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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION LITERATURE: THE THEORY OF LOGICAL TYPES

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Laurel E. Joakimides

December, 1994

UMI Number: 1361181

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ABSTRACT

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION LITERATURE: THE THEORY OF LOGICAL TYPES

by Laurel E. Joakimides

This thesis challenges the content-command and digital-analogic axioms proposed by Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967) by introducing and reinterpreting three of Gregory Bateson's theories—double bind, the theory of logical types, and the principle of double description. With the revised Batesonian perspective (the MEG hierarchy) established, the author (a) critically reviews the most widely published scholars in relational communication literature (Edna Rogers, Judee Burgoon, and Leslie Baxter); (b) reconceptualizes the double bind phenomenon; and (c) takes the reader through a step-by-step process of comparative-relational analysis of double bind using a segment from Edward Albee's play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. The conclusion presents a summary of the weaknesses in current interpersonal communication literature and provides suggestions for future research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Earning my Master of Arts degree at San Jose State has afforded me the opportunity to work with many excellent teachers. Along the way, I have also made some wonderful friends. Space will not allow me to thank every one whose influence contributed to this project. In something like chronological order I wish to thank several people particularly influential to the completion of this thesis.

For the early advice in finding a topic about which I will feel passionate, I wish to thank Professor Dennis Jaehne. For providing me with the courage to tackle such a project, I would like to thank Professor Stephen Hinerman. I owe a debt of thanks to Professor Philip Wander for his gentle reminders that my insecurities, though very real to me, were nothing short of nonsense, and for his insistence that a project of this magnitude was not beyond my reach.

To my friend, my mentor, and my advisor, Professor Wen-Shu Lee, I give my heartfelt thanks for her technical expertise, her guidance, her patience, her dedication and joint passion for the topic, and in seeing this project to completion. I will continue to aspire to Dr. Lee's level of dedication to her students.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Terry, who stood by, criticized and appreciated, and bore with undying patience, my excitements and depressions as ideas came and went.

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INTRODUCTION

> Whenever we pride ourselves upon finding a newer, stricter way of thought or exposition; whenever we start insisting too hard upon "operationalism" or symbolic logic or any other of these very essential systems of tramlines, we lose something of the ability to think new thoughts. And equally, of course, whenever we rebel against the sterile rigidity of formal thought and exposition and let our ideas run wild, we likewise lose. (Bateson, 1972, p. 75)

Researchers in interpersonal communication over the years have amassed a substantial body of research devoted to questions relating to how people strategically accomplish a set of goals from conflict management, politeness, and relationship initiation. While this body of research seeks a better understanding of how actors accomplish multiple goals and a better understanding of the cognitive mechanisms by which strategic action is actually produced, the scholarly criticisms that have ensued are housed within a monologic perspective where the "individual is the unit of analysis, and explanation is sought through the psychological constructs of intention and planning" (Baxter, 1992c, p. 331).

During the past two decades we have seen a *cognitive turn* in the way we think about interpersonal communication. Although the alternative perspectives aid us in locating different kinds of research questions, Baxter (1992c) argues that "readers are provided with fairly abstract renderings of the 'social' alternative(s) to the dominant psychological approaches" (p. 336). Today,

scholars are urged to embrace the inherent benefits found in the presence of a viable alternative voice that forces us to raise questions we normally would not ask. Recently we have seen an increase in scholars offering alternative theoretical voices competing with the traditional positivistic establishment to shape the process of interpersonal communication research (Lee, Joakimides, & Wander, 1994). Beginning with Lannamann's (1991 & 1992) *critical interpersonal approach*, and Leeds-Herwitz's (1992) special forum on "social approaches," interpersonal scholars are being asked to redress *ideological muteness* inherent in their early empirical orientation by examining "the relations of power that legitimate particular knowledge claims" in concrete interpersonal processes framed within larger social phenomena (Lannamann, 1991, p. 183). Following the *critical turn* in interpersonal communication research as advocated by Lannamann (1991), this thesis will move away from quantification and focus on critical inquiries. Specifically, the argument in this thesis is that an *old* voice (Bateson) is being misused and must be reinterpreted.

My interest in Bateson's works stems from his research on the notion of double bind. We seldom read Bateson in our field—we read only Watzlawick, Bevelas, and Jackson's (1967) interpretation of Bateson. Indeed, most of the literature on relational communication that cites Bateson comes through *Pragmatics of Human Communication.* Unfortunately, Watzlawick et al.'s version of Bateson leads us straight into a cul-de-sac leaving researchers with nowhere

else to go. In other words, we are at a dead end with an important body of research. Bateson is an outstanding communication theorist. If we go back to his work without going through Watzlawick et al., we open up a whole new line of research. It becomes important, therefore, to conduct a critical analysis so that the *old* voice will be reinterpreted as an alternative ***new*** voice in interpersonal communication.

The thesis is divided into five sections. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to double bind, with an emphasis on three basic reasons why we have not been able to apply extensively double bind theory in our discipline. The reason for reviewing double bind literature is that in the forty years since the formulation of this theory, it has not been successfully applied. As a starting point to the eventual understanding and application of double bind, Chapter 2 deals with the theory of logical types discussed by Bateson and further revised by Lee (1994) and Lee, Joakimides, and Wander (1994). Based on this work, two revisions can be made to: 1) Watzlawick, Bevelas, and Jackson's (1967) axioms, and 2) the notion of double bind. Once these revisions are made clear, the third component of the thesis, Chapter 3, provides a critical review of relational communication. This review is necessary because relational communication is the area of interpersonal communication that has most heavily relied upon Watzlawick et al. (1967) and Bateson. Chapter 4 is a critical reinterpretation of the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* It is my intent to illustrate the thesis at hand by drawing

from sections of Edward Albee's play. The reason for selecting this particular play for critical reinterpretation is that Watzlawick et al. (1967) used the play as the basis of their analysis. Rather than using case studies that would have made their project prohibitive, the unusual and well-known play satisfied their criteria for providing data that were easily accessible to illustrate the thesis at hand. Chapter 4 provides a basis for comparison of Watzlawick et al.'s application of Bateson's theories to my reinterpretation of the play. After a synopsis of the line of action, this chapter will follow closely the concepts developed in Chapter 2. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes criticisms of relational communication literature and also spells out a new research agenda to facilitate future research in interpersonal communication.

The underlying framework of this thesis is the recovery of Bateson's original formulation of double bind. Once the recovery is complete, we can then begin to rework the communication axioms in a more fruitful way. By critically reformulating Bateson's and Watzlawick et al.'s (1967) works, we can begin to rethink the way we understand and do research in interpersonal communication. This is important because, first, we will be able to examine transformed relational meanings by treating aspects of communication (e.g., verbal, nonverbal, sequence) holistically rather than separately. Second, we will be better equipped to understand and talk about disturbing communication experiences (e.g., double bind, disqualification, interruption, topic shifting, perceived sexual harassment

and oppression) by attacking the contradictions in relational meanings. Third, by removing logical breaches in the use of "metacommunication," we will be able to begin to study and to advise people "how to talk about talk," that is, to negotiate dialogically to transform disturbing communication events into more productive events.

Before introducing the notion of double bind, it is important to furnish a few of the key definitions. One of the critical components of double bind is *paradox*. As many scholars who have investigated double bind have realized, paradox has been the most difficult to grasp. Although the brief definition may seem trivial on the surface, it is essential that the nuances that distinguish paradox from contradiction be clearly understood.

Key Definitions

Paradox: Paradox is defined as a contradiction that follows a valid deduction from acceptable premises; the classic paradox was presented by Epimenides.[1] However, it is important to distinguish between paradox and other kinds of contradictions and incongruencies. Unless the contradictions occur between different levels of abstraction or different logical types, the incongruity is a simple contradiction, rather than paradox (Abeles, 1976). Two delightful examples highlighting this distinction are offered by Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967). With a pair of *contradictory* but independent orders such as the two traffic signs "Stop" and "No Stopping Anytime" appearing on the same post,

we choose to obey one or the other, though the unchosen one is disobeyed. A *paradox* offers no choice in spite of the illusion of choice. The example for paradox shows a picture of a sign posted over a freeway that reads "Ignore This Sign." Assuming that we have seen the sign while driving down the road, it is not a question of being wrong whatever we do, as in the "Stop" sign example just given; rather we cannot really do anything at all. In other words, the sign can only be obeyed by disobeying it, and conversely it is disobeyed by obeying it.

> Contradictions and conflicts of this type called "simple" can be difficult and harrowing; the distinction drawn here is not intended to minimize their disrupting effects. They do not, however, have the peculiarly paralyzing effects of paradox, wherein a perpetual oscillation between nonexistent alternatives is set in motion. It is something like turning on the light to better inspect the dark; you simply cannot do it (Abeles 1976, p. 119).

It is important to emphasize the difference between simple contradiction and paradox because in a similar way double bind is often incorrectly interpreted as meaning inconsistent communication or contradictory messages, rather than paradox.

Logical Types: The concept of double bind (paradox) is rooted in Russell's *Theory of Logical Types* (Whitehead & Russell, 1910). The central thesis of this theory is that there is a discontinuity between a class and its members. The theory deals with different levels of abstraction and states that a class cannot be a member of itself nor can a member of the class *be* the class; classes and members are distinct logical types. Bateson (1972) argued that in spite of the perceived insignificance of errors in logical typing, they are significant

and prevalent even among scholars. The most common mistyping is when two logical types are treated alike. More complex and difficult to understand is the mistyping that occurs when members of a class are considered at the same level as the class—a higher level of abstraction. Take the word "chair" for instance. All chairs comprise the class of chairs. The remainder of things left in the universe comprise the class of nonchairs inasmuch as they have one definite thing in common: they are not chairs. Hence, to include the class of chairs as a member of the class of nonchairs generates a paradox for nothing can be a chair and nonchair at the same time (Bateson, 1972).

Deutero-learning: Deutero-learning was a term coined by Bateson in 1956. Deutero-learning simply means learning to learn, or "higher-order learning" (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976). "Whenever a subject is exposed to any situation whatsoever in which he [or she] must act, he [or she] will first scan the general structure of the situation in order to classify it as a member of one-and-not-another class of situations, and only then proceed" (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976, p. 45). If the situation does not include any obvious clues about the setting, the individual will proceed on a trial-and-error basis until enough information is gathered to proceed. Sluzki posits that "content and structure, learning and deutero-learning, are concurrent processes operating at different levels of abstraction" (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976, p. 45).

An Introduction to Double Bind

A review of literature in interpersonal communication led to an investigation of the notion of double bind, first introduced by anthropologist and communication theorist, Gregory Bateson. Double bind theory is considered by many to be one of the revolutionary ideas of the twentieth century (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976); however, its empirical standing is considered weak. Most support comes from clinical anecdotes of double bind situations in families where one individual is diagnosed as schizophrenic (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). Although the notion arose originally from efforts to understand the etiology of schizophrenia, its scope is much wider.

The vagueness in theorizing makes double bind very difficult to understand. As such, it has not received much attention in our field. Once we get a clearer understanding of double bind, we will be better equipped to make it out of the labyrinth residing at the heart of conflict. Thus, it warrants further research. This section highlights some of the most significant papers that followed the publication of *Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia* (Bateson, Jackson, Haley, & Weakland, 1956).

In 1956 the first publication of double bind theory appeared with the central thesis that there is a discontinuity between a class and its members. Bateson (1972) argued that a breaching of this sort happens frequently in human communication, and when it does, we must expect *a priori* pathology to occur.

Bateson's interest in levels of learning and levels of classification systems led him to investigate the nature of communication in terms of levels. According to Bateson, discontinuity between classes and their members makes paradox possible.

There are several necessary ingredients for a double bind, specifically: (1) There must be two or more individuals involved; a double bind in a family situation can be caused by the mother, father, and/or siblings alone, or by some combination of all three. (2) There must be repeated occurrences; a single traumatic experience does not invoke a double bind. (3) There must be a primary negative injunction; herein lies the context of learning based on avoidance and punishment rather than on seeking reward. (4) There must be a secondary injunction conflicting with the first at a more abstract level and enforced by punishment of some sort—usually the threat of survival (Bateson et al., 1976). Bateson suggested that the secondary negative injunction is perhaps the most troublesome to describe because it is typically communicated through nonverbal means. He argued that posture, tone of voice, gesture, and the implications concealed in the message may all be used to convey an abstract message. Once the victim has learned to perceive his or her universe in double bind patterns, the complete set of ingredients is no longer necessary. Any sequence may be sufficient to precipitate panic or rage (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976).

Bateson's project first sought examples of the paradoxes and abstractions in the field of play and metaphor (Haley, 1976). Haley pointed out that one of the major confusions in human life is the difficulty people have interpreting metaphorical statements. He argued that the peculiarities of metaphor appear more vividly in some circumstances than others, for instance, in ritual, humor, fantasy, and play. Haley said that when metaphor is used in fantasy and play, it may be a rewarding and enriching experience; however, when used in a power struggle, there may be dismaying results.

> [T]he bloody side of the history of Christianity was based upon the question of heresy, and typically the heretical episode was a conflict over whether an idea should be interpreted as metaphorical or literal. An early heresy was the issue whether Christ existed as a man or was a metaphorical statement about the divinity in each of us. Later men were burned alive over the question whether the bread and wine was really the body and blood of Christ or only metaphorically so (Haley, 1976, p. 99).

Within the framework of rules of a game, activities are acceptable that would be condemned under other circumstances. In play there is retyping of messages. Whether in games of children or the bites of animals, when the activity is typed as "play" the unpleasurable becomes pleasurable (Bateson, 1972). In this instance the ability to metacommunicate becomes critical. Caught in a double bind situation, however, the individual is unable to make the appropriate distinctions, and is therefore likely to respond to the message defensively. This is characteristic of anyone who feels "on the spot" according to Bateson et al. (1976), even when it is inappropriate (e.g., when someone is

joking). The juxtaposition of messages in a joke plays with logical types such that there is a shift in logical type so that something that was classified one way suddenly gets classified in another. Often the shift occurs by reframing the context with a single word.

When involved in an intense relationship where the victim is not sure how the information will be used, it is not uncommon for that person to take a metaphorical statement literally when a response is required. The pathology enters when the victim does not know that he or she is responding to a metaphor. In order to understand the inappropriate response, one must realize that s/he is defending him- or herself; however, to do so would mean recognizing the fact that the individual is afraid of the other person. Such an awareness, according to Bateson, would be an indictment of the other person and therefore provoke disaster. Individuals who have grown up in a double bind relationship are not always able to understand those signals that accompany messages to indicate how the message should be taken. He or she is not able to judge accurately by the context and tone of voice the content of the message.

> This is another way of saying that if an individual doesn't know what sort of message a message is, he may defend himself in ways which have been described as paranoid, hebephrenic, or catatonic (Bateson et al. 1976, p. 10).

Unable to respond appropriately, the individual may try to defend him- or herself. Ultimately, the person may simply "tune out", at which time the "human being is

like any self-correcting system which has lost its governor; it spirals into never-ending, but always systematic, distortions" (1976, pp. 10-11).

Bateson (1972) posited that a breakdown in the individual's ability to discriminate between logical types is likely whenever a double bind situation occurs. The general characteristics of this situation are: (a) when an individual is involved in an intense relationship where it is vital that he or she can discriminate accurately what sort of message is communicated in order to respond appropriately; (b) when the individual is caught in a situation in which the other person is expressing two orders of messages where one denies the other; and (c) when the individual is unable to make a metacommunicative statement. Although a situation of this sort occurs between a preschizophrenic child and his or her mother, Bateson (1972) argued that it occurs in normal relationships as well.

According to Haley (1976), the ability to discriminate the different classes of messages is a learned skill, so multiple levels of learning and the logical typing of signals are inseparable phenomena. Haley argued that

> since a learning context is a frame for the message within it, it should follow that the individual who exhibits a confusion of Logical Types in his [sic] discourse must have suffered sequential patterns in his learning context which helped him acquire the mental habits which would produce that confusion in his discourse (Haley, 1976, p. 69).

The team hypothesized that the sequences in the external experience of the schizophrenic patient are responsible for the patient's inner conflicts of logical typing. The unresolved sequences are termed "double bind."

In 1969 Watzlawick (1976) wrote that "perhaps in the [future] research in human communication will supply [clinicians] with more reliable data for the understanding of specific games without end in human systems" (p. 176). Until such time, three tentative hypotheses regarding the preponderance of forms of mystification, disqualification and double bind were offered: (1) If an individual is punished for correct *perception* of the outside world or of him- or herself by a significant other, he or she will learn to distrust the data of his or her senses. Consequently the person will find it difficult to behave appropriately in both impersonal and interpersonal contexts and may tend to engage in a fruitless search for supposed meanings which supposedly the significant other sees very clearly. (2) If the individual is expected to have feelings different from those which he or she actually experiences, he or she will eventually feel guilty for being unable to feel what one ought to feel in order to be approved of by the significant other. For example feelings of sadness may be misconstrued by the significant other as ingratitude. Consequently, sadness becomes associated with badness. (3) "If an individual is exposed by a significant other to injunctions that both demand and prohibit certain actions, a paradoxical situation arises in which the individual can only obey by disobeying" (Watzlawick, 1976, p. 177).

Consider a case illustrated by Sluzki and Ransom (1976) about a college student having difficulty concentrating on his homework. A university student kept having a mental block whenever he opened his books, even though he wanted to study. As it happened, while he was in therapy for his inability to concentrate on his homework, the student casually mentioned as an aside that he also had a problem brushing his teeth. He said that he knew that he should brush his teeth but instead used all sorts of subterfuges to avoid brushing them. He went on to say that as a child he had painfully irritated gums, and thus avoided brushing his teeth whenever possible. His parents tried to give special weight to their demands regarding tooth brushing, as well as other activities, that to do these things *on his own initiative* would give proof of his being "grown up."

The multiple messages conveyed with this example are: First, "You must brush your teeth;" second, "To brush your teeth is an adult attitude," and therefore independent and commendable (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976, p. 252). Notice that there is paradox embedded in the two messages. Specifically, "Do exactly as we say, but on your own initiative," which could be elaborated into "If you do not obey, we shall be angry with you; but if you do obey only because we are telling you to, we shall be also angry, because you should be independent" (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976, p. 252). The injunction creates an untenable situation in that it demands that the external source be confused with an internal one (that is, to *want* to do whatever it is that one *should* do of one's own will). The

patient's childhood world contained another rule: any opposition to the parents was considered bad. Sluzki and Veron (1976) discuss this injunction in the following way:

> The explicit injunction "You must mind us," was reinforced for this patient by assigning to any act of rebellion an intensely negative meaning. So there is no exit: to mind is a good thing, because it satisfies the demand for obedience, but it is bad because it does not comply with the demand for independence; while not minding, on the other hand, implies independence, which in itself is good, but violates the injunction to be obedient (p. 252).

The pattern can continue indefinitely until someone recognizes the basic incongruity and extricates herself or himself accordingly. The successful resolution to paradox requires an awareness that different levels of abstraction are involved and that the discontinuity between them has been breached. The paradox provides a particular frame within which there is no solution. Solution requires stepping outside the frame; i.e., recognizing a different logical type.

Objections to the Initial Concept

Several general objections were made at the first attempt to introduce the concept of double bind. First, the impression was given that double bind is a clearly definable, countable sequence that occurs in human relations. Today it is not considered as clearly distinguishable in light of the fact that human discourse is a complicated network of multiple levels of messages. Second, an objection was made about the ambiguity presented in the original paper that double bind sequences were limited to schizophrenic learning contexts. Double bind

sequences are indeed part of the etiology of schizophrenia as Bateson et al. (1956) and Haley (1976) pointed out; however, Haley argued that this does not imply that double binds are not part of the etiology of other pathologies or even part of normal discourse. A third objection was the limitation of a double bind to a two-person interaction. However, Haley said that the assumptions about the two-person limitation were drawn in error. For simplicity, the authors' emphasis was largely focused on the interaction between two people, the binder and the victim. Although reference was made regarding the interaction between a mother and child, it was not assumed that the double bind was inflicted by the mother alone. As stated earlier, the primary ingredient for double bind includes two or more individuals.

The objections to the original paper revealed a number of misunderstandings of the ideas proposed. For example, many readers (clinicians working with schizophrenic patients and their families) attempted to reframe double bind situations without grasping fully the underlying assumptions. Readers assumed that when a "victim" is faced with a double bind, he or she is faced with a "damned if I do and damned if I don't" situation (Haley, 1976). The most commonly held misconception is that people believe that a person is faced with two contradictory messages rather than a paradox (two messages which conflict because they are on different levels) (Haley, 1976). The difference is that in a "damned if I do and damned if I don't" situation, the person may select

the lesser of two evils. In a double bind situation, one cannot choose one without choosing the other. For example, if someone says "I want you to disobey me," there is no alternative. The bind becomes this: If one obeys, he or she is disobeying; if one disobeys, he or she is obeying. A relevant question is where does the bind reside, i.e., in the binder, the message, or the victim. Abeles (1976) tells us it resides in none of these, but in the *pattern* of the interaction that is characterized by paradoxical invalidation of the relationship. Some of the confusion about the theory results from the claim "that it is the formal structure of the bind (paradox) which is potentially pathogenic together with simultaneous claims that many types of humor, creativity, and therapy are structurally equivalent" (Wynne, 1969, cited in Abeles, 1976). In 1978, Wynne argued that a problem that has plagued researchers for years is that double binds are hard to find in the "real" world. This concern does not imply that double binds do not exist; rather they are difficult to locate and identify as enduring patterns.

Methods of Research

Since the introduction of double bind theory in 1956, there has been a fair amount of research traceable to this work. From 1961–1975 alone there were ten dissertations published on the topic, and even today we hear the term used in everyday language. Some of the publications provoked by the original work supported it, other publications opposed it, and there were a few who

reinterpreted it. Because of the vagueness of the theorizing, it is understandable that considerable confusion and misunderstanding exist.

Weakland (1976) contends the original article on double bind theory was concerned with relationships between behavior and communication. He said to study the relationships between behavior and communication means both must be handled adequately—both conceptually and empirically. This seems to be the crux of the problem. As already mentioned, double bind, because it involves a complex system of interactions and several levels of abstraction, is not easily measured, at least with our current understanding of both double bind and the science (or art) of measurement. The very nature of the concept of double bind is its abstractness. A thread running throughout most of the history of double bind research has been the attempt to quantify and measure this abstract concept. Typically, as exemplified by Ringuette and Kennedy's[2] study of double bind in written communication, these attempts at quantification, rather than advancing our situational knowledge, have obfuscated and confused the issues. Behavioral scientists are contributing to a double bind by insisting that studies and results are only valid if they fit within a narrow scope of "acceptability." A large component of this "acceptability" relates to quantification and measurement.

Past attempts to validate double bind theory experimentally have run into difficulties, according to Abeles (1976), many stemming from the very

abstractness of its initial formulation. In her essay entitled *Researching the Unresearchable*, Abeles (1976) states that the nature of the definition makes it problematic for the researcher who must "tease out" essential criteria in order to develop an operational definition that is both conceptually appropriate and viable at a practical level. Abeles argues that although the definitional problem is less acute in documentary studies in which it is possible to discuss the "presence or absence of X without ever having to specify precisely what X is" (1976, p. 124), with simulated studies, the researcher must state explicitly the essential phenomena under investigation. At its best, double bind is considered by many scholars as a *slippery concept*. "Somewhere in the process of isolating paradox (which is exemplified in the double bind) from its relationship context (which is what is being contradicted) in an attempt to clarify these as essential features, and in rejoining the clarified isolates within the experimental paradigm, something crucial is usually lost" (Abeles, 1976, p. 145).

Abeles indicated that the findings of earlier studies are interpreted by reviewers in a generally sweeping fashion as nonsupport for the theory or any of its derivable hypotheses. Although she concurs that the findings are sometimes difficult to interpret, especially as adding anything substantive to double bind literature, the studies are important, if not for the purpose of multiple descriptions of double bind which require us to sharpen distinctions in meaning that emerge while considering various interpretations, then for what we are taught about the

requirements for a conceptually appropriate experimental paradigm. "For the most part the operationalizations seem to be drawn from the double bind's list of ingredients definition without respect for an essential feature of the concept: *paradox in the context of an intense relationship*" (Abeles, 1976, p. 136). Abeles goes on to say that investigators attracted to the double bind would do well to keep in mind Bateson's warning that such highly abstract theories do not lend themselves to validation by controlled experimentation (Bateson, 1970, cited in Abeles, 1976). Still, there remains a strong bias in favor of experimental design.

The difficulty with researching double bind with an empirical format is the inability to isolate critical variables; e.g., how does one describe an interactive phenomenon? With interactional systems and concepts, Abeles (1976) argued, there are no isolates, and etiology is not interpreted in terms of lineal cause-and-effect determinism. In spite of the obviousness of having respect for the concept's essential features, which is crucial to any experimental design, Abeles (1976) found that experimental paradigms employed thus far have usually isolated nonessential features of the concept or have *unwittingly* dealt with elements at the same level of abstraction, or have misconceived it altogether. In recognizing the concept's interactional nature, and in keeping with systems-theory principles, Abeles pointed out that "one must recognize that efforts to identify and isolate presumably critical features and variables are necessarily

doomed to failure: the essential relationship among those features and variables are isolated out and one ends up with an exercise in futility" (p. 147).

Perhaps the single greatest source of confusion and error in research on double bind is the problem of reification. While engaged in dialogue on the problems of double bind research, Bateson was asked, "Where have you misled us?" Without hesitation, Bateson replied:

> I think the first double bind paper was certainly published two to three years too soon. It reads much too concretistic and a lot of people have wasted a lot of time trying to count double binds—which is almost like trying to count the number of jokes at a funny party. You can't do it. Now this is part of the process, when work goes forward, branching, correcting and so on, and that's how it is. But you cannot really regret that the process has its own form. You can regret that at that moment you were a bit over to one side maybe (cited in Sluzki & Ransom, 1976, p. 161).

It seems that the tendency to look upon double bind as something that can be counted can be traced to early examples employed to illustrate double bind. To make a very abstract formulation more accessible to readers, examples of specific incidents were used. The illustrations gave the impression that double bind is an event that can be readily identified (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976). The result was a reification of the concept, which led people to believe that double binds could be counted.

> What was not sufficiently emphasized, however, is the essential interrelatedness of the various contingencies and components and the irreducibility of the whole package. Thus, those who picked up the concept for research were not sufficiently discouraged from attempting to further reduce the description to what each saw in his or her own terms as its essential core. The problem is that no further reduction is possible on

> a concept rooted in a holistic or contextualist metaphor (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976, p. 162).

The survey of literature shows an abundance of studies on double bind between 1972 and 1976, but not much since then. The difficulties and problems discussed by Abeles may explain this stagnation. Research on the notion of double bind, however, must and should continue, not only because it is such a troubling notion, but because it ***is*** at the heart of most conflict (Joakimides, 1992, 1993; Lee, Joakimides, & Wander, 1994). Double bind looks at the message process more closely. It looks at *how* people communicate and how they become stuck. Double bind gives us a much deeper understanding of the communication process—it opens the window of orderliness on a type of conflict that otherwise appears irrational. Consequently a whole ocean of irrationality opens up and this irrationality has never really been explored. Let us now trace the core of such an abstract, thorny construct (double bind) by going to Bateson's theory of logical types.

CHAPTER 2

GREGORY BATESON: THEORY OF LOGICAL TYPES AND REVISIONS IN COMMUNICATION AXIOMS

In spite of Bateson's historic contribution to the scientific community, much of his work has been misrepresented, confused, and obscured in our field. This chapter addresses several of the issues that have contributed to this *muddle*. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section one, the theory of logical types, begins with an overview, then provides a detailed discussion of the different levels of abstraction, and concludes with the theory as applied to human communication. Section two presents a new logical hierarchy[3] as proposed by Lee (1993a). The new hierarchy is composed of goal-oriented talk, metatalk, epistemic talk, and provides a new Batesonian perspective. Section three, revision of communication axioms, begins with a brief restatement of the need to revise the content and command and digital and analogic communication axioms found in Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson's (1967) work. In keeping with the spirit of Bateson's and Watzlawick et al.'s example, updated computer analogies are used to aid the reader in understanding the shortcomings of Watzlawick et al.'s interpretation of Bateson's theories. Section three concludes with the axioms viewed from the perspective of the new logical hierarchy. With the new Batesonian perspective in mind, a critical evaluation of Watzlawick et al.'s axioms establishes the framework for the critical analysis of relational

communication literature (i.e., the heir apparent to interpersonal communication) in Chapter 3.

Theory of Logical Types[4]

> All science is an attempt to cover with explanatory devices—and thereby to obscure—the vast darkness of the subject. It is a game in which the scientist uses his explanatory principles according to certain rules to see if these principles can be stretched to cover the vast darkness. But the rules of the stretching are rigorous, and the purpose of the whole operation is really to discover what parts of the darkness still remain, uncovered by explanation (Bateson, 1958, p. 280).

Logical types, because of their complexity, at first reading may cause confusion rather than enlightenment. Following Bateson's path, this section begins with the concept of deutero-learning, which led him to the theory of logical types.

It was more than twenty years after the publication of *Naven* that Bateson reached a new epistemological awareness—an awareness he coined as deutero-learning, or learning to learn. Learning to learn may be described in two ways: (1) the experimenter learns various responses from a subject that over time may be predicted, and (2) the subject him- or herself learns from the context that s/he may expect certain things in his or her universe. For instance, we as human beings may come to expect that certain things will happen (stimuli) but can detect that there is nothing we can do to prevent or precipitate the occurrence of the reinforcement. The converse of this is that we can teach individuals through repeated instrumental reward "to deutero-learn" a character

structure that will enable the individual to live as if "in a universe in which he [she] can control the occurrence of reinforcements" (Bateson, 1958, p. 286). For example, as patterns of symmetrical behavior are deutero-learned, we not only come to expect certain types of behavior in others, but also act in such a way that others will experience those contexts in which they in turn will learn symmetrical behavior. As Bateson pointed out, in scientific inquiry the scientist is not the only human being in the picture. In other words, the scientist's subjects are also capable of deutero-learning, and as is true with the scientist, the subjects are capable of errors of conceptualization. It was this idea that brought Bateson to the notion of logical types in human communication.

The theory of logical types was first introduced by Bertrand Russell (Whitehead & Russell, 1910). The central thesis of this theory is that there is a discontinuity between a class and its members. The theory deals with different levels of abstraction and states that a class cannot be a member of itself nor can a member of the class be the class. Although in formal logic, an attempt is made to maintain the discontinuity, in real communication, the discontinuity is continually and inevitably breached. When it is, Bateson (1972) argues that we must expect *a priori* pathology to occur, such as frustration and at the extreme, schizophrenia. Illustrations of how human beings handle communication involving multiple levels include use of humor, falsification of mode-identifying signals (e.g., artificial laughter, kidding, friendliness, etc.), and learning (e.g.,

stimulus, response—"I heard loud music outside and knew that the ice cream truck was here. So I went to the street.").

There are three levels in the hierarchy of logical types: The *first logical type* (the lowest level) contains individual "members" represented by a single term and existent on their own account; for example, an individual, object, utterance, etc. The *second logical type* is constituted of all the individuals that satisfy some function. In other words, a "class" is formed when all individual members share a *relationship* (Loriedo & Vella, 1992). An example of this is that all individuals belong to a class known as humankind. It is important to note that although an individual belongs to a class, an individual is not a class; that is, we cannot compare an individual with a class or vice versa. Let us take the following simple example as explained by Lee, Joakimides, and Wander (1994):

> Numbers 2, 4, and 6 share a relationship: they are all even numbers. Even number designates a class, while 2, 4, and 6 are members of it. According to the theory, the class of even number and 6 are of different logical types, namely, *even number* is more abstract than 6. Furthermore, even number is not 2, or 4, or 6 (1994, p. 4).

Figure 1
Level Markers Used to Maintain Level Discontinuity

CLASS	E = {EVEN NUMBER}
member	e = {2, or 4, or 6, etc.}

The *third logical type* is a class formed by members that are classes and, therefore, is a *class of classes*. If a class is analogous to the concept of

relationship, a class of classes is a relationship of relationships and, therefore, a *system* (Loriedo & Vella, 1992, pp. 21-22).

Bateson (1972) argues that errors in logical types in human communication may seem trivial; however, it is not unusual for theorists of behavioral science to "commit errors which are precisely analogous to the error of classifying the name with the thing named—or eating the menu card instead of the dinner—an error of *logical typing*" (p. 280). More complex and difficult to understand is the more general case of this mistyping that occurs when an item at one level of abstraction is classified at the same level as its members. The crux of the problem, as pointed out by Lee (1994), is that we do not have "differentiated codes in English (both natural language and theoretical language) to mark 'automatically and formally' logical types of human communication" (p. 148). To paraphrase Lee (in press), following is an example of this type of logical error:

> Take the word "dogs" in the sentence "you are going to the dogs." Dogs may denote the ***class of dogs*** (regardless of their breed, color, weight, look), if the meaning of the sentence is that "you are going to ruin." Yet, it may also denote specific ***members***, my dogs Jessie and Zoë, if the sentence means that you are going to the kennel to see my dogs. In other words, the same word can represent two different levels of abstraction, a general ***class*** and a specific ***member***.

Words can represent two different levels of abstraction, a general *class* and a specific *member*. "Unlike the use of capital letters and small letters, the English language for such class-member level discrimination is poorly

developed" (Lee, 1994, p. 148). To address the problem of lack of level markers in language, Lee (1994) suggests ways to label unambiguously human utterances that belong to different classes of talk—the MEG Hierarchy.

The MEG Hierarchy of Human Communication

Lee, Joakimides, and Wander (1994) posit that if we are to understand double bind fully, we need *a hierarchy of human communication* that is sensitive to levels of abstraction and different tasks carried out by different types of talk. The MEG hierarchy proposed by Lee (1994) can accomplish such a task. The lowest level in the MEG hierarchy consists of "individual utterances," e.g., "You are so beautiful," "What do you mean by 'knock you up?'" Individual utterances consist of all verbal, and/or nonverbal expressions. Depending on the shared characteristics among individual utterances, Lee proposes three types of talk at the class level, including metatalk, epistemic talk, and goal-oriented talk. These three are used to form the acronym "MEG". Let us now take a closer look at each type of talk.

Goal-Oriented Talk

The class of goal-oriented talk consists of "utterances that share a relationship of aiming at a goal when lifeworld can be assumed" (Lee, 1994, p. 149). Lifeworld, a notion discussed by Habermas (1987a), means the *taken-for-granted context* in which people speak and conduct their affairs. Since

language and culture are components of a lifeworld, Habermas explains that the profusion of incomplete utterances in everyday conversation testifies to the importance of the lifeworld as a "shared background against which utterances take on definite meaning" (1987b, p. 35). In our day-to-day activities we coordinate our actions around definitions of situations that are often taken for granted. When we can take language and culture relatively for granted, we are able to focus on how to do business together without engaging in discussions about the meanings of each other's utterances (Lee, 1994). That is, we do not have to move away from "goal-oriented talk" to a different type of talk—metatalk—to negotiate, make sense of, or argue about each other's use of words or use of utterances.

By relying on the works of Habermas (1981/1987b), Lee is able to identify two members in the class of goal-oriented talk—communicative talk and cognitive-instrumental talk. Very simply, communicative talk occurs when "two or more persons expressly seek to reach voluntary agreement on their situation for the sake of cooperating" (1987b, p. 31). Important to note here is that persons may use communicative talk without expressly intending to reach agreement. That is, one person may advance a claim, the other is given room to say "yes" or "no" to the proposed claim, and both parties attempt to reach mutual understanding regarding the course of intended action(s) (Lee, Joakimides & Wander, 1994). In contrast, the goal of cognitive-instrumental talk is personal

success in obtaining a goal. In other words, actors relate to other persons as "objectifiable means or obstacles to the attainment of their aims" (Habermas, 1987b, p. 30). The other is not given room to say "no" in the process. In sum, cognitive-instrumental utterances aim at private success, while communicative utterances purport to reach mutual understanding (Lee, Joakimides, & Wander, 1994).

Although disagreement over whether an utterance belongs to the class of "communicative talk" or "cognitive-instrumental talk" may arise, imposing the "correct" classification is not important. There is no right or wrong classification. The point here is to identify the relevant[5] relationships shared by individual utterances, and propose a way to label them consistently. Before moving from "goal-oriented talk" to "metatalk," let us take a moment to discuss changing levels in the logical hierarchy. "The theory of logical types provides us with interpretive level markers, according to which concrete utterances as members may be interpreted or grouped into different classes, and classes of classes" (Lee, Joakimides & Wander, 1994, p. 5). What we have is a three-level hierarchy: specifically, "goal-oriented talk" is a class of classes since it contains the classes "communicative talk" and "cognitive-instrumental talk" which in turn contain individual members at the lowest level—concrete utterances. (See Figure 2 below.)

Figure 2
The Logical Hierarchy of Goal-Oriented Talk

CLASS OF CLASSES	GOAL-ORIENTED TALK	
Classes	***Communicative talk***	***Cognitive-Instrumental talk***
members	"Let's discuss my thesis tonight. But, I can wait until tomorrow."	"Let's discuss my thesis NOW!"

Metatalk

Another type of talk is metatalk. Metatalk consists of talk about talk. Typically metatalk is used when it is not possible for two persons to communicate because they do not share aspects of a lifeworld. This may be in the area of idioms, as emphasized in Lee's (1994) research. In this case goal-oriented talk may be suspended while metatalk is used to establish the common understanding (e.g., "What do you mean by that?" "What are you saying?"). Of course, metatalk is also of value to the scholarly community so that we can talk about talk, analyze talk, etc. Two different classes of metatalk are identified by Bateson and further revised by Lee (1994): linguistic metatalk and relational metatalk.

Linguistic Metatalk

Bateson refers to metalinguistic communication as "those explicit or implicit messages where the subject of discourse is the language" (1972, p. 178). An example of metalinguistic communication is "the verbal sound 'dog' stands for any member of such-and-such class of objects" and "the word 'dog' does not have fur and cannot bite." For clarity Lee labels this "linguistic metatalk" because the talk focuses on "codes" used. Take as an example the linguistic metatalk in which a father, who grew up in Greece, explains to his daughter, who was born in America and is a college student, the meaning of an expression he used that his father (her grandfather) also used in a different sense:

1. Daughter: Why did Grandpa laugh when you called me "maimou?" (an utterance marked as *goal-oriented talk* in question format)

2. Father: Because "maimou" means "monkey," in Greek. (an utterance marked as linguistic metatalk) Your grandfather used to call me a "monkey" when he thought I was being mischievous. (an utterance marked as *linguistic metatalk* in explanation format)

3. Daughter: Why do you call me a "monkey" at these years? (an utterance marked as *goal-oriented talk* in question format)

4. Father: I don't mean to call you monkey. I'm making a pun from the English word "my" and the Greek suffix "mou," which means "mine" when appended to a word. (an utterance marked as *linguistic metatalk*) When I use the expression "maimou" with you, I'm really saying "my mine." To me, calling you "maimou" is very similar to calling you "agape mou," which means "my love" in Greek. (an utterance marked as *linguistic metatalk*)

5. Daughter: ***In comparison with*** other expressions, what does the expression "maimou" tell me about the *relationship* between you

and Grandpa? (an utterance marked as *relational* metatalk in question format)

6. Father: Grandpa used to call me a monkey whenever I was doing something of which he didn't approve. I grew up during the war so we didn't have many things. Of the few things I did have, I used to enjoy taking them apart to see how they functioned. Mostly, Grandpa didn't want to discourage me from doing such things, but sometimes he would get angry and call me a "maimou." Other times, when he was not as angry with me, he would use the word "maimouthaki," which means "little monkey." "Maimouthaki" is a more endearing term. Whenever Grandpa called me a "maimou" I knew I was in trouble, our relationship was *very* distant. It was a warning to stop whatever I was doing immediately. When I use "maimou" with you, however, I feel very close to you. I guess "maimou" has different relational meanings between grandpa & me versus you and me. That's the reason why he laughed. (utterances marked as *relational metatalk*)

In this example the lifeworld of the grandfather was unintelligible to the granddaughter, which necessitated metatalk to bridge the gap. Their lifeworld could not be assumed. Utterances 2 and 4 are labeled "linguistic metatalk" because they specifically explain the usage of the word *maimou* in utterance 1. To fully understand the dialogue, we need to turn to another type of metatalk—relational metatalk.

Relational Metatalk

Linguistic metatalk is not sufficient enough to talk about talk because a message involves more than language. Although talk may focus on uttered symbols, talk may also focus on the people who utter—an "I" speaker with an "other" co-communicator (Lee, Joakimides, & Wander, 1994). Therefore, "utterances that focus on the relationship between communicators who use

language together are marked as members of the class of relational metatalk"[6] (Lee, 1994, p. 151). Thus, in the same way that linguistic metatalk allows us to discuss the codes used in communication, relational metatalk allows us to discuss the relational meanings implied in our communication. To refer to the example above, utterance 5 is classified as "relational metatalk" because the subject of the utterances is the relationship of the people who use a language together (i.e., maimou), specifically the intimate, exclusive relationship between the father and daughter. They are not just about language. Lee, Joakimides, & Wander (1994) explain that "on top of the discussion of language, people who use the language are included into [in] the discussion" (p. 9). Relational metatalk spells out or situates "people who do the talking" in a relational web.

Bateson (1972) suggests that people detect relational meanings through *nonverbal* as well as contextual cues. I argue that verbal communication also signals relational meaning. The importance of relational meaning, as argued by Lee, Joakimides, & Wander (1994), is that we may systematically learn to engage in relational metatalk to talk about and make sense of the mysterious processes through which people make sense of relational meanings in communication. It is important at this point to digress from relational metatalk to consider an epistemic process noted by Bateson, specifically, the principles of double description versus single description.

Epistemic Talk

Bateson approaches epistemology by asking the question, "What is the process of knowing?" (Bateson & Bateson, 1987, p. 20). He proposes two principles, double description versus single description. Double description means "combining information from two or more sources" (Bateson, 1979, p. 71). Conversely, single description focuses on essentialized traits of a single source. According to Bateson, how we perceive follows the principle of double description, but how we talk about what we perceive often follows the principle of single description.

Double description is of great importance because we frame our behavior into various sorts of sequential chunks (Bateson, 1979). For instance, we may say that "A" is dependent on "B," when what we really mean is simply that there are certain interchanges between "A" and "B" that have certain characteristics. As an example, let us say that Lisa, who is a graduate student, frequently asks her boyfriend, Rick, for assistance with her papers. Although Rick does not mind helping Lisa, he cannot help but wonder why Lisa cannot figure out how to do her work alone. Figure 3 below describes two different perspectives on Lisa's and Rick's relationship.

Figure 3
Interchange and Interpretation from Two Perspectives[7]

	Initial State (a_1) Lisa asked for help	Response (b) Rick helped Lisa	Interpretation (a_2)
Lisa's Perspective	Weakness	Succoring	Acceptance/ thankfulness
Rick's Perspective	Command	Acquiescence	Reinforcement

It may be argued that Lisa is dependent on Rick where a_1 is an indication of "weakness," b is "succoring," and a_2 is an "acceptance." Bateson (1991) contends that if A frequently sees this ongoing stream as containing patterns of this kind, s/he will think s/he is indeed dependent on B. Referring to our example above, Rick may see things quite differently. For instance, Rick may very well say that a_1 was really a command, b was an act of acquiescence, and a_2 was positive reinforcement. In this instance Rick perceives Lisa as "dominant," where Lisa has been thinking all along that she is "dependent." The difference between "dependency" and "dominance," then, is how one reads structure into a sequence—"what sort of contextual frames you slide over the sequence to make sense of them for yourself" (Bateson, 1991, p. 168). To understand these differences, we must compare the two different perspectives, Lisa's and Rick's, using double description. Bateson argues that to use words like "dependency," "dominance," "suffering," etc., is nonsense. "If you really want to say what you mean by them. . . you will find you have to spell out *contexts* of interchange

between persons in order to define their meaning" (Bateson, 1991, p. 168). In other words, there is not something called dependency which is inside people and which makes them dependent; but "there is regularity in their external behavior vis-à-vis other persons, involving the behavior of other persons" (Bateson, 1991, p. 168). Double description is very useful because when the same event is perceived differently, the difference may be attributed to the different lifeworlds of the participants.

Bateson (1979) asserts that it is of great importance to think of two parties to an interaction as two eyes, each giving a monocular view of what goes on and, together, giving a binocular view in depth. "This double view *is* the relationship" (1979, p. 142). Moreover, Bateson argues that relationship is not internal to the single person. As such, he argues that it is nonsense to talk about "dependency," or "aggressiveness" or "pride," and so on. According to Bateson, these words have their roots in what happens *between* persons, not in something *inside* individuals. "There are changes in A and changes in B which correspond to the dependency-succorance of the relationship. But the relationship comes first: it *precedes*" (1979, p. 143). Accordingly, we cannot refer to an individual's "pride" nor can we explain "aggression" by referring to instinctive (or even learned) "aggressiveness." Bateson posits that such explanation only hides the real issues. In other words, if we want to talk about aggressiveness we must talk about two persons or two somethings and what

happens *between* them, since all characterological traits derive their definitions from patterns of interchange; i.e., from combinations of *double description*.

Now let us look at an example of how we might talk in a single-descriptive format about what we perceive.

> Jennyfer was in a room of 70°F. She was asked to place her right hand in Bucket A full of water of 35°F. Jennyfer uttered, "It's freezing!" After about three minutes in Bucket A, Jennyfer was asked to place her right hand in Bucket B full of water of 60°F. She said, "Wow, it's hot!" Patrick, who was in the same room with Jennyfer, did not place his hand in Bucket A at all. When he felt the water in Bucket B, he said, "The water is cool."

The above example illustrates Bateson's thesis that our perception (e.g., cold or hot) is the result of comparison of at least two states/sources/somethings (i.e., the feeling of "hot" is the result of comparing Bucket A and Bucket B); however, our talk about what we perceive usually focuses on one source only (i.e., by saying "It's hot," Jennyfer only focused on Bucket B, the one source that was within view or present. She left out the difference between Bucket A and Bucket B that is at the root of her perception). Bateson points out that human knowledge arises from an epistemic process (usually tacit) of comparing differences between at least two entities rather than from entities as things in themselves. However, in everyday communication, people rarely verbalize this comparative principle (Bateson & Bateson, 1987, p. 189). That is, they usually engage in single-descriptive talk. Bateson advocates transforming human communication from single-descriptive talk confined to internalized traits of isolated entities into double-descriptive talk embracing perceived differences

between at least two entities. To continue the above example: Jennyfer needs to learn to talk differently. That is, she should replace her single-descriptive utterances with double-descriptive utterances to reflect more accurately how she perceived the temperature:

> Jennyfer: It's freezing. (a single-descriptive utterance) → In comparison with the temperature in the room, this bucket of water is freezing. (double-descriptive utterance)
> Jennyfer: Wow, it's hot. (a single-descriptive utterance). → In comparison with Bucket A, the water in Bucket B is hot. (a double-descriptive utterance)

The principle of double-description also helps us understand more clearly why Patrick and Jennyfer made different comments on the water in Bucket B.

Returning now to goal-oriented talk and metatalk, we are able to merge the two classes with the two classes of epistemic talk forming six categories of talk: single- and double-descriptive goal-oriented talk, single- and double-descriptive linguistic metatalk, and single- and double-descriptive relational metatalk. An illustration of the six categories is presented in Figure 4 on page 40.

Lee (1994) argues that to make relational metatalk double descriptive, there is need for alternative expressions in each dimension. That is, the addition of a double-descriptive dimension might enable Father to verbalize the implied process of comparison, which opens up a new area of dialogue about unsaid lifeworlds. With the discussion of epistemic talk complete, let us now focus on how to verbalize the process through which we sense relational meanings. In

order to talk more clearly about relational messages, Lee (1994) proposes that we may focus relational metatalk on three aspects of codes exchanged: word choice, nonverbal cues and sequence.

Figure 4
Combining Goal-Oriented Talk, Metatalk, and Epistemic Talk

	EPISTEMIC TALK	
	SINGLE-DESCRIPTIVE (NON-COMPARATIVE) TALK	**DOUBLE-DESCRIPTIVE (COMPARATIVE) TALK**
GOAL-ORIENTED TALK	**single, goal-oriented talk** "My father used to call me a 'maimou.'"	**double, goal-oriented talk** "Compared with tolerating my behavior, my father called me a 'maimou' to warn me to cease and desist whatever I was doing."
LINGUISTIC METATALK	**single, linguistic metatalk** "'Maimou' means monkey in the Greek language. My father meant that I was sneaky and mischievous."	**double, linguistic metatalk** "Compared with being playful (or cute), my father labeled my being sneaky and mischievous as 'maimou.'"
RELATIONAL METATALK	**single, relational metatalk** "My father called me 'maimouthaki' to indicate his playful relationship with me."	**double, relational metatalk** "Compared with when he was angry and called me 'maimou,' he called me 'maimouthaki' when he was more playful than angry."

Word choice refers to the choices we make, consciously and/or unconsciously, of alternative sets of words (Saville-Troike, 1989). Simply stated,

if we are to grasp relational meaning of a verbal utterance, we must engage in a new type of communication. For example, in the Father/Daughter metalogue above, in order to fully understand the meaning of "maimou," Daughter might engage in co*mparative (or double descriptive) metatalk*:

5. Daughter: ***In comparison with*** other expressions, what does the expression "maimou" tell me about the *relationship* between you and Grandpa? (an utterance marked as *relational* metatalk in question format)

6. Father: Grandpa used to call me a monkey whenever I was doing something of which he didn't approve. I grew up during the war so we didn't have many things. Of the few things I did have, I used to enjoy taking them apart to see how they functioned. Mostly, grandpa didn't want to discourage me from doing such things, but sometimes he would get angry and call me a "maimou." Other times, when he was not as angry with me, he would use the word "maimouthaki," which means "little monkey." "Maimouthaki" is a more endearing term. Whenever Grandpa called me a "maimou" I knew I was in trouble, our relationship was *very* distant. It was a warning to stop whatever I was doing immediately. When I use "maimou" with you, however, I feel very close to you. I guess "maimou" has different relational meanings between grandpa & me versus you and me. That's the reason why he laughed. (utterances marked as *relational metatalk*)

In response to Daughter's question, Father provides a good example of "comparative relational metatalk" about different word choices, refining "verbal communication" for a deeper understanding of relational meaning.

Nonverbal cues often add very subtle relational shadings by reinforcing certain behaviors, modifying a person's behavior and/or contradicting behavior by way of facial expressions, tone of voice, proximity, body position, the way in

which a person is touched, and/or through eye contact. Continuing with the father/daughter example:

7. Daughter: In addition to his words, how could you tell if Grandpa was really angry?

8. Father: It would depend on his tone of voice, and the way in which he looked at me. If he was really angry, his face would also turn a little red.

In this instance, the father explained the nonverbal cues signaled by his father in terms of relational distance. Depending upon Grandpa's tone of voice and face color, a decision had to be made regarding the combined meaning of the verbal and nonverbal cues of the expression "maimou." The verbal and nonverbal cues never cancel each other out. "They transform each other into utterances with qualitatively new/different relational meaning" (Lee, Joakimides & Wander, 1994, p. 16).

Sequence of communication refers to the order of exchanging information in social and interpersonal routines and rituals (Saville-Troike, 1989). "Because symbols and words are situated within rituals (Malinowski, 1935), people learn to use sequence to signal relational meaning. In this way, sequence adds a further relational dimension to words chosen and nonverbal cues" (Lee, 1994, p. 154).

As an example, let us use the single word "garbage," as uttered by Amanda in two different episodes.

1. Amanda says "garbage" (*verbal* communication) to her husband, Tom, in a questioning tone (*nonverbal* communication) when Tom has just made the "rounds" to close the house down before going to bed on a Wednesday night (*sequence* in ritual format) (note that the trash is picked up early on Thursday morning in Amanda and Tom's neighborhood).

2. Amanda says "garbage" (*verbal* communication) to Tom in a disgusted tone (*nonverbal* communication), while they are watching a politician making a speech (TV ritual).

In case (1), the nonverbal cue (questioning tone) and the sequence ("ceremony performed"—e.g., making the evening rounds—and day of the week) clearly make the message "Did you take the garbage can to the sidewalk?" In case (2), the nonverbal cue (disgusted tone) and the sequence (during the politician's speech) clearly make the message "This politician is speaking utter nonsense!" In comparison, the relationship between Amanda and her husband was playful and pal-like in (1), while tense and distant in (2). In sum, word choice, nonverbal cues, and sequence all work together to send out complex and intricate relational meanings.

Relational vs. Linguistic Communication

Linguistics is a well established discipline with an elaborate naming system to deal with verbal communication. In contrast, the study of relational messages is relatively new and without a well established vocabulary. Moreover, relationships are signaled and negotiated (often implicitly) through the use of language, which is codes developed by humankind. Thus, it is more difficult to talk about relational messages than to talk about linguistic messages.

One reason for the little progress in this area to date stems from the belief that relational metatalk is impossible rather than just difficult. An indication of this perception is found in Watzlawick et al.'s (1967) statement that, "Analogic message material, as we have seen, is highly antithetical; it lends itself to very different and often quite *incompatible* digital interpretations" (p. 100, emphasis added).

In summary, what we have discussed thus far is that we can engage in relational metatalk to get at relational meaning in goal-oriented talk through the use of words, nonverbal cues, and sequence. Since all of these relational meanings qualify one another, we can say that these three areas of relational meaning transform one another into a new qualitatively different composite of relational meaning.

Revision of Communication Axioms

Much of what has been written in interpersonal communication textbooks on relational communication stems from the research conducted by Watzlawick et al. (1967), in what has become a classic in our field, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*. In this publication, Watzlawick et al. (1967) advance five "tentative" axioms. Many communication specialists have accepted these axioms as a kind of "received wisdom." Since first appearing in print nearly thirty years ago, the axioms have entered into articles (e.g., Millar & Rogers, 1976; Morse & Phelps, 1980; Rogers, 1989) and textbooks (e.g., Littlejohn, 1992;

Trenholm & Jensen, 1992) in our field almost without comment. Although Watzlawick et al.'s (1967) work is widely accepted and is founded on Bateson's theorizing, the axioms have misrepresented Bateson's original notions, thus inspiring much confusion in the interpersonal communication literature. For instance, when Watzlawick et al., (1967) borrowed from Bateson to establish the foundation for their own research in 1967, they not only transformed some of Bateson's definitions, they also omitted the key ingredient—gestalt codification.[8]

The transformation is exemplified in the two axioms on which this discussion focuses—content and command, and digital and analogic. The first axiom, content and command, as proposed by Watzlawick et al. (1967), is summarized as follows:

> [1a] Every communication has a content and a relationship aspect such that [1b] the latter classifies the former and [1c] is therefore a metacommunication (p. 54)

The second axiom, digital and analogic, is related to the first one and is summarized as follows:

> [2a] Human beings communicate both digitally and analogically. [2b] Digital language has a highly complex and powerful logical syntax but [2c] lacks adequate semantics in the field of relationship, while [2d] analogic language possesses the semantics but [2e] has no adequate syntax for the unambiguous definition of the nature of relationship (pp. 66-67).

In order to make these complex postulates easy to understand, both Bateson and Watzlawick et al. (1967) use computer analogies. In keeping with the spirit of their example, I also use updated computer analogies.

The first misinterpretation relates to the content/command axiom. In this axiom Watzlawick et al. (1967) clearly equate command with relationship and as such place command at "higher level" than content. In other words, the relationship must be understood in order to understand the content. Bateson (1972) also states that relationship is essential in translating content to command (and vice versa); however, he very clearly states that content (or report) and command are at the same level:

> [I]t is evident that every message in transit has two sorts of "meaning". . . . On the one hand, the message is a statement or report about events at a previous moment, and on the other hand it is a command—a cause or stimulus for events at a later moment (Bateson & Ruesch, 1951, p. 179).
>
> [T]he translation is impossible unless we have total knowledge of B's psychological mechanism (Ruesch & Bateson, 1951, p. 181).[9]

Bateson even goes so far as to say "that these two processes [report and command] may occur separately, but for the purposes of all scientific discussion they must be treated as a single process"[10] (Ruesch & Bateson, 1951, p. 182). Watzlawick et al. (1967) use the analogy that computer data (the analog to content) are meaningless until the operation (the analog to command) defines the relationship. This analogy may be valid at a very elementary (primitive) level of a computer; however, with the advent of structured higher level language,[11] the operation generated by the translator (compiler) depends on the data type; in other words, it is the data type that defines the relationship. Furthermore, with object-oriented language,[12] the semantics of the operation are part of the data

object definition; in other words, computer science has moved away from the Watzlawick et al.-like concept that the operation defines the relationship, to the original Batesonian concept that the definition of the object is essential in understanding both the data within the object and the operations that are performed on the object.

The second misinterpretation that Watzlawick et al. make relates to the digital/analogic axiom. The misinterpretation is in two parts. The first is derived from the error discussed above; specifically Watzlawick et al. (1967) viewed nonverbal-analogic communication as metacommunication. The second error is in the apparent assumption that a language must be self-describing[13] (see [2e] above). As such, Watzlawick et al. (1967) painted themselves into a corner that did not permit them to see that an extension of verbal communication (i.e., relational metatalk) can be used to provide the "syntax for the unambiguous definition of the nature of the relationship." Going back to the computer analogy, unlike the analog computer that is a representation of reality, in a digital computer it is necessary to encode reality as a set of algorithms and data. A large amount of data must be processed and stored in the digital system to closely approximate reality. Due to limitation of both processor speed and storage, the early systems (even into the late 1960s) typically dealt with only crude approximations. With the advent of microchips, microprocessors, and improved recording technology the issues of both speed and storage are being

solved. Compact Disc (CD) players and digital audio tapes both use microprocessor techniques to process digital signals. One of the main advantages of this is that the play-back signal is "more true to form." With digital technology the original digital signal is reconstructed exactly; the only limitation is the accuracy of the digital approximation and as indicated above this is primarily an issue of how much data can be processed and recorded. The techniques used in digital recording provide the framework so that signal can be distinguished from noise, and thus eliminate the hiss and distortion (noise) inherent in the system, providing "truer" reproduction. In a similar fashion, metatalk will provide the framework for the definition of different aspects of communication.

It is also noteworthy that Watzlawick et al. (1967) contradict themselves. In their discussion of the content/command (relationship) axiom they indicate that analogic communication is at a higher level of abstraction than digital communication; however, in their discussion of the digital/analogic axiom they clearly state the opposite, "digital message material is of a much higher degree of complexity, versatility, and abstraction than analogic material" (p. 65).

Another way of examining these two axioms is based on the MEG hierarchy proposed earlier. What the axioms are essentially saying is that [1a] we may differentiate two aspects of human communication—content and relationship; [2b and 2c] we may equate content to verbal-digital communication

and relationship to nonverbal-analogic communication; [1b] the relationship aspect classifies the content aspect; and [1c] nonverbal-analogic-relationship communication is labeled "metacommunication." According to the MEG hierarchy, [1a] can be endorsed because "human utterances may signal content (linguistic meanings) as well as relationship (relational meanings) between the communicators" (Lee, Joakimides, & Wander, 1994, p. 18). However, [2b and 2d] cannot be endorsed because both verbal communication and nonverbal communication can be understood from a relational perspective. That is, they ***both*** send out relational meanings. It can be further argued that in [1b], "nonverbal communication does not modify verbal communication unilaterally—they modify each other **mutually** in an utterance to signal a transformed relational meaning, which is different from each in isolation" (Lee, Joakimides, & Wander, 1994, p. 18). The argument against [1b] also refutes [1c] in that nonverbal communication is not metacommunication. For instance, just as verbal communication is capable of relational meaning, so is nonverbal. We cannot say with certainty which one modifies the other. In 1991 Guttman questioned the same issue:

> Can one really classify communication patterns in this way? Which is "meta"—nonverbal or verbal communication? Probably, the only sensible answer is a "constructivist" conclusion: The observer defines communication levels and their interrelationships . . . If one wants to know whether or not a verbal statement is being disqualified by a nonverbal message, one considers the nonverbal parameters to be "meta" to the verbal one. If one wonders whether a nonverbal message transmitted via a particular channel (e.g., tone of voice) is or is not being confirmed by

> another "channel" (e.g., movement), one observes the latter. In this case, movement is "meta" to tone (pp. 45-46).

The position I take is that different aspects of an utterance mutually influence each other to form a qualitatively different composite of relational meanings. In other words, the whole is different from the simple combination of the parts.

To summarize, the term metacommunication is a term that is too muddled to provide logically systematic discussions about human utterances. In his book, co-authored with his daughter, Mary Catherine Bateson, *Angels Fear*, Bateson expressed the following related concern:

> There is still the problem . . . of the misuse of ideas. . . Some of the information has been lost, an essential part of the idea. . . Instead of scolding those who have to work out their epigenesis with essential ideas or connections missing, we can try to identify the missing pieces (1987, p. 205).

Clearly identifying the logical types and keeping consistent the levels of abstraction is critical to the understanding of relational communication. The theory of logical types and the MEG hierarchy provide a framework with which communication scholars can talk more distinctly about communication. As communication scholars, we can now both push back the darkness and identify the parts of the darkness that remain.

CHAPTER 3

RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION LITERATURE: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Conceptually, relational communication is vague, which makes it difficult to comprehend. To clarify the multiple meanings signaled by relational communication we may base our understanding on the MEG hierarchy, especially, goal-oriented talk and metatalk. Relational communication at the goal-oriented level may be defined as a composite of messages (e.g., verbal, nonverbal, sequence) that send out relational meanings to a co-communicator. These relational messages are often implicit, unnamed, and unspoken. We feel them as we communicate. That is, the co-communicators can feel relational meaning without having to go through a negotiation process. At this level, relational communication and its meaning are often taken for granted.

Relational metatalk, on the other hand, is the explicit communication used to talk about "relational" meaning. For instance, what happens when a potentially innocent utterance is completely misunderstood and taken as an insult? Let us look at an example of an utterance that for all intents and purposes requires relational metatalk:

"I'll knock you up at 7:30."

In the same way that linguistic metatalk allows us to discuss the words in communication ("What do you mean by 'knock you up?'"), relational metatalk allows us to discuss relational messages that are the other essential part of

communication. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the expression "knock you up" means to drop by your house (linguistic metatalk). In comparison, in the United States the expression means to get a woman pregnant (linguistic metatalk). A woman in the United States, as the recipient of such a statement, may be immediately insulted without having a full understanding of what was meant by the statement. In this instance, not only do we need to spell out the different linguistic meanings signaled by "knock you up," we also need to clarify the *relational messages* (relational communication at the goal-oriented talk level) via relational metatalk so that both parties can achieve mutual understanding. For example, relationally speaking, "knock you up" is friendly in England, but "derogatory" in the United States.

It is also important to point out that any goal-oriented talk can move to metatalk; however, when language, personal, and cultural differences interfere with understanding, individuals must move beyond the level of goal-oriented talk to relational metatalk to make sense of their lifeworld.

In the following literature review, I use the term "relational communication," because that is how the writers analyzed referred to the term. However, during the critique, the term "relational communication" is replaced with more refined terms: "relational meaning" (to mean implicit relational messages felt by the co-communicators) or "relational metatalk" (to mean talk about relational meanings).

With this in mind, this chapter surveys the most widely published scholars in relational communication literature: Edna Rogers, Judee Burgoon, and Leslie Baxter. Rogers' work was selected because of her research in relational communication from a verbal perspective; Burgoon's research was selected because she approaches relational communication from a nonverbal perspective; and Baxter's research was selected because she approaches relational communication from a dialectical perspective. The survey examines how each author defines and approaches relational communication and looks at the various kinds of knowledge claims these researchers make based upon their research efforts and the purpose or *telos* behind their research projects. The intent in this chapter is not to exhaust the domain of all possible research in interpersonal communication literature. Rather, the goal is to provide concrete examples of the limitations within the current body of research.

Historical Background

Malcolm R. Parks (1980) presents a good overview of the origins of relational communication in his article entitled *Relational communication: Theory and research*. His objective in this article is to outline the "real rather than apparent" (Parks, 1980, p. 287) issues in relational communication. Parks (1980) defines relational communication as "Aspects of messages which define and redefine relationships. . . Complementarity and symmetry have been suggested as the central constructs of a theory of relational communication"

(1980, p. 287). Although many scholars continue to pay homage to Bateson as establishing the springboard for work in relational communication (Millar & Rogers, 1976; Parks, 1980; Rogers & Farace, 1980), Parks (1980) tells us that relational communication research did not take hold in the area of speech communication until the early 1970s following the publication of *Pragmatics of Human Communication* by Watzlawick et al. (1967). The explication of Bateson's notion of report and command aspects of communication are ascribed to this group as well.

Originally, Bateson's work on the double bind theory of schizophrenia was applied in the field of psychiatric research. In the mid-1950s Parks reports that Bateson and his associates at the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto were making extensive use of the concepts in therapy. In an effort to move away from a clinical bias, Sluzki and Beavin (1965) were the first to conceptualize the command or control dimensions of communication in terms of basic grammatical forms and metacommunicational categories (Parks, 1980). Following Sluzki and Beavin's lead, Mark (1971) developed a detailed coding scheme that stimulated research outside of the clinical setting enabling investigators to examine relational communication patterns in "normal" families (Parks, 1980, p. 288). More recent coding schemes expanded and refined even further Mark's work (Folger & Puck, 1976; Rogers & Farace, 1980).

> Rogers (1973), for example, examined the relationship between relational communication patterns and discrepancies between behavior and role

> expectations. Millar (1973) explored the effects of rigidity and stability in relational control patterns. Further analysis began the process of modeling relational communication patterns as stochastic systems (Parks, Farace, & Rogers, 1975) (Parks, 1980, p. 288).

Although Parks offers a brief description of how command or relational components of messages refer to the manner in which ongoing relational definitions are developed and maintained over time, he does not provide a way of understanding it. For example, how do the dyads know, or how do they talk about the different levels or about different messages? According to Parks (1980), a given message or utterance may suggest one of three alternatives:

> (1) it may be an assertion of relational definition by its source—usually referred to as a "one-up" message; (2) it may be an acceptance of or request for another's relational definition—usually referred to as a "one-down" message; or (3) it may avoid either an acceptance or assertion of relational definition—recently referred to as a "one-across" message (1977, p. 288).

An explanation of how individuals can make sense of their communication and relationship is not offered; rather, Parks simply describes from a researcher's perspective how each category of symmetry and complementarity may be characterized based upon previous research.[14] Parks' (1980) parting comments are that the parameters of this conceptually rich area of research are ill-organized at best, and argues that most quantitative efforts have been "more descriptive than predictive or explanatory" (p. 294).

Viewing communication from a systems perspective: Edna Rogers

A major contribution Edna Rogers made to the field of relational communication was beginning to view communication from a systems perspective. "Individual system members are seen as active participants in communication; they improvise and impute meaning, influence and constrain one another with their lines of action. . . The emergent forms that characterize the process, however, reside in codefined mutually produced patterns of interrelation between system members" (1989, p. 280). Rogers argues that social relationships are not reducible to the characteristics of individual interactors or single messages, but are complex actions of relational members.

The conceptual background under which Rogers identifies the basic premise of relational communication stems from systems theory and cybernetics principles, which she identifies as "an interwoven set of ideas that give prominence to pattern over objects and interrelations over unilateral cause" (1989, pp. 280-81).

> Relational communication refers to the control aspects of message exchange—those elements in message exchange by which interactors reciprocally define the nature of their relative "position" or dominance in their interaction. In popular terms, the notion of being "one-up" or "one-down" indicates two examples of relational control" (Rogers & Farace, 1980, p. 306).

The objective behind Rogers' work is to present a procedure for coding and analyzing the relational control aspects of communication by using a transactional and process-oriented approach. A transactional perspective looks

at the combined rules that govern a system's message exchange process and not just the individual characteristics brought to the situation by the individual participants (Rogers & Millar, 1976). The overriding goal of the coding scheme is to obtain a methodology for *describing* interactor patterns of communication exchange. Arguing that earlier studies offer no apparent unifying notion underlying the set of communication variables, Rogers and Farace (1980) developed an analytical scheme whereby indices at the system level are made possible. The coding system was developed to *describe* certain aspects of conversation, namely, symmetrical and complementary patterns, with emphasis on the form of conversation rather than the content. "The focus of the relational coding system is on how messages function pragmatically—on how communication behaviors are constrained by the preceding messages, and, in turn, constrain the following messages" (Rogers, 1989, p, 283).

The communication 'properties' that are indexed by the coding system are: (1) the types of relational control, (2) the fluidity of relational control, and (3) the configuration patterns of relational control over time (Millar & Rogers, 1976; Rogers & Farace, 1980). Only a general description of the coding scheme is presented here, since full details are given elsewhere (Rogers & Farace, 1980). In this coding system, each verbalization is assigned a three-digit code. For instance, the first digit designates the speaker, the second digit refers to the grammatical form or speech act (assertion, question, talk-over, etc.), the third

digit identifies the response function of the message relative to the other's preceding messages (support, extension, instruction, order, answer, etc.).

> [A]ssignments are made on the basis of whether a message is (a) an attempt to assert definitional rights, which is designated as one-up (↑), (b) a request or an acceptance of the other's definition of the relationship, designated as one-down (↓), or (c) a nondemanding, nonaccepting, leveling movement, which is designated as one-across (→) (Rogers & Millar, 1976, p. 95).

Even though there are a number of shortcomings with Rogers' encoding method, the importance of her contribution should not be discounted. Rogers has provided a methodology that has been demonstrated consistently to encode certain aspects of relational communication. Her contributions are important because they provide a method for encoding (thus giving the ability to analyze), they move to the area of dyadic coding, and they view sequence of messages rather than message as a single unit. However, there are two important shortcomings to her approach: (1) Rogers treats the relationship between messages as the primary aspect of relational communication; and (2) translation is translator-dependent.

Rogers' focus is on transaction types,[15] or message relationship, and furthermore she appears to treat this as relational communication. Rogers also demonstrated a correlation between the transaction types and the relationship of the communicants; however, in spite of this demonstration, Rogers' methodological coding scheme misses the relationship part of communication. Her relational coding scheme assumes that the relational intent of a message is

conveyed consistently through grammatical structure and message content. Frequently, when a behavior is placed in a category there is the assumption that it is "equivalent to every other behavior placed in that category" (Folger & Sillars, 1980, p. 331). It leaves out entirely nonverbal cues that may alter the verbal relational meaning. Folger and Puck (1976), for example, found that bids for dominance or submission while answering a question vary depending upon the nature of the question and the nature of the answer. This variance is not evident in Rogers' coding scheme.

The secondary concern about Rogers' relational coding scheme is the translation process: the assumptions about dominant (one-up), submissive (one-down), and neutral (one-across) behavior. While relational coding schemes can be handled in an objective, scientific manner, researchers have relied primarily on intuition in assigning acts of dominance, submission, or neutrality in coding utterances (Folger & Sillars, 1980). The result is that control may vary across relational coding schemes. This concern is secondary because there are a number of well known techniques, such as statistical methods and training of the observers, that can overcome this deficiency. However, in keeping with the notion of double-description, how viable or culturally valid are the observer's interpretations in relational communication? Again, it is quite possible, and extremely likely, that the observer's interpretation will be something entirely different from what the participants think.

What Rogers titles relational communication focuses on the grammatical/syntactical aspects of message exchange strictly in the verbal domain. The argument presented in this thesis is that every single utterance sends out multiple relational meanings. By adopting Rogers' methodology the researcher is likely to interpret relational communication as "words exchanged" between the communicants and then infer the relational meaning. The problem with this approach is that the other elements (e.g., nonverbal cues [p. 41], sequence [p. 42]) of the relational meanings are excluded, which means that our understanding of relational meaning is oversimplified and, at the same time, unrealistic. Recall from the previous chapter that verbal and nonverbal utterances mutually qualify each other. It is for this very reason that we must study them together. Furthermore, as argued earlier, interpretation is always situated and contingent upon double-description. Not only does Rogers' scheme exclusively focus on goal-oriented talk, her model is based upon single-description from the researcher/coder's perspective.

Viewing relational communication from a nonverbal perspective: Judee Burgoon

> [T]here is still a theoretical difference between the linguistically oriented researcher, who is used to thinking of a language system or structure, and the psychologically oriented researcher who is happy with looking at a stimulus, e.g., a sign (Harrison & Knapp, 1980, p. 170).

A significant issue in nonverbal communication raised by Judee Burgoon and her associates is the extent to which nonverbal behaviors have consistent meaning within a social community. During the past ten years, the aim of

Burgoon's research in relational communication has been to test effects of nonverbal behaviors against two contrasting models: A social perspectives model and an expectancy violations model. The social perspectives model holds that many nonverbal behaviors have consistent usage within a "language community." This simply means that when certain verbal and nonverbal cues accompany one another, meanings can be easily determined without resorting to the negotiation process. The alternative perspective, expectancy violations model, holds that meanings for some nonverbal cues are ambiguous and therefore must be mediated (Burgoon, Coker, & Coker, 1986). Burgoon et al. (1986) posit that the mediation process is nonverbal and may take on the form of changes in such things as conversational distance during interactions and/or adjustments in the amount of eye contact depending on whether the behavior is viewed as being positive or negative.

Burgoon, Pfau, Parrott, Birk, Coker, and Burgoon (1987) argue that communication episodes are often conceived to have both content and noncontent, "or relational," aspects to them.

> The relational aspect refers to the definitions people hold of their relationship with one another. The evolving definitional process occurs through the continual exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages that signal how parties view each other, the relationship, and themselves within the context of the relationship. Expressions of similarity, involvement, empathy, and liking, or inequality, dominance, disinterest, and disdain, for example, are part of relational communication (p. 308).

Relational communication, according to this group, occurs more frequently at the nonverbal level. By referring to their study of compliance-gaining strategies applicable in a physician-patient relationship, Burgoon et al. (1987) posit that even though verbal strategies used to gain compliance may influence behavior, verbal influence occurs only on a secondary level. In other words, Burgoon and associates are placing nonverbal behavior at a level higher than verbal, which is conceptually similar to Watzlawick et al.'s (1967) concept of *command* level.

Much of Burgoon's research is oriented toward nonverbal cues, their impact on verbal communication, their consistency, and the impact of the communicants' relationship to the nonverbal cues. The fundamental goal of her early research is an attempt to validate empirically that nonverbal cues are socially meaningful. The questions driving Burgoon's research center around the extent to which the social meanings associated with specific nonverbal behaviors yield consistent interpretations using the expectancy violations model. In a study conducted by Burgoon, Buller, Hale, and deTurck (1984), it was determined that people routinely send out multifaceted relational messages. To that end, the authors concluded that to understand the interpretations of any of the cues, "one needs to look at them in the context of the larger cue complex" (p. 354).

> [T]he important implication for relational communication research is that studying one or two behaviors in isolation may be very misleading, as other present verbal or nonverbal behavior may act to augment, compensate, or ambiguate meanings being attributed to the ones under study. The result can be false conclusions about what interpretations are

being assigned to the cue complex or even about which cues and acts are actually responsible for any observed effects (p. 371).

The 1984 study was guided by a "message orientation" toward nonverbal communication. Immediacy behaviors, which include such things as trust, depth and breadth or superficiality, affection or hostility, intensity of involvement, inclusion or exclusion, were chosen specifically as cues to be identified. The experiment was designed to provide definitive evidence that interactants actually assign unifying meanings to the cue complex. "More importantly, however, these cues are presumed to express other relational meaning as well, such as liking, relaxation, and dominance" (Burgoon et al., 1984, p. 358). The experiment largely confirmed the hypothesized relationships between five nonverbal cues, i.e., closer proximity, frequent eye contact, the presence of smiling, brief touching, and forward body lean during conversation all point to greater intimacy. It was also determined that when the cues are considered in relation to one another, proximity emerges as the characteristic carrying the greatest weight. Burgoon et al. (1984) assert that the importance of rank ordering nonverbal behavior is that people are seldom consciously aware that conversational distance exerts "more powerful influence on relational interpretation than other nonverbal cues that are more readily noticed" (p. 371). Furthermore, the authors suggest that the sensitive observer of relational communication may find invaluable information by attending to this easily observed cue, but they fail to

provide the reader with a way in which to understand the *explicit* relational meaning.

What is particularly troubling about the above-mentioned study is the absence of verbal communication and the absence of sequence. For instance, the authors concluded that closer proximity, frequent eye contact, etc., all point to greater intimacy. The question this raises is at whose cue complex are we looking? While Burgoon and associates argue that all these nonverbal cues point to greater intimacy, what do these nonverbal cues tell us about the same behaviors if exhibited in, say, South-central Los Angeles, or in the heart of East Palo Alto? A sensitive observer growing up in either of these areas would likely have a much different perspective, e.g., a person exhibiting such behaviors in one or both of these cities is likely to get killed.

In later research, a schema for relational communication developed by Burgoon and Hale (1987) proposes as many as twelve fundamental and distinctive themes (or topoi) underlying relational message exchange. These themes include: (1) dominance-submission, (2) emotional arousal, (3) composure-noncomposure, (4) similarity-dissimilarity, (5) formality-informality, (6) task vs. social orientation, (7) intimacy, and the subcomponents of intimacy, (8) depth (of familiarity), (9) affection (attraction and liking), (10) inclusion-exclusion, (11) trust, and (12) intensity of involvement. Utilizing a multipurpose study,

Burgoon and Hale (1987) set five goals for their research, the first three reported as being the most important:

> (1) to assess the interrelatedness of the 12 topoi, (2) to create a reliable and valid measurement instrument for self-report and observational use in interactional studies or relational communication, [and] (3) to determine the ability of the different message themes to discriminate different interaction conditions (p. 19).

A relational communication scale was developed by examining all the measurement instruments in a wide range of prior research and culling from them concepts and wording applicable to Burgoon's concept of relational communication. New items and categories, developed largely by using college students enrolled in communication courses, were also created for nonrepresented topoi.

The above sampling of Burgoon's research, albeit only two of her many works, provides a glimpse of the shortcomings in her work. The above examples also provide insight into a contradiction in her research. On the surface, Burgoon advocates that relational communication investigators should not overlook the verbal elements of message exchange, yet her approach to relational communication is linear in that she approaches it from a strictly nonverbal perspective (Burgoon & Jones, 1980; Burgoon, Coker, & Coker, 1986; Burgoon, Pfau, Parrott, Birk, Coker, & Burgoon, 1987; Burgoon, Walther, & Baesler, 1992). Without ignoring the importance of her theoretical framework,

that is, the recognition that relational communication is multifaceted, her methodological approach is very limited.

A major theoretical problem in Burgoon's view of relational communication is that it is determined by the "definitions people hold of their relationship with one another" and that this definition is primarily expressed by nonverbal messages (e.g., "expressions of similarity, involvement, empathy, and liking, or inequality, dominance, disinterest, and disdain, for example, are part of relational communication"). This problem in turn leads to two issues: First, and most important, is that Burgoon's model of relational communication is expressed by nonverbal messages. Since nonverbal communication is at a higher level than the speech act in this model, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for the communicants to rationally understand, clarify, and modify the relational aspects of their communication; they cannot understand or make sense of composite relational meanings. (Note that this in turn leads to the necessity for the "professional" to understand, diagnose, and *prescribe* the solution for any relational communication problem.) The second issue is that the definition of the relationship is self-referential to the communicants; this does not account for relational aspects that are global to the individual's perception (e.g., common heritage), and as noted above, it makes it very difficult to negotiate, especially without a language. In other words, the studies do not inform us about the actual process of talk about talk. The authors stay at the *expert's* sensemaking (often

single-descriptive) of other peoples' (often college students) artificially stimulated talk.

As already indicated, Burgoon and associates started down the path of relational communication as a set of multifaceted relational messages in 1984; however, the follow-on research digressed. It is appropriate to ask the question, "Why does good research often lead us to unsatisfactory results?" The answer, most likely, is that the fundamental model on which the research is based is invalid. The first adjustment needed in Burgoon's model is to separate relational communication from nonverbal communication and to study them for their own individual merits. The MEG hierarchy is proposed as a way for scholars to address these issues and move forward.

Viewing relational communication from a dialectical perspective: Leslie Baxter

> What exactly is it that relationship parties do in their everyday conduct of personal relationships? Despite a decade of vigorous research in the growing area of personal relationships, a comprehensive answer to a question so fundamental as this still eludes researchers and theorists (Baxter, 1992b, p. 336).

This quotation from Leslie Baxter is indicative of her journey to understand relational communication. Frustrated by the somewhat sterile portrait painted by many scholars that tends to strip away many of the complexities we often experience in our relationships—their paradoxes, inconsistencies, and contradictions—Baxter has spent more than a decade trying to identify the strategic communicative actions by which personal relationships are constituted,

maintained, and disengaged. The significance of her research lies in the fact that she continues to ask questions, as above, and is willing to explore new avenues offering the promise of a deeper, richer understanding of relational communication.[16] Building upon a growing body of social scientific work in the analysis of relationship accounts, Baxter (1988) advanced a new approach to studying personal relationships: a dialectical perspective, emphasizing the utility of studying relationship contradictions. This section traces Baxter's footsteps beginning with her introduction of a dialectical perspective to her most recent recognition of the importance of root metaphors and play in relational communication.

In 1988 Baxter pointed out that despite the several threads of dialectical thinking that have emerged among relationship theorists and researchers, very few advances have been made to broaden our understanding of the dialectical theory of relationships. Moreover, no one, according to Baxter (1990), has addressed the dialectical tensions with which parties continually cope.

Although the term dialectic evokes many meanings, Baxter refers to Cornforth (1968) who identified two root concepts running through the literature that he claims qualify a theory as dialectical: *process* and *contradiction*.

> The centrality of the process concept to dialectical thinking leads to a theoretical interest in development in contrast to a focus on static or stable states of being. Such development is not limited in the instance of relationships to the opening phase of a relationship's history but occurs throughout a relationship's entire history. Change, in turn, is caused by the struggle and tension of contradiction. A contradiction is formed

> whenever two tendencies or forces are interdependent (the dialectical principle of unity) yet mutually negate one another (the dialectical principle of negation) (Baxter, 1988, p. 258).

Baxter contends that contradictions function at different levels: an individual level and a relationship level. Because the dominant theories of relationship development are located at the individual level, Baxter argues that it is not surprising that the relationship strategies research commonly conceptualizes "a 'strategy' as action by which the individual accomplishes his/her goals" (1988, p. 258). Dialectical theorists working at the individual level assume an "objective reality" and focus on how contradictions function, regardless of whether the parties are consciously aware of them (Baxter, 1988). The problem with using this individualistic orientation is that researchers must assume the burden of understanding and explaining individual motives.

In contrast, dialectical theorists of a "social reality" tradition concentrate on contradictions as subjectively experienced by the relationship parties. The difference in perspectives is subtle but important, according to Baxter. "The individualistic perspective heads one down the theoretic path of cognitive psychology, whereas a relationship perspective such as dialectical theory focuses attention outwards on the relational situation" (1988, p. 258). Baxter's research adopts the latter perspective, defining the domain of contradictions as those subjectively experienced and reported by the parties. She posits that three bipolar pairs constitute the primary dialectical forces which meet the

conditions of both unity and negation, thus constituting dialectical contradiction: autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and predictability-novelty. The primary exigence of relating in Baxter's (1988) mind is the autonomy-connection dialectic. She claims that no relationship can exist unless the parties forsake individual autonomy; however, paradoxically, too much connectedness destroys the relationship because individual identities become lost (Baxter, 1988, 1990, 1992a; Baxter & Simon, 1993). Although the two tendencies that form a dialectical contradiction are logically perceived as polar opposites, the two poles are in constant motion with respect to one another (Baxter & Simon, 1993).

Various studies conducted by Baxter provide support for the claim that the maintenance strategies of contact, romance, and avoidance function in a manner consistent with her concept of dialectical specialization. However, the research does not offer insight into how couples can talk about or make sense of the excesses in autonomy, predictability and closedness that are common dialectical problems they experience. Instead, Baxter's research asks how parties can stay together or maintain a happy relationship by performing a number of strategies for coping with contradictions, i.e., sharing information, spending increased time together, and taking time to listen to what the partner is saying. In short, her work affirms that people try to build relationships, but the strategies she suggests do not deal with the *process of talk*. Stated differently, her work provides little

insight into how relationship partners can make sense of their world through talk rather than through metaphors or rituals.

In reviewing her work, I find that Baxter has a strong sense that something intrinsic to interpersonal relationships is missing from her research, as well as from relational communication literature in general. To fill this void, beginning in 1992 she expanded her research to complement extant approaches to the problem of how parties make sense of their relationships using metaphor analysis. In contrast to the more specialized analytical approaches, Baxter (1992a) said that root metaphors provide a more holistic appreciation of parties' relationship accounting. "A relationship account is a story-like explanation of past actions and events, an organized narrative of sensemaking by which the account-giver organizes the meaning of his or her relationship" (Harvey, Agostinelli, & Weber, 1989, cited in Baxter, 1992a, p. 254).

Baxter believes that root metaphors capture fundamental experiential gestalts that provide an efficient way for relationship parties to account for varying stages in their developing relationship. In other words, root metaphors are another way by which parties communicate about their relationship since "metaphors afford a compactness and vividness of expression difficult to match through other linguistic forms" (Baxter, 1992a, p. 255). Moreover, Baxter argues that metaphors play a significant role in defining, understanding, and communicating about a relationship (Baxter, 1992a), and suggests that the

challenge for researchers is to define the boundaries of these metaphors. One gets the sense that Baxter sees the researcher as a translator who does not understand the syntax and may not understand the semantics; however, through experiment and observation the researcher is able to interpret.

Upon close inspection, one can see that there is an interesting link with Baxter's research and the MEG hierarchy discussed previously. For instance, root metaphors (or the observable aspect) are directly a form of relational metatalk. The fundamental difference between communicating metaphorically and communicating explicitly (relational metatalk) with a well defined language is that in the former the parties are likely unaware that they are communicating at a meta level.

It is evident that Baxter is getting closer to finding the missing puzzle piece in her research, which is relational metatalk, by reviewing her parallel investigation where she studies form and function of intimate play in personal relationships. From this line of research, Baxter concludes that layered on top of play's surface functions of fun and relaxation is a *metacommunicative* act that accomplishes substantial serious business for the parties. During her investigation of intimate play, Baxter (1992b) identifies six functions of play, of which two serve as metacommunicative functions. These are: (1) play often-times serves as a "safe communication" strategy that allows parties to undertake activities that might prove embarrassing—such as playfully declaring one's

emotional attachment to the other in order to test for reciprocated emotion (Betcher, 1981, cited in Baxter, 1992b, p. 337); and (2) play provides partners with a repertoire through which to construct meaning.

One serious drawback of play as a metacommunication method is the ambiguity inherent in play's blurring playful messages with metacommunicative messages (Bateson, 1972). As Bateson (see Rieber, 1989) points out, play may sometimes invoke the meta message "this is fun." However, play at other times may be terrifying, devoid of all playful characteristics, and rules are often changed or broken. The problem embedded in play is that many elements of play are composed of the very same gestures that in another context constitute threat; i.e., threat gestures in play may result in more serious physical blows of combat. In the case of play, players may not easily understand that punishment or prohibition of play should extinguish the actions of "play." Bateson (1991) writes:

> Often children will respond by trying to throw the category of "play" around the forbidding action of the adult, either inviting the adult into some game or mocking him [her] as [s]he stands there outside the game (p. 203).

"Play" may be used to name a specific episode between romantic partners. But in terms of logical types related to member-class differentiations, play is a class of concrete social actions. That is, based upon one's lifeworld, one may classify a group of concrete social actions into a class named "play," while the other may classify the same social actions into a class named "aggression."

In sum, couples may engage in specific social actions classified as "play," and these may enable couples to more easily test or negotiate their relationship. However, even though "play" may be a safer mode of metatalk, it is quite ambiguous in that it fails to specify whether a person metatalks about a specific aspect or combination of aspects of messages (e.g., verbal, nonverbal) in a linguistic and/or relational manner; it also fails to discuss explicitly whether such "playful" metatalk is done double-descriptively or single-descriptively.

Summary

Recall the levels described in the MEG hierarchy: We have goal-oriented talk, metatalk, and epistemic talk; but for the sake of double bind analysis, we need to talk about the importance of double-descriptive relational analysis at the metatalk level. To bring people in to talk about the relational dimension is important; however, how we talk about it may be essentializing or imposing because we engage in single-descriptive talk. It is important to invite double-descriptive talk, so that we can understand each other's comparison points in bringing together the subtleties and richness of cultural, gender, regional, social, and class differences, etc. Rogers and Burgoon do not take us to the metatalk level—they do it for us. They do not teach us how to do it for ourselves. Moreover, Rogers and Burgoon only study goal-oriented talk from a single-description perspective—Rogers emphasizes verbal message exchange;

Burgoon emphasizes nonverbal message exchange. But the fact remains, both are constrained by the weaknesses of essentialization.

Baxter's work is more promising in that she pushes us to the metatalk level. Baxter argues that we forget to learn how to solve the problem of what it is that relationship parties do in their everyday conduct of personal relationships, and she hints that play and metaphor may be a good way to deal with such matters. Yet, even Baxter does not differentiate the levels of problems, although she does talk about metacommunication. She does not help us understand the difference between relational and linguistic metatalk. She does not help us to differentiate single-descriptive from double-descriptive talk.

Although we have seen a *social and ideological turn* in the way we think about interpersonal communication during the past two years, and that the alternative perspectives have aided us in locating different kinds of research questions, Baxter (1992c) points out that readers are "provided with fairly abstract renderings of the 'social' alternative(s) to the dominant psychological approaches" (p. 336). MEG provides the foundation upon which we can build a more contextualized understanding of relational communication. The next chapter continues Baxter's project, employing the MEG hierarchy to reconceptualize the double bind phenomenon.

CHAPTER 4

REVISITING DOUBLE BIND: A COMPARATIVE-RELATIONAL ANALYSIS

> We humans seem to wish that our logic were absolute. We seem to act on the assumption that it is so and then panic when the slightest overtone that it is not so, or might not be so, is presented. . . .In truth, a breach in the apparent coherence of our mental logical process would seem to be a sort of death. I encountered this deep notion over and over again in my dealings with schizophrenics, and the notion may be said to be basic to the double bind theory. (Bateson, 1979, p. 135)

When a person oscillates between anger, depression, and/or frustration (e.g., "It doesn't matter what I do, I never seem to do it right," or "I'm damned if I do and I'm damned if I don't"), it is very likely that the individual is trapped in the early stages of double bind communication. If we draw a comparison between the way in which ordinary people live and people who live in double binds, we find that victims of double bind live with a pathologically distorted view of the world. Oftentimes, "when double bind communication becomes ingrained or habitual, people may display paranoid (scanning for meanings in least possible or related areas), catatonic (treating any communication in absolutely literal fashion), or hebephrenic (withdrawing from human involvement) symptoms" (Lee, Joakimides, & Wander, 1994, p. 20). Whether we live in "normal" or "pathological" worlds,[17] learning to understand and deal with double binds is instrumental to our relative sanity and relational well being.

Using the MEG hierarchy discussed in Chapter 2, this chapter undertakes two tasks: first to take a closer look at the crucial communication-related

elements that exist in a double bind phenomenon; and, second, to take the reader through a step-by-step process of comparative-relational analysis using a segment from Edward Albee's play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*.

Double Bind Revisited

Bateson is the first to acknowledge that the concept of double bind is very complex and thus, difficult to research. Since we cannot count double binds, it does not lend itself to quantitative research. An even worse complication in researching double bind is that we have not had a clear-cut way in which to talk about this abstract concept. For instance, how does one apply the theory of logical types to something as abstract as relational communication? In spite of the importance of understanding the notion of double bind, the concept baffles most people. The MEG hierarchy takes the first step toward understanding how individuals can work through double bind situations via comparative-relational analysis.

The author acknowledges two necessary factors that exist in a double bind phenomenon: (a) there must be two or more individuals involved who are dependent on each other; and (b) there must be repeated occurrences. This section will address two elements in the communication process that give birth to double binds. We will use excerpts from the movie version of Edward Albee's play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* to illustrate the elements defined below. Let us introduce the play briefly to lay out the relational pattern between the two

major characters, George and Martha. We will then define two communication elements that give birth to the double bind phenomenon.

The entire movie takes place in George and Martha's living room during the late hours of a Saturday night. The setting is a New England college campus. George, 46, is an associate professor in the history department; his wife, Martha, is the daughter of the college president. She is 52. They have been drinking heavily at a faculty party given by Martha's father. As they stumble into their living room, they begin to bicker over seemingly insignificant things. Under the circumstances, their bickering is not out of the ordinary; they have been drinking, they are both tired, and it is late. What the audience does get is a strong sense of the pattern of their behavior. Martha bullies George, and he accepts her behavior with weary resignation. This sets the stage for the entire play.

To George's surprise, Martha announces that she has invited another couple over to join them for drinks. It is two o'clock in the morning! Put out by Martha's news, George launches into another round of bickering until the guests arrive.

Nick and Honey, Martha's "little guests," as George refers to them, arrive shortly after George and Martha have had a few more drinks. Nick, a good looking, well-built man of 30, is a new faculty member in the biology department. His wife, Honey, an insipid and seemingly superficial person, is 26. From the

moment Nick and Honey cross the threshold into George and Martha's house, they find themselves entrenched in the older couple's competitive wars. As the night progresses and the liquor continues to flow, tensions that have been hidden emerge in the form of psychological games.

In Act I the audience sees their battle of verbal abuse accelerate and ultimately end with Martha's scathing remarks about George's failure as a man and as a teacher. According to Martha, George never lived up to the expectation that she and her father had for him; that is, to someday take over the history department, and one day become the president of the college. She does not hesitate to display openly her contempt for her husband. George fights back with his mastery of verbal skills. The turning point in the play occurs when George learns that Martha revealed a forbidden topic to Honey—George and Martha's "son."

Act I, entitled "Fun and Games," introduces George and Martha's style of verbal combat. What is evident is how quickly the couple shifts back and forth between anger and affection. But what do the abrupt changes tell us about their relationship? Does double bind have a stranglehold on the older couple? The excerpt for the following analysis is taken from the opening of the movie and may be found in Appendix B. For ease in later discussion, the scene under analysis is divided into frames (1 through 5). The frames signify a topic shift or level

jump. The reader is encouraged to read the scene in Appendix B prior to trying to understand the analysis below.

In Frame 1, the couple is arguing over whether or not George laughed at a song that was sung at the party. Martha thought the song was a "scream"; George thought the song was merely "all right." Infuriated because George is noncommittal, Martha distances herself from him and exclaims, "You make me puke!" In the midst of this brief tirade, Martha asks George for assistance in locating a word that would further debase him. The joint effort and recognition of their teamwork at the end of the frame appear to signal acceptance between them, and they both laugh.

In Frame 2, the couple shifts to an entirely different topic midstream, which appears to be the norm for this couple. During Frame 2, the mood is lighter and more playful. For instance, George playfully likens Martha's big teeth to those of a cocker spaniel. The subject then moves to the couple's vulnerabilities: George hints at Martha's age and she at the fact that George is losing his hair. The oscillation is never ending; closure is never reached. The couple simply keep moving from subject to subject. Notice, for example, how quickly a shift from antagonism to affection occurs when George calls Martha "honey," and how just as quickly the mood changes from intimacy to antipathy in Frame 3. In Frame 4, George changes the subject after pushing Martha aside, asking her a question unrelated to the intimacy that just transpired between

them. With his back turned to Martha, George does not wait for her to answer his question. Rather he exits the room, cutting off her answer.

The different verbal combative technique of the couple is strongly evident in Frame 5. Martha favors crude insults ("you make me puke," "simp," "pig"), George favors the role of condescending intellectual ("That wasn't a very nice thing to say, Martha;" "Well dear, if I kissed you I'd get all excited . . ."). Also evident is that the couple's bickering never seems to reach closure; it keeps oscillating between closeness and distance, but never settles down for any length of time.

The First Element of Double Bind

Under the framework of MEG, two problems emerge in goal-oriented talk: (1) relational meanings sent out by at least two dimensions of an utterance (or series of utterances) are mutually exclusive[18] thus leading to a contradiction, and (2) this mutual exclusiveness is judged/felt by the receiver as negative or punishment oriented. In Chapter 2 we learned that double bind does not originate solely from verbal and nonverbal communication, but may indeed be created by different sources of communication.[19] In sum, the first element of double bind is a composite of relational meanings signaled by goal-oriented talk that is perceived to be mutually exclusive and punishment oriented. In an effort to understand the first element of double bind, we will examine George's and Martha's verbal interchange in detail. Several figures offer a synopsis of their

conversation. The figures are followed by detailed analyses that explore what transpired from each of their perspectives.

Double Bind from Martha's Perspective

In order for Martha to understand the interchange between herself and George, she must first focus on certain dimensions of George's utterances (that is, word-choice, tone of voice, etc.). Second, for each dimension she chooses to analyze, she must come up with an alternative interpretation based upon her relational history with George (and perhaps with her father, and other significant others in her lifeworld). Finally, Martha must discuss relative relational meanings by comparing two alternatives from dimension to dimension. The following comparative-relational analysis of Frames 3 and 4 (see Appendix B) emphasizes the negative mutual exclusiveness in the composite of relational meanings from Martha's perspective. The figure can be represented in the following narrative (hypothetically established by the author).

> Martha: George signaled, both orally, by saying "Hello, honey," and nonverbally, by his warm laughter and acceptance, that he wanted me close to him (see Figure 5). Yet, when I tried to respond by moving closer to him and by asking him for a kiss, he rejected me. This was indicated both in the verbal ("I don't want to kiss you") and the nonverbal dimension (i.e., his body stiffened and he moved away from me) when I got close to him. In comparison with a possible alternative of his desire to get close and kiss me, his words and attitude signal distance and rejection (see Figure 6).

Figure 5
Comparative-Relational Analysis of Frame 3: Martha's Perspective

Message Dimension	Message Performed	Alternate	Comparative Relational Meaning
Verbal	Hello, honey.	I'm angry with you for not letting us have this time to ourselves.	(+)*
Eye contact	Eyes locked with Martha	Looking away	(+)
Distance	Intimately close	Stiff and distant	(+)
Facial expression	Smiling	Frowning	(+)
Tone of voice	Charming, affectionate		(+)
Summary of overall relational meaning: Comparatively speaking, as indicated by the five "+" signs above, George was consistently trying to establish intimacy with Martha as a man.			

* (+) means relational closeness, (-) means relational distance. Closeness or distance is established upon comparison of the performed message and the alternate expected in people's lifeworld.

Figure 6
Comparative-Relational Analysis of Frame 4: Martha's Perspective

Dimension	Performed	Alternate	Comparative-Relational Meaning
Verbal	I don't want to kiss you, Martha.	No alternate, they just kiss each other	(-)
Eye contact	Eyes looking away	Looking at Martha	(-)
Distance	Stiff and distant	Ignored his impulse to leave	(-)
Facial expression	Frowning	Smiling	(-)
Tone of voice	Sarcastic and condescending	Rapture and passion	(-)
Summary of overall relational meaning: Comparatively speaking, as indicated by the five "-" signs above, George was consistently trying to distance himself from Martha.			
The above relational meanings as represented in Figure 5 and Figure 6 transform one another into a qualitatively different relational composite: *George's charming desire to be close was distant and rejecting.*			

After conducting the comparative-relational analysis, the interchange between George and Martha clearly illustrates their mutual exclusivity (charming desire for closeness versus distance and rejection). Hence, it satisfies the first communication-related element in double bind—that is, perceived mutual exclusivity in negative relational meaning in goal-oriented talk. It is important to note that the comparative-relational analysis is not locked into the categories selected above. In other words, any of a number of interchanges between George and Martha may be selected for analysis. It is also noteworthy to mention that the alternates are expected behaviors that hinge upon the couple's relationship history as interpreted by the author. Arguably, the alternates may change based upon our knowledge about George and Martha. What is important here is the evidence that George and Martha's relationship oscillates between closeness and distance. Locked into the comfortable familiarity of these patterns, they may know of no other way to behave with each other. Comparative-relational metatalk, using double description as evidenced in the author's construction of Martha's monologue on page 82, is important because if it is conducted as a dialogue, it enables the couple to isolate pathological behaviors that are indeed destroying the relationship, allowing them to transform them.

The Second Element of Double Bind

The second element is similar to the first element, but it occurs in the area of metatalk (rather than goal-oriented talk) and withdrawal. That is, when a person perceives the first element, it does not matter whether she or he chooses to talk about it with the binder, or withdraw from the encounter, the binder again performs utterances that give out (a) mutually exclusive, and (b) punishment-oriented relational meanings. Bateson labels this second element tertiary negative injunction. Let us continue with George and Martha's case using Frame 5 in Appendix B.

> Martha: When I asked a question to clarify the mixed messages sent out by George, his reply to my request further disturbed me. There are three dimensions to consider. First there is the verbal dimension that indicates rapture and sexual innuendo ("Well dear, if I kissed you I'd get all excited."). In comparison with "I am angry with you and I don't want to kiss you" that does not threaten me but explains his feelings and mood; his words signal desire and closeness. The second dimension, his disinterested tone (too matter-of-fact), indicates distance and indifference. In contrast to George's earlier laughter (warmth), I feel his tone was cool. Also, in comparison to his words of sexual innuendo, I feel his tone as distant. Finally, there is the dimension related to sequence, which is a pedagogical event. That is, George treats me like an ignorant student. It is no longer on an interpersonal level. In comparison to an interpersonal event, this is very distancing (see Figure 7 below).

The second element of double bind describes a situation in which a person cannot escape. Clearly the second element of double bind exists between George and Martha. What is implied is sexual innuendo, but defined in lecture format. Although Martha sought clarification from George about why he

did not want to kiss her (her metatalk attempt), she received mutually exclusive and predominantly negative relational meanings from his reply. No matter what Martha did, intimacy and rejection worked in tandem to strangle her sanity.

Figure 7
Comparative-Relational Analysis of Frame 5: Martha's Perspective

Dimension	Performed	Alternate	Comparative Relational Meaning
Verbal	Well dear, if I kissed you I'd get all excited.	I'm angry with you for not letting us have this time to ourselves.	(+)*
Eye Contact	No eye contact	Looking at me while answering my question	(-)
Distance	Standing at a distance	Standing close	(-)
Sequence	Pedagogical event, lecture format	Interpersonal event	(-)
Tone of voice	Matter of fact	Warm and affectionate	(-)
Summary of overall relational meaning: The above five relational meanings (one "+" and four "-") transformed one another into a qualitatively different relational composite: George gave Martha distant and condescending warmth and affection.			
*In comparison to overt rejection, George supplied a verbal explanation that signaled fully that he wanted to kiss Martha, therefore we use a (+) to signal relational closeness.			

Double Bind from George's Perspective

We now have an idea of how comparative-relational analysis works. However, the above analysis is lopsided. In other words, we have only Martha's perspective. Bateson (1958) posits that social psychology may be defined as "the study of *the reactions of individuals to the reactions of other individuals*" (italics his, p. 175), and adds that we not only have to consider A's reactions to B's behavior, "but we must go on to consider how these affect B's later behavior and the effect of this on A" (1958, p. 176). The comparative-relational analysis points out very different reactions between George and Martha. The following analysis is taken from George's perspective using Frame 3 (see Figure 8 below).

> George: Martha signaled that she was not interested in my getting close to her both verbally ("Give your *Mommy* a big sloppy kiss") and nonverbally by her childlike behavior. In comparison with a possible alternate of her desire to kiss me as a man, her words and attitude signaled a more playful mother-child relationship which is romantically distancing and rejecting.

The comparative-relational analysis from George's perspective also illustrates that there are mutually exclusive (affectionate and patronizing) relational meanings, and the overall meaning was perceived to be condescending and rejecting. This meets the first communication-related element of double bind. Now let us look at the second element as illustrated in Figure 9 below.

In order for George to deal with the mutually exclusive messages sent out by Martha, he could have (1) walked away, (2) talked about the contradictions in Martha's messages (metatalk). But he did neither. George said "no" twice to

Martha, using verbal protest. As Martha continued to ignore his protest, George started giving mutually exclusive messages; that is, George used mutually exclusive and negative messages to counter Martha's mutually exclusive negative messages.

Figure 8
Comparative-Relational Analysis of Frame 3: George's Perspective

Dimension	Performed	Alternate	Comparative-Relational Meaning
Verbal	Give your Mommy a big sloppy kiss.	Hello, sweetheart	(-)
Eye contact	Eyes locked	Looks away	(+)
Distance	Leaning for-ward toward him	Leaning away from him	(+)
Facial expression	Smiling	Stern, authoritarian	(+)
Tone of voice	Mother/child relationship but speaking to a pet	Mature and sophisticated	(-)
Summary of overall relational meaning: Comparatively speaking, Martha was inconsistently trying to establish closeness with George by talking to him as though he were a child but treating him as if he were a pet.			
The above five relational meanings (two "-" and three "+") transformed one another into a qualitatively different composite: Martha's desire for closeness was patronizing and condescending.			

Figure 9
Comparative-Relational Analysis of Frame 4: George's Perspective

Dimension	Performed	Alternate	Comparative-Relational Meaning
Verbal	Where are these people you invited over?	I'm angry with you for not letting us have this time to ourselves.	(-)
Tone	Polite and civil	Angry and distant	(+)
Sequence	Topic shift	Answering her question	(-)
Verbal	Where is this good looking, well-built man . . .?	I'm angry with you for not letting us have this time to ourselves.	(-)
Tone of voice	Sarcastic and disrespectful	Polite and civil	(-)
Summary of overall relational meaning: Comparatively speaking, George was inconsistently trying to establish distance from Martha by ignoring Martha and shifting the topic.			
The above five relational meanings (four "-" and one "+") transformed one another into a qualitatively different composite: George displayed polite disrespect toward Martha.			

Because George and Martha did not engage in metatalk to deal with the mutual exclusivity of their messages, and because George did not exit, it is a game without end. As we can see, George uses mutually exclusive messages to counter mutually exclusive messages from Martha. That is the reason they shift

topics and never reach closure. Even if George had engaged in metatalk, we could expect the same old business of topic shifting from Martha. Their topic shifting is habitual. Without talking about these shifts, they continue to oscillate by producing mutually exclusive messages. There is simply no way out for either of them. In order to break the bond of double bind communication, they must learn how to engage in comparative-relational metatalk with each other, which automatically eliminates the second element of double bind. Or, perhaps, the exit strategy (e.g., separation or divorce) may be used to eliminate double bind communication.

Summary

This chapter demonstrates the usefulness of the comparative-relational method in analyzing double bind. To overcome double bind situations, it is imperative that communicative partners learn how to engage in comparative-relational metatalk whenever mutually exclusive negative meanings are perceived. Engaging in this metatalk will provide a sense of closure to partners' dialogue in a specific topic area, and will eliminate the never-ending oscillation from topic to topic with continuous level shifts.

It is important to note that an informed analysis takes long hours and much hard work. When people are called upon to verbalize the relational meanings behind certain words, nonverbal cues, tone of voice, etc., they usually find they have to overcome layers of difficulties (Lee, Joakimides, & Wander,

1994). Lee, Joakimides, and Wander (1994) talk about comparative-relational analysis as a four-step process. First, individuals have to be convinced that talking about how people in their lives use an utterance is something worthwhile or significant. Second, they have to overcome the difficulty in remembering how talk proceeded in their family a long time ago. Third, when discussions about the relational meaning of an utterance proceed, their personal history becomes increasingly more vivid and present. Thus, they have to overcome the difficulty in dealing with intense emotions evoked by their talk about talk in the past. Finally, once individuals set their minds on verbalizing relational meanings of word choice, nonverbal cues, and sequence in a comparative fashion, they have to grapple with words to describe "what they know" about the relational aspect of their lifeworld.[20]

From the analysis above, we see that George and Martha have two very different perspectives about their relational meaning. The value in this method is that the couple is now able to question the relational meaning through comparative-relational analysis. They now have a method through which they can get at and understand shared relational meanings. Their debates may be lively, but they will find that they can learn from each other interesting information about themselves and their own culture, and they can make sound decisions about how to proceed in the future. Each may come up with different alternates and, therefore, provide different accounts (relational metatalk) of relational

meanings, but at least, by using relational metatalk, they have a framework through which they can better understand their lifeworld.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

> As science, epistemology "is the study of how particular organisms or aggregates of organisms *know*, *think*, and *decide* (Bateson, 1979, p. 246).

Throughout his life, Gregory Bateson strove to develop a universal epistemology. He drew on a wide range of fields to illustrate his approach, among them anthropology, biology, cybernetics, engineering, mathematics, philosophy, psychology, and religion. According to Rieber (1989), "Bateson's career was one of an intellectual nomad, traveling from place to place, from one field to another, without ever settling into the safety of a secure niche" (p. 2). Bateson was constantly on the lookout for "intellectual spurs" as Rieber called them. He describes Bateson as being obsessed by the belief that our *traditional* categories of thought had grown stale and that our current search for practical solutions has become "utterly bogged down in this backwash of stale ideas" (p. 2).

Bateson held that it is not only important for people to try new things, and to *think* new thoughts, he believed that it was essential to our well-being. According to Bateson, trying new things is a way to recharge one's batteries. Suddenly one is able to come up with answers and notice things of difference, something that was not there yesterday (Rieber, 1989). Bateson strongly believed that if we allow ourselves to notice difference, a whole new line of thinking opens to us. Difference is what *provokes* us into activity. This is not

saying that difference *causes* activity. Rather, when we notice difference, we find ourselves thinking about things that are not necessarily related to the activity provoking it. The map, as Bateson would often say, is not the territory it represents. Difference enables us to ask ourselves questions, such as, "Now why am I thinking about him?" or "What on earth provoked me to think about such and such?" Differences generate class-member hierarchies in our mind. Differences between differences yield new feedback. Bateson asserted that some feedback involves interaction with the environment; while other feedback is internal and reflects various summations and reclassifications. To Bateson, sound epistemology reflects the way our minds work.

Bateson's earliest research identified patterns of interchange between self and others that lead to breakdown in social integration. His seminal work on schizophrenic behavior led him to his theory of double bind. The theory lay in an awareness that certain interaction systems may be dysfunctional. Next came the recognition that certain symptoms of schizophrenia suggest an inability to discriminate between logical types. Before he could advance his theory further, however, he took a detour by accepting an offer to study why two "autistic" otters would not play with one another at Fleishhacker Zoo in San Francisco, California (Haley, 1976). What Bateson discovered had a profound impact on his later research, namely, that two organisms could exist side by side yet fail to communicate with each other. Ultimately, Bateson discovered that play occurs

only if the participants can exchange metacommunicative messages, that is, if they can offer a signal of some sort carrying the message: "This is play." This message is subtle, but important. Bateson explained that the message "this is play" contains elements of paradox. For instance, a playful bite is a bite, but does not denote what would be denoted by being bitten. The paradox is similar to Epimenides' paradox (see note 1). This discovery led him to Russell's *Theory of Logical Types.* It also provided him with enough information to formulate a theory about the etiology of schizophrenia, specifically the elements needed to constitute a double bind.

Bateson collaborated with many people. As a consequence, a number of his ideas got misused and diffused. He did not receive the recognition nor gain the reputation he deserved. Those who followed in his footsteps received recognition for his work. Ironically, the group closest to Bateson misinterpreted him and ended up leading communication scholars into a conceptual dead-end.

The purpose behind this critical analysis was to recover Bateson's original formulations of double bind, locate the areas of confusion and misuse, and offer an alternative approach. The following three approaches to relational communication—Rogers' emphasis on verbal, Burgoon's focus on nonverbal, and Baxter's center on dialectic—are evaluated against the backdrop of a revised Batesonian method: double-descriptive relational analysis. The

implications for the study of relational communication are discussed, and suggestions for future research are made.

Relational Communication Literature

The survey of literature in relational communication yields three different genres of interpersonal communication: verbal, nonverbal, and dialectic. Rogers' work was selected because of her research in relational communication from a verbal perspective; Burgoon's research was selected because she approaches relational communication from a nonverbal perspective; and Baxter's research was selected, in part because of her shift from traditional theoretical models to "those that would be included under the rubric 'social'" (Leeds-Herwitz, 1992, p. 239), and because she approaches relational communication from a different perspective—a dialectical perspective.

Rogers' coding scheme in verbal communication aimed at producing a methodology for describing patterns of communication exchange between interactants. This coding system described certain aspects of conversation, namely, symmetrical and complementary patterns, stressing the form of conversation rather than the content. Assignments in the coding system are made on the basis of whether a message is an attempt to assert definitional rights, make a request or accede the other's definition of the relationship, or record a nondemanding, nonaccepting leveling movement.

Rogers' coding scheme remains at the goal-oriented level. That is, her model cannot aid us in helping individuals to talk about comparison points in their relationships. Rogers' paradigm does not take into account nonverbal behavior (sequence, facial expression, position), topic shifts, or mutually exclusive interchanges. The coding scheme does not envision individuals trying to work out and understand relational meaning relevant to the situation at hand. What does Rogers' coding scheme offer George and Martha? An utterance may signal a submissive command, an accepting rejection (See Figure 7 in Chapter 4, page 87), or a condescending intimacy (See Figure 8 in Chapter 4, page 89). Accordingly, her paradigm is of limited use in trying to understand relational communication at the level of complexity I have shown it to have.

Burgoon's research, on the other hand, is oriented toward nonverbal cues, their impact on communication, their consistency, and the impact of the communicant's relationship to the nonverbal cues. Her early research argued that nonverbal cues are socially meaningful. The central questions driving her research centered on the extent to which social meanings associated with specific nonverbal behaviors yield consistent interpretations (i.e., empirically verifiable). Burgoon and associates found that people routinely send out multifaceted relational messages and concluded that to understand the interpretations of any of the cues, a larger cue complex must be taken into consideration.

What is troubling about Burgoon's research in nonverbal communication as it pertains to relational communication is that it screens out both verbal communication and sequence. What does Burgoon's model tell us about George and Martha's relationship? George and Martha have a troubling marriage. Unifying their nonverbal behavior cannot possibly address underlying relational paradoxes. Taking the figures in Chapter 4, Burgoon's model cannot detect the mutually exclusive messages sent out by George and Martha. Her model would tell us that George and Martha are either intimate or distant. In Figure 8 (see Chapter 4, page 89) George and Martha's close proximity (and even the verbal cues at a surface level) following Burgoon, indicate intimacy. Burgoon's rules do not account for the mother/child in contrast with the lover/lover aspect of the word choice. Burgoon's model also fails in Frame 5 (see Appendix B). In this exchange, George and Martha are physically closest (i.e., most intimate according to Burgoon's model) during the last three sentences (starting with "Fix me another drink . . . lover); at the same time their words and other nonverbal cues are sarcastic and angry. Burgoon's model, absorbed with the nonverbal, cannot sensitize topic shifting (see Frames 4 and 5 in Appendix B). In brief, the primary failing of Burgoon's approach is that it takes one segment of human communication—nonverbal communication—and treats it as if it were the whole of relational communication.

Baxter's research from a dialectical perspective offers the most promise for relational communication scholars. Baxter's most recent research effort defines the domain of contradictions subjectively experienced by the parties. She posits that three bipolar pairs constitute the primary dialectical forces which meet the conditions of both unity and negation, thus constituting dialectical contradiction: autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and predictability-novelty. Although the two tendencies that form a dialectical contradiction are logically perceived as polar opposites, Baxter (1990) contends that the two poles are in constant motion with respect to one another. Baxter's research in contradiction led her to two other aspects of relational communication: root metaphors and play in intimate relationships.

Baxter believes that root metaphors are another way by which parties communicate about their relationship since "metaphors afford a compactness and vividness of expression difficult to match through other linguistic forms" (Baxter, 1992a, p. 255). What makes this particular line of Baxter's research so exciting is her recognition that metaphors are a "form" of relational metatalk. Despite this important recognition, metaphors are at best a weak "form" of metatalk because they lack precision. Metaphors are *implicit* comments at the metatalk level. As such, the ambiguity of metaphors makes them easily misconstrued. We cannot know if we are at the metatalk level or goal-oriented level. Let us look at the following example from Martha: "Phrasemaker." What

exactly does this metaphor mean? Does it mean George has a wonderful facility with words? Does it mean George composes attractive but meaningless phrases? Metaphors are single-descriptive—they do not help us get down to specific message-oriented understanding. Similarly, when Martha called George a "pig," what did she mean? We can only infer relational meaning from her comment. Finally, metaphor is "verbal communication" only. If we consider other messages accompanying the "metaphor," for example, how the metaphor is said (e.g., tone of voice), and the sequence in which the metaphor is articulated, we may have a better understanding of the complex relational meanings sent out by a "metaphorical" utterance. In sum, the weaknesses of treating metaphors as relational metatalk include: (a) the lack of specificity in terms of level of talk; (b) essentialization based upon single description; and (c) the failure to consider message dimensions other than verbal communication.

During her investigation of intimate play, Baxter (1992b) identified six functions of play, of which two serve as metacommunicative functions. These are: (1) play oftentimes serves as a "safe communication" strategy that allows parties to undertake activities that might prove embarrassing—such as playfully declaring one's emotional attachment to the other in order to test for reciprocated emotion (Betcher, 1981, cited in Baxter, 1992b, p. 337); and (2) play provides partners with a repertoire through which to construct meaning. I argue that the ambiguity of "play" in her analysis makes it a questionable metacommunicative

vehicle. What can "play" tell us about the relationship between George and Martha?

In Frame 4 (see Appendix B), when Martha playfully asks George for a "big sloppy kiss" and assumes a mother/child posture, is Martha dialectically trying to shift between autonomy and connection, or trying to find a balance between predictability and novelty? Although play may serve to counter or transform problems, it does not help people negotiate their way out of mutually exclusive relational binds (see Frame 5, Appendix B). Moreover, play can only occur if the participants are capable of exchanging metacommunicative messages—signals that convey the message: "This is play." In double bind, it is exactly at the metacommunicative level that the communication goes bankrupt. Since "play" assumes that what ought to be true is no longer true, it requires the necessity of metatalk. I concur with Baxter that play is a type of social interaction, but "play" cannot locate problems and contradictions at a specific level of talk. As such, her approach breaks down when trying to understand the whole of relational communication. As pointed out with metaphor, play cannot get down to specific message-oriented understanding. What we need is a more precise methodology with which scholars and ordinary people can talk about composite relational meanings. MEG offers the framework upon which the precision can be built.

The MEG Hierarchy

MEG, the new hierarchy of human communication introduced in Chapter 2, offers a viable alternative to studying troubling communication in interpersonal relationships. MEG divides talk into classes: Metatalk, epistemic talk, and goal-oriented talk. Goal-oriented talk consists of "utterances that share a relationship of aiming at a goal when lifeworld can be assumed" (Lee, 1994, p. 149). Metatalk consists of talk about talk and contains linguistic metatalk and relational metatalk. Linguistic metatalk allows us to discuss the codes used in communication, and relational metatalk allows us to discuss the relational messages that are the other essential part of communication. Epistemic talk is talk about how we "come to know" and it contains two classes: single- and double-descriptive talk. Single-descriptive talk is confined to internalized traits of isolated entities whereas double-descriptive talk combines information from two or more sources. Double description is of great importance, because it enables us to uncover the social and personal roots of our behavior and frame our behavior into various sorts of sequential chunks (Bateson, 1979).

The current line of relational research cannot describe relational communication, especially complex, interrelated communication such as double bind. However, as seen in Chapter 4, MEG enables us to examine "transformed relational meanings" by treating aspects of communication (verbal, nonverbal, sequence) holistically rather than separately. Researchers cannot just look at

verbal, nonverbal, interruption, topic shifting, sequence, etc., as isolated elements of communication. They must be integrated into a relational composite.

Suggestions for Future Research

This thesis was designed to help future researchers in interpersonal communication transform double bind. It does so by affirming Bateson's life-long goal to develop a universal epistemology (double description and logical types). Reflecting on paradoxes in the family (civilized cruelty, loving hatred, polite accusation, silencing love through abandonment of individual voices), we realize that, at one time or another, we are all caught in conflicting relational worlds. What is good, affectionate, wholesome, polite, decent, innocent, sacred or loving within one social institution is considered bad, shocking, unconscionable, crude, indecent, lewd, profane or hateful within another institution (family, marriage, school, office, hospital, church). How do we talk about these dilemmas? How can we ask questions without being punished? How do we transcend them?

One area of future research where need is evident is the refinement of language and the development of methods with which we can indeed talk about talk, talk about relationships, and talk about differences. Let us look at three areas of research where the development of both language and method would be beneficial: interpersonal conflict, active listening and assertive communication.

Interpersonal conflict: Millar, Rogers, and Bavelas (1984) conceptualize interpersonal conflict as a power struggle. They propose that conflict is composed of three consecutive one-up comments. "The power struggle is manifested in the control dimensions of relationships" (cited in Fisher & Adams, 1994, p. 314). We have submissive conflict, competitive conflict, and integrative conflict. What does this mean in a double bind situation? Perhaps double bind should be considered a type of conflict. If so, then we need to use a set of strategies that can sensitize double bind conflict. The double-descriptive analysis of talk and metatalk may help in this regard. By doing so, participants as well as researchers may learn to understand the nature of their conflict in a more holistic and level-sensitive manner.

Active listening: Students in interpersonal communication classrooms, as well as in public speaking courses, are being trained in active listening. Indeed, "active listening" has almost become a buzzword in communication textbooks.[21] What do we know about active listening? How do we teach people to be active listeners? How does active listening aid us in double bind situations? Can active listening help George and Martha? How? Should they paraphrase codes and relation at the same time? Maybe active listening is being able to listen from different levels of relational meaning. Researchers may develop specific methods derived from the MEG hierarchy to facilitate more holistic and level-sensitive listening skills.

Assertive communication: Assertiveness is defined as "interactive style that is self-enhancing, expressive, and self-supportive, while protective of the choices of others. Not aggressive and not shy" (Wilson, Hantz, & Hanna, 1989, p. 422). In the above definition, there are a number of single-descriptive words (e.g., expressive, protective, not aggressive, not shy), which may vary from culture to culture, from gender to gender, from region to region, etc. In addition, in the face of "double binds," how can one be self-enhancing, supportive, and protective of others? For example, George seemed to be quite assertive when he said "no" to Martha (i.e., "I don't want to kiss you") but his assertiveness was itself relationally paradoxical. Even if we grant that these single-descriptive traits are wise and valuable, we still do not know how to go about cultivating them? Perhaps, the ability to conduct double-descriptive relational analysis is the first step in gaining assertiveness without further producing mutually exclusive relational messages. Future research may focus on the refinement of assertiveness training along the line suggested here.

The logical beauty of the concept of double bind gave the impression of being a handy notion that could be plugged into many different models. As this thesis points out, that misappropriation of Bateson's theory has led to an intellectual dead end. Considering the passion that double bind has evoked over the years, clearly double bind should be approached with conceptual and logical rigor. It is my hope that scholars will investigate the issues discussed above, as

well as others, and instigate critical discussions among students, teachers, business people, and practitioners of family communication on paradoxical issues.

NOTES

[1] Epimenides' paradox is more commonly known as the "liar's paradox." For instance, if a person says, "I am lying," is that person telling the truth? If s/he is telling the truth, s/he is lying.

[2] Abeles' (1976) essay reviews briefly experimental research on double bind from 1961–1975. She said that perhaps the heaviest blow to empirical research resulted from Ringuette and Kennedy's (1966) investigation as to whether double bind communications were present in written correspondence. The primary aim of the study was to "assess whether persons highly conversant with the double bind concept could reliably identify such communication in letters, and if so, whether its presence or absence was related to the fact of the letters having been written by the parents of a schizophrenic or nonschizophrenic person" (see Ringuette & Kennedy, 1966, p. 136, cited in Sluzki & Ransom, 1976, p. 152). Five types of judges were present. Among the expert judges were Gregory Bateson, William Fry and Paul Watzlawick; their interjudge correlation was a mere 0.19. Following are the three conclusions Ringuette and Kennedy offered:

> (a) Double bind communication is not present in letters, in which case a postulate of the theory is clearly invalid; (b) it is not presently a measurable phenomenon; (c) it actually does not exist (Ringuette and Kennedy 1966, p. 141, cited in Abeles, 1976, p. 130).

Abeles argues that Ringuette and Kennedy's conclusions are in some respect inappropriate because:

> (a) Binds may or may not be present in such letters; one would expect their reliable recognition to require the presence of the other significant party (parties) to the interaction (or exchange of letters); (b) it is certainly difficult to measure, and measurement, in the experimental sense, may not be the most appropriate approach; and (c) its existence is a matter of conceptualization, and is thus in no better or worse state than other concepts (p. 130).

[3] For a detailed explanation of Lee's new logical hierarchy, refer to her 1994 article entitled *On not missing the boat: A processual method of inter/cultural understanding of idioms and lifeworld.* The new logical hierarchy received its new name, ***The MEG Hierarchy*** by Lee, Joakimides, and Metzger (1994). "MEG is an acronym that stems from the three types of talk classified in the hierarchy of human communication: **m**etatalk, **e**pistemic talk, and **g**oal-oriented talk" (p. 11).

[4] Bateson's use of logical types was discussed by Watzlawick et al. (1967), and his notion of double description was mentioned by Lannamann (1991). However, Bateson's works remain obscure in our field. For a systematic treatment of his impact on multi-disciplinary scholarship, see Rieber, 1989.

[5] The relevance of the classification is relative to the purpose of the classification. What is important is the logical consistency of the assignment of members to a class.

[6] Bateson proposes the notion of "metacommunicative messages:"

> The other set of levels of abstraction we will call metacommunicative (e.g., "My telling you where to find the cat was friendly," or "This is play"). In these, the subject of discourse is the relationship between the speakers (1972, p. 178).

[7] Adapted from Bateson (1991), p. 167.

[8] To assist our understanding of human mental processing, Bateson uses the metaphors digital, analogic, and gestalt codification. "Gestalt" is typically defined as "a configuration or figure whose integration differs from the totality obtained by summing the parts" (Dictionary of Behavioral Science, 1973, p. 159). This definition embedded in gestalt psychology anticipates a system postulate, "the whole is more than the sum of its parts." According to Bateson (1956), gestalt codification is the most fundamental metaphor for understanding human mental processing because humans think in terms of *relationships* rather than concrete objects.

[9] Bateson's discussion was oriented toward psychology; from a communication point of view *relationship* should be substituted for *psychological mechanism*.

[10] Bateson refers to the case of three neurons to discuss the report and command aspects of communication. Consider A, B, and C, in series, so that A leads to the firing of B, and the firing of B leads to the firing of C. Bateson argues that the message transmitted by B has two sorts of messages. First, it can be regarded as a "report" to the effect that A fired at a previous moment; and second, it is a "command" or cause for C's later firing (Ruesch & Bateson, 1951). Bateson asserts that the same thing happens in human communication. When A speaks to B, whatever words s/he uses carry these two aspects: they tell B about A, conveying information about some perception or knowledge which A has; and they will be a cause or basis for B's later actions.

[11] An example of a higher level language is PASCAL.

[12] One example of an object-oriented language is C++.

[13] To some extent this is equivalent to the error of logical typing that Bateson addressed in that as the class may not be a member of itself, the metalanguage may (need) not be a part of the language.

[14] Historically scholars stay at the metatalk level to interpret *for* participants their; that is, to infer relational meanings *for* them.

[15] A transaction type is the relationship between contiguous messages.

[16] See, for example, Baxter's early research on compliance-gaining strategies as politeness, 1984; Gender differences in heterosexual relationship rules, 1986, Symbols of relationship identity, 1987; Root metaphors, 1992a; Forms and function of play, 1992b; and also see Baxter and Wilmot's (1984) study on Secret Tests; and Baxter and Widenmann's (1993) study on revealing and not revealing the status of romantic relationships.

[17] Foucault (1987) indicated that such a distinction is not absolute. Rather, the line between sanity and insanity was marked only a few hundred years ago with multiple historical and ideological reasons behind it.

[18] Just as fire and water cannot coexist, relational closeness (e.g., love, intimacy, respect) and relational distance (e.g., hatred, contempt, disrespect) cannot coexist.

[19] Bateson's primary negative injunction and secondary negative injunction are combined in this model. Bateson's primary negative injunction means verbal communication that is punishment oriented, "Don't come close to me, otherwise, I'll punish you." His secondary negative injunction means nonverbal communication that negates verbal communication, "Don't see what I just said as a punishment." From the discussion in Chapter 2, the author argues that both verbal and nonverbal communication are capable of sending relational meanings and they frame and/or modify each other. Bateson's two injunctions sensitize us to the case where "nonverbal cues negate verbal statements." The first elements, in contrast, suggest mutual negation rather than unilateral negation. That is, by revising Bateson's terms we are able to understand more types of double bind cases (e.g., verbal and nonverbal mutually negate each other, sequence and verbal mutually negate each other).

[20] The authors found that speakers live in the lifeworld relationally. One speaker interviewed said, "How obvious it has been for me, yet how little I know about it!" (Lee, Joakimides, & Wander, 1994, p. 14).

[21] For skills in active listening see Adler & Towne, 1993; Verderber, R. F. & Verderber, K. S., 1992; Caputo, Hazel, & McMahon, 1994; Johnson, Kline, Krupar, & Hutchins, 1992; Luotto & Stoll, 1992.

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APPENDIX A

FATHER-DAUGHTER DIALOGUE

1. Daughter: Why did Grandpa laugh when you called me "maimou?" (an utterance marked as *goal-oriented talk* in question format)

2. Father: Because "maimou" means something different in Greek. (an utterance marked as *linguistic metatalk*) Your grandfather used to call me a "monkey" when he thought I was being mischievous. (an utterance marked as *linguistic metatalk* in explanation format)

3. Daughter: Why do you call me a "monkey" after all these years? (an utterance marked as *goal-oriented talk*)

4. Father: I don't mean to call you monkey. I am making a pun from the English word "my" and the Greek suffix "mou," which means "mine" when appended to a word. (an utterance marked as *linguistic metatalk*) When I use the expression "maimou" with you, I'm really saying "my mine." To me, calling you "maimou" is very similar to calling you "agape mou," which means "my love" in Greek. (an utterance marked as *linguistic metatalk*)

5. Daughter: ***In comparison with*** other expressions, what does the expression "maimou" tell me about the *relationship* between you and Grandpa? (an utterance marked as *relational metatalk* in question format)

6. Father: Your Grandpa used to call me a monkey whenever I was doing something of which he did not approve. I grew up during the war so we didn't have many things. I am very inquisitive, as you know, and things were not so different when I was a child—I enjoy taking things apart to see how they function. Mostly, my father did not want to discourage me from doing such things, but sometimes he would get angry and call me a "maimou." Other times, when he was not as angry with me, he would use the word "maimouthaki," which means "little monkey." "Maimouthaki" is a more endearing term. Whenever Grandpa called me a "maimou" I knew I was in trouble, our relationship was very distant. It was a warning to stop whatever I was doing immediately. When I use "maimou" with you, however, I feel very close to you. I guess "maimou" has different relational meanings between Grandpa and me versus you and me. That's the reason why he laughed. (utterances marked as *relational metatalk*)

7. Daughter: In addition to his words, how could you tell if Grandpa was really angry?

8. Father: It would depend on his tone of voice, the way in which he looked at me and shaking his index finger at me. If he was really angry, his face would also turn a little red.

APPENDIX B

EXCERPTS FROM *WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?*

The following excerpts are taken from Act I, scene one of Edward Albee's play for Chapter 4 analysis.

Frame 1:

Martha: . . . you make me puke!

George: That wasn't a very nice thing to say, Martha.

Martha: Oh, I like your anger. I think that's what I like about you most . . . your anger. You're such a . . . such a simp! You don't even have the . . . the what?

George: . . .guts?

Martha: Phrasemaker. . . .(*Laughter*)

Frame 2:

Martha: . . . You never put any ice in my drink. Why is that?

George: I always put ice in your drink. You eat it, that's all. It's that habit you have of chewing your ice cubes like a cocker spaniel. You'll crack your big teeth.

Martha: They're my big teeth.

George: Some of them . . . some of them.

Martha: I've got more teeth than you've got.

George: Two more.

Martha: Well . . . you're going bald.

George: So are you. . . . (*Laughter*)

Frame 3:

George: Hello, honey.

Martha: Hello. C'mon over here and give your Mommy a big sloppy kiss.

Frame 4:

George: . . . no . . .

Martha: I want a big sloppy kiss!

George: I don't *want* to kiss you, Martha. Where are these people you invited over? Where is this good-looking, well-built man and his slim-hipped wife? (*George exits the room*)

Martha: They stayed on to talk to Daddy. They'll be here . . . Why don't you want to kiss me?

. . . George?

Frame 5:

Martha: (*Follows George downstairs*) George?

George: Yes, love.

Martha: Why didn't you want to kiss me?

George: Well, dear, if I kissed you I'd get all excited. I'd get beside myself, and I'd take you, by force, right here on the living room rug, and then our little guests would walk in, and . . . well, just think what your father would say about that.

Martha: You pig.

George: Oink! Oink!

Martha: Fix me another drink . . . *lover*!

George: My God, you can swig it down can't you?

Martha: I'm firsty. . . .