



Special points of interest:

"Games People Play," first published in 1964 was preceded by "Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy," published in 1961. These titles and others by Eric Berne, M.D. have been translated into many foreign languages. 50 to 100 million copies of these books have been sold .



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"Games People Play" - More about Underworld Games

"Games People Play" by
Eric Berne, M.D.



Berne continues on page 132:
"With the infiltration of the "helping" professions into the courts, probation departments and correctional facilities, and with the increasing sophistication of criminologists and law enforcement officers, those concerned should be aware of the more common games prevalent in the underworld, both in prison and out of it. These include "Cops and Robbers", "How Do You Get Out of Here" and "Let's Pull a Fast One on Joey."

COPS AND ROBBERS

"Thesis. Because many criminals are cop-haters, they seem to get as much satisfaction from outwitting the police as from their criminal gains, often more. Their crimes, at the Adult level, are games played for the material rewards, the take; but at the Child level it is the thrill of the chase: the getaway (* #1) and the cool-off."

"Curiously enough, the childhood prototype of "Cops and Robbers" is not cops and robber but **hide-and-peek**, in which the essential element is the chagrin at being found. (* #2)

Younger children readily betray this. If father find them too easily, the chagrin is there without much fun. (* #3) But father, if he is a good player, knows what to do: he holds off, whereupon the little boy gives him a clue by calling out, dropping something or banging. Thus he forces father to find him, but still shows chagrin; this time he has had more fun because of the increased suspense. (* #4) If father gives up, the boy usually feels disappointed rather than victorious. Since the fun of being hidden was there, evidently that is not where the trouble lies. When his turn comes to hide, father knows he is not supposed to out with the little boy for very long, just long enough to make it fun; and he is wise enough to look chagrined when he is caught. It soon becomes clear that being found is the necessary payoff."

"Hence **hide-and-peek** is not merely a pastime but a true game. At the social level it is a battle of wits, and is most satisfying when the Adult in each player does his best; at the psychological level, however, it is set up like compulsive gambling, in which White's Adult has to lose in order for his Child to win. Not being caught is actually the antithesis. Among older children, one who finds an insoluble hiding place is regarded as not being a good sport,

since he has spoiled the game. He has eliminated the Child element and turned the whole thing into an Adult procedure. He is no longer playing for fun. He is in the same class as the owner of a casino, or some professional criminals, who are really out for money rather than sport."

"There seem to be two distinct types of habitual criminals: those who are in crime primarily for profit, and those who are in it primarily for the game.-- with a large group in between who can handle it either way. The "compulsive winner", the big money-maker whose Child really does not want to be caught, rarely is, according to reports; he is an untouchable, for whom the fix is always in. The "compulsive loser", on the other hand, who is playing "Cops and Robbers" (C&R), seldom does very well financially. The exceptions to this often seem to be due to luck rather than skill; in the long run even the lucky one usually end up as their Child requires, squawking rather than riding high."

"The **C&R** player, with whom we are concerned here, in some ways resembles the **Alcoholic**. He can shift roles from Robber to Cop and from Cop to Robber. In some cases he may play the Parental Cop during the day and the Child Robber after dark. There is a Cop in many Robbers (* #5) , and a Robber

Dr. Ernst was a student and teacher of Dr. Berne. What I mean by this is that Dr. Ernst taught Dr. Berne some things, too. Dr. Berne credits Dr. Ernst several times in his writings.

The following are notes by FH Ernst, Jr., MD about Berne's book "Games People Play."

* #1 "Getaway" means the payoff was a GAF, a Get-Away-From.

* #2 "Chagrin" here means the structure of a particular game had been timed and concluded with an angry Parent doing the finding.

* #3 "Not much fun" means without the exhilarating build up of excitement coming from several episodes of nearly being found (repetitive play of the "locator clue" gimmick by the hider and the play irritation of the seeker) and anticipating the payoff.

* #4 Repetitive playing of the gimmick is the key to heightening the anticipation, suspense.

* #5 A Cop, DA and a Judge in many a Robber, witness the skill with which some of the "intramural Court" hearings are conducted by some of the "kangaroo Courts" held within prisons on occasion.

* #6 The modus operandi is like a set of finger prints, or his signature.

* #7 Gambler as a game.

* #8 Including but not limited to the oily skin deposited fingerprints.

* #9 The reason an individual would come to the attention of one of these professions would lie in the person's maladaptive behavior in the social situation in which he lived.

* #10 "Compulsive winner" here means these lawyers are dedicated and skillful at their own profession; they are not "players" in terms of a Child's need to lose. While they recognize the courtroom is an arena, a play(pen) area, in which the emotions of judge and jury are fair game, they exercise their dramatic skills in order to achieve a professional result.

* #11 "Constructive game" was an outgrowth of the direction the [San Francisco Transactional Analysis] seminars took. While most times the author was clinically Adult about "a game is a game," there were those occasions when he was talked into "There are good games and there are bad games." A "constructive game" by definition

in many Cops. If a criminal "reforms", he may play the role of Rescuer, becoming a social worker or a mission worker; but the Rescuer is far less important in this game than in "Alcoholic." Ordinarily, however, the player's role as Robber is his destiny, and each has his own modus operandi for getting caught (* #6). He may make it tough or easy for the Cops."

"The situation is similar with **gamblers** (* #7). At the social or sociological level a "professional" gambler is one whose chief interest in life is gambling. But at the psychological level there are two different kinds of people who are professional gamblers. There are those who spend their time gambling, ie, playing with Fate, in whom the strength of the Adult's desire to win is exceeded only by the strength of the Child's need to lose. Then there are those who run gambling houses and actually do earn a living, usually a very good one, by providing opportunities for gamblers to play; they themselves are not playing, and try to avoid playing, although occasionally under certain conditions they will indulge themselves and enjoy it, just as a straight criminal may occasionally play a game of **C&R**.

This throws light on why sociological and psychological studies of criminals have been generally ambiguous and unproductive: they have been dealing with two different kinds of people who cannot be adequately



differentiated in the ordinary theoretical or empirical frameworks. The same is true in studying gamblers. Transactional and game analysis offer an immediate solution for this. They remove the ambiguity by distinguishing transactionally, below the social level, between "players" and "straight professionals."

Let us turn from this general thesis to consider specific examples. Some burglars do their jobs without any waste motion. The "**Cops and Robbers**" burglar leaves his calling card in gratuitous acts of vandalism, such as soiling valuable clothing with secretions and excretions (* #8). The straight bank robber, according to reports, takes every possible precaution to avoid violence; the **C&R** bank robber is only looking for an excuse to vent his anger. Like any professional, a straight criminal likes his jobs to be as clean as circumstances permit. The **C&R** criminal is compelled to blow off steam in the course of his work. The true professional is said never to operate until the fix is in; the player is willing to take on the law barehanded. Straight professionals are well aware, in their own way, of the game of **C&R**. If a gang member shows too much interest in the game, to the point of jeopardizing the job, and particularly if his need to be caught begins to show, they will take drastic measures to prevent a recurrence. Perhaps it is just because straight professionals are not playing **C&R** that they are so seldom caught, and hence so rarely studied sociologically, psychologically and psychiatrically; and this also applies to gamblers (* #9). Hence most of our clinical knowledge about criminals and gamblers refers to players rather than to straight professionals.

Kleptomaniacs (as opposed to professional shoplifters) are examples of how widely trivial **C&R** is played. It is probable that a very large percentage of Occidentals, as least, have played **C&R** in fantasy, and that is what sells newspapers in our half of the world. This fantasy frequently occurs in the form of dreaming up the "perfect murder", which is playing the hardest possible game and completely outwitting the cops.

Variations of **C&R** are "**Auditors and Robbers**", played by embezzlers with the same rules and the same payoff; "**Customs and Robbers**", played by smugglers; etc. Of special interest is the criminal variation of "**Courtroom**." Despite all his precautions, the professional may occasionally be arrested and brought to trial. For him "**Courtroom**" is a procedure, which he carries out according to the instructions of his legal advisers. For lawyers, if they are compulsive winners. (* #10) "**Courtroom**" is essentially a game played with the jury in which the object is to win, not to lose, and this is regarded as a constructive game by a large segment of society. (* #11)

Antithesis. This is the concern of qualified criminologists rather than psychiatrists. The police and judiciary apparatus are not antithetical, but are playing their roles in the game under the rules set up by society.

One thing should be emphasized, however. Research workers in criminology may joke that some criminals behave as though they enjoyed the chase and wanted to be caught, or they may read the idea and agree in a deferential way. But they show little tendency to consider such an "academic" factor as decisive in their "serious" work. For one thing, there is no way to

unmask this element through the standard methods of psychological research. The investigator must therefore either overlook a crucial point because he cannot work it with his research tool, or else change his tools. The fact is that those tools have so far not yielded one single solution to any problem in criminology (* #12). Researchers might therefore be better off discarding the old methods and tackling the problem freshly. Until **CSR** is accepted not merely as an interesting anomaly, but as the very heart of the matter in a significant percentage of cases, much research in criminology will continue to deal with trivialities, doctrines, peripheral issues or irrelevancies (1).

ANALYSIS

Thesis: See if you can catch me. (*#13)

Aim: Reassurance.

Roles: Robber, Cop (Judge).

Dynamics: Phallic intrusion, eg: (1) Hide-and seek, tag. (2) Crime.

Social Paradigm: Parent-Child.

Child: "See if you can catch me."
Parent: "That's my job."

Psychological Paradigm: Parent-Child.

Child: "You must catch me."(*#14)
Parent: "Aha, there you are."(*#15)

Moves: (1) W: Defiance. B: Indignation. (2) W: Concealment. B: Frustration. (3) W: Provocation. B: Victory. (* #16)

Advantages: (1) Internal Psychological --material indemnification for old wrong. (2) External Psychological--counter-phobic. (3) Internal Social-- See if you can catch me (* #13) (4) I almost got away with it. (Pastime: They almost got away with it.) (5) Biological--notoriety. (6) Existential: I've always been a loser.

Thesis: The historical evidence is that those prisoners survive best who have their time structured by an activity, a pastime or a game. This is apparently well known to political police, who are said to break some prisoners down simply by keeping them inactive and in a state of social deprivation.

The favored activity of solitary prisoners is reading or writing books, and the favored pastime is escape, some of whose practitioners, such as Casanova and Baron Trenck, have become famous.

The favored game is "**How Do You Get Out Of Here?**" ("**Want Out**"), which may also be played in state hospitals. It must be distinguished from the operation (see p. 48) of the same name, known as "**Good Behav-**

ior." An inmate who really wants to be free will find out how to comply with the authorities so as to be released at the earliest possible moment. Nowadays this may often be accomplished by playing a good game of "**Psychiatry**", Group Therapy Type. The game of "**Want Out**", however, is played by inmates or by patients whose Child does not want to get out. (* #17) They simulate "**Good Behavior**", but at the critical point they sabotage themselves so as not to be released. Thus in "**Good Behavior**" Parent, Adult and Child work together to be discharged; in "**Want Out**" Parent and Adult go through the prescribed motions until the critical moment, when the child, who is actually frightened at the prospect of venturing into the uncertain world, takes over and spoils the effect. "**Want Out**" was common in the late 1930's among recently arrived immigrants from Germany who became psychotic. They would improve and beg for release from the hospital; but as the day of liberation approached, their psychotic manifestations would recur.

Antithesis. Both "**Good Behavior**" and "**Want Out**" are recognized by alert administrators and can be dealt with at the executive level. Beginners in group therapy, however, are often

was a "good game." In fact the majority of the time GPP author saw games as being one of the most absorbing and engaging of the varieties of human activity, as one of the principle ways people structure their time.

This writer, additionally, has observed that among the classes of time structuring activities, a game is the most efficient of these for switching from one ego state to another, eg for the Child to come out and "play" if one of the other two (Parent or Adult) has been "working" for a long period of time. A game is the "procedure" that the Child in each one of us knows will provide the social bridge for coming out to be seen and heard every so often.

Furthermore, in his sequence of moves (four plus payoff) the player, in each game event, will sequentially activate four different qualities of his social, behavioral repertoire, plus experiencing the emotionally charged event of payoff.

Each move is more exciting, animating, stirring of suspense. A game awakens and stirs to activity more neurons in more areas of the human than any of the other four classes of time structuring. Talk about a daily exercise program! * #12 Therefore, criminals serve some vital social function, a playfield for the fantasies of the straight population.

* #13 Actually "See if you can find me."

* #14 Actually "You must find me (first)."

* #15 Similarity to "Gotcha" here in **Hind & Seek**.

* #16 Much more needs to be said about these "moves."

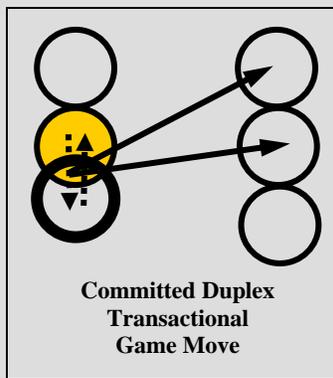
* #17 Inmates with a few days or weeks before a scheduled release who make an "escape attempt", get easily caught and receive an added much extended sentence. The line of these is "**I Gotta Get Outta Here, Now!**" Those observed by writer still had a dangerous Child, one with a high violence potential.

This particular game is an example of the "demon Child." The demon

Footnotes continued on next page

"A Game is a Game is a Game"

" 'Constructive game' was an outgrowth of the direction the [San Francisco Transactional Analysis] seminars took [in the late 1960's]. While most times the author was clinically Adult about "a game is a game is a game," there were those occasions when he was talked into "There are good games and there are bad games." A "constructive game" by definition was a "good game." In fact, the majority of the time GPP author [Berne] saw games as being one of the most absorbing and engaging of the varieties of human activity, as one of the principle ways people structure their time."





Addresso'Set Publications

"Game Codes—Newsletter of Games People Play"

Franklin "Harry" Ernst III, Editor

P.O. Box 3009

Vallejo, California 94590

Phone: 707/643-5100

Fax: 707/644-6358

E-mail: harryernst@a03news.cnc.net

We're on the Web.
www.ListeningActivity.com
www.ErnstOKCorral.com

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

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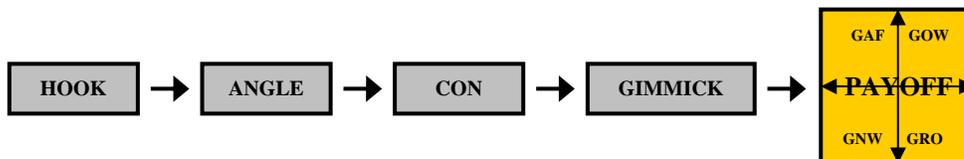
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A game is defined as a recurring set of transactions with ulterior transactions, concealed motivation, a gimmick, and a payoff. Eric Berne, M.D. used a particular variation of the duplex transactional diagram to represent the ulterior aspects of a 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:



"Underworld Games" continued

taken in. A competent group therapist, knowing these are the most frequent manipulations in psychiatrically oriented prisons, will be watching for them and will ferret them out at an early phase. Since "Good Behavior" is an honest operation, it may be treated as such, and there is no harm in discussing it openly.

"Want Out", on the other hand, requires active therapy if the frightened inmate is to be rehabilitated.

Relatives. A close relative of "Want Out" is an operation called "You've Got To Listen." Here the inmate of an institution or the client of a social agency demands the right to make complaints. The complaints are often irrelevant. His main purpose is to assure himself that he will be listened to by the authorities. If they make the mistake of thinking that he expects the complaints to be acted on and cut him off as too demanding, there may be trouble. (* #18) If they

accede to his demands, he will increase them. If they merely listen patiently and with signs of interest, the "Got To Listen" player will be satisfied and cooperative, and will not ask for anything more. The administrator must learn to distinguish "You Got To Listen" from serious demands for remedial action (2).

"Bum Rap" is another game that belongs in this family. A straight criminal may holler "Bum Rap" in a real effort to get out, in which case it is part of the procedure. The inmate who plays "Bum Rap" as a game, however, does not use it effectively to try to get out, since if he gets out he will no longer have much excuse to holler.

child is the one with inadequately working internal limits. Also he has figured out how to foil AND disappoint someone else's Parent as his payoff, i.e., the sick "gallows grin." (* #18) "You got to listen (to me)" is in fact a game. In the above example listed by EB of the "complainer", the "listening" advocated is of the quality leading YAGOLITOME player to a GNW payoff, one he expects. Giving credence to the above complaints as if they needed defending against, is for the "listener" (often playing IOTHY) to aim for a GRO payoff against YAGOLITOME.

In my 10/14/85 letter to Assemblyman Don Sebastiani I cited the malicious use by CCC Licensing of validating the unrealistic complaints of a male paranoid personality patient, using these complaints as a basis for persecuting the Board & Care Home where paranoid Paul had been living. He was sore when evicted for non-payment of 10 months of room & board despite the witnessed receipt of his monthly SSI checks. When CCC Licensing acted as if his complaints were realistic, he decompensated, set his former rooming house on fire and his psychosis recurred.