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Games people play with brands: An application of Transactional Analysis to marketplace relationships

Abstract

Relationships have been normalised in marketing theory as mutuality beneficial, long-term dyads. This obscures their emotional content, ignores critical conceptualisations of corporate exploitation, and fails to capture the range of possible marketplace relationship forms. In this paper we offer Berne's (1964) Transactional Analysis (TA) as a way to uncover the biographical psychology that informs marketplace relationship structures and their accompanying emotions, and to provide a critique of such arrangements. We first explain TA, its origins, its relationship with psychoanalysis, its limitations, and contemporary extensions beyond therapy. We then present the structural basis of marketplace relationships from a TA perspective, before illustrating how TA Game Analysis can be applied through an analysis of the iPhone and related mobile phone contracts, and the Games *If I didn't Love Apple* and *Smallprint*. Finally we discuss the implications of such an approach for transforming market practices based on recognition of Marketplace Games and their modification.

Keywords: marketplace relationships, loyalty, Transactional Analysis, Eric Berne, Games

Introduction

Relationships are central to contemporary marketing theory (O'Malley et al., 2008; Østergaard and Fitchett, 2012), including consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Fournier and Alvarez, 2012). They are most often conceptualised through Relationship Marketing (RM) as based on mutual benefits for companies and their consumers (Bonnemaizon et al., 2007; O'Malley et al., 2008; Miles, 2015) as trusting and committed relationships are produced and managed (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Lindberg-Repo and Grönroos, 2004; Ballantyne and Varey, 2006; 2008; Grönroos, 2008). However, such normalising theory both obscures the emotional content of marketplace relationships (Fournier, 1998; Illouz, 2007) and ignores critical conceptualisations where consumers are objects of corporate exploitation (see Zwick et al., 2008; Ritzer and Juergenson, 2010; and also Marcuse, 1964).

Reflecting on the limitations of RM, O'Malley et al. (2008) ask that it is 're-activated' through alternative theoretical approaches, and Østergaard and Fitchett (2012) note the limited ability of RM theory to account for the range of relationships possible in the marketplace. As Fournier (1998) has also pointed out that 'relationships' in marketing have become a metaphor only for long-term sales based on brand loyalty that ignores underlying psychological structures. Indeed we also note calls for a return to psychoanalysis in marketing theory that deals with just this (see Cluley and Desmond, 2015). We might therefore ask why marketplace relationships should be rational, positive and constructive, when psychoanalysis reveals many of our interpersonal relationships as emotional, antagonistic, and haunted by early-life experiences? Might not consumers also remain in unsatisfactory relationships with brands, or even unconsciously seek them out? Might brands even invite such relationships? Might marketplace relationships also incorporate the emotional biographies of those involved? And might insight into such relational patterns provide new critical perspectives and so the possibility for transformation?

To answer such questions we demonstrate how Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis (TA) allows us to understand the complexity of marketplace relationships, and in our illustrations consumer-brand relationships in particular. We show how TA can be applied to the relations between different market actors to reveal underlying psychological structures that produce emotional 'Payoffs', including dysfunctional ones. The benefits of such an approach are threefold. First, TA is more accessible than other psychoanalytic approaches, although it retains a biographical explanation of human motivations that are made absent in cognitive, or behavioural approaches. Second, the focus on 'Transactions' allows us to examine specific exchanges between market actors that explain dysfunctional aspects of marketplace relationships. Finally, TA can provide both new and critical perspectives, and the possibility of transformation of relationship forms. We therefore explain the structural basis of marketplace relationships from a TA perspective, illustrate how TA Game Analysis can be applied to marketplace relationships, and discuss the implications of such an approach for transforming market practices.

Marketplace relationships

RM emerged in the 1970s in the context of industrial marketing to become solidified in marketing theory in the 1990s (O'Malley et al., 2008; Østergaard and Fitchett, 2012), although

Tadajewski (2009) points out that relationships have been important in marketing long before that. Yet, for O'Malley et al. (2008), the relationship metaphor has now been so widely applied that it represents an unquestioned 'reality', that needs to be 're-activated' it new theory.

RM has come to be narrowly concerned with establishing, developing and maintaining long term relational exchanges inside and outside a firm, (Morgan and Hunt, 1998; Grönroos, 2008; Gummesson, 2011). The focus is on constructs such as commitment-trust (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), loyalty (Dick and Basu, 1994), gratitude (Palmatier et al., 2009) or reciprocity (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Tadajewski, 2009). Yet it has been argued that when applied to mass marketing, or consumer-brand relationships, even with access to databases and ICTs, the principles become tenuous because such exchanges don't represent 'real' relationships between people (O'Malley et al., 2008). A distinction here is between network-based RM (intra and inter business relationships) that represents the origin of RM, and market-based RM, which includes consumer-brand relationships (Möller and Halinen, 2000), and which for O'Malley et al. (2008) represents a dubious extension.

O'Mally et al. (2008) highlight the limitations of social exchange theory (SET) in RM as a tautological metaphor based on market exchanges and so non-inclusive of the full range of possible relational structures. Avery et al. (2014) also argue for theory to account for a complexity that mirrors the variety of interpersonal relationships and not just the 'marriage' metaphor implicit in SET. The complaint is that RM's trajectory has become separated from the project to understand how relationships form and unfold in markets. Marketplace relationships are normatively described as mutually beneficial dyads where brand and consumer work together to achieve 'value' (Lindberg-Repo and Grönroos, 2004). Consumers get rewarded with better goods and services, and brands make more profit and gain competitive advantage due to similarity, reciprocity. The result is an optimistic reading of consumers as inherently brand loyal because of an alignment of positive values (e.g., see Sirgy, 1992;1985). Like some online dating algorithm, consumers are presented as evaluating their own characteristics and those of different brands to decide which are best for them, and therefore suitable for a lasting relationship.

Elsewhere, but in related branding theory, there is little doubt that consumer culture is a rich resource for relational activities, although an emphasis is the *positive* emotional connections that consumers form with brands (Fournier, 1998; Poels and Dewitte, 2006), their loyalty 'beyond reason' (Pawle and Cooper, 2006), desire to forgive 'brand failure' (Bauer et al., 2009),

and even a love for brands that is similar to interpersonal love (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Batra et al., 2012; Maxian et al., 2013). 'Brand love' in particular articulates the emotional character of consumer-brand relationships as human-like. Indeed, empirical work confirms that consumers form psychological attachments to brands (Fournier, 1998; Whan Park et al., 2010) such that separation causes heartbreak (Batra et al., 2012).

Yet in an apparent contradiction other studies suggest the possibility of *negative* emotions in consumer-brand relationships too. For example research has considered how consumers boycott, betray, or retaliate against hated brands (Grégoire et al., 2008; 2009) or engage in negative word-of-mouth, venting emotions such as anger, frustration or outrage to sabotage a brand's relationship with other consumers (Kähr et al., 2016). Additionally, studies suggest that consumer and brand personalities might align through a joint neurosis (Huang et al., 2012), or may be 'fused' such that brand service failure is ignored, as it is perceived as a threat to the consumer's own self (Lin and Sung, 2014). It is also confirmed that individuals may be hooked in perpetual psychological structures with a brand (Lin and Sung, 2014), i.e., a relationship born out of dependency. This is not the only way that companies conspire to retain consumers. A rather different approach is taken through the use of 'loyalty' schemes based on points, money-off, or vouchers, that are ripe with psychological manipulations (Liu, 2007; Zhang and Breugelmans, 2012), and yet another is the more brutal means of tying-in and profiting from customers' 'relationships' based on proprietary systems (Zhu and Zhou, 2011; Kucharik, 2003).

At the margins of theory on marketplace relationships then, there is an excess of evidence of something other than mutual co-operation, reciprocity and understanding in consumer-brand relationships – quite different form the theoretical assumptions of SET.

More explicitly opposed to the posibility of wholesome marketplace relationships are critical arguments such as illustrated by Shankar et al. (2006: 495) who note that in an individualised consumer culture, "people, unable to form meaningful relationships with each other, form relationships with commodity substitutes instead". A focus for them is that consumers remain in a narcissistic, infantile position where commodities provide emotional experiences, although not necessarily happiness. This is not a new argument. For example Marcuse (1964), Fromm (1942; 1956; 1976) and later Bauman (2007; 2013) and Illouz (2007) all argue that the alienation produced by consumer cultures undermine the possibility of authentic human relationships. For Marcuse (1964), 'one dimensionality' involves a repression of the

processes of alienation and a replacement of pleasure with performance such that the conditions of a work and spend relationship with organisations is maintained. For Fromm (1976), the 'marketing personality' replaces being with having such that market relationships form the normal pattern for interactions between people. For Bauman (2007; 2013), relationships between people take on the same temporary and instrumental liquid form as marketplace transactions. And for Illouz (2007), 'emotional capitalism' means that human and market relationships have become intertwined where economic behavior clashes with intimate, authentic interpersonal relationships and love is conflated with economic self-interest. Together such arguments call for consumers to be freed from unhealthy relationships with brands, although given the enduring nature and popularity of these arguments we might still wonder why so few consumers seem to achieve this (and how they may yet be helped).

There is little indication in RM that negative emotions may actually be the unconscious *desired* outcome of relationships and such a view may seem ridiculous to the discourses of mutual benefit and 'win-win', even though the possibility of consumer misery has been convincingly argued for (Shankar et al., 2006). Indeed, Davis (1971) warns of the potential for rejection as 'absurd' any approach that challenges existing field assumptions so directly. Nevertheless it remains desirable to account for apparently dysfunctional on-going marketplace relationships, and we may do this by recognising the emotional biographies of those involved. Transactional Analysis offers just such an analytic.

Key concepts in Transactional Analysis

TA acknowledges that relationships are often dysfunctional, yet structured and sustained by a series of 'Games' that *all* parties have an interest in playing (Berne, 1964). To understand the formation of Games it is first necessary to explain both the PAC model at the heart of TA and how TA recognises the importance of structuring time to produce Games. Berne capitalises many TA terms and here we have extended this to all TA terms we use in order to avoid confusion with everyday meanings.

Parent, Child and Adult Ego-states: the PAC model

The PAC model posits that adults think, feel and behave according to different Ego-states (our Parent, Adult and Child) as we contain within us our childhood responses as well as our understanding of parental figures' behaviours. These reinforce and maintain Life-scripts that we also acquire early in life.

Occasionally one Ego-state can be predominant, but individuals may use any as resources for dealing with the world. As Harris (1968) argues, the very young person has little vocabulary whilst internalising early events in their lives, so they rely on learned responses in relation to parental figures. The Parent Ego-state involves both nurturing and helpfulness (Nurturing Parent), but also rules, admonishing regimes and monitoring (Controlling Parent). The Child Ego-state is dominated by both dependency and approval seeking (Adapted Child), but also curiosity and creativity (Free Child), (Berne, 1964; Harris, 1968). Finally the Adult Ego-state comes with the development of self-awareness, reasoning and reflection that leads to a processing and filtering of stimuli in order to come to a considered view of present reality. The Adult maintains an awareness of current information and feelings; the Parent and Child rely instead on scripted, recycled and therefore in TA terms, Inauthentic emotions.

Early life also establishes broader Life-scripts based on parental Injunctions, the apparently benign advice to children that comes to define how they will live. For example, repeated indication in early life that a child was not wanted, is a burden, or limits what the parents can do amounts to a 'Don't Exist' injunction and subsequent narcissistic adult behaviours as they always fear non-existence and therefore persistently demand attention (Heathcote, 2006).

As TA explains how we deal with our role in the world, it has been suggested that any relationship may be analysed using this model (Harris, 1968; Mihailovic and Mihailovic, 2004; Campos, 2014; 2015). We should, for example, consider it peculiar for interpersonal relationships to work one way, but for marketplace relationships to work in another. It would be as if the market is outside the legacy problems of our psyche that are dealt with through psychoanalysis or, in TA terms, it is as if Parent and Child Ego-states are ignored in RM discourses in favour of an assumed Adult Ego-state. If TA explains how individuals have learnt to interact with the world, this must include how they learn to interact with brands and other market actors.

Structuring time and Strokes

TA posits that individuals have a 'structure-hunger' – an innate desire to find order in life, to structure time, and to assure themselves of Strokes. Strokes are emotional 'units of recognition' (Stewart and Joines, 2012) which can form a 'bank' that can build up, or may be depleted as individuals work through a Life-Script (see below). Steiner (1971) develops the idea of 'Stroke economy' that involves a scarcity of affection (Intimacy) created by limited, restricted, calculated exchanges of Strokes that in some ways parallels Illouz's (2007) 'emotional capitalism' and the idea of 'emotional work' (Hochschild, 2003). For example, Nuttall (2000) notes that Strokes are exchanged in workplaces through relations with other employees, and we argue that such Strokes are in fact an outcome of a much broader range of marketplace relationships. TA therefore allows us to assess marketplace relationships in terms of emotional exchanges and not just financial ones and to explain how markets are ways of structuring time.

Time may be structured through: Withdrawal, Rituals and Pastimes, Games, and occasionally, Intimacy (Berne, 1964; Stewart and Joines, 2012).). Withdrawal implies a retreat into the imagination to gain self-Strokes. Rituals are short, familiar ways of interacting that unfold as if they were pre-programmed, for example daily greetings. Pastimes involve more conversation about something that may include Strokes without either working towards a particular Script, or achieving Intimacy. Games though, involve work towards a Script and are the focus of TA because they perpetuate negative patterns of Inauthentic emotions. In Games, Strokes are gained through tricking ourselves into re-experiencing old emotional responses, also referred to as Racket feelings. These are easy to re-create once a Game is learned and Games are therefore the most reliable way to gain Strokes and fulfill a Life-script. They are described below as a basis of repeated marketplace interactions that are potentially psychologically unhealthy, yet symbiotic. Finally Intimacy is described by Berne (1964: 32) as 'set-up by the Adult ego-states of the parties concerned, so that they understand very well their contracts and commitments with each other'. Intimacy requires Adult thinking and reasoning, along with caring and protection from the Parent, and an innocent, playful Child. In Intimacy there is no Discounting – the process of ignoring current information in favour of a Script – but a genuine, authentic exchange of feelings (Stewart and Joines, 2012).

Although consumers may potentially structure time in any of these ways, a failure of marketplace relationships to be authentic and therefore to allow Intimacy – an underlying 'Con'

in market exchanges (see below) – makes them ripe for the potential for Rituals, Pastimes and Games.

Games people play

We should not confuse TA Games with theories of play, for example play as child development, imagination and speculation, power struggles, adaptability, identity, or culture (see Huzinga, 1938; Caillios, 1958; Sutton-Smith, 1997). In contrast, TA Games are a metaphor for structures of interactions between actors (Berne, 1964).

TA Games are captured by colloquial phrases that bring to mind familiar scenarios in one's own experience and so allow for reflections on roles, hidden motives, and Life-scripts. A good Game description produces something like a phenomenological nod of recognition (van Manen, 1990) from which an eventual transformation might occur, and indeed Berne (1964) immediately linked his ideas with existential phenomenology (Nuttall, 2000). For a Game to be played individuals must pair with other actors whose Scripts are *complementary*. People then play their Games to collect negative feelings that confirm a Life-script. For example, if someone's Script calls for them to be a Victim, they must seek out others willing to Persecute and avoid those unwilling to take this role. In this way they ensure that their Victimhood is perpetuated such that they may repeatedly play *Why Does This Always Happen to Me?*, just as their persecutors may play *See What You Made Me Do*. Karpman (2011) notes that a simple way to think of Games is to consider movements between Victim, Persecutor and Rescuer in a 'Drama Triangle'.

Other Games explained by Berne (1964) have similarly emotive everyday names such as *If it Wasn't For You* (Victim Game), or *Now I've Got You, You Son of a Bitch* and *Let's You and Him Fight* (Persecutor Games). Berne (1964) chooses colloquialisms based on descriptions given by his patients and which represent exactly what they suggest. He points out *"if some of them seem disrespectful, the irony is directed against the games and not against the people who play them"* (p. 63). Rather than the congruence between the self and a brand found in RM (Sirgy, 1982; 1985; Lindberg-Repo and Grönroos, 2008; Huang et al., 2012; Lin and Sung, 2014), compatible Scripts are what are important in marketplace Games. Hence the observation of neurotic brand relationships (Lin and Sung, 2014), and loyalty *beyond reason* (Pawle and

Cooper, 2006), can be just as symbiotic as a consumer-brand identity match and closer to the interpersonal relationships considered in TA.

For Stewart and Joines (2012) it is as if people wear 'sweatshirts' that signal their desired Game to suitable partners. On the front of the sweatshirt is an apparently genuine social message, yet on a psychological level, choice of others is invited by a 'secret message' on the back that allows for the Game (Stewart and Joines, 2012). For example, in *Kiss-off* a woman might have *'I'm available'* on the front, and *'But not to you, ha ha'* on the back and might pair with a man with *'Please don't kick me'* on the front, but who looks for Victimhood with a *'Kick me'* secret message. Games are therefore instigated by Cross-Transactions, or Duplex-Transactions, i.e., where there are ulterior motives behind social exchanges (see below for illustrations). As the Game unfolds and a Switch is made both parties get their Payoffs (in *Kiss-Off* it's: indignation for the woman, 'All men are the same'; rejection for the man, 'No woman wants me'). Time is structured and Strokes are gained. Berne (1964) presents the sequence of a Game with a formula:

> **Formula G**: **Con** (invitation to play) + **Gimmick** (concealed motivation) = **Response** (series of ulterior transactions) - > **Switch** (change of roles) - > **Crossup** (when confusion, surprise or dissonance is experienced, during which both parties wonder 'What happened?') - > **Payoff** (Racket feeling that confirms a Life-position).

Again, a Racket feeling (the aim in a Game) is a 're-experience' rather than an authentic response to a present reality. Therefore the problem with Games is that players avoid taking responsibility for their insecurities, fears or weaknesses, and so also avoid Intimacy (as an understanding of another), Discount themselves and others, and maintain unhealthy symbiosis with others.

Transactional Analysis as contemporary theory

As we are introducing TA as a basis for marketing theory, we must also consider its underlying assumptions, its similarities and divergence from its psychoanalytic roots, its limitations and contemporary applications that justify our approach outside the consulting room.

TA as biographical approach to psychology

Like other psychoanalytic traditions TA is a biographical rather than biological theory of psychology (see O'Shaughnessy, 2015) although it was developed as an *alternative* to the

established Freudian approaches to therapy used in California in the 1960s. Despite its influence outside therapy, such as in pedagogy and organisational behaviour (Bennett, 1996; Nuttall, 2000; Lerkkanen and Temple, 2004; Balling, 2005), TA has hardly been applied to marketing (Bennett 1996; 1999 are rarely cited exceptions), but given the move to emphasise relationships and especially their emotional dimensions in markets, TA presents new possibilities for understanding the complexity of marketplace relationships.

TA can therefore also contribute to the 'return to psychoanalysis' in marketing (Cluley and Desmond, 2015), itself a response to the over-emphasis of consumer agency in phenomenological approaches (Cluley, 2015), or a cognitive bias in psychological, behavioural accounts of emotions (Fournier, 1998). For example, Chatzidakis (2014) notes how repressed guilt may lead to consumption that *produces* guilt; Patsiaouras et al. (2015) and Cluley and Dunne (2012) recognise the implications of narcissism on consumption practices - including its potential dark side; Cluley (2015) notes the more general ways in which repressed matter manifests itself in consumption that would not readily be observed in consumers' own accounts of their practices, and; Böhm and Batta (2010) argue for a Lacanian lack at the heart of consumption. TA also reveals structures behind the surface of behavioral rewards and financial exchange, and behind consumer accounts of experience.

Although TA has been compared with other psychoanalytic traditions, practitioners have expressed frustration at the energy that goes into this rather than putting TA to work on its intended aims (the analysis and transformation of relationships), (see Karpman, 2006). Nevertheless, it's worth drawing some comparisons. TA has several distinct features as *post*-psychoanalytical theory. First, its language is accessible despite complex theoretical underpinnings, and unlike the impenetrability of much psychoanalytic theory (Cluley and Desmond, 2015; O'Shaughnessy, 2015). Second, unlike Freud or Lacan, and rather more like Erikson (Miles, 2015) who trained Berne in the early 1950s, TA emphasises the understanding and modification of *present* patterns of behaviours rather than their diagnosis and treatment through a return to traumatic early-life experience, although such experiences remain important in establishing Ego-states and Scripts. Indeed, Clarkson (1992) and Shmukler (2001) note that TA's PAC model actually borrows much from Klein's Object Relations.

Both Stewart and Joines (2012) and Mazzetti (2010) have argued that it has only been recently, with insights from neuroscience and revisions to both psychoanalysis and to TA theory

itself, for TA to be widely accepted. If anything TA is gaining in popularity and 2010, the centenary of the birth of Berne, saw TA analysts from 90 countries organise conferences and publications to celebrate his work (Sills, 2010). Current associations and activities related to TA include the Transactional Analysis Journal, the European TA Association, and the Berne Institute or International Association of Relations Transactional Analysts, which maintain Berne's legacy and develop his work (Stewart and Joines, 2012). Despite its origins in the 1960s and popular image, TA therefore remains a viable approach to understanding relationships.

Origins of TA and divergence from Freud

Berne developed TA in response to what he saw as practical problems with psychoanalysis (which he felt was inaccessible by too many practitioners and especially their patients). Len Campos, a member of the San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars that Berne held, says that: "Berne dropped psychoanalytic metaphors because the newer metaphors of TA were more conducive to changing people's lives" (Cornell, 2008: 95). Berne insisted that patients understood the process of therapy and was frustrated with the psychoanalytic community's insistence on using esoteric language. For example, Nuttall (2000: 74) explains how he found that (unlike other psychoanalytic traditions) "…executives quickly grasp the concepts [of TA], feel at ease, and are less defensive simply because they can relate to the colloquial language". Steiner (2006: 331) puts it like this: "Try to explain to a busy manager in a factory that her angry reaction to you is a transferential phenomenon of unconscious-type, primary intersubjectivity based, founded on the splitting and subsequent projection of an introjected object, and see how far that gets you." As marketing theorists, marketing managers and consumers themselves are also not trained psychoanalysts, insights derived from such highly specialized language risks a loss of impact through opaqueness. Berne's further complaint was that analysts seemed to believe that the more obscure the language of diagnosis, the more successful treatment might be such that "Boring long words are designed to keep the mesmerized Child [patient] from interrupting, and keep the Critical Parent [analyst] in control" (Karpman, 2006: 291).

Steiner (2006: 332) notes that Berne was "not able to see the id and superego […], but he was able to see the Child and Parent... This need to be able to see, or vividly intuit, what he was discussing was probably the most significant distinction he drew between his work and psychoanalysis". Nevertheless, as Karpman (2006) acknowledges, in translating European

Psychoanalysis for what Berne might describe as an 'average Joe', Freud was presented as something of a straw man, and because of this and perhaps Berne's unreasonable prejudice towards the psychoanalytic community itself (see Cornell, 2008), Berne's work became unfairly criticised for being trivial. The simplified and often erroneous accounts that followed the commercial success of 'Games people play' resulted in TA gaining the undeserved reputation of being 'pop psychology' (Sills, 2010).

TA challenges the original Freudian conceptualization of the dynamically repressed unconscious (the place in the mind for regression and psychopathology) by suggesting that Scripts and Ego-states can be brought into consciousness to offer individuals a model for adaptation (although in all but his last works Berne maintains some form of unconscious thought), (Cornell, 2008). For Clarkson (1992), this places TA within a humanist/existential tradition where change is possible, based on reflection. Berne emphasizes that the dialogue between Parent, Adult and Child is *preconscious*, and so accessible. It consists of "sides taken from real life, things which were once actually said out loud" and which can be identified and understood (Cornell, 2008: 96). Consistent with Berne's ideas, in contemporary psychoanalysis the unconscious is no longer seen as a box for repressed impulses or trauma, but as "core unformulated experience and unsanctioned or unacknowledged desire and potential" and so a part of a lifelong development (Cornell, 2008: 98).

This full debate about the unconscious is beyond our aims here, but it's worth noting that much of Berne's rejection of psychoanalysis may not have been well motivated. For us it is possible that TA, with its accessible metaphors and focus on patterns of current behavior may sit happily alongside psychoanalysis work in marketing to account for contemporary consumer culture and market structures. For example, TA's Racket feelings and Games are consistent with Freud's idea of transference (Karpman, 2006), repression becomes Discounting, narcissism is translated in TA as an absence of early parental Stokes and a 'Don't exist' injunction (Heathcote, 2006), Lacan's 'lack' as 'structure hunger', and Oedipal guilt as the development of a 'Not OK' life script (Steiner, 1974).

In the latter case of guilt we further might illustrate how TA differs in approach. Chatzidakis (2014) explains that unconscious guilt leads to guilt producing and alleviating market exchanges. However, the metaphors Chatzidakis (2014) borrows from psychoanalysis are not immediately accessible to marketers or consumers, or even to researchers who have to

grapple with Oedipus, with good and bad breasts, and with paranoid-schizoid and depressive modes. For example, Freudian guilt is explained as a consequence of an Oedipus complex, derived from the Super-ego, and alleviated by doing something that is known to be wrong and which can then allow for 'legitimate' and conscious feelings of guilt. Freud therefore provides detailed accounts of the origins of motivation and behaviour. TA, on the other hand, focuses on metaphors for the resulting relational pattern. For example, Klein's depressive mode of guilt as care can be seen in 'good' Game structures such as *You'll be glad you met me* and *Happy to help* whereas paranoid/schizoid guilt is seen in *Kiss-off* that we described above (see Berne, 1964), or in *Schlemiel* (a North American term for someone who is clumsy, or unlucky) where a party guest repeatedly breaks things, but gets forgiven when persistently sorry. Players experience cathartic guilt, the biographical origins of which may be similar to those suggested by psychoanalysis. For Berne the emphasis is on the patterns of interactions that are solidified in adult behaviours. We can therefore apply TA to marketing without doing harm to the underlying psychoanalytic narrative, which benefits from the nuanced application of Klein and Freud, as Chatzidakis (2014) illustrates.

Limitations of TA

As we compare TA with psychoanalysis, we may recognize that it also shares weaknesses, as well as having a few that are all of its own. Like psychoanalysis, TA cannot easily be verified through scientific methodologies, despite Berne's insistence on 'seeing' Ego-states. Like repression in psychoanalysis, processes of Discounting cannot be reported by individuals themselves, and nor can the link between a Parental injunction and a Script be verified. We are instead reliant on accepting TA analysis as a metaphorical discourse, or 'useful fiction', (O'Shaughnessy, 2015), that helps us to reflect on psychological structures by making them accessible and recognisable without the comfort of measurement.

A further limitation is that in foregrounding both current transactions and the idea that they may be modified, TA risks a naive view of its own biographical basis. For example such optimism stands in contrast to Böhm and Batta's (2010) explanation that lack (or 'Not OK', in TA terms) is a fundamental aspect of the self and therefore of consumption. If Intimacy is impossible, then markets represent as good a place as any to gain Strokes and TA's hopefulness for transformation is moot.

Paradoxically, the strengths of the approach are also its limitations. Because TA is accessible it's easy to use without a consideration of its intricacies, or of psychoanalysis itself, hence the risk of 'wild analysis' is particularly problematic. Berne (1964) refers to this as *Psychiatry* Games. For this reason, we resist the attempt to undertake Game analysis with human subjects and restrict ourselves to illustrations of Marketplace Games. Also relevant here is the potential for the misapplication of the principles of TA in marketplace practice such that rather than use it for analysis, reflection, and triggering change, attempts are made by marketers to deliberately produce Game structures as a new form of manipulation in branding. We certainly don't want to encourage such practice and might argue that such attempts by marketers would reveal much about their own Persecutor Life-scripts.

TA (and its language) is also a product of its time. When dealing with homosexuality, or alcoholism for example, Berne's approach could be accused of reducing complex biological and genetic aspects of the self to mere Games of the mind that may be adjusted through therapy. Indeed Illouz's (2007) criticism of psychoanalysis more generally is that it positions everyone as in need of working towards 'normality' through therapy. For Illouz psychoanalysis creates ways to feel and to talk about emotions and so to 'achieve the self' that are actually a good fit for a consumer culture as they neutralise critiques by suggesting that problems are in the 'mind' of the individual. This criticism is also a justification for a broader application of TA to market structures, rather than just to indivdiuals as part of the 'self-improvement' movement that TA became associated with.

In summary, TA is an analytic that makes biographical aspects of relationships accessible to us, rather than a scientific theory of communication or personality. Although we might be cautious of TA's ability to deal with the complexity of the formation of the personality in the way psychoanalysis can, it nevertheless remains TA's ability to illuminate the complexity of relationships that justifies its application to marketplace relationships.

Contemporary applications of TA

TA has come a long way from Berne's California consulting room in the 1960s, but even early in TA's development Harris (1968) argued that there was a *need* to apply the approach to larger problems. One contemporary example at the macro-level is Campos (2015; 2014) who uses TA to explore how violent conflicts between nations are tied to underlying National Life-Scripts transmitted across generations. Campos suggests that the United States' cultural Script legitimises militarization in foreign policy such that peace results in *distrust anxiety* (an

insecurity when there isn't conflict) that leads to further violent conflicts, strengthening the collective beliefs that war is destiny and reproduced at an individual level. The solution is a new cultural Script.

Mihailovic and Mihailovic (2004) provide another example of the macro-level application of TA. They analyse political economy, emphasising that TA has the potential to create alternative social orders that foster autonomy, ethical principles and a sense of social responsibility. The authors point out that our contemporary world is defined by both capital and globalization as powerful cultural Scripts. Organisations in turn may gain their Scripts from these as global capitalism provides strong Injunctions in the early life of organisations. Social and political issues should therefore be contemplated into psychotherapy as a setting for meaningful change in the social order.

Closer still to our aim, and at the mezzo-level, Bennett (1996; 1999) suggests that the TA ego-metaphor can be applied to organisations. The acceptance of 'organisational cultures', Bennett argues, provides a basis for understanding corporate Ego-states that come from internal values and interactions. This culture is made up of ideas, opinions and perspectives of those who manage and work in an organisation and is perpetuated through internal procedures and documents. Further, Bennett (1996) maintains that the Ego-state of an organisation can be reflected in promotional messages, symbols in advertisements, sales methods, customer care, and so on (Bennett, 1996). Organisational Ego-states therefore determine how an organisation interacts with the outside world. An organisation might tend towards a Controlling Parent, Nurturing Parent, or Free Child overall. Bennett (1999) further empirically identifies different Ego-states in different companies using Harris's (1967) TA Life-positions. His observations suggest a potential for an organisation, personified though its brand, to play Games with consumers.

In all these cases, TA is not only diagnostic of patterns of interaction beyond the micro-level of individuals, but offers therapeutic transformation and such an approach can also be applied to markets where consumers come to understand how their interactions with brands take the form of Games.

Transactional Analysis and marketplace relationships

We now apply TA to marketplace relationships. We first explain how brands may be understood as suitable actors for TA Games, then provide illustrations of marketplace Transactions, of 'loyalty Games' and of approaches to Game Antithesis.

Brands as relational partners

An objection to the application of TA to relationships with brands might be that there are significant differences between interpersonal relationships and interactions that involve brands, or organisations. Indeed this is O'Malley et al.'s (2008) objection to extensions of relationship marketing to consumer-brand relationships. We therefore need to demonstrate how brands might be considered as potential partners in Games. This can be done in at least three ways.

First, and as noted above, whilst traditionally TA is used in therapy, early in its development Harris (1968) argued for the approach to be applied to nations, institutions, and collective groups and we accept this extension. If TA can be usefully applied to wars (Campos 2014; 2015), the world economy (Mihailovic and Mihailovic, 2004), and organisational cultures, (Bennett 1996; 1999) we argue that it can and should be applied to marketplace relationships, as an analytic that integrates emotional biographies into relationships.

Second, and again already suggested, it is widely accepted that brands have personalities (Aaker, 1997; Milas and Mlacic, 2007; Huang et al., 2012) and that consumers anthropomorphise brands (Bengtsson, 2003; Delbaere et al., 2011; Fournier and Alvarez, 2012). Indeed, there is a growing body of literature on the significance of anthropomorphism in branding (Brown and Ponsonby-McCabe, 2013; Hossany et al., 2013; Patterson et al., 2013). Brown and Ponsonby-McCabe (2013) suggest that people are prone to attribute human like characteristics to all things. Marketers frequently use anthropomorphic characters – Marlboro Man, Michelin Man, Ronald McDonald, Aleksandr the Meerkat – to communicate with consumers about everything from tyres, insurance, and cigarettes, to fast food (Patterson et al., 2013; Hossany et al., 2013). Anthropomorphism allows brands to play TA Games because it provides a unified 'player' identity for Games as an embodiment of an organisation's culture.

Finally, we note recent work that suggests that agency exists in both human and non-human actors. In line with Miller (2009) and with Actor Network Theory (ANT) approaches (see Latour, 2005) the human-centric basis of how a relationship is assembled can be challenged. We might note that although at many points market interactions are between people (customers, sales

staff, or service representatives), a focus on these masks non-human (although potentially anthropomorphised) actants. In our case we are less concerned with how specific realities come to be – the ontological implications of networks – but rather on the interactions between these actors, although there might be useful dialogue between, for example, the ontological politics of ANT (see Mol, 1999) and the outcomes of the various Games we describe as assembled realities. As we shall see below, and as illustrated above, accepting the agency of non-humans provides intellectual weight to the expansion of TA's original focus.

If organisations have a Life-script, they also need to structure time and we can reflect on what a Stroke means for an organisation. Although for individuals within organisations Strokes remain those points of recognition from other colleagues, suppliers and/or consumers (for example see Nuttall, 2000, for a TA interpretation of the 'Games executives play'), for organisations units of recognition become the metrics that managers aim for and that produce such internal transactions: brand attitudes, sales figures, profits, market share, or share price. These in turn filter through the organisation as targets for various sales, services and as a marketing communication Sweatshirt signals to consumer-Game-players.

Game Analysis of Marketplace Relationships

In 'Games People Play' Berne (1964) lays out the basis for Games, examples of how Games unfold (abstracted from his experience in therapy and presented as typical exchanges), then Antithesis to Games as an approach to addressing the problems identified. His purpose was to provide a reflective tool for both therapists *and* their patients. Campos (2014) adopts a similar approach to Game Analysis where he offers examples of typical Cross Transactions and Duplex Transactions in international relations, an illustration of the 'Game of War', and then the Antithesis. Nuttall (2000) also assumes a similar style in his application of TA to relationships within organisations. We follow these approaches. There isn't space for us to explore all possible marketplace Games. We therefore provide: (1) an explanation of the structural basis of Games in Marketplace relationships; (2) an illustration of what we call 'Loyalty Games', in our case seen in the actors and interactions involving Apple's iPhone (including consumers and mobile phone networks), and; (3) the possible Antithesis of such Games.

1. TA Cross and Duplex Transactions in Marketplace Games

Marketplace interactions reliably produce Strokes through Ritual and Pastime 'have a nice day' service exchanges, and well articulated by Hochschild's (2003) explanation of emotional labor. Indeed, in our individualised consumer society (see Bauman, 2013), Strokes might be easier in the market than elsewhere (see Shankar et al., 2006). Through TA analysis we can maintain this critical position towards consumer culture, now described as a series of interactions that avoid Intimacy, responsibility and psychological maturity but satisfy 'structure hunger'. However, at their most dysfunctional these exchanges may become Games that prevent all parties from Adult psychological fulfilment. In this respect, we agree with Miles' (2015) diagnosis of the problems with RM and the possibility of changing relationships through therapy-like analysis and approaches.

TA recognises three forms of Transactions: Parallel, Cross, and Duplex (Berne, 1984; Harris, 1968). Rituals and Pastimes largely involve on-going Parallel Transactions with complementary Ego-states, potentially played out forever (Adult-Adult, Parent-Child, Child-Child). Cross-Transactions and Duplex-Transactions, however, are most likely to result in Games. Cross-Transactions are when one actor responds with a different Ego-state from the one initially invited, leading to a change in Ego-State as a set up for a Game. For example, when an Adult invitation is met with a Child response, inviting the Adult into a Parent or Child. For example:

Example 1 - Child/Parent
Brand: "Let's do a deal." (Adult - Adult)
Consumer: "But I don't trust your motives, I need reassurance." (Child - Parent)
Brand: "The quality of our products is good." (Adult - Adult)
Consumer: "I really want it, but I don't have the money!" (Child - Parent)
Brand: "OK, buy it now, then pay later on credit." (Parent - Child)

Example 2 – Parent/Child
Consumer: "I have a problem with something you sold me." (Adult - Adult)
Brand: "You're using it wrong." (Parent - Child)
Consumer: "I've checked, and I'm sure there is a fault" (Adult - Adult)
Brand: "Well if there is, it's down to you because you misused it" (Parent - Child)
Consumer: "Right, just see what I'm going to write in my online review!" (Child - Parent)

In these cases, both actors end in non-Adult Ego-states and one of them changes state. Alternatively, we may also see Duplex-Transactions, where although an apparently Adult exchange takes place on the social level, on the psychological level a different Ego-state is actually talking to a non-Adult Ego-state in the recipient, again setting up a Game. For example:

Example 3 – Hidden Child
Social level
Brand: "We have reduced surplus stock." (Adult)
Consumer: "This means I can save money" (Adult)
Psychological level (Child - Child, unspoken)
Consumer: "I really desire this, but I don't have any money" (Child)
Brand: "we'll put a sale on so everything looks cheap" (Child)

Example 4 – Hidden Parent
Social level
Brand: "We can save you money on your shop" (Adult)
Consumer: "Thanks, it's important to save money" (Adult)
Psychological level (Parent – Child, unspoken)
Brand: "Keep shopping, we need to make profit." (Parent)
Consumer: "Ok, because I like buying things" (Child)

In these cases, Parent and Child Ego-states actually direct the outcome of the exchange. The Adult transactions seem reasonable and straightforward on the social level, yet ulterior motives are revealed by hidden Ego-states. It should also be apparent where specific examples of such transactions can be found: example 1 may be familiar to car salespeople; example 2 to consumers claiming on a warranty; example 3 is seen in many retail sales, and; example 4 in loyalty cards. Indeed we can look for such transactions whenever brands and consumers communicate and the purpose of such illustration is to aid such recognition.

2. Loyalty Games in marketplace relationships

We now offer more specific illustrations of TA readings of marketplace relationships. RM presents loyalty as an alignment of values, reinforced by 'excellent' service (Ballantyne and Varey, 2008). Consumers articulate needs and companies work to meet them in an assumed Adult-Adult parallel series of Transactions. TA, however, suggests alternative forms of loyalty, based on Stroke-rich Rituals and Pastimes with none Adult Parallel-Transactions, and on Games, with the latter our focus here. For example, we can consider Berne's *If It Wasn't For You.* In his original description, an individual finds a possessive partner who is nurturing, but also controlling and so provides protection, but also an excuse for not pursuing 'risky' behaviours, whilst maintaining positive positions towards them. Here TA accounts for what we might call a 'love/hate' relationship, a form of co-dependency and a dysfunctional pattern of attachment.

For a brand to invite this Game it must offer security, but also ensure that a consumer cannot easily try another product, revealing its own insecurity. The brand as Parent (first Nurturing, then Controlling) Cons the consumer's Child (Free then Adapted). The brand gets

loyalty and the consumer gets to defer responsibility to the brand, but also maintains a possible switch that allows for a Game Payoff in the form of contempt, or resignation. In *If It Wasn't For You* we see an explanation for consumers who might enjoy complaining about their chosen brand, but never switch. Using Berne's original approach to Game definitions we might describe a similar marketplace Game as *If I didn't love Apple*:

> **Thesis:** An Apple user wants to be seen to use the latest technology at the same time as being scared about it.
> **Aim:** Primarily reassurance, but also vindication.
> **Ego-states:** Consumer as Child, Apple as Parent.
> **Moves:** 1. Instruction – compliance; 2. Instruction – protest.
> **Payoffs:** User blames Apple for their own insecurities.

We are not suggesting that *all* consumer relationships with the Apple take this form. Many Apple customers may maintain Parent-Child parallel and complementary Transactions throughout their relationship with Apple as a Pastime. Apple introduces new products and services and instructs customers to buy and consumers dutifully and enthusiastically comply even though Apple also subsequently restrict consumer's options and behaviour. Some conceptualisations of 'brand love' (Fournier 1998; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Batra et al., 2012; Maxian et al., 2013) fit this Pastime form. Although these behaviours might lack the dramatic Switches of Games, they are not an Antithesis to Games and nor do they represent Adult-to-Adult Transactions required for Intimacy. Indeed we recognise the potential manipulation of the Pastime *Apple fan* where Parent-Child Transactions are maintained as a structure similar to the more general claims of 'infantilised' consumers (see Barber, 2007). In Game form however, consumers switch to blame *their* brand for any restriction (just as Apple in turn may use such behaviour as an excuse for maintaining control). It may unfold like this:

> *Social level*
> Apple: "We make the best consumer technology" (Adult)
> Consumer: "I need the best technology on the market" (Adult)
>
> *Psychological level* (Duplex Transaction)
> Apple to Consumer: "We are afraid you'll abandon us" (Controlling Parent)
> Consumer to Apple: "I'm scared of taking risks" (Adapted Child)
>
> *Game structure*
> Apple to Consumer: "Think differently; Follow a vision; Change the world" (Nurturing Parent) ***Con***
> Consumer to Apple: "This is the kind of person I am" (Free Child) ***Gimmick***
> Apple to Consumer: "We have great services for you" (Nurturing Parent) ***Instruction***
> Consumer to Apple: "OK, here's all my personal data" (Adapted Child) ***Compliance***

Apple to Consumer: "You can only use Apple services" (Controlling Parent) ***Instruction***
Consumer to Apple: "But there's something more cool on Android"(Adapted Child) ***Protest/Switch***
Apple to Consumer: "You signed up with us, you can't leave" (Controlling Parent) ***Instruction/Switch***
Consumer to Apple: " I would if I didn't love Apple" **Payoff**: confirmation of risk, frustration, and/or anger for consumers; confirmation that consumers might defect, and indignation, for Apple

Note: Berne (1964) illustrates a complementary game to *If it wasn't for you…, After all I've done for you.* Although there isn't space for a full description here, it represents Apple's possible Payoff position

Apple's Transactions represent a corporate fear of consumers leaving the brand, or simply doing things independently, hence sanctions against 'jailbreaking' (removing security in the iPhone so that users can gain full access to hardware), proprietary and licenced accessories, restrictions on third party apps and services, and even on third party repairs. As a Parent brand, Apple 'knows best'. Apple gains their Strokes through sales, and the fandom of their most enthusiastic customers (for example see Griffin's 2015 report of queues and celebrations for the release of the iPhone 6) yet behind this the dominant Parental corporate Ego-State is insecurity, suggesting an absence of sufficient Strokes in early corporate life. Whilst we would not like to engage in any further wild analysis of Steve Jobs, it is intriguing that our TA reading of the relationship Apple has with their consumers is consistent with the reports of Job's narcissism, controlling tendencies and insecurity derived from his abandonment and complex adoption as a child (Maccoby, 2000; Isaacson, 2011, 2012; Henriques, 2012) and typical of a 'Don't Exist' injunction (see Heathcote, 2006).

The conclusion to this game is especially played out in the safe environment of the various online forums focused on Apple, where the most loyal fans complain about bugs, faults, failures, limitations and prices, yet continue to rave about Apple products. Apple's advertising may instruct consumers to 'think differently', 'follow a vision' and 'change the world' at the same time as their software End User Licence Agreement maintains restrictions on what a user may do with their Apple products that prevent easy defection to a competing brand. An advantage for consumers is that they can maintain a position of enthusiastically claiming to embrace the latest technology, whilst avoiding the insecurity of, say, building their own computer, or researching the myriad of Android smartphones. Apple consumers may therefore avoid confronting their own insecurities. If Apple's Corporate Ego-state carries some of Steve Job's narcissistic characteristics, complaining fans are themselves fulfilling a 'Don't Grow Up' injunction (see Goulding and Goulding, 1976).

Apple Discounts consumers' ability to choose and to manage (their own technology); consumers Discount their own ability to choose and to take risks. The result is that the Adult processing that might ask if the Apple premium is worthwhile, or if the system is too restrictive, or if cheaper options might be just as good, is replaced by Child ways of thinking. More generally we might see this Game whenever a brand restricts consumer action in some way, but claims that it's for the consumers' own good.

Game Analysis also recognises that actors may be involved in different complementary Games at the same time. For example, where loyalty is achieved by manipulating commitment, or conning the consumer's Child into agreements they cannot get out of (see Zhu and Zhou, 2011; Beckett, 2012 for other examples governing consumers), this looks like a game that Berne calls *Now I've Got You, You Son-of-a-Bitch*. This game is apparent in those mobile network providers that *supply* iPhones on contracts. In Berne's original description, this Persecutor Game takes the form of a trap where a player (who usually accepts a Victim role) is set-up for failure through an apparently genuine invitation to undertake some task, but in anticipation that something will go wrong that will allow Persecution. We might call the marketplace version *Smallprint*, played when a consumer tries to get out of a contract:

> **Thesis:** Brand allows 'misbehaviour' in consumer, then calls fowl, enjoying just indignation, and forcing the consumer to concede that they are in the wrong.
> **Aim:** Justification, being right.
> **Ego states:** Brand as Parent, Consumer as Child.
> **Moves:** 1. Provocation – accusation; 2. Defence – accusation; 3. Defence – punishment.
> **Payoff:** Consumers don't want to pay, but we can make them.

Although apparently Adult-Adult on the social level, as a Loyalty Game instigated by a brand, the brand first seduces a consumer's Child, with their own Child Ego-state, only to then take punitive action against them, switching from Free Child to Controlling Parent, when a contract is inevitably breached. The networks that invite consumers into expensive Apple mobile phone contracts play this Game with discounted contracts with long durations. For mobile phone contracts there are possibilities to profit from excess use of data (over agreed amounts), and/or use of the phone outside the narrowly defined allowance and locations (excessive roaming changes). For example, we might consider O2 in the UK, one of the largest suppliers of the iPhone on contracts, and their recent 'Be more dog' advertising campaign.

> *Social level*
> O2: "Get your iPhone from us, we have the best network" (Adult)

Consumer "I need the best network and handset" (Adult)

Psychological level (Duplex Transaction)
O2 to Consumer: "we're afraid that you'll exploit us" (Adapted Child)
Consumer to O2: "I don't want responsibility" (Free Child)

Game structure
O2 to Consumer: "Play with us. Be more dog." (Free Child) ***Con***
Consumer to O2: "Ok, I'll just have fun; mobile contracts are too complex" (Free Child) ***Gimmick***
O2 to Consumer: "Sign your contract, we're in charge" (Controlling Parent)
Consumer to O2: "Hey, I don't have enough data on my contract" (Adapted Child) **Provocation**
O2 to Consumer: "Your contract is clear" (Controlling Parent) **Accusation**
Consumer to O2: "I didn't know I'd use so much" (Adapted Child) **Defense**
O2 to Consumer: "There are penalties for going over your allowance" (Controlling Parent) **Accusation**
Consumer to O2: "But I still needed to use my phone" (Adapted Child) **Defense**
O2 to Consumer: "You'll pay" (Controlling Parent) **Punishment**
Consumer to O2: "How did this happen to me?". **Payoff:** for consumers confirmation that they can't take responsibility, regret, hopelessness; for O2 confirmation that consumers can't be trusted, righteousness

Note: Berne (1964) notes that a complementary game to *Now I've got you.*. is *Kick me. Although there isn't space for a full description here, it represents well consumers' Payoff position*

The pattern is an initial Child-Child Con (through marketing communication and even an anthropomorphised brand image, or spokesperson), followed by a Parental enforcement of a contract. This applies to many aspects of contracts that aim to tie-in consumers following an initial attractive offer. O2's actions reveal a corporate Ego-state that fears exploitation and abandonment and takes reassurance at finding ways to ensure on-going (often negative) Strokes in the form of complaints that confirm to O2 the risky nature of dealing with consumers in the market and a need to control with contracts.

We might see this as a result of the large investments required to operate mobile networks that produce a 'Don't Trust' injunction based on vulnerability and a fear of betrayal (see Goulding and Goulding, 1976). From their early inception mobile networks have had to balance their risky, long-term investments with potentially fickle consumers moving round to get the best deal producing a need to 'get them, before they get us' that is typical of games of *Now I've got you…* In the 'Be More Dog' campaign, O2 metaphorically ask their fickle, cat-like consumers to have more fun, but actually also not to defect, not to be independent, but to be more loyal, like a dog. This may reveal their corporate fear (that consumers are fickle and can't be trusted), but also masks the underlying structure of *Smallprint* in Transactions. For example, a regulators report (Ofcom, 2016) on switching in mobile markets reports that less than half who attempt to switch actually do so, citing reasons like difficulty in contacting providers,

understanding contracts, or managing the complex process of porting a number. We might also note the widely reported high levels of complaints about mobile phone contracts and charges. For example, Meyer (2014), Jackson (2015), Hazell (2016) are among numerous journalists writing financial columns who report excessive mobile charges, an inability to get out of long contracts, 'unfair' changes mid-way through contracts, poor customer services, poor signals and a general contempt for mobile phone consumers apparently held by operators. For their part consumers seemingly enjoy not having to deal with complex contracts, or the advice in such articles (for example the calculations involved in predicting the different costs of contracts, contract terms and subsidised handsets and alternative ways to buy and change mobile phones and contracts) and instead focus on phone specifications and designs.

3. Game Antithesis

A Game Antithesis is the way to avoid Games and so also change Scripts. We do this by recognising Game structures, then asking what happens when one actor refuses to play and instead responds in an open, honest way, expressing their feelings and unresolved needs. This is the ultimate aim for TA as a form of therapy. For example, alternative Transactions in the Games above might look like this:

Apple to Consumer: "Think differently; Follow a vision; Change the world" (Nurturing Parent) ***Con***
Consumer to Apple: "Nice sentiment, but no phone or laptop is really doing to do that" (Adult) **No Gimmick**
Or
Apple to Consumer: "We have great services for you" (Nurturing Parent) ***Instruction***
Consumer to Apple: "Let me read the terms in detail first" (Adult) **Game cut short**
Or
O2 to Consumer: "Play with us. Be more dog." (Free Child) ***Con***
Consumer to O2: "I'm more interested in your contract terms" (Adult) **No Gimmick**
Or
Consumer to O2: "Hey, I've used too much data, but I won't pay" (Adapted Child) **Provocation**
O2 to Consumer: "We can change your contract, so you are on the right one" (Adult) **Game cut short**

Although in these examples it may seem that the Antithesis requires a permanent Adult position as seems to be the suggestion in RM approaches, this isn't actually the case. Potential Cons and Gimmicks are *avoided* with Adult Ego-states because TA 'cures' ask that individuals attempt to gain Strokes through Intimacy rather than Rackets. Elsewhere, there remains room for interactions between other Ego-states that are part of Intimacy.

In both our illustrations we recognise the vulnerabilities that dominate Corporate Life-scripts and that make Antithesis difficult. Indeed this may be similar for all corporations trapping them in Persecutor roles (cf. Mihailovic and Mihailovic, 2004). For Apple Antithesis might mean opening up systems so that users can more easily switch to other operating systems and/or use other hardware and services, and so accepting that Apple does 'Exist' (without controlling), but this would be a surrendering of control that has taken years to establish. For O2 it may mean simplifying contracts resisting opportunist additional charges, or accepting that they can 'Trust'. Such Antithesis for a business might damage profitability however. For consumers an Antithesis would be to recognise that they may not need Apple's or O2's Parenting, that they can make decisions from an Adult position, that they can 'Grow Up'.

It's possible to see how regulators have intervened in attempts to prevent Games. For example in an apparent Rescuer Game, regulators in in the UK systematically intervene to prevent excessive contract lengths, excessive penalty and roaming changes, changes to contracts mid-term, and barriers to switching (Morley, 2014; Meyer, 2014; Jackson, 2015; Hazell, 2016 and also see regular Ofcom reports). Yet we should recognise that this does little to address either the Script of the corporation, or of consumers and may therefore actually reinforce both. In TA, as with other psychoanalytic approaches, transformation can only come from recognition of the Scripts that are enacted and strategies to avoid them by the players themselves. The problem (in TA terms) with regulation is that it allows dysfunctional psychological structures to remain, i.e., companies feel threatened and consumers defer responsibilities to the regulator and the media. An extended application of TA might examine the subsequent drama triangles that Karpman (2011) observes are common in such situations.

The Antithesis of Marketplace Games cannot therefore come through third-party regulatory interventions of this sort, but by considering the players own injections and replacing the negative Strokes in Marketplace Games with other ways to achieve recognition and Intimacy. This should not be seen as a neo-liberal claim for the removal of regulation however, but as a recognition that such protection is naïve to the biographical aspect of psychology.

Implications of TA for marketplace relationships

TA does not directly challenge normative RM theory such as commitment, trust, mutual benefit or the 'win-win' of RM (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Gronross, 2008). Such discourse assumes an

Adult position and therefore represents the social level of marketplace relationships whilst masking the occasions where Parent and Child Ego-states influence thinking and behaviours. Our illustrations point to the unconscious, dysfunctional marketplace relationships that may be sought on a psychological level, because *all* players get the Strokes and emotional Payoffs programmed through their early Injunctions.

We are not suggesting that *every* marketplace relationship takes the form of a Game; Rituals and Pastimes abound, and Withdrawal is possible. Nor are we suggesting that Adult-Adult exchanges in market Transactions are impossible. Rather we observe that as market relations have ulterior motives other than the Intimacy that Berne (1963) places at the heart of Adult-Adult relationships, and so are ripe with the potential for Games. Consumer-brand relationships involve brands Conning the consumer from either a Parent, or Child in their own (corporate) Ego-state or vice-versa as a basis for Games. This suggests a way of understanding value in marketplace interaction as the emotional Payoff from Games and confirmation of Life-positions (somewhat like Steiner's 1971 'Stroke economy', but as part of the 'real' economy).

We also need to distinguish between destructive marketplace Games and the milder form of Pastime that does not include the Cross-up or negative Payoff. Indeed many Pastimes are marketplace-based even in Berne's (1964) original explanations: *General Motors*, where cars are compared and reviewed; *How much?*, where prices are complained about, and; *Ever Been*, a travel game. Such Pastimes are a way for consumers to structure time and gain Strokes via the market, even as they maintain non-Adult Ego-states and therefore the potential to discourage Adult consumer scrutiny of their marketplace Transactions.

Games, however, are more problematic. Berne (1964) notes that determination to play a Game means that if deprived of opportunity, an actor will either escalate their attempts to engage the other, or seek new players. This means that any company that choses not to play established Games could face either intensifying demands by consumers, or consumer disloyalty and defection to a more willing player, and vice-versa. For example in Persecutor Games, meeting consumers demands would simply result in them making further and more unreasonable ones, and avoiding Victimising those seeking Victimhood would result it defection to new Persecutors. It's for this reason that regulatory intervention, whilst apparently protecting both corporate and consumer interests, can do little to reduce Game-playing. Advice that companies improve communication with consumers to make it more equal (Lindberg-Repo and Grönroos, 2004;

Ballantyne and Varey, 2006, 2008) also ignores the fact that both consumers and companies may unconsciously desire dysfunctional interaction for Payoffs that include anger, irritation or frustration at the inability to communicate. Much 'consumer education' may therefore be misplaced because no amount of information, if provided *or* interpreted in a Child, or Parent Ego-state, would prevent possible Cross or Duplex-Transactions and subsequent Games, and may actually aid them. Indeed, there may be specific TA structures in market relationships that are otherwise presented as power relations, i.e., brands tend to invite Child Ego-states in consumers, either with a playful Child or Parental voice, or both (see our illustrations above). Elsewhere this might also be captured in accusations of marketplace infantilisation (Barber, 2007). TA accounts for how consumers may be complicit in such activity because for consumers, these Transactions can produce predictable daily Strokes and Payoffs, albeit often negative ones.

Berne also recognised the disturbing potential for Games to intensify, noting that a 'third-degree' Game is one with a tragic outcome, ending in "the surgery, the courtroom, or the morgue" (Berne, 1964: 57). Hence when consumers claim that they would 'die for', or 'kill for' the latest brand offering, they might actually mean that literally, like something from a JG Ballard plot (see Fitchett, 2002). If this seems an outrageous claim, consider the violence that was reported at Tesco stores during the Black Friday sales in 2014 (BBC, 2014), the persistence of bankruptcy through personal debt as a third-degree version of *Smallprint* (BBC, 2015), or the obesity-related heath crisis caused by the over-consumption of sugar (Campbell, 2015). We might also note the existence of brand sabotage; consumers turn hostile and are strongly determined to cause damage to the brand (Kahr et al., 2016). The possibility of third degree marketplace Games supports projects to reveal underlying psychological structures in our consumer culture in order to address them.

To achieve the Antithesis to Marketplace Games first requires recognition of the underlying biographical psychologies behind them. Then, just as Mihailovic and Mihailovic (2004) ask that social and political issues should be contemplated into psychotherapy, we would advocate particular attention to markets. However, simply refusing marketplace Games as part of dominant cultural Scripts, results in the existential anxieties of, 'what to do' (see also, Berne, 1975), or a crisis in time structuring. Berne (1964) suggests that in such a situation the risk is that individuals who are made aware of their Game may simply seek another Game to structure time. Moreover, Berne (1964) seems to suggest that many who are incapable of achieving Intimacy are

actually better off sticking with their Games, and Böhm and Batta (2010) imply that inevitable Lacanian lack in consumers may make dysfunctional marketplace relationships irresistible.

For Games to be avoided, consumers and brands also need new ways to gain Strokes and structure time. In this respect TA also engages with sociological critiques of an isolated and individualised society (Shankar et al., 2006; Bauman, 2013), or a focus on 'having' and the 'marketing personality' (Fromm, 1956; 1976) understood as underlying cultural Scripts. Without sufficient opportunities for Intimacy, the individualised consumer can rely on the marketplace for Strokes in one form or another and Intimacy is never possible under a system that instead produces alienation. Our application of TA therefore aligns with critical approaches to markets, but provides an analytic of the specific relationships that markets have produced. The question then is what a market would look like where actors worked towards Intimacy. This is particularly problematic for brands because the maintenance of an Adult interaction from their side would certainly invite them to question marketing communication practice that includes a Con, and may limit their ability to make a profit. As Mihailovic and Mihailovic (2004) suggest, Global Capitalist Scripts may be hard for organisations to avoid. Balling (2005) also notes the difficulty of changing organisational cultures.

The Antithesis to Games requires that we consider the underlying, unmet needs, the processes of Discounting, and responsibilities that are avoided. As they vary by individual and by brand this requires a specific process similar to the therapeutic practice of TA, not just for consumers, but also for brands. In our examples Apple and O2 have different issues that TA may identify, and possibly also address. If there is any optimism in Antithesis it is that individual actors retain the capacity to avoid specific Games and re-direct their emotional energy elsewhere, and perhaps the Antithesis to Games therefore also connects with that established body of work that promots voluntary simplicity (Elgin, 1993), or alternative hedonism (Soper, 2008) in their advocacy of alternative, legitimate cultural Scripts.

Therapy requires reflection on Ego-states and related Games, and such an approach could also apply to firms. For example, we see relevance to corporate social responsibility (CSR), where a company reconsiders how it structures Games through its brands, giving little choice to consumers other than to play, for example through impenetrable terms and conditions, limited systems for handling complaints, or the instrumental approaches to sustainability (which might lead to the Game of *Greenwashing*) and to ethics, (the adiaphora of the excuse of *It's Industry*

Practice). A TA approach to CSR might ask companies what types of Transactions they *should* have with stakeholders as they contribute to the Stroke economy, or perhaps whether ethical stakeholder engagement, equal communication, or dyadic relationships (Lindberg-Repo and Gronroos, 2004) might be seen as a demand to resist Games and even to work towards Intimacy in marketplace relationships.

Conclusions

RM theory does not capture the full range of possible marketplace relationships (Østergaard and Fitchett, 2012), their underlying emotional content (Fournier, 1998), or their dysfunctional co-dependencies. TA is useful here as a biographical theory of psychology that emphases current structures of relationships in an accessible way. As we have illustrated, this provides explanations for the relationships between consumers and brands, not based on mutual benefits or a match of values (all of which might still appear on the social level), but also on Ego-state Transactions and the subsequent transference in Games. In addition, and as we have also illustrated, TA can deal with the complex networks of market relations, in a way that can provide new accounts of consumer culture, and even the basis for transformations in that culture.

Our analysis suggests the possibility that our consumer culture, at least in part, exists in its current form so that we gain Strokes as we play out our psychological Games in an emotional economy (see, Steiner, 1971; Shankar et al., 2006; Illouz, 2007). TA recasts critiques that are more usually presented as alienation or exploitation, as Games. As third or fourth generation consumers, we may also have all learnt Marketplace Games from Parental Injunctions (from both actual parents and brand advertising as Parental figures), just as marketers have also learnt their preferred Scripts, including from narcissistic leaders like Steve Jobs. As Barber (2007) identifies (albeit without the insight of TA), in consumption we are largely infantilised, or at least invited to use our Child Ego-state.

There is, however, some opportunity for a more positive aspect to the application of TA to marketing that is worth further work in line with the current return to psychoanalysis in marketing (Shankar et al., 2006; Cluley and Desmond, 2015; Miles, 2015; O'Shaughnessy, 2015). This is based on the potential intended by Berne (1964) that the recognition of Games should lead to reflections that transform behaviour and free individuals – and organisations – from oppressive scripts and a tyranny of the legacy of the Parent and Child.

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