encouraged abuse or contributed to disruption in an individual’s attachment process, is attire that forms a thick blanket in the therapy room, often so heavy that everyone in the room feels suffocated. Thinking back about the group, we were not allowing or accepting of the member’s confusion of what to do with the puppy, or even acknowledging her dilemma and anxiety and later her guilt. Instead, she was almost being told that she was incapable of care and responsible for allowing another’s suffering to continue. And as a facilitator I had furthered the attack.

In retrospect, I realised my contribution to the oppression in the therapy room also challenged my personal belief about oppression. This realisation, firstly opened up a personal

investigation of my values and position as a male authority and secondly, for the group to reflect on the sanction of oppression and its serious psychological impact on the members lives. As a therapist I do believe that in the group I am also expected to encourage social change. A culture of empowerment in the group is vital to healing. However, such empowerment could lead to serious conflict within family systems and social contexts, as they threaten the control of those who dominate. Can the abuse of power and authority, hate crimes, gender discrimination, sexualisation of women or the entitlement of being superior be separated from symptoms of disorder? In my opinion not! Now as a therapist, the dilemma is when I encourage such challenge to the social constructs in the room, am I being idealistic and putting the members at greater risk of being further abused by the system they live in.

### **Conclusion**

The question that I am engaging with in this article ‘does culture have a role to play in therapy or not?’ is not new. For decades the debate has been fraught with international associations of professionals questioning the globalization of mental illness, demanding that culture be a significant part of diagnosis and treatment as opposed to others speaking of chemical imbalances, disease and evidence based practices, devoid of any corruption from subjective elements such as one’s culture. The latter seems to be losing the stronghold it enjoyed over the last four decades with new thinkers such as Lucy Johnstone (Johnstone, Power Threat Meaning Framework, 2018). The ‘manualization’ (by this I mean the creation of a manual), of human conditions into neat classifications with a checklist based system for defining problems, has bred within the professional community a culture of intolerance, promoted by a practice of the I-

know-better-than-thou attitude. Dissent and questioning is only met with scornful looks of experts creating a class system, which is autocratic. In my opinion this seems anti-therapeutic and a cause for tremendous anxiety. In this article I am stressing on enquiry into culture of both the therapist and the members in my group, and the culture of the group and of the world we live in, all as an integral part of the therapeutic process.

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*Anando Chatterji, CEO and Co-Founder, Hank Nunn Institute, has a BA in philosophy. He has worked for 14 years (as an individual and a group therapist) in a residential therapeutic facility for people with severe psychological problems. His interest in understanding behaviours and emotions in a social context, led to his co-founding the Hank Nunn Institute in 2014, with an aim*

*to create and alternate to the predominant bio-medical approach to diagnosis and treatment of psychological distress. His work is influenced by group psychotherapy and more recently, the community of communities and the living learning experience workshops.*

*Anando currently trains, supervises and works with people individually and in groups and has an interest in complex traumas and histories and the role of culture in psychotherapy. He is passionate about combining group processes with earth processes, as parts of the therapy experience to help open up access to mental health.*

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# **TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS IN PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT**

# Organization Culture and Scripts

*Gunjan Zutshi*

## **Context**

I have always found it challenging to use the concept of organization scripts while working as a consultant. At the conscious level, it's to do with my familiarity and comfort with use of other models and hence a conscious choice not to use organization scripts. At the unconscious level, perhaps it's my deeply held assumption that scripts are a great way to understand intrapsychic and interpersonal processes and not the best way to understand large groups and systems - hence, not using organization scripts or believing it's a difficult concept to be applied in organizations.

So, when I chose to write this paper, I wondered why I want to write about something that I have not found easy to work with. Perhaps, writing this paper was a way for me to test my assumptions and find some answers. And I must say, it has not been an easy process. The ambivalence and ambiguity I hold towards the idea of scripts in organizations reflected in how I approached this paper and the challenge I faced to give it thought and structure.

This paper is a practitioner's attempt to make personal meaning and to share experience of applying organization scripts to understand organization dynamics. Part 1 of the paper looks at existing literature around organization scripts and culture and how the two are linked. Part 2 is sharing my experience through a case study and Part 3 is to suggest a few ways in which I think organization scripts can be used more effectively.

## **Part 1: Review of existing literature**

### **Organization Culture**



Edgar Schein (2004) defines **culture of a group** as *a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.*

Thus, organizational cultures develop, as groups of people struggle to make sense of and cope with their worlds. Culture is both a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by leadership behaviour and a set of structures, routines, rules and norms that guide and constrain behaviour.

These dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of leadership and make one realize that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of culture as a concept, is that it points us to phenomena that are below the surface - that are powerful in their impact, but invisible and to a considerable degree, unconscious. In that sense, culture is to a group what personality or character is to an individual.

There are many approaches to defining and studying organization culture (Hofstede, 1991; Trice and Beyer, 1993; Schultz, 1995; Deal and Kennedy, 1999; Cameron and Quinn, 1999; Ashkanasy, Wilderom, and Peterson, 2000 and Martin, 2002) and that can pose its own dilemma of what lens to use when trying to understand organization culture.

### **Organization Script**

While there is plethora of literature available on organization culture, the same is not the case for organization scripts. There is not much literature, research or application and it struck

me that in reference to approaches to understanding culture, organization scripts is not commonly cited as an approach.

Berne (1972) defined life script as an ongoing program, developed in early childhood under parental influence, which directs the individual's behaviour in the most important aspects of his life.

Just as individuals have scripts, organizations too have scripts. Individuals create organizations as part of their *ongoing programs*. Organizations seem to be scripted by founders through *a defined set of beliefs about the business world and how it works*. *Organizations start as ideas and then as actions of their founders and hence to some extent the personality as well as conscious and unconscious needs of the creators become part of organization script (Krausz, 1993)*.

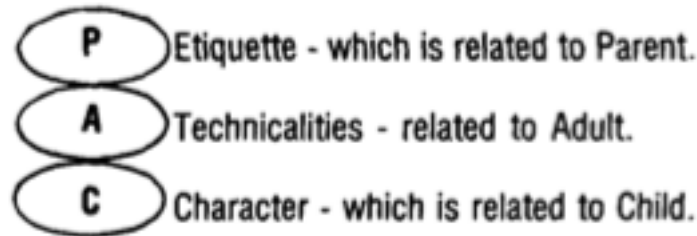
Founders create the rational (structures, technologies) and also the non-rational aspects of organizations (like belief systems) that have an impact on individuals at an unconscious level. Organizations are scripted by the ideologies they adopt and follow, which tend to focus on central issues of organizational life, establishing the initial organizational program that will guide individual and collective action in the organizational setting.

Organization scripts are forwarded through directives contained in the ideologies that are followed by individuals as members of an organization. Those directives may be followed consciously or unconsciously and be verbally or nonverbally transmitted (Krausz, 1993).

Another way to understand organization culture and how scripts may be perpetuated, is the concept of Cultural Parent (Drego, 1981). The Cultural Parent consists of etiquette, technicalities and character of a culture, as introjected into and lived out by an individual living within that

culture.

The Cultural Parent contains the conscious and unconscious boundaries of acceptable behaviour, whether or not what is acceptable is harmful or helpful to the individual.



*Figure 1: Personality of a Culture, Drego (1981)*

In summary: the etiquette, Parent-type contents of a culture are the transmitted designs for thinking, behaving and valuing in a particular society; the technicality, or, Adult-type contents consist of the actual organization of the material and social life of a particular human group; the character, Child-type contents include socially programmed ways of feeling, handling biological needs, emotional expressions, especially compliance and rebellion.

This allows one to understand the personality of culture of an organization along with understanding how it is introjected and acted upon by the individuals in an organization, thus perpetuating the organization script.

Transformation of Cultural Parent is not an easy process and this transformation at a group level is an even more difficult and longer process. At times a change in technicality will bring about a change in etiquette and character, at times the process starts from a change in character or etiquette.

### **Interplay of Organization Culture and Script**

When going through the definitions of organization culture and scripts, both seem one and the same to me. They develop in similar ways – culture develops as groups struggle to survive and life scripts develop as individuals struggle to survive. The choices and decisions individuals make, determine the culture and script of the group.

Leadership and culture are two sides of same coin. Founder/s or leader/s scripts and their ideologies give rise to organization culture and hence organization scripts can provide an understanding of culture or might it be that culture of an organization can provide insight into scripts of founders / leaders. It would seem that individual scripts and systemic scripts both have a role to play in understanding of organization culture and dynamics.

Using script theory to analyse organizational culture can enlarge our understanding of the dysfunctional aspects of organizational functioning and clarify unconscious aspects of organizational culture and behaviour that are introduced by founders and other parental figures and maintained by a consistent pattern of assumptions that guide individual and collective actions in the organizational setting. Understanding this better helps us identify and deal constructively with such scripts. (Krausz, 1993)

## **Part 2: My Experience – as understood through a case study**

The organization is India R&D unit of an European company. Set up about 20 years ago, in the last 7-8 years it has grown from a small unit to about 3000 people.

I was called in initially to do cross-cultural training and team building for a team, which works with counterparts in Europe, to build sensitivity towards each other and work in collaboration. Over the next year and a half, I worked with many different teams within the organization on similar issues.

As work started on building cultural sensitivity and collaboration, I chose to work with the Hofstede model, as it offered a way to understand differences in work cultures in organizations. Geert Hofstede did his seminal work on national cultures and defined six dimensions on which different cultures could be understood: Power Distance, Individualism, Long Term Orientation, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Indulgence. Later, the model was defined specifically for organization culture. Known as the 6D model, it has the following six dimensions of understanding organization culture: Means-oriented vs. goal-oriented, Internally driven vs. externally driven, Easy-going work discipline vs. strict work discipline, Local vs. professional, Open system vs. closed system, Employee-oriented vs. work-oriented (Hofstede, 1983, 2011).

The reason for choosing this model to work with was that it provided a simple yet comprehensive framework for understanding team dynamics and to help build cultural sensitivity. While this provided some insights and enhanced cultural sensitivity, I felt that some things were not getting addressed through this. There seemed to be underlying beliefs and assumptions operating at the unconscious level, that were impacting the teams and a pervasive feeling of fear. This was difficult to explain by just looking at above dimensions of organization culture. Patterns began to emerge that gave an indication that this is not just about a specific team or issue, but is a more pervasive phenomenon.

What was heard across organization at different levels and in different contexts was something like this - Managers felt their team members didn't take ownership, accountability and responsibility. Team members felt their managers were not interested and didn't care about them. They were not given responsibility and were expected to follow orders. Roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined and expectation was that they should deliver without

being provided enough clarity and resources. There was too much work pressure and too little support.

There were difficulties in working with team members in Europe, with both sides feeling the other is not able to understand their expectations and hence many instances of conflict emerged. Outcomes – speed and quality of work impacted; delayed timelines for delivery; complaints from internal stakeholders on quality of work being produced; miscommunication and expectation mismatch and staff disengagement and demotivation.

When I started exploring this psychodynamic, what became apparent was that this unit was set up as a small offshore R&D unit, working at the direction of parent company. It was a small, stable set-up until some years ago, when tremendous growth happened. There seemed to be certain beliefs carried over and operating in the present, about the purpose for which the unit was set up, how it should work, its relationship with its parent company, the hierarchies in mind, command and control ways of working - which were at conflict with the current realities and demands of a changing workforce and industry. Pervasive mindset seemed to be of service delivery and an execution oriented organization, instead of an innovative, cutting-edge, product development company.

Systems and processes of working were not very well defined and there were unclear roles & responsibilities, especially when working in cross functional teams. Management style was too task-oriented and not inclusive enough.

At the core, it seemed to be an issue of identity - Who are we? Product development R&D or just software development & delivery? Mechanical or new age R&D? Are we a service provider to the parent company and thus treat them as customers, or an expert R&D unit working

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with them to drive innovation and superior product development and hence treat them as equal partners?

With this awareness, it became clear, that to build cross-cultural sensitivity, collaboration and ownership would require addressing some of these issues, which were more systemic and unconscious. Bringing attention to these unconscious dynamics helped the managers, leadership team and team members address few of these underlying elements and some shifts in behaviours could be seen.

If I were to look at what was happening from organization script perspective, it is quite clear that who the parent organization is, the leadership team that founded the India unit, beliefs about identity and how to treat the parent company, beliefs about parent company towards India unit etc., were all part of the organization script that were impacting its current culture of non-ownership and lack of collaboration. It was being enacted through what seemed to be issues of not understanding cultural differences between the two units.

Looking at it from Etiquette, Technicalities and Character of Cultural Parent, this is how it can be understood:

**Etiquette** - Deeply held beliefs about hierarchies where people are not referred by designation but by grade or level numbers, a service delivery mindset instead of product development/ R&D mindset, a vendor / client partner mindset treating team members in Europe as customers.

**Technicalities** - A tendency to take orders rather than working together with European counter parts, working very hard to prove credibility and not be blamed, not asserting themselves and accepting unrealistic demands and then not being able to deliver,

constantly on-the-go and not investing enough time in setting up processes and structures, managers maintain tight control and not delegating enough.

**Character** - Need to please the clients, afraid of being blamed or punished for non-delivery, frustration at not being acknowledged for hard work and feeling angry with own team members, managers and peers, feeling threatened and not able to trust each other.

As can be seen, understanding culture from Hofstede dimensions, while helpful, was not enough to address the underlying unconscious system psychodynamics and hence could only have limited impact. While it brought awareness, it did not necessarily change behaviors because that was held hostage to these unconscious dynamics.

Throughout this process, I did not consciously use the idea of organization scripts to either make meaning of what was happening or to intervene in the system. What was challenging for me?

1. One challenge, I feel, is lack of a structure to think about and study organization scripts. One can follow the life script questionnaire and make meaning of individual script. How does one do that for organization scripts?
2. The other difficulty is that in large organizations, where founders have moved on, and professional leadership teams keep changing, it becomes difficult to draw the links between individual and systemic scripts. Sometimes, there is no access to leadership teams who may / may not be involved and that makes it difficult too. In the above case, I had access mostly to mid-level managers and HR managers who are perhaps just enacting the script.



3. Another difficulty is separating individual narratives from the collective, because source of information is an individual. To be mindful of what belongs to the individual and what to the organization can sometimes be difficult.
4. Most of the work with organization scripts is at the unconscious, psychodynamic level, which takes time to surface and even longer to change. And time is what most organizations don't seem to have. The focus is on quickly taking care of symptoms, rather than going deeper and working with unconscious and systemic processes. The prevailing belief is to make it a personal and individual phenomenon and any attempt to de-personalize and look at it from a systemic perspective is usually met with resistance.

### **Part 3: Using Organization Scripts**

For all the challenges I have cited above, what I have come to understand through this reflection, is that using organization scripts to understand organization culture and dynamics is certainly helpful. It provides a depth that is not possible with some other models. Two things come to mind about how I could use this more mindfully and effectively.

1. One approach I have personally found very helpful to understand systems psychodynamics, is what is known as the "Tavistock Approach". It provides a framework for looking at leadership and followership, exercise of authority in organizations and for understanding boundaries, roles and task.

It incorporates systems thinking, study of group behaviour and psychoanalytic theory into an aligned approach to help understand what is happening at the conscious and unconscious levels in individuals, teams and organizations.

I feel there are similarities in this and organization scripts and perhaps integrating the two will provide a more cohesive way of understanding organizations.

2. The other thought that emerged, was to have a way to structure my enquiry of organization scripts. There are some questions I ask when working with organizations to understand what might be happening. That and the life script questionnaire (Berne, 1972), gave me the idea of having a script questionnaire for organization scripts. It may help to ask some or all of these questions when working with groups and organizations, to understand what might be happening at an unconscious, systemic level. This is not an exhaustive set of questions and is purely based on my experience of asking these questions. Here, I have tried to link them to understand scripts in organizations.

**Table 1: Organization Script Questionnaire**

1	Describe using some adjectives what kind of organization this is (organizational beliefs)
2	What are your favorite stories about this organization? / what stories are most often narrated in the organization? (organizational myths)
3	What kind of leadership / leaders are described in these stories? (organizational myths)
4	What do leaders role model in the organization? (introjects)
5	What is the advice given by managers to subordinates? (programs)
6	What is energizing and enabling in this organization? (permissions)
7	What is de energizing and disabling in this organization? (injunctions)

8	What is OK and not OK to do in this organization? (injunctions)
9	What gets priority in the organization? Employees, Customers, Shareholders, other external stakeholders (organization priorities / drivers)
10	What is recognized and appreciated in this organization? (drivers)
11	What is reprimanded or penalized? (drivers)
12	How is good work rewarded and recognized in the organization? (strokes)
13	How are mistakes dealt with? (strokes)
14	How do problems get solved? (programs / discounting / games)
15	How are decisions taken? (programs /discounting / games)
16	How is conflict handled? (programs /discounting / games)
17	How do managers interact with subordinates? (Games)
18	When things are not going well, how do organization members react to it? (rackets)
19	What about this organization attracted you to join? (matching scripts)
20	How close is the organization to its stated vision? (script decisions)
21	How does organization see itself vis a vis its competitors? (Script decisions)
22	If you were on a jury to award the organization, what would you award it for? (script beliefs)
23	What would you say about the organization when leaving it? (script decisions)
24	If you could change some things about the organization, what and how would you change? (re decisions and contract)
25	How do you wish the leaders in this organization were different? (Re decisions and

	contract)
26	How do you wish people in this organization could be different? (re decisions and contract)

## Conclusion

So, have I found some answers and is there new insight that can change my beliefs about organization scripts and how they can help one understand organization culture and dynamics? Through the process of writing this paper, some questions have been answered, some have remained; but what has emerged, is an increased understanding of the idea and enhanced appreciation that it does hold immense potential. Even keeping it as a frame in my consciousness when I enter organizations, will help me understand organization dynamics better. Whether I can actively use it or not is still a question for me, one that I am more willing to explore and engage with.

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## **TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS IN PERSONAL CONTEXT**

## Where is my culture now?

A reflection on the impact of culture on my Script development over time.

*Steff Oates*

### **Abstract:**

The author provides a short reflection on her phenomenological response (i.e. the development of human consciousness and self-awareness - Merriam-Webster), to the invitation to write on the theme of this journal. She makes reference to the impact of her own upbringing, in a small rural town on the border of England and Wales and the subsequent development and expansion of her capacity for curiosity and wonder, regarding cultural differences. With reference to Drego (1983) and Mazzetti (2010), she speculates like Mazzetti, on the question of ‘What has Culture to do with Script’?

### **Introduction:**

When I received the invitation to write for this particular issue of SAJTA, I was at first delighted. The invitation felt timely and fitting, as I was due to attend the ITAA/SAATA conference, the theme of which was “The Dance of Culture”. I had agreed to run a workshop, which I entitled “Dancing with Words – Writing as an Exploratory Process”.

We have an expression in English, which says “Put your money where your mouth is”. The meaning of this according to the Cambridge English Dictionary is ‘to show by action and not just words, that you support or believe in something’. This is a value that has always been dear to my heart; I feel it to be an important part of my character and I agreed to write.

### **Ideas arising from my internal disturbance:**

As the time came closer to sit down and write, all sorts of anxieties arose. Who am I to write for an Indian publication? What if I make a fool of myself? I am afraid of making a mistake, of offending my colleagues, of making a major blunder. I do have a number of people I would consider friends and colleagues in India and our discussions have centred much more about the work of the ITAA (International Transactional Analysis Association), rather than enquiry as to cultural differences. I felt ill equipped to write on the subject of “The Impact of Culture on Individuals, Families, Communities and Organisations.” I addressed this with the person who invited me to write, who reassured me that it would be interesting to hear from someone with a different perspective and from a different culture. Checking the reality of what was expected helped me to settle into writing of my own experience, without needing to adapt and shape the article to expectations beyond those of my understanding.

As a Transactional Analyst, it was not hard for me to realise that these anxieties had their roots in my history, having been raised in a small rural mostly farming community on the English/Welsh border.

By the time I approached adulthood in this community, I saw that it was unusual for very many people to leave the community to set up a life and home beyond. There were friends who left - went to university and returned, but many of my school friends and cousins remained there, having married someone they grew up with from the same town. It is still relatively rare, even in 2018 and with much more movement of people throughout the world, to see people of colour in the town.

### **My own Cultural Parent (Drego 1983)**



Berne's concept of culture is supported by combined anthropological views on culture. Etiquette, Technicality and Character form the basis of TA Cultural Analysis and correspond to the Parent, Adult and Child components of the individual person. The internalization of the “personality of a culture” is described in structural terms: it forms the Cultural Parent of the individual person, and is diagrammed as three ellipses within the Parent ego state. The Cultural Parent provides a strategy for individual change within a socially unjust environment and a tool for social transformation of groups.

The Cultural Parent of my childhood could be described as having:

- an **etiquette** of respect for the natural order of the rich landowner, the proud hard working labourer and tradespeople as the middle-men.
- a **technicality** of encouraging young women to learn domestic sciences with the hope of grabbing a young farmer or local tradesman as a husband, therefore encouraging young men to develop a trade or technical skills to work the land and community.
- a **character** of recognising the importance of working hard, “not putting our head above the parapet”, remembering our humble beginnings and not “getting too big for our boots”.

I notice that I write the paragraph above in an idiomatic style. That is, the phrases would be immediately recognised by those of my own culture even though they may not be immediately apparent to someone from outside. For example “not putting our head above the parapet” means to not be seen to stand out; “getting too big for our boots” means being boastful about things where others might see flaws.

I am hoping that through these idioms and their explanations, readers will understand the sense of the character of my Cultural Parent, which ultimately, I believe, is protective of

individuals. It serves towards not being discovered to be less than we are showing ourselves to be. This felt sense runs throughout the character of all I know from my hometown in some way or another; it has the quality of being born in our very cells.

Christopher Bollas in “Being a Character” (1993) defines **idiom** as something we are born with and which is elaborated through parental provision. Bollas argued that everybody had their own idiom for life - a blend between the psychic organisation which since birth, forms the self’s core, and the implied logic of the familial way of relating into which we are then raised. As adults, we spend our time looking for objects of interest - human or material, which can serve to enhance our particular idioms or styles of life.

“As we are born with our idiom and as it is elaborated through parental provision, the individual develops a belief in psychic dissemination, which leads him to assume that he can articulate his idiom through the psychic freedom of object representation and the liberty of object choice.” (p. 66).

I understand this to correspond to Berne’s idea of **aspiration**. When writing in ‘What do you say after you say hello’ in 1972, he writes:

“As for myself, I know not whether I am still run by a music roll or not. . . . Certainly I know there are large areas where I am free to improvise. It may even be that I am one of the few fortunate people on earth who has cast off the shackles entirely and calls his own tune. In that case I am a brave improviser facing the world alone. But whether I am faking on the player piano, or striking the chords with the power of my own mind and hands, the song of my life is equally suspenseful and full of surprises as it rolls off the pulsating sound board of destiny a barcarole that either way will leave, I hope, happy echoes behind.” (pp. 276-277).

In the paragraphs that follow, I expound on that very question, am I “faking on the piano player or striking the chords with the power of my own mind”, I suspect sometimes it is one and sometimes the other.

### **Culture and Script**

Returning to the theme of the article and my question – ‘What has Culture to do with Script?’ I reflect on the differences between my school contemporaries and myself.

Due to my mother’s determination, my siblings and I are somewhat different from our classmates. All three of us have a university education and none of us lives in our hometown. I have lost my accent. I have a career that not many folks in my hometown understand. The type of self-reflection that I have learned over the last thirty years through being in the Transactional Analysis community is considered by most of my school contemporaries, as an affliction. “You think too much” is a criticism often levelled at my determination to wonder and keep wondering. Losing my accent does not feel like a conscious behavioural choice, it has happened through immersion in a different culture. My choice to immerse myself in that culture however does feel like that ‘psychic freedom of object choice’ (ibid) which Bollas describes.

### **Who am I now?**

As I thought more about the broad reach of this title, I wondered - Should I do a comparison of cultures? Should I look at cultural differences? Should I wonder what is it that made me travel so far outside my own cultural norm? What is my cultural norm now? How have I been influenced as an individual? What does this mean for my family? What is my culture now? Which community is mine, the one I was born and raised in or the one in which I have chosen to spend the last thirty years of my life? Is the shift my siblings and I chose, one of

autonomy or one of adaptation to my ambitious mother, who was determined that her children would rise above the social class into which they were born? In either case, what are the Script limitations from this upbringing and how might my Script be developing as a never-ending process of evolution (Monin 2018), with new opportunities that were not afforded to me then?

If the decision to move outside of my culture was a process of adaptation to my mother, then I may (and in fact, often do) feel, that I have transgressed beyond the character of the Cultural Parent. At these times it is not unusual to feel the pain of old lesions (James 1986).

I am aware as I write this, of how my reflections are quite individualistic. Recently, a TA colleague and friend suggested to me during a conversation where our views differed, that I was not interested in politics. The truth is we just have different ways of showing our interest. I am quietly reflective rather than choosing to canvass or join protest marches.

What was of particular interest to me was that I felt (what I can assume to be) an old wound, which I am now linking to a transgression against the Cultural Parent. In feeling the shame of this lesion, the meaning I made was that I had clearly become “too big for my boots” and needed “taking down a peg or two” by my colleague. I was now reaping the wrath of someone who was taking pains to remind me of my unreflective roots. Once I was aware of this, I was able to have a conversation with my colleague about our different approaches to thinking and getting active over our concerns regarding what is going on politically in the world.

The question remains, was my distress a result of a Script decision of not wishing to be seen, noticed and pointed out as lacking, or was it a transgression of the cultural norm of my town. Could it even be both and how does one influence the other?

My ambitious mother, if she were still alive, would now be proud of my achievements; my old school friends remain puzzled. I believe my choice to remain quiet regarding my political preferences is an autonomous choice, but am I the one playing the piano or am I the one being played and if so by whom? Now I clearly belong to a Transactional Analysis culture, am I now expected to adhere to unspoken cultural norms regarding being politically more outspoken?

I know how deeply distressed many of us are about the referendum result in the UK two years ago where a small majority voted for us to exit the European Union, the very system that was once proposed as an antidote to war. My home county voted, in the majority, to leave Europe. I did not and I maintain a possibly naïve wish that our separation from Europe does not happen.

As I reflect on my colleague's remark and the rubber banding (Kupfer and Haimowitz 1971) back to my original culture, I make the link with the lack of questioning and curiosity found in my hometown. I believe this relates to the issues described by Marco Mazzetti in his article (op. cit.). Mazzetti refers to Reisman's (1950) four phases of the development of human society, the first phase is one of an archaic society.

Mazzetti writes of Reisman's phases and the movement from the **archaic stage** through to an expanding one where a more **individualistic** style is valued. According to Reisman this is usually followed by an **other-directed society** where the norms are decided by the group. The last phase is **autonomy**, which is defined as a society where people transcend the social character of the society into which they were born.

In some ways my hometown remains a somewhat archaic society whereby the "social character" is "tradition directed" (1950 p 164). The individual's behaviour is driven by the

cultural demand to act in a traditionally approved way and is reinforced through the fear of being shamed. Sameness is lauded, difference is mistrusted.

**Conclusion:**

As I conclude this article, you will notice that questions remain. On the whole I am inclined to agree with Mazzetti's view: I think that culture has a strong effect on Script and that cultural influences are relevant not only in Script formation, but also as a fundamental aspect of the therapeutic process. (p. 188).

The issue with which I still grapple and invite readers to join me is twofold. It is not just how our culture of origin impacts on the individual, families, community and organisations, but also how cultures and customs that we as individuals or as groups have adopted throughout our lives influence us for better or worse.

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# The Culture I Grew up in & the one I now Choose

*Khushali Adhiya-Shah*

## **Abstract:**

**Culture** is a way of living, thinking and behaving; it is a way of life. It includes customs, traditions, values, beliefs, systems, rules, norms, morals and language of a community. Culture is learned within the family, over a period of time. It is construed in several perspectives – organizational/work culture, educational culture, national culture, family culture, religious/spiritual culture, socio-economic culture, regional culture, etc.

In this article, the focus is on two prominent paths for understanding culture: **individualism** and in more detail, **collectivism** (e.g., Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Triandis, 1995, 2007). Triandis and colleagues (1995, 1998) have also identified a further distinction between societies that are **horizontal** (valuing equality) and **vertical** (emphasizing hierarchy).

Using the lens of Transactional Analysis, the author explains the influence of her **vertical-collectivistic Indian culture**. The article leaves the reader with a few questions to ponder upon, for personal growth. In conclusion, this work proposes a healthy formation of the self through the ‘TA Culture’.

## **Individualism and Collectivism**

The fundamental difference between these two cultural distinctions, is how the **self** is seen:

- *Individualism: Self is unique and autonomous.*



- *Collectivism: Self is indistinguishable and necessarily embedded within a larger social network.*

“This distinction has also been referred to as egocentric versus socio-centric selves (Shweder & Bourne, 1982), or independence vs. interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991)”.

**Individualism:** This is characterized by an **independent** self-construal, which defines the individual in terms of unique attributes and characteristics. People tend to prefer independent relationships to others and to subordinate the goals of their in-groups (i.e. family, community) to their own personal goals.

Individualism is mostly seen in the cultures of Western Europe and North America, whereas collectivism is mostly seen in the cultures of Asia, Africa, and parts of Europe and Latin America (Triandis, 1993; Nelson & Fuvish, 2004).

**Collectivism:** Typically in collectivistic societies, it is normative to develop an **interdependent** construal. The **self is a part of the community** and is concerned with belongingness; it is defined in relation with others and is characterized by dependency, reciprocity and empathy. Relationships are the focus, being ends in themselves while independence and autonomy becomes secondary. Unflinching emphasis is placed on cooperation, conformity, family cohesion and solidarity (Skillman, 2000). Therefore individuals in these societies tend to emphasize on group goals, make more references to others and follow the expectations and regulations of the group (Desai, 2007).

Since the primary goal is to **maintain important group memberships and interpersonal relationships**, individuals figure out what is appropriate in their communication – they pick up on the paralinguistic aspects (reading between the lines of communication and making inferences

given context, tone of voice, and other cues) and the ability to restrain oneself, not stick out or offend the in-group members. However, it is the intrapersonal relationship that remains incomplete.

Essentially, collectivism emphasizes interdependence, togetherness, collectiveness, and engaging in co-operative tasks. In **vertical-collectivistic cultures** like India, Japan & Korea, people focus on fulfilling obligations to others, even when that entails sacrificing their personal goals (Erez & Earley, 1987). It is vertical because of the way hierarchy is emphasized in families and workplaces, complemented with messages of increasing superiority and respect commanded, moving upwards through the hierarchy.

**Interdependence between in-group members** (i.e. family, community) is emphasized upon in collectivistic cultures and they are expected to prioritize group goals. For example, children are not encouraged to individuate from their parents; they tend to obtain psychological well-being and a sense of security through obedience to, and dependence on, parents. Individuals therefore choose to preserve relationships (rather than achieve justice). Direct confrontation is usually anxiety-provoking and undesirable in solving the situation.

Research has found that **personal traits** that are facilitative to maintain group connectedness, are especially favourable in collectivistic cultures e.g. being willing to sacrifice, being skilful in maintaining close relationships, etc. Tan (2009) observed that **individual values** such as self-determinism, independence and self-expression are in direct conflict with traditional vertical-collectivistic values of obedience to parents, respect to elders, exercise of control and self-restraint.

### **The Culture I grew up in:**

The vertical-collectivistic aspect of my Indian culture taught me team-work and fostered components of social intelligence - social awareness, social information-processing and social skills (Goleman, 2006). However, the tricky part of this learning was the way it was communicated, as I explain below.

In my community, we are considered ‘good’ only if we are helpful, generous, dependable and sensitive to the needs of others. Fulfilling one's obligations to group members and collective welfare are therefore central to well-being, while communicating and pursuing one's personal goals and desires is assumed to be a secondary issue. For example, I have observed that my culture ubiquitously dislikes being refused; saying “No” was and sometimes still is, hard for me. Learning to employ cross transactions in my relationships was an upheaval task (Berne, 1961,1996). This broadened the gap between my real and executive self (how I really feel versus how I have to behave externally) (Berne, 1961,1966).

Given the background voice of “What will people say?” and “See how well behaved Mr.XYZ’s daughter is”, I picked up driver messages of ‘please others’ and ‘be perfect’. Experiences were so deep rooted that the ‘please others’ channelized me to discount the existence of my problems (Schiff & Schiff, 1971), as well as my ability to do something about them (i.e. my real-self feeling helpless). Instead, I had begun to over-adapt (Schiff & Schiff, 1971) to earn my minimum requirement of strokes (Berne, 1968)!

Prioritizing the needs of others over oneself extends even to the idea of death and closures, which resonate with personal loss and sadness. However, the messages we receive are “Calm down. Be brave and strong. If you cry, how will you take care of your father/mother/others?” The driver messages (Kahler, 1975) of ‘be brave’ and ‘be strong’ are introjected into our

existence! Unfortunately as a result, a gallows smile (Berne, 1974,1987) came naturally to rescue me from the impasse that I was experiencing (Gouldings, 1976). Culture influenced my identity as ‘secondary to relationships’ and impacted my personal boundaries, from not having my own physical and psychological privacy and space growing up.

The **influence of culture on my self-concept** is evident to me now. While my counterparts in the individualistic cultures might describe themselves in terms of personality traits and characteristics e.g., "I am smart, funny, athletic and kind", those of us like me, from the collectivistic cultures are more likely to describe ourselves in terms of our social relationships and roles, e.g., "I am so-and-so's son/daughter/wife" or "I am a good son, brother and friend".

Our culture plays a key role in defining our identities as a person, which then spills-over into the varied personal, professional and social roles that we play. While retaining the healthy aspects of this culture, I offer the importance of an infusion of the ‘TA Culture’ for a healthier self-concept below.

### **The Culture I now Choose:**

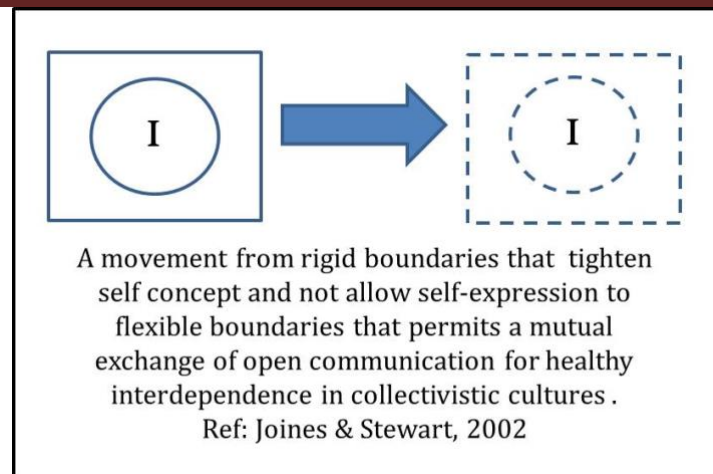
In many significant ways, I found the possibility of unlearning and relearning the way I perceive myself and the world around me through the principles and practices of Transactional Analysis. I propose that a plethora of TA concepts be employed to re-formulate our living as a **‘horizontal-individualistic-collectivistic’** culture for humankind globally.

The practice in TA of addressing others by names, sometimes with a salutation but without the “madam” and “sir”, helps me foster the feeling of equality (horizontal). I learned that I can express respect in my words and behaviour by addressing a person by their first name. It has revised my self-concept to being someone with a unique existence and at par with others around

me, in comparison to the superiority-inferiority feelings of a vertical culture. *Can we foster the idea of earning respect, instead of demanding for it?*

Individual uniqueness, while simultaneously interdepending with others in society, can be fostered with the use of open communication and mindful cross transactions. In a conflict with a senior, I find myself agreeing with the person (even though I don't wish to). Instead, communicating directly and employing a cross transaction to share my discomfort, rather than feeling obliged, is healthier. It allows me to be authentic. Using these methods could also reverse our culture's unspoken rule of 'take-your-family-member-for-granted', where we're told, "We're family. We're supposed to..."! *Can we allow children/junior colleagues to openly express their comforts and discomforts, without feeling offended?*

The interdependence of our cultures can be re-modified from rigidness (i.e. prioritizing others and not expressing self), to mutual exchange by constructing flexible boundaries (Joines & Stewart, 2002) (**Figure 1**). We can learn as a community to allow information that we feel ok with to come through and communicate our discomfort with information that doesn't feel congruent with our real feelings! Our interdependence would become more authentic and autonomous. *Can we teach our children (boys included) to express real feelings (as opposed to only those 'allowed' (English, 1971), within these flexible boundaries of interdependence?*



**Figure 1, Rigid to Flexible Boundaries, Joines & Stewart, 2002**

The basic philosophies of TA (People are ok; Everyone has the capacity to think and People decide their own destiny and these decisions can be changed) (Berne, 1966) are particularly helpful in any culture. The vertical dimension of hierarchy promotes critical evaluation and ‘judgementalism’. The TA philosophies instead re-direct us to a space where we can learn to accept people as they are, even if we do not agree with their ideas. Equality can be practiced by encouraging self-reflection and decision-making (instead of spoon-feeding or instructing/ordering), especially in parenting and education.

The life position (Berne,1966) of ‘I am ok, You’re ok’ if incorporated in our culture, exercises the horizontal dimension in a collectivistic culture. I have personally found it extremely useful to engage in Adult-Adult conversations (Berne, 1961,1966), especially with children, to promote this idea; it has helped them (and me) see ourselves as ‘worthy enough to share and care’. *Can we account for ourselves, while we mutually encourage accounting of others?*

To conclude, I re-emphasize the significance of the practices of the ‘TA Culture’ in our daily living! We can indeed be a **horizontal, individualistic and collectivistic culture**, if we so choose!

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## Centeredness – A forgotten Indian culture

*Meenakshi Kirtane*

### **The Premise:**

History (c. 200 BCE - c. 650 CE) talks about an India that was prosperous, abundant, peace-loving and non-attacking of others. A society that was content and self-sufficient - both economically and emotionally. A culture of kindness, generosity, extending ourselves for others and inclusive of diversity. A country whose temples celebrated sexuality (Jayapalan, 2001). To me, this speaks of the state of being **centered** (inwardly calm and steady).

Yet, my personal experience and my sense of today's Indian is quite different – we seem to have lost some of the richness and values of those cultural and historical roots. Reading Steiner's thoughts about socio-cultural influences on the formation of individual scripts (Steiner, 1974), fuelled me to think about self-limiting scripts we might have as Indians. Scripts that might be operational in a large majority of us, holding us back as a nation, corroding into our psyches and stifling possibilities.

Personally, I had felt '**off-centered**' for a long time in life and it was with difficulty, that I learned to separate my own identity and values from prevalent socio-cultural values, norms or trends. Questioning my own values about money and creating my own definition of what is enough; as a couple, having discussions with my spouse about how many cars and how big, we should have; as a woman, figuring out how much my role is defined by societal pressures, vis-à-vis what I think woman is.

Steiner's views made me wonder whether there are other Indians who feel off-centered like me? Do they feel pressured and on an unending chase set up by societal expectations from them? Is this only affecting individuals or also leading to disconnects in family environments? Are communities and states getting affected by this? Could this off-centeredness and restlessness be a result of our socio-cultural scripts? If so, what may have caused it?

I use this article to explore these questions and provide a theoretical hypothesis to understand socio-cultural scripts of Indians today; leading to my script diagnosis and conclude with sharing my own experience of how to regain Centeredness. This article is based purely on my perspectives and experiences of the current psychological state of Indians as impacted by history and does not intend to hurt anyone's cultural beliefs or sentiments.

### **Historical Influences on Script Formation:**

In my understanding, various historical influences have contributed to the formation of **Loveless, Mindless and/or Joyless Scripts** (Steiner, 1974) in Indians, each in their own way moving us away from the practice of being centered.

From c. 650 CE to c. 1100 CE when regional kingdoms were prevalent in India, the *Raja* (King) and *Prajaa* (Subjects) system developed a lot of power inequality. During the rule of power hungry tyrants, the *prajaa* experienced long patches of deprivation and lack of prosperity. Most kingdoms weren't democratic, so the right to think and make decisions was centralised with those few who served the King. Tyrannic rulers would additionally dish out unfairness and physical brutality to the *prajaa*, forcing them not to remain in touch with their bodies. Rebellion of any sort was dealt with harsh and punitive measures very swiftly. During the rule of incapable and weak kings, the *prajaa* was left unprotected from attacks from neighbouring kingdoms.

These scripts got further strengthened once foreign invasions began. Our cultural and religious relics were destroyed. India was looted many times and its riches plundered. We became scared of attack, got robbed of our riches, became overly protective of our women.

During the British Raj, it seems to me, we became a nation ashamed of itself and wanting to emulate the west. (To this day, we see attraction for fairer skin or feel inferior in not being able to speak fluent English).

Post independence, India's 2<sup>nd</sup> generation politicians have enforced Loveless, Mindless and Joyless scripts the most. Their coming into office gave them freedom to unleash their greed and need for power. Not only did the larger populace not benefit from freedom, on the contrary, politicians introduced corruption into the bloodstream of the Indian administration and mindsets. The Santhanam Committee, which was appointed in 1962 to examine the problem of corruption, observed in 1964 that: "There is widespread impression that failure of integrity is not uncommon among ministers and that some ministers, who have held office during the last sixteen years have enriched themselves illegitimately, obtained good jobs for their sons and relations through nepotism and have reaped other advantages inconsistent with any notion of purity in public life." With monetary and psychological deprivation, our souls and basic value systems also got corroded. Agencies related to the basic needs and empowerment of people (like education and health), were not strengthened (Census 2001 and 2011).

I assess that the above historical reasons have led to our being 'off-centered' and have caused some amongst us to have developed loveless, joyless and/or mindless scripts. I have tried to explain what these scripts mean and how I see them operate in our society in the following section.

**1) Loveless: “Scarcity of essential life support causes depression. People need food, shelter, space, safety, drinkable water, breathable air and human contact (strokes).” Without adequate strokes, people develop a loveless script. A person having a loveless script is not free to give or receive strokes freely (Steiner, 1974).**

Our country still struggles to provide basic needs and requirements of food, water, shelter and health (Census 2001 and 2011). The agrarian economy which is actually self-sustaining and in sync with nature, is seeing people endlessly migrate to urbanity (Census 2001 and 2011). People are leaving behind what is natural and healthy, due to water and irrigation problems (World Bank, 2013) and lack of basic amenities in rural India (TOI, 2010 and Census of India, 2001). The whole country is not financially rich (CIA The World Factbook, 2017-18, IMF, 2017-18). Even the upper middle class do not experience financial abundance (UN, 2018 and New Economics Foundation, 2016). In urban areas, there is no time to give and take any strokes because of long working hours (Economic Times, 2015). There is still animosity between religions and communities and therefore no space for tolerance and diversity (Pew Research Centre, 2017). Within families, even now there is enmeshment and inability to individuate. Census data shows that between 2001 and 2011, the percentage of nuclear families as a percentage of all families actually declined slightly.

The data above shows how scarcity continues to create stroke deficits in the country and this deficit maintains and develops a Loveless script in our society.

**2) Mindless: A mindless script is operational when a person does not own up both to his ability to think and decide; and his internal power (Steiner, 1974).**

I see a lot of people in India as still being conformists in their personal and professional choices. There are set social/family norms and times to do things, to which most people conform (DNA, 2014). Personal opinions, choices, rhythms and timings of each individual are largely discounted. Therefore, we hardly see any permission (Wyckoff, 1971) in people to separate and be their own identities. Very often men or women, who have a distinct or different identity are not understood or accepted easily (single mothers or women corporate leaders). When we go to other countries as students or professionals, we are at our creative best and stand out. But within the country, up until recent times, technological innovation facilities were still developing (Economic Times, 2015). Emotions are yet largely not understood (Senad, 2017 and TOI, 2018). In my work with college students, I meet a lot of them confused and directionlessness as they lack clarity about who they are and what kind of work best expresses them. There is still an induced sense of inferiority as a race and culture. (Livemint, 2013). Majority of relationships have debilitating levels of power plays (UNDP, 2015).

These examples show how both the freedom to think for oneself and own upto one's power are socially not very encouraged in India, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of a Mindless script.

**3) Joyless: A joyless script is operational when an individual has lost a sense of connection with his/her body both as a source of joy as well as a source of information about what fits well for them (Steiner 1974).**

With this connection lost, the person is not tuned in to a major source of personal wisdom. Additionally people tend to get into addictions as they do not know how to derive joy from their bodies, non-abusively.

There is rampant addiction today in the whole country (Tobaccoatlas, 2014 and WHO, 2014). Most people can't leave their phones aside. School and college students experiment with alcohol, cannabis and other drugs. Few people have a concept or time for listening to their selves or 'Me' time (Economic Times, 2015). Very few people introspect about themselves or think about their spiritual core (Indian Express, 2017). Health awareness is still catching up in India. Those people who gym and exercise regularly, I wonder how many do it to show off their bodies to others or under medical recommendations and how many because they rejoice and care for their bodies. Sexuality continues to be a huge taboo rather than being rejoiced.

**Transactional Analysis Script Diagnosis:**

Each script has related Injunctions, Attributions, Counterscript, Script Decisions and Somatic Components. In the following table I have enlisted certain socio-cultural Injunctions, Attributions and Script Decisions, which when we believe or follow without mindful thought, keeps us script-bound. They perpetuate the loveless, joyless and/or mindless scripts in an individual permeating into family, society, state and country. Breaking out of them is the key.

I have also given a brief of how these beliefs might reflect in the bodies of some Indians (Somatic Component) and given a few examples of people who have broken the societal script (Counterscript).

1. Socio-Cultural Injunctions	2. Socio-Cultural Attributes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Don't Think</li> <li>✦ Don't Make it</li> <li>✦ Don't Be You</li> <li>✦ Don't Be Rich, Don't Feel Rich</li> <li>✦ Don't be Proud of your Language</li> <li>✦ Don't Be Content</li> <li>✦ Don't Be Proud of your Culture</li> <li>✦ Don't Celebrate your History</li> <li>✦ Don't be Connected to Nature</li> <li>✦ Don't Apply your Scriptures and Life Philosophies to your Life</li> <li>✦ Don't Say No Even Where Required</li> <li>✦ Don't Act</li> <li>✦ Don't Care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ You are inferior</li> <li>✦ Your origin is shameful</li> <li>✦ Your colour is aversive</li> <li>✦ You are born to be followers</li> <li>✦ You are powerless</li> <li>✦ Everything you have can be taken away</li> <li>✦ Just accept everything that is thrown at you</li> <li>✦ The country is not yours to love and care for</li> </ul>
3. The Counterscript	
<p>I do see a lot of individual examples of people who have broken against these scripts. Lovelessness has been broken by those like Jamshedji Tata, who became not only abundant, but deep rooted in their philanthropy and distributed wealth to others. Mindfulness as displayed by Sundar Pichai, Head of Google, or Indian scientists at NASA, who have been welcomed and celebrated for their thinking and mental calibre all over the world. Finally, there are yoga gurus and Indian musicians who have been spreading Joyfulness through the richness of our musical heritage and spiritual awakening to the whole world.</p> <p>Though all of this has happened, the country as a whole does not seem to take a quantum jump psychologically. Even when there is political will at times, people are so scripted that we don't look at prosperity in a larger way.</p>	

**Figure 1, Diagnosis of Indian Socio-Cultural Script: Injunctions, Attributes and Counterscript**



4. Socio-Cultural Script Decisions	5. The Somatic Component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ There is less out there, so we need to hoard</li> <li>✦ We will be safe if we don't show our originality or give our opinions</li> <li>✦ We are good enough if we emulate the west</li> <li>✦ we are intelligent and smart only if we speak English well</li> <li>✦ At best, we are Me-Too products. Nothing original about us is good</li> <li>✦ Only money (western parameters/competitive chase) defines success. Therefore, we have to loose our inner contentment in small things and restlessly keep chasing</li> <li>✦ Being in touch with our centres will lead to severe negative repercussions</li> <li>✦ We have less and so we keep saving all our lives and pass on money to our children</li> <li>✦ We can't be too bothered about the street or nation or natural resources. Actively participating could lead to annihilation</li> <li>✦ We should be scared of and not at harmony with other communities/religions</li> <li>✦ It is dangerous, so keep a vigil</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Weak and malnourished physical structures</li> <li>✦ Very few communities have tall people that could overpower the physique of western countries</li> <li>✦ Anxiety, stress and resultant heart problems are rampant</li> <li>✦ Lot of people have weak spines and backs</li> <li>✦ Lot of obese people. Especially post marriage, people stop taking care of their physical selves</li> <li>✦ Substitution of food for all kinds of nourishment and overfeeding guests</li> <li>✦ Body and sexual shaming</li> </ul>

**Figure 2, Diagnosis of Indian Socio-Cultural Script: Script Decisions and Somatic Component**

### **The Road to Recovery – Reclaiming our Indian-ness**

As Transactional Analysis is a decisional approach (Steiner, 1974), the idea about historically diagnosing our national script is not to blame, but to figure out what we need to do in order to break free of it. Based on the thoughts regarding antithesis provided by Steiner, (Steiner, 1974), the best way I thought was to put forward what I had done in each of the areas. I hope these thoughts would be helpful to you. I invite you to think about what we could do individually and collectively as a nation to change these scripts.

#### **1. Antithesis to Loveless Script**

Steiner suggested that in order to change the loveless script, it was important to break down our stroke economy (Steiner, 1974).

**Connect:** I actively started giving and receiving strokes. I started volunteering hugs; started asking the autorikshaw guy, paper wala, milkman how they were and how their day had gone; ensure that I meet my friends face-to-face and amply laugh with them and ask from my family whatever strokes I needed. I started gardening, talking to my plants and home, cooking by myself which helped me remain in relationship with my surroundings.

**Definition of Enough:** An internal definition of what's enough regarding material success, was one of the most difficult tasks for me, due to the social conditioning in me around monetary parameters of success. I realised that a lack of my own definition blocked me from feeling internally content and abundant. I expanded my definition of richness to include a healthy body, people who love me just the way I am and support me, having an extremely resourceful and competent mind, God at my core and the abundance of possibilities that life as a journey provides. All of this led to a sense of abundance in me, thereby breaking down my stroke economy on a different plane.

## **2. Antithesis to Mindless Script**

**Account for My Intelligence and Uniqueness:** Through reading our scriptures I have developed an independent perspective towards my life purpose (karma). I have tried to understand my uniqueness and innovativeness as a person. Over the last decade, created an organisation and work path that answers my calling and expresses my uniqueness instead of conforming to the standard socially expected jobs.

Beyond my own realm, I have become very mindful in my use and preservation of natural resources, being it non-use of plastic, to mindful use of tissue rolls to segregated garbage disposal.

**Discount Power Plays:** Understanding the centuries old life wisdom in India, helps me to see that everyone is the same pure soul energy. Automatically, my need to have undue power in any situation has melted away. With my being in connect with my original spiritual core of inner power, I also feel more courageous to embrace life in all its colours.

### **3. Antithesis to Joyless Script**

**Connect with my Body:** Around 7-8 years back when I first started Pranayam and Yogasanas, I realised how disconnected with my own breathing and body I was. With the passing years, the more it has become a part of my daily life, the more I have experienced the importance of these practices as way of listening to myself, and remaining centered in my body.

Over years I have recommended these to a lot of my clients and seen excellent results for them. Learning to breathe deeply and into different body parts also cures a lot of psycho-somatic ailments.

**Connect with my Sexuality:** Accepting that I am sexual human being and enjoying that has been a difficult yet very important step of my life. Letting go of the immense sexual repression and culturally borrowed shame within me has helped me free up this energy within.

**Connect with my Soul:** In the last decade or so, continuously being aware of a higher self in me and keeping divinity at the center of my decision making has helped me remain in touch with my wisdom at all times. Quiet time and introspection as a practice also helped tremendously to become grounded and balanced as a person. Gradually developing the ability to listen what my

mind, body, heart or higher self might be saying at any moment has helped develop Congruence (an ability to be in contact with our body, mind, heart and spirit in the here and now).

**Conclusion:**

As transactional analysis is based on each person thinking and deciding for themselves, I invite all readers, within and outside the TA community to reflect on my diagnosis of how, where and why our social scripts are the way they are. Do you also experience these, within you and around you? Additionally, gauge whether what I incorporate in my life as a way of regaining my centering and breaking my scripts, could also work as an antithesis for you. Think about whether you would want to create your own antithesis and encourage it in as many others around you as possible. Beyond all this, what more can we all collectively do for national script cure?

I end my paper here with the hope that what I have written adds value to your understanding of our national psyche and its script recovery and the wish that this paper inspires every reader to live their life lovefully, mindfully and joyfully!

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# Re-examining my cultural influences through TA

*Krishnan Madhabushi*

## **Introduction**

As I sat down to write this article, the first question that came to my mind was this – Being a beginner in this journey, am I competent enough to write for an official TA journal? Before I could start thinking of the answer, I wondered - where was this doubt coming from in the first place? Where else, but my own life-script! And this awareness answered both my questions in one go! I realized that I wasn't called upon to write an authoritative piece on the concepts of TA but an authentic account of my personal experience. No one was better equipped to do that but me.

I have been experiencing moments of awareness on a day-to-day basis in the past few months. The genesis of these myriad experiences has been two defining events in my short, yet enlightening, TA journey:

- **The day I met my life-script**
- **When my Racket system became apparent**

These events have helped me examine the cultural influences (familial and societal in this context), which have shaped my script beliefs and decisions. I call them 'defining' since they have helped me understand and redefine my views of myself, others and life.

## **The day I met my life-script**

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*“life-script is a life plan made in childhood, reinforced by parents, justified by subsequent events, and culminating in a chosen alternative” (Berne, 1972)*

My introduction to life-script was a paradigm shift in many ways. Initially, I wondered how a seemingly logical and rational adult, could be operating based on a script made in his childhood? I could recollect nothing out of the ordinary or traumatic during my childhood either. My loving, well-intentioned parents wanted me to ‘work hard’ and ‘be a good boy’.

It was only when I understood the nuances of Berne’s definition of life-script, did things start becoming clear. The *“life plan made in childhood”* was, in fact, a concretizing of decisions made by me as a child, based on my interpretation of experiences with parental figures in my childhood environment. The script therefore was “decisional”, though different from adult decision-making.

These decisions were made by my child’s Adult ego-state - my “Little Professor” (Berne, 1961), based on my perceptions of the realities around me. It was a survival strategy for a child, amidst giants. This Little Professor was interpreting script messages about self, others and the world, in order to arrive at my script decisions. Over time they also aided in getting me positive strokes, typically conditional strokes, from my environment.

Most of us who have grown up in middle class households in India, would relate to these well-intentioned parental messages of ‘work hard’ and ‘be good’. Script messages may be conveyed verbally as commands or attributions or non-verbally using modelling (Berne, 1972). On the face of it these messages are innocuous and familiar; this happens even today in many households with similar cultural influences.



As I explored this aspect further, I was able to vividly recall and recognise several ways in which these messages were conveyed and received during my childhood:

**Commands** (Direct commands of what to do):

- “You can only succeed if you work hard” (“work hard”)
- “You have to respect elders” (“be good”)

**Attributions** (What the child is):

- “He is a disciplined boy” (“be good” and “work hard”)
- “He is a good student” (“work hard”)

**Modelling** (Child’s observation of parental figures):

- Both my parents were dedicated to their respective responsibilities - father as a provider and mother as a homemaker. They would very rarely take a day off from their routine due to illness or just to rest. They modelled a high standard of discipline, hard work and commitment to their day-to-day tasks. (“be good” and “work hard”)

These parental script messages were further reinforced by the wider circle of cultural influences in the form of grandparents, extended family, historical tales and contemporary stories.

My Little Professor took these messages and decided to “try hard” and “please others” (Kahler, 1975). On the positive side, these decisions have held me in good stead in my professional pursuits and in being sensitive and respectful in my relationships. However, they were also lived out without awareness, which resulted in these strategies being misapplied in some adult situations. I did not adapt them to realities of when not to try hard and whom not to please.

Meeting my life-script made me realize the following:

- My life-script, with its beliefs and decisions, exists
- My script influences my adult life significantly
- They were formed as a result of my Little Professor's survival strategies based on the cultural influences of my childhood
- There were desirable and undesirable outcomes of being in script. However, both the outcomes were incidental, since they were lived outside of my awareness

This awareness is empowering and so is the knowledge that I can re-decide and choose to extricate myself from my script. It has helped me re-examine my cultural influences in a new light. It was a defining moment, since it opened up a new paradigm for me to understand myself, others and the world.

### **When my Racket system became apparent**

*“racket feeling is a familiar emotion, learned and encouraged in childhood, experienced in many different stress situations, and maladaptive as an adult means of problem solving”*  
(Stewart & Joines, 1987)

My understanding of script was further enhanced as I began exploring the ways in which I was living out my script through my racket system and games. One of my favorite rackets displays is overthinking (rumination) which manifests itself as withdrawal, at times. I would instinctively take any negative feeling (sadness, anger or fear) into my head for analysis, without letting myself ‘feel the emotion’ fully. This helped me keep up with the image of being a ‘logical, thinking’, ‘good’ person, while in reality I was operating in my script.

This need to be seen as a ‘logical, thinking’ person goes back to decisions taken by my Little Professor in my childhood. In the environment that I grew up in, expression of certain feelings (fear or sadness) was not desirable. While at times they were expressly prohibited, most times, the absence of these elicited positive strokes from authority figures. Hence my survival strategy was to replace these real feelings with the racket of withdrawal or overthinking.

My understanding of rackets was enhanced by the concept of Injunctions. Injunctions are negative, restrictive script messages communicated from the Child in the parent to the Child in the child (Steiner, 1974). The predominant injunction for me here is “Don’t feel” and I especially apply this to those feelings (fear and sadness), which were considered negative in my culture, especially as I am a male child. Fear was considered as a feeling to be ashamed of, especially for a man. My father’s modelling as a physically strong and fearless person also reinforced this injunction. The general narrative of gendering of fear in wider society, also contributed to this reinforcement. I recall being asked to accompany my female siblings, though I was younger and physically weaker than them. The subliminal message was that I was to make them feel safe and therefore had no room to display fear. I would in such situations withdraw into my shell of rumination and project a stoic exterior. Unlike the commands and attributions mentioned earlier, the messaging of these injunctions was non-verbal and subtle.

I had always believed that the stoicism that I displayed right from my young adulthood was in fact a personality trait. The realization that this was in fact a racket, for me to avoid dealing with my authentic underlying feelings of sadness or fear, was a revelation. In hindsight, I realized that certain stressful situations tended to linger in my mind for a long time instead of getting resolved, due to this rackets display. I now understand why.

Since this realization, I have had occasion to be in stressful situations and have allowed myself to experience my authentic feelings, without rushing into (over) analysis, my favorite racket. While it was initially discomfiting, allowing myself to experience my authentic feelings has helped me find real closure to the situation, which racket feelings did not allow. This is the second defining moment of my TA journey.

My TA journey has helped me develop a new level of awareness and empathy about myself, others and the world, while also understanding the cultural influences that have shaped us. As I continue this journey, I am sure to encounter more such (re) defining moments, and I am keen to discover connections and layers that will help me live by choice, rather than an outdated script.

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