

# Game Codes Newsletter of Games People Play

 Addresso'Set Publications

## “Why Don’t You ... Yes But”

### Special points of interest:

- \* Games are both necessary and desirable, and the only problem at issue is whether the games played by an individual offer the best yield for him.

The game of “Why Don’t You ... Yes But” is the most common game played at social gatherings, committee meetings and psychotherapy groups the world over (pg 58 in Games People Play by E. Berne).

“As the transactions of a game unfold, then the picture of a game is seen. (pg 63 of Who’s Listening by FH Ernst Jr) The Hooks are sunk so that the Angle and Con maneuvers can be set in motion, and then the Gimmick eventually can be played in order that the player then can go for the ulterior gratification of the Payoff. The predominant and driving impetus and force behind this series of social exchanges is the latent, the hidden, the ulterior motivation of the thirst for Payoff. When this picture of a game is

understood, then the transactions of a game can be seen as having a natural logic within themselves. Out of the social level Adult to Adult transactions, games are seen to evolve in one of two directions to bring about different forms of psychological structure, each with its unique quality of dynamics.” The opening move of ‘Why Don’t You .. Yes But’ is a set complementary transactions between two people: Adult to Adult, or Parent to Child, or Child to Parent. These games can be played by many people at the same time, referred to as the hands played.”

Friday night poker buddies may play this when “casually” talking about their parents or brothers (to the exclusion of their parents and brothers). This game is played among

“friends,” and between mothers and sons. The games are played thru five distinct moves: Hook, Angle, Con, Gimmick and Payoff. Each one of these moves or series of moves can be recycled any number of times.



The game of “Why Don’t You ... Yes But” is played for a Get-Nowhere-With payoff much of the time. It can also be played for a Get-Rid-Of, Get-Away-From, or Get-On-With payoff.

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## Yes But

“Why Don’t You ... Yes But” games are usually pretty mild. A game is a game. Yes but this game could be played to promote fights. Yes but aren’t there other games a person could play?

“Lets You and Him Fight” sometimes is the consequence of playing

“Why Don’t You ... Yes But.” A second-degree or third degree intensity game for example is a son playing with his mother to promote a fight between his mother and father. Sadistic joke? but real. Dad reflected on this with me years later as he figured it out.

And then there is the history of

“little sister” of five older brothers learning how to play “Why Don’t You ... Yes But” to get them to do her bidding. Today in another house she is masterfully influencing people as she plays hundreds of people for “control.” Get-on-with her buddies, a get-rid-of those “against her,” or a get-away from them in a huff, or get-nowhere-with

## Yes But continued

them until she pounces or gets someone else to do "it" for her.

Games are played by different numbers of players: two handed games, three handed games, five handed games, and many handed as in "Why Don't You ... Yes But." "In addition to the number of players, three

other quantitative variables are often useful to consider: flexibility, tenacity, and intensity (pg 63 of [Games People Play](#)). Some people play their games in a relaxed way, others are more tense and aggressive. These three variables converge to make games gentle or violent." There are degrees of games played. "A First-Degree Game is one

which is socially acceptable in the agent's circle. A Second-Degree Game is one which no permanent, irremediable damage arises, but which the players would rather conceal from the public. A Third-Degree Game is one which is played for keeps, and which ends in the surgery, the courtroom or the morgue."

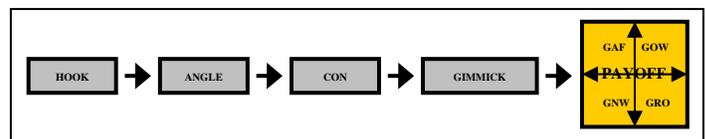
## The five moves of the game "Yes But"

In the game of "Yes But" there are five distinct moves. Each one of these can and are repeated, recycled as the players play them. Move #1 - "I was just thinking of you." Move #2 - "I have (got) this problem." Move #3 - "Nothing seems to work." Move #4 - "Yes But." Move #5 - Payoff.

This player may be trolling for people to play with, or will already have a complementary game player

who plays the "Why Don't You ..."

This game is shown in this diagram.




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"The strokes a person exchanges during his / her encounters with others (encounter by encounter) have consequences."

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## "Why Don't You ... Yes But" illustrated by Eric Berne

*Thesis:* "Why Don't You--Yes But" occupies a special place in game analysis, because it was the original stimulus for the concept of games. (from pgs 116-122 of [Games People Play](#)) It was the first game to be dissected out of its social context, and since it is the oldest subject of game analysis, it is one of the best understood. It is also the game most commonly played at parties and groups of all kinds, including psychotherapy groups. The following example will serve to illustrate its main characteristics:

White: "My husband always insists on doing our own repairs, and he never builds anything right."

Black: "Why doesn't he take a course in carpentry?"

White: "Yes, but he doesn't have the time."

Blue: "Why don't you buy him some tools?"

White: "Yes, but he doesn't know how to use them."

Red: "Why don't you have your building done by a carpenter?"

White: "Yes, but that would cost too much."

Brown: "Why don't you just accept what he does the way he does it?"

White: "Yes, but the whole thing might fall down."

"Such an exchange is typically followed by a silence. It is eventually broken by Green, who may say something like, "That's men for you, always trying to show how efficient they are."

"YDYB can be played by any number. The agent presents a problem. The others start to present solutions, each

beginning with "Why don't you...?" To each of these White objects with a "Yes, but..." A good player can stand off the others indefinitely until they all give up, whereupon White win. In many situations she might have a dozen or more solutions to engineer the crestfallen silence which signifies her victory [See Note #1], and which leaves the field open for the next game in the above paradigm, Green switching into "PTA", Delinquent Husband Type. [Note #1 by FH Ernst Jr.: This game payoff, "victory", is a GNW payoff; she's stalemated, frustrated all these other learned people. In fact, this game of "Yes, But" has been observed (in other settings) to be resolved (payoff) with mutual laughing pleasure payoffs (GOW), and GRO and GAF payoffs.]

"Since the solutions are, with rare exceptions, rejected, it is apparent

that this game must serve some ulterior purpose. YDYB is not played for its ostensible purpose (an Adult quest for information or solutions), but to reassure and gratify the Child. A bare transcript may sound Adult, but in the living tissue it can be observed that White presents herself as a Child inadequate to meet the situation; whereupon the other become transformed into sage Parents anxious to dispense their wisdom for her benefit.

"This is illustrated in the drawing. The game can proceed because at the social level both stimulus and response are Adult to Adult, and at the psychological level they are also complementary, with Parent and Child stimulus ("Why don't you...") eliciting Child to Parent response ("Yes, but..."). The psychological level is usually unconscious on both sides, but the shifts in ego states (Adult to "inadequate" Child on White's part, Adult to "wise" Parent by the other) can often be detected by the alert observer from changes in posture, muscular tone, voice and vocabulary."

"In order to illustrate the implications, it is instructive to follow through on the example given above.

Therapist: "Did anyone suggest anything you hadn't thought of yourself?"

White: "No, they didn't. As a matter of fact, I've actually tried almost everything they suggested. I did buy my husband some tools, and he did take a course in carpentry."

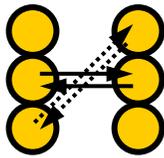
"Here White demonstrates two of the main reasons why the proceedings should not be taken at face value. First, in the majority of cases White is

as intelligent as anyone else in the company, and it is very unlikely that others will suggest any solution that she has not thought of herself. If someone does happen to come up with an original suggestion, White will accept it gratefully if she is playing fair; that is, her "inadequate" Child will give way if anyone present has an idea ingenious enough to stimulate her Adult. But habitual YDYB players, such as White above, seldom play fair. On the other hand, a too ready acceptance of suggestions raises the question of whether the YDYB is not masking an underlying game of "Stupid."

"The example given is particularly dramatic, because it clearly illustrates the second point. Even if White has actually tried some of the solutions presented, she will object to them. The purpose of the game is not to get suggestions, but to reject them."

"While almost anyone will play this game under proper circumstances because of its time structuring value, careful study of individuals who particularly favor it reveals several interesting features. First, they characteristically can and will play either side of the game with equal facility. This switchability of roles is true of all games. [See Note #2] Players may habitually prefer one role to another, but they are capable of trading, and they are willing to play any other role in the same game, if for some reason that is indicated. (Compare, for example, the switch from Drinker to Rescuer in the game of Alcoholic.)"

[Note #2 by FH Ernst Jr: Hence complementary games: game players cast opposite the principal and in the case of games with more than two-hands, the other supporting roles.]



"Second, in clinical practice it is found that people who favor YDYB belong to that class of patients who eventually request hypnosis or some sort of hypnotic injection as a method of speeding up their treatment. When they are playing the game, their object is to demonstrate that no one can give them an acceptable suggestion--that is, they will never surrender; whereas with the therapist, they request a procedure which will put them in a state of complete surrender. It is apparent that YDYB represents a social solution to a conflict about surrender."

"Even more specifically, this game is common among people who have a fear of blushing, as the following therapeutic exchange demonstrates:

Therapist: "Why did you play 'Why Don't You---Yes But' if you know it's a con?"

White: "If I'm talking to somebody I have to keep thinking of things to say. If I don't, I'll blush. Except in the dark. I can't stand a lull. I know it, and my husband knows it, too. He's always told me that."

Therapist: "You mean if your Adult doesn't keep busy, your Child takes the chance to pop up and make you feel embarrassed?"

White: "That's it. So if I can keep making suggestions to somebody, or get him to make suggestions to me, then I'm all right, I'm protected. As long as I can keep my Adult in control, I can postpone the embarrassment."

"Here White indicates clearly that she fears unstructured time. Her Child is prevented from advertising as long as the Adult can be kept busy in a social situation, and a game offers a suitable structure for Adult function-

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The Game Diagram is a systematic and methodical approach to games people play. The questions of games, which form the basic structure of emotional dynamics of individuals, families, and organizations can be better understood using this diagram. Transactional encounters can be described with the Game Diagram.

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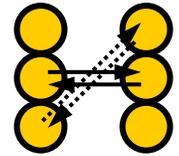
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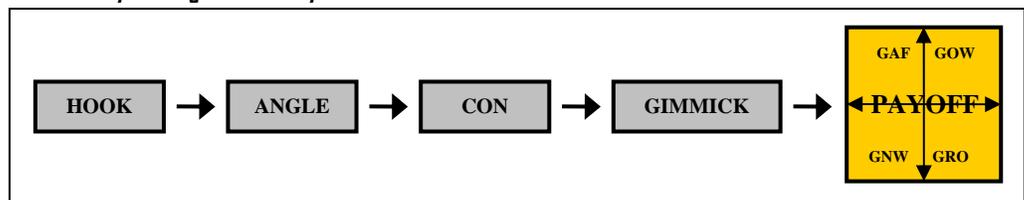
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A game is defined as a recurring set of transactions with ulterior transactions, concealed motivation, a gimmick, and a payoff. Eric Berne, M.D. used a particular variation of the duplex transactional diagram to represent the ulterior aspects of a game. Berne added the concept of switch in 1966 and introduced "The Game Formula."  $Con + Gimmick = Response > Switch > Payoff$



The "Ernst Game Diagram" as described by Franklin H. Ernst Jr., M.D. in his paper "The Game Diagram" shows the phenomena of the variableness of a game and number of variations without contradicting "Berne's Game Formula." The Game Diagram" has five moves: Move #1-Hook, Move #2-Angle, Move #3-Con, Move #4-Gimmick, Move #5-Payoff. Diagrammatically it looks like this:



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*"Mastery of the universe is proportional to the symbols man has by which to represent his universe."*

### "Why Don't You ... Yes But" illustrated by Eric Berne continued

ing. But the game must be suitably motivated in order to maintain her interest. Her choice of **YDIB** is influenced by the economy: it yields the maximum internal and external advantages to her Child's conflicts about physical passivity. She could play with equal zest either the shrewd Child who cannot be dominated or the sage Parent who tries to dominate the Child in someone else, but fails. Since the basic principle of **YDIB** is that no suggestion is ever accepted, the Parent is never successful. [See Note #1] The motto of the game is: "Don't get panicky, the Parent never succeeds."

"In summary, then: while each move is amusing, so to speak, to White, and brings its own little pleasure in rejecting the suggestion, the real payoff is the silence or unmasked silence which

ensues when all the others have racked their brains and grown tired of trying to think of acceptable solutions. This signifies to White and to them that she has won by demonstrating it is they who are inadequate. If the silence is not unmasked, it may persist for several minutes. In the paradigm, Green cut White's triumph short because of her eagerness to start a game of her own, and that was what kept her from participating in White's game. Later in the session, White demonstrated her resentment against Green for having abridged her moment of victory."

"Another curious feature of **YDIB** is that the external and the internal games are played exactly the same way, with the roles reversed. In the external form, the one observed clini-

cally, White's Child comes out to play the role of the inadequate help-seeker in a many-handed situation. In the internal form, the more intimate two-handed game played at home with her husband, her Parent comes out as the wise, efficient suggestion-giver. This reversal is usually secondary, however, since during the courtship she plays the helpless Child side, and only after the honeymoon is over does her bossy Parent begin to emerge into the open. There may have been slips as the wedding approached, but her fiance will overlook these in his eagerness to settle down with his carefully chosen bride. If he does not overlook them, the engagement may be called off for "good reasons", and White sadder but no wiser, will resume her search for a suitable mate. ..."

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