

Two Racketeering Patterns: "I Love You, So Gimme!" and "Darling, You Owe Me!"

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Abstract

Racketeering consists of exploitative dyadic transactions that are initiated by a player for strokes to his or her racket or for other gains. It may go on subtly for a long time because it operates alongside other transactions in a relationship without necessarily leading to a sudden switch of ego states, as is the case with games. Therefore, racketeering requires its own distinct nomenclature, both to facilitate the identification of the process when it occurs and to distinguish it from games. Two different but potentially complementary patterns of racketeering are named and described.

It has taken me some time to figure out why I am increasingly uncomfortable with a long-time acquaintance whom I generally find knowledgeable and interesting. Finally I realized that although we often had enjoyable times together, by her constant emphasis on how much more fortunate I am, along with offering me small tokens of her love, she subtly led me into giving her more time, concern, presents, and even money than I truly wanted to, lest I be callously insensitive and fail to reciprocate the affection of a devoted friend.

I now see that for a while I participated as a partner in a particular racketeering process that deserves its own name and must be seen in its own light rather than primarily as a prelude to a game. This is important because racketeering is a complementary process that can operate unnoticeably over long periods of time in a relationship alongside various other transactions. This is in contrast to games, which have specific moves and end abruptly with a crossed transaction after a sudden shift of ego state in the initiating player.

The name I have given to the racketeering process just described, which I recognized only recently, is: "I love you, so gimme!" (ILYSGM). I also recognized that a complementary racketeering process can be called "Darling, you owe me!" (DYOM).

In referring to his list of games, Berne (1964) stated:

This collection is complete to date (1962), but new games are continually being discovered. Sometimes what appears to be another example of a known game turns out, on more careful study, to be an entirely new one, and a game which appears to be new often turns out to be a variation of a known one. The individual items of the analyses are also subject to change as new knowledge accumulates; for example, where there are several possible choices in describing dynamics the statement given may turn out later not to have been the most cogent one. (p. 69)

Indeed, Berne's 1962 list did not conform to the Game Formula he later developed (Berne, 1972, p. 24) and to his statement that "Unless a set of transactions has these four features, it is not a game—that is, the transactions must be ulterior so that there is a con, and the con must be followed by a switch, a crossup, and a payoff" (p. 23). Thus many of the titles listed in *Games People Play* actually represent variants of racketeering rather than of games, in which a switch of ego state in the player (or Agent, to use Berne's term) generates the crossed transaction that ends the game.

In various writings (English, 1976, 1977) I elaborated on my idea that there are two basic patterns for racketeering, each of which may go on for a long time, even indefinitely. It is only if/when one of the partners seeks to pull away from the ongoing complementary transactions of the racketeering process that the

Agent may switch ego state (from panic about potential loss of stroke exchanges). As a result, the Agent crosses the next transaction and thereby ends a process of racketeering, which then retroactively may be erroneously labeled as a game.

I also have suggested that in many cases such an ending does not represent the "ulterior payoff" that makes it a game, but rather that the unrecognized element for racketeering lies in the Agent's hope to extract particular strokes to support his or her racket. Thus, often what appears to have been a game simply signifies that continuation of racketeering failed and was terminated by one or both parties with frustration and consequent bad feelings.

The following sections provide more detailed information about each of the two basic racketeering patterns and their corresponding potential "game" endings.

"I Love You, So Gimme!" (ILYSGM)

Variants of this pattern may include "I need you," "I admire you," and so on, always followed by "gimme," stated or implied. The initiating Agent of this racketeering process functions with a Type I Undersure personality (English, 1976b, 1977) from an existential position that corresponds to "I'm not-OK, You're OK" felt as "I'd be OK if you'd be OK enough to give to me unconditionally. Since I love and admire you, and show it, and have so many unmet needs, and you are supposedly OK, you can prove it by giving me . . . and, of course, giving more . . . and more. . ."

This is the position of a very young child chronologically, one who is entitled to unconditional love from parents and who requires major strokes for whatever spontaneous indications of love or need he or she offers, such as a smile or stretching out his or her arms toward the parents. However, when this position is held by the Child of a grown person, perhaps because of childhood deprivation, it translates into the inappropriately greedy, demanding, guilt-provoking position of the player of ILYSGM.

Such racketeering, addressed to the Nurturing Parent of a chosen partner, may go on for

an extended time, frequently within a relationship that may include various other mutual interests of both partners so that, in addition to racketeering transactions, there may also be various other transactions, including Adult ones, pastiming, and occasional enjoyable Child-Child experiences.

It is only when the Agent's chosen partner continuously resists the recurring, subtle, needy demands from the seemingly admiring Child of the racketeer, or otherwise pulls away from responding to strokes, that the Agent will switch from Adapted Child to Critical Parent in relation to the partner. The consequent ending may then be similar to that of a NIGYSOB ("Now I've Got You, You SOB") game, although the purpose for racketeering was different.

Even after such a crossed transaction, if the partner is willing to participate again in a racketeering process like the early one, it may be resumed again and again, which then implies that the partner is not just an innocent participant but a racketeer in his or her own right, possibly a Type II racketeer like the one I am about to describe.

"Darling, You Owe Me!" (DYOM)

In this racketeering process, the Agent functions with a Type II Oversure personality (English, 1976a, 1976b, 1977) from an existential position that corresponds to "I'm OK, You're not-OK," which the person experiences as: "I must keep proving I'm OK and you're not-OK by lording it over you or overwhelming you with my grandiosity and generosity."

Nancy Porter-Steele (personal communication, November 9, 1998) identified this pattern in "wealthy parents who invited their offspring to go to Europe with them, or gave them other benefits, after which they got them to suffer, one way or another, before, during, and after the trip."

Although the initiating Agent of DYOM operates primarily with the Parent ego state, covering up the needs of his or her Child lest they be too overwhelming, DYOM racketeering is not limited to chronological parent/child transactions. In fact, it operates extensively in marital and business relationships as well as in

general friendships. The Agent is blind to the subtle way he or she humiliates the recipients of his or her bounty. He or she expects them to function primarily with Adapted Child, and experiences himself or herself as generous, until such time as said recipients pull away and are "ungrateful." This does not immediately generate a switch of ego state for the Agent, who may simply maintain the Parent ego state but manifest it more and more critically, thus becoming the Persecutor of the Victim/racketeering partner instead of his or her false Rescuer (English, 1976b). However, ultimately, if the racketeering partner totally defects or becomes actively accusatory, the DYOM player feels victimized and may thus switch into a hurt, despairing Child. This may then resemble Berne's (1964, pp. 105-107) "Look How Hard I Tried."

Complementary Racketeering

As just indicated in relation to ILYSGM, DYOM racketeering can also proceed unnoticed for a long time because of additional transactions, many of which may be pleasant in the context of a family, marital or business relationship, or friendship. However, the relationship may come to an abrupt and painful game ending if the Agent's partner stops participating in the racketeering process.

This is why it is useful to learn to recognize racketeering patterns and to be aware of how one's own personality type may make one vulnerable to participating in one category of racketeering or another. It may then be necessary to firmly but affectionately discuss the ongoing relationship to see whether it can be salvaged with straight transactions. However, the principal racketeering Agent may be so committed to the racketeering process that the relationship cannot be maintained.

Of course, frequently ILYSGM and DYOM racketeers find each other and establish a codependent relationship that can keep them going for quite a while, especially if they are fairly well matched on a first-degree level. I need not spell out here that codependency brings on its own problems.

Extremely bad divorces or major business disruptions with painful endings will occur if one of the partners racketeers on a third-degree level while the other has racketeered only on a first-degree level and wants out at some point. There can be lethal consequences also if both partners racketeer on a third-degree level and increasingly experience that even constant racketeering will not meet their genuine needs.

The compulsion to racketeer only dissolves in an individual if or when he or she becomes aware and consciously recognizes whatever underlying feelings are substituted for by the rackets for which he or she seeks strokes by racketeering. If he or she is in a codependent relationship with a second- or third-degree racketeering partner at the time, it can be extremely difficult for the now healthy individual to disentangle from the ongoing complementary racketeering process, and therapeutic help may be required to minimize the resulting conflicts.

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