

THE DOUBLE BIND TECHNIQUE IN  
ADLERIAN FAMILY COUNSELING

by

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## ABSTRACT

The double bind technique was proposed to identify certain interactions in Adlerian family counseling which affect change.

A review of related literature was presented including the double bind theory, its application as a therapeutic technique, and a review of the operational process of Adlerian family counseling. The necessary sequence of events describing the double bind technique was delineated. The sequence in the original research on the double bind theory was used as a model for this delineation.

The data collected consisted of verbatim transcripts of Adlerian family counseling sessions. These transcripts were reviewed for occurrences of the double bind technique. The results of the study include five varieties of the double bind technique. A transcript of each variety is presented as it occurred within the context of the operational model of Adlerian family counseling.

The double bind technique provides cognitive understanding of certain interactions which facilitate change in Adlerian family counseling. This technique may be incorporated in counselor education programs, providing additional understanding of the Adlerian family counseling process.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Counselors who are able to affect change are frequently unable to describe exactly how they do so. It is difficult to ascertain if the counselor-in-training learns more from the modeling process or from the cognitive presentations of the counseling process. One thing is apparent, a combination of learning styles is desirable.

The cognitive understanding of the facilitation of change began as people placed this process in a scientific framework. This pursuit began with Freud in his attempt to use the phenomena of "self-understanding" as the key element in the facilitation of change. Although Freud marked the beginning of Westerners' attempt to view change in a scientific format, there is still no method for rigorous examination of self-understanding in therapeutic intervention.

Adler, cited in Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956) and Sullivan (1954) recognized the interpersonal element of intervention along with self-understanding. Adler defined "the building up of courage" as a basic ingredient in every step of treatment.

Interpersonal theory described by Sullivan credits "facilitation of the interview" as the significant element



The counselor plays an active role in making sure "not to injure" the fragile trust between him/herself and the counselee.

Both Adler and Sullivan described the interactions between counselee and counselor in a conceptual form that is difficult to examine systematically, even though it remains important in understanding therapeutic intervention.

A variety of elements have been studied in an attempt to understand therapeutic intervention. The communicative element of the interaction between counselor and counselee was examined by Bateson, Jackson and Haley in 1956 as a result of their research on the double bind situation in schizophrenic families. This was developed further in "the bind and double bind technique" by Erickson and Rossi in 1975 to describe interactions in hypnotherapy.

#### Statement of Purpose

This study identifies the use of the double bind technique in Adlerian family counseling and proposes to delineate varieties of this technique.

#### Need for Study

In light of the above information, the needs for the study of the use of the double bind technique in Adlerian family counseling are:

1. To help determine whether or not the double bind technique can provide a frame of reference for

understanding interactions between counselor and counselee.

2. To provide a descriptive structure of the double bind technique which could aid the practicing counselor and counselor-in-training to become more effective in facilitating change with a larger variety of clients.

### Questions

The following questions are addressed in this study:

1. Can the double bind theory provide a criterion for defining a technique used to facilitate certain changes in Adlerian family counseling?
2. Can the double bind technique provide a method of viewing certain therapeutic interactions which facilitate change in Adlerian family counseling?
3. Where can the double bind technique be placed in the operational model of Adlerian family counseling?

### Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made in this study:

1. The double bind theory accurately describes a process of interaction between two or more persons.

2. The necessary sequence of events defined in the Batesonian double bind situation can be transcribed successfully to a sequence of events in the double bind technique.
3. Adlerian family counseling is an "effective" modality for the study of counselor-in-training.
4. The double bind technique will assist the reader in developing a cognitive understanding of the facilitation of change in Adlerian family counseling.
5. Increased cognitive understanding will increase counselor effectiveness.

#### Limitations

The following limitations are considered in this study:

1. The specific results interpreted by the investigator are based on observing one counselor's facilitation of Adlerian family counseling.
2. The data is limited to verbal communications and the context in which it takes place.

#### Definition of Terms

The following definition of terms is provided:

Adlerian Family Counseling--A form of counseling, usually occurring within the context of an educational group, in

which misbehavior is accounted for by one's misinterpretations and mistaken concepts about oneself and the process of social living. New information, designed to correct the mistaken self concept, is believed to change behavior.

System--A set of interrelated parts directed towards a specific outcome.

Interactional System--Two or more communicants in the process of, or at the level of, defining the nature of their relationship (Watzlawick, Beavis and Jackson, 1967).

Double Bind--A situation, imposed upon a person by significant others, communicated through conflicting messages at different levels, and in which any response by the person will be responded to by punishment (Bateson et al., 1956).

Therapeutic Bind--A situation, between counselee and counselor, in which the client feels an obligation to respond in a therapeutic direction (Erickson, Rossi and Rossi, 1976).

Therapeutic Double Bind--A situation, presented to the counselee by the client, communicated through therapeutic messages at different levels, and in which any response by the client will be in a therapeutic direction (Erickson, et al., 1976).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following review of literature is an outline of the development of the bind and double bind technique, emphasizing the double bind theory. The literature review also describes Adlerian family counseling.

#### The Double Bind

Several practitioners use techniques similar to the bind and double bind in the facilitation of therapeutic intervention. Dreikurs (1972) and Haley (1963) describe Dunlap's "negative suggestion" as a method for motivating a client to do something by suggesting the opposite. This type of intervention is also referred to as "paradoxical intention" (Frankl, 1960): cured if you do, cured if you don't. "Deconditioning and desensitization" (Wolpe, 1958), developed by the behaviorists, represent another version of the technique. Dreikurs (1972) refers to "antisuggestions" as a method in which the therapist recognizes a client's private logic and asks him to intensify it.

The double bind theory was developed in an attempt to understand the etiology of schizophrenia from an interactional point of view by Bateson et al., (1956). Utilizing

theoretical implications, they later describe the technique as "prescribing the symptom." Jackson and Weakland (1961) incorporate this technique in family therapy, and Jackson (1963) applies it to a system of therapy with paranoid patients. The double bind theory is important in understanding Haley's (1963) basic rule of brief psychotherapy, the encouragement of the symptom in such a way that the patient can not continue to use it.

The double bind theory is utilized by Haley (1963) to explain the facilitation of hypnotherapy. The bind and double bind is outlined in an attempt to describe systematically the interactional process of hypnosis and understand its therapeutic effect.

### Double Bind Theory

The double bind theory is based in part on Bateson's et al., (1956) communications theory derived from Whitehead and Russell (1910) concept of logical types. The central thesis of this theory is that there is a discontinuity between a class and its members; that is, a class cannot be a member of itself nor can one of the members be a class, since the term used for class is a different logical type than the term used for members. For instance, a baseball team cannot be a baseball player, player and team are not interchangeable. Whereas formal logic attempts to maintain discontinuity between a class and its members, Bateson's et al., (1956)

theory of double bind assumes that in the "psychology of real communications" this discontinuity is continually and inevitably breached. This breach can be seen in the pathology classified as schizophrenia, occurring in the human organism when certain formal patterns occur in the communication between mother and child.

An illustration of this communication, in which two different logical types are presented, would be a mother and child interaction where the mother exhibits both hostile (withdrawing) behavior and simulated loving (approaching) behavior (Bateson et al., 1956), the purpose of the loving behavior being to deny the hostile behavior. The important point is that loving behavior is then a comment on (since it is compensatory for) her hostile behavior and consequently the messages are of different logical types.

The mother not only attempts to deny the hostile feelings but also uses her child's response to affirm that her behavior is loving. Since the loving behavior is simulated, the child will not accurately interpret her communication. Thus, the child can't discriminate between the expression of simulated love (one logical type) and the real feeling of hostility (another logical type). As a result the child must systematically distort (breach) his/her perception of meta-communicative signals.

For example, if a mother feels hostile toward her child she might say "Go to bed, you're tired now and I want

you to get your sleep because I love you." This loving statement is intended to deny a feeling which if verbalized might be "Get out of my sight because I am sick of you." The child would be punished for discriminating accurately what she is expressing by recognizing that the mother does not want him/her. However, the child is also punished for discriminating inaccurately because if he/she moves close to her (assuming love is the real message), mother must respond according to her real feeling and move away from the child. Thus the child is caught in a double bind.

Bateson et al., (1956) formalized the sequences of experiences in family interactional systems which induce the symptomology of schizophrenia. For these unresolvable sequences the term "double bind" was coined.

The necessary sequence of events for a double bind situation, as Bateson et al., (1956) outlined are:

1. It must involve two or more persons. The child "victim" is inflicted with a double bind by a mother or any combination of mother, father, and/or siblings.
2. It must be a repeated experience. The double bind is a recurrent theme in the experience of the victim and eventually the double bind structure comes to be a habitual experience.



3. There must be a primary negative injunction.  
This may have two forms: (a) Do not do so and so, or I will punish you, (b) If you do not do so and so, I will punish you.
4. There must be a secondary injunction conflicting with the first at a more abstract level, and, like the first, this injunction is endorsed by punishments or signals which threaten survival. "Non-verbal" behavior such as posture, gesture, tone of voice, and the implications concealed in verbal comment may all be used to convey messages such as, "Do not question my love"; "Do not see this as punishment"; "Do not see me as the punishing agent"; and so on.
5. There is a tertiary negative injunction prohibiting the victim from escaping the field. Obviously an infant is unable to escape; however, escape is also made impossible by devices like capricious promises of love.
6. Finally, the complete set of ingredients is no longer necessary when the victim has learned to perceive his/her universe in double bind patterns.

#### Adlerian Family Counseling

Alfred Adler organized the first Child Guidance Clinic in Vienna shortly after World War I. Rudolf Dreikurs,

a student of his, subsequently developed a Child Guidance Clinic in Chicago by 1939. This was the beginning of Adlerian open center family counseling in the United States. Christensen and Lowe applied this model in the College of Education at the University of Oregon in the mid-1950's. Christensen developed a similar model at The University of Arizona in the late 1960's, and his model is investigated in this study.

Adlerian open center family counseling occurs in the context of an educational group. A basic concept is that difficulties parents and teachers experience with children stem from a lack of information rather than pathology. Misbehavior is accounted for by misinterpretations and mistaken concepts about oneself in the process of social living.

Adlerians view people as social beings the interpersonal movement as an attempt to belong to the social body of human kind. The first experience people have with how they belong is in the family group, and frequently this style of belonging is incorporated into other social groups. As a child learns to belong, his/her experiences concerning belonging are subject to misperceptions and misinterpretations. As new information, designed to correct these mistakes, is provided, the child is capable of change.

The primary task for the counselor then is understanding the child's own misperceptions and providing

new information which allows him/her to correct mistaken concepts and change behavior.

In order to understand the counselee's world, his/her interpersonal dynamics are explored. In Adlerian family counseling this process begins as the counselor gathers information regarding the family constellation: the birth order; names and ages of children; miscarriages and stillbirths; serious childhood illnesses and other members of the family living in the home. Patterns about how children fit into the family frequently occur and family constellation information allows counselors to capitalize on this common factor of family systems.

The next step in understanding the interpersonal dynamics is identification of the problem child and description of specific situations of concern. When eliciting specific examples of the problem situations, the counselor focuses on how the parent responds. These illustrations of the interpersonal dynamics allow the parents to understand their contribution to the specific problem.

As parents describe a typical day the counselor gathers information on the interpersonal dynamics of the entire family. The counselor again focuses on how the parents respond both emotionally and behaviorally to specific situations. This process directs parents towards viewing the problem from an interpersonal level and helps the counselor form the diagnostic hypothesis.

The diagnostic hypothesis is shared with the parents prior to the children's interview. This addresses the child's goal of misbehavior in relation to the parents. Dreikurs (1948) described the goals of misbehavior as attention getting, power, revenge and assumed disability. When making the hypothesis about the goals of misbehavior, the counselor specifically examines how the parent responds emotionally to the child in specific situations.

For example, as the mother is describing one specific illustration of the almost daily fights between brother and sister, the counselors ask, "And how do you feel when they come home crying?" The mother then describes feeling angry towards the children. These feelings of anger would lead towards a hypothesis of a power struggle between mother and the children.

Dreikurs (1948) explains that the parent or adult involved with a misbehaving child will feel a certain type of emotion for each one of the goals of the misbehavior. If the goal of the child is attention, the parent will feel irritated; if the goal is power, the parent will feel anger; if the goal is revenge, the parent will feel hurt; and if the goal is assumed disability, the parent's feeling is hopelessness.

The parent interview terminates after sharing the diagnostic hypothesis and the child interview begins. The

counselor may receive a playroom report regarding the interpersonal relationships of the playroom group during the transition between the parent's and the children's interviews.

The child interview begins as the counselor describes the purpose of the meeting. The counselor shares the parent's concerns, enumerating specific examples of the problem parents and counselor have discussed. Focusing on the specific problems and misbehavior of the child is the first step of goal disclosure. This is the process in which the counselor suggests possible motivations for the child's misbehavior based on Dreikurs four goals of misbehavior. After goal disclosure the counselor shares the kinds of recommendations that will be made to the parents.

After the termination of the child's interview the parents return; the counselor then relates information from the child interview to the parents. The counselor then gives specific recommendations, suggesting one or two tasks for the parent to focus on until the next counseling session.

Christensen and Marchant (1979) have developed graphic representations to illustrate the operational model of Adlerian open center family counseling. This flow chart provides clarification of the above counseling process (Figure 1).

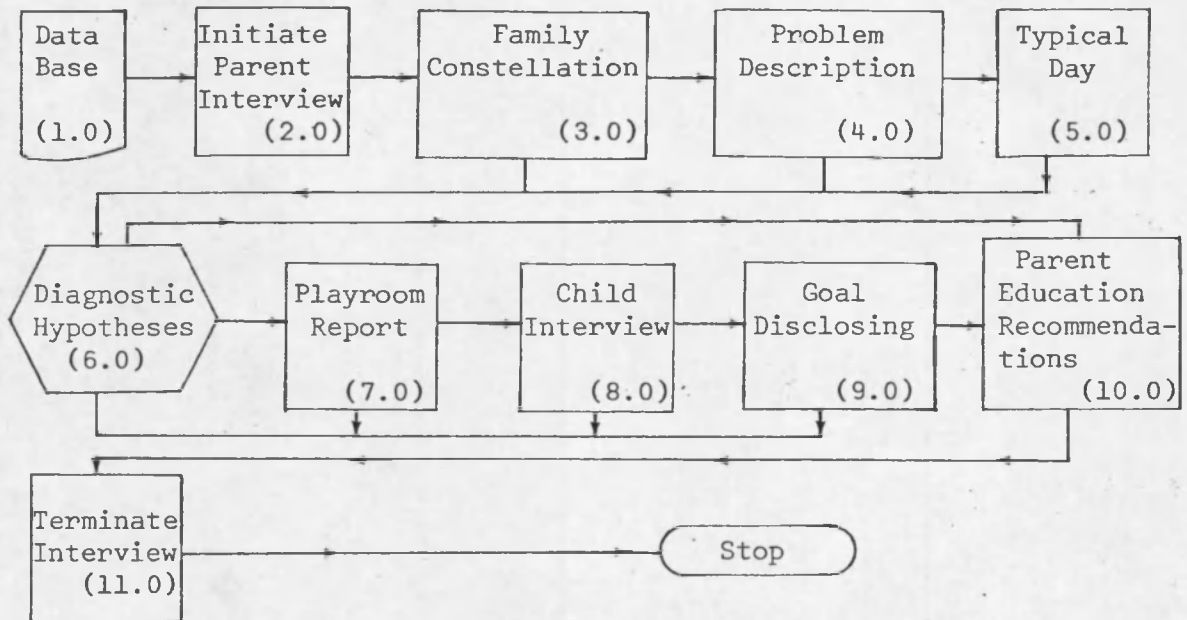


Figure 1. Open-Center Counseling Process (Christensen and Marchant, 1979, Figure 1)

### Summary

This chapter included a review of the double bind theory, presenting the basis for understanding of the double bind technique. Also a review of Adlerian family counseling is presented, including a discussion of the operational process of this counseling modality.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to identify the double bind technique for the purposes of understanding the interactions of change facilitation, in Adlerian family counseling. The double bind technique attempted to delineate the facilitation of therapeutic change by focusing on the communicative interchange between counselee and counselor.

The setting for the collection of the data was the Department of Counseling and Guidance at The University of Arizona. The families were self-referred and generally resided in the vicinity of Tucson, Arizona. They were aware of this service through a variety of sources including schools, physicians, media, friends and local service agencies.

The data for the research was collected through direct observations of Adlerian family counseling sessions. Since the counselor being studied was aware of this research project half of the sessions used were taped prior to conception of the research. Eight sessions were investigated. Each family counseling session studied was recorded from the beginning to the end on audio or video tape.

The verbatim transcripts were then examined for evidence of the necessary sequence of events indicating



occurrence of the double bind technique. The sequential events Bateson et al., (1956) outlined during the original research on the double bind theory served as a guide for identifying the sequence of events in the double bind technique.

The necessary sequence of events for identifying the double bind technique employed were:

1. Two or more persons were involved. The counselee and counselor engaged in a positive relationship for the purposes of effecting change.
2. There may be a single or series of positive double bind technique utilized until change is effected.
3. A primary positive message was offered at the object level of communication.
4. A secondary positive message at a higher level of abstraction was offered. This message was often communicated through implication.
5. A tertiary positive understanding was established between counselee and counselor which encouraged the client to remain in therapy until the therapeutic task was completed (rapport).

6. The therapeutic relationship was terminated :  
when the client learned to perceive the world  
in new ways which freed him/her from misbe-  
havior.

#### Summary

Verbatim transcripts of Adlerian family counseling sessions were collected at The University of Arizona and studied for occurrences of the double bind technique. The sequential events, defining the double bind technique were outlined prior to data collection.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE DOUBLE BIND TECHNIQUE IN ADLERIAN FAMILY COUNSELING

As counselees enter therapy they are typically at an impasse in their interpersonal relationships. They are caught between resisting and yielding to their impulses, values and life styles. An effective counseling approach for resolving the dilemma is to allow the counselee to express both resistance and yielding. The double bind technique permits counselees to resist and yield to their impasse.

The counselee is presented by the counselor, with a primary message on an object level of communication and a secondary message on a more abstract level. The primary and secondary messages are different logical types. These two messages address the counselees' impasse and as they respond to both messages their resistance and their yielding are expressed. In this type of interaction between counselor and counselee resolution of the impasse occurs.

The counselor communicates the secondary message to the counselee through implication. This implication may be concealed in verbal or non-verbal comment.

In presenting the results of the data, five varieties of the double bind technique were explored:

1. the double bind question
2. The best at being worst
3. The reverse set
4. Prescribing the symptom
5. The time double bind

Each variety of double bind technique was then identified in the transcript of the counseling process where it occurred.

### The Double Bind Question

The double bind question is a method of presenting a choice of comparable options to the counselee. No matter which option the counselees respond to they are directed toward a therapeutic outcome.

The double bind question is used frequently in the counseling sessions facilitated by Christensen. This type of double bind is found at each step of the counseling process.

The following example illustrates the double bind question:

Christensen: What we're coping with here--the reason we use, "how are you feeling", is not to find out anything about mother, but to find out why the child is doing what she is doing. If the misbehavior in Tanya--makes mother mad, then chances are it's a design to show mother who is boss. And right now Tanya is an

extremely powerful person. And how does she demonstrate her power? Through weakness--helplessness or weakness is one of the most powerful postures a person can operate from. "I'm so stupid you have to help me", but notice the emphasis on the word "have to!" You must tell me which end of the pencil to sharpen cause "I'm too dumb." And that really bugs you, to have a kid push you into doing things for her when you know perfectly well she can do it for herself. That really gets to you. So it's a very effective power tool for Tanya. I would suspect that mother is the most susceptible to this kind of play, but teachers can be equally susceptible because our stock-in-trade is that we can educate kids. And to have a kid come up after we've just given our best lesson on pencil sharpening and he says, "which end of my pencil do I sharpen?" He's not only told you he is stupid, but he's also told you, "you didn't teach him anything"--which is really difficult for teachers to live

with. Now, it's a slap in mother's face in a sense when she says "which end of my pencil do I sharpen" because "this is my child who is being so dumb." So it's an extremely powerful weapon. What else does she do to show you she is boss?

This double bind question was used in the process of establishing the diagnostic hypothesis during the parent interview.

The object level of communication was "how else does daughter show you she is boss?" This double bind question gave mother a choice of comparable responses. On a secondary level of communication the implication was that daughter's misbehavior was an attempt to be the boss. As mother responded to the object level of communication she also acknowledged the secondary message.

Continuing in this particular example the parents responded to the double bind question and supported the diagnostic hypothesis of power.

Christensen: What else does she do to show you she is boss?

Mother: I don't know, Virgil?

Father: Alright, down this same type of line. Last night she completed her dinner and then informed us that she had to go do

her book report. Jo (mother) said, "you have certain duties to complete before you go do your book report", and she said, "but my teacher said I had to do my book report after dinner. The hell with my duties. I am now going to do my book report."

Christensen: Beautiful. And she may well practice law yet. (laughter)

Father: And at that point Jo made the comment-- "If your teacher would like to come over to run this household she may very well tell you when to do your book report. As long as I'm your mother and I run this house you're going to do your book report when you get time because right now you're going to do this and this."

The double bind question was used in this example to establish the diagnostic hypothesis of power. Christensen elicited several more examples which continued to support the power hypothesis.

#### The Best at Being Worst Double Bind

"The best at being worst" double bind is a method of encouraging children and at the same time identifying their

misbehavior during the children's interview. The impasse children typically experience is between viewing themselves as "bad or stupid" and acknowledging their ability to control the misbehavior.

This type of double bind is used primarily in the childrens' interview. During the childrens' interview Christensen identifies to the children their misbehavior and the goal of misbehavior.

The following is an example of "the best at being worst" double bind.

Christensen: You know something? I think old Diane is a very very strong person. I really kind of like Diane. Now what's special about Diane that really comes through? People can honestly say that she is a very strong girl. She is so strong that she actually can win every single battle she gets into. She can defeat her parents; she can defeat her big brothers; she can defeat her big sister; and she does it by being the one who wins the spankings. That same ambition that Diane has at "being the best at being the worst" can stand her in good stead when she decides to do everything right.



In this example, Christensen's use of "the best at being worst" double bind illustrated his attempt to establish the goal of misbehavior.

As the child accepted the object level compliment, being the best at being the worst, she acknowledged her misbehavior and gained satisfaction in her ability to excel. The implication was that the child was in control of her misbehavior. It is a common belief among many counselors that "being the best" is a position achieved through practice and intention. As the girl accepted, the primary level message, her ability to be the best she also accepted the secondary level message, the possibility of being less than the best.

Continuing in this example Christensen identified the misbehavior and the goal of misbehavior with the child and elicited her cooperation in establishing a new pattern of belonging in the family unit.

#### The Reserve Set Double Bind

The reserve set double bind is used with the resistant counselee. As the reverse set double bind is communicated to the counselees, they are encouraged to continue to resist the counselor and also yield a therapeutic response. This type of double bind is an effective response to the counselees' continuous no-answer.

The reverse set double bind was used in both the parents' and childrens' interviews.

The following example between a resistant mother and Christensen illustrates a continuous no-answer interaction.

Christensen: That was too calm and peaceful. I don't know if I can accept it quite the way you said it. Nobody fusses that they don't like that kind of cereal?

Mother: No, they don't say anything about the breakfast. I just set the cereal on the breakfast table and they pick their own--there are several different kinds. We usually go through a hassle--somebody spills the milk or Shirley carries her cereal in front of the T.V.--and then she scatters it all over the floor.

Christensen: And what do you say when she scatters it all over the floor?

Mother: I figure I'll get it picked up later.

Christensen: So you don't say anything?

Mother: A lot of times no, sometimes I get on her. I've got other things to do--make for sure Raymond's getting dressed--he likes to watch T.V.--that

preschool" thing--is on in the morning and Lassie is on and other things. He likes to fiddle around in the morning.

This type of interaction continued during the description of the typical day. Mothers' resistant responses were established as a consistent pattern of communication. The next section of dialogue illustrated the reverse set double bind. Christensen changed his tack of communication.

Christensen: Now you've got the two big one's out of the door. What do you do next?

Mother: I sit down and have coffee with Virgil.

Christensen: Alright, what are the two little ones doing?

Mother: Oh, they go outside and play or they go to their rooms or occasionally they decide they want to get dressed about then.

Father: Or they watch T.V.

Mother: Or they watch T.V.

Father: They watch more television than anybody else.

Christensen: Sounds pretty good.

Mother: Yeah, they like to watch T.V. or they are pretty good. They like to help daddy drink his coffee, things like that.

Christensen: You pour three cups of coffee and you get one. It sounds like a very pleasant time. I can't really--you are not too uptight--you

Mother: (Interrupts) Well it all depends. I don't get too uptight about stuff like that. Just when they don't pick up their stuff.

Christensen: That bugs you?

Mother: Yeah.

The impasse, then, was between resisting presenting herself as a bad mother and yielding information about the misbehavior of her children. Christensen addressed this impasse on the object level of communication by stating that "things seem pretty good" and that "mother is not uptight." The secondary message was "continue to respond in a contrary fashion." Mother resisted the object level of communication, "mother is not uptight," and in doing so yielded the necessary information regarding the childrens' misbehavior.

The reverse set double bind was used in this example to gather information regarding the misbehavior which occurred during a typical day. As this information was elicited Christensen began to formulate the diagnostic hypothesis.

Prescribing the Symptom Double Bind

Prescribing the symptom double bind is enacted by directing the counselees to employ their symptomatic behavior in a limited or different manner. The secondary message was that the counselees will change as they discover their ability to change behavior.

Prescribing the symptom double bind occurs during the childrens' interview. The following example is an illustration of this type of double bind used by Christensen.

Christensen: I understand that you're hyperkinetic-- hyperactive. Would you show me how you do it? Come on, be hyperactive. I want to see how you do it. Aw, show us, come on.

Debbie: (sister) Yeah, come on.

Christensen: You mean when you decide to sit still you can?

David: No, ah--I get nervous.

Christensen: Are you nervous now?

David: No.

Christensen: Show me how you get nervous?

David: (Responds in nervous fashion).

Christensen: You do it like that? And what do people do when you get nervous?

During the childrens' interview the misbehavior, identified in the parent interview, was shared before goal

disclosure. Christensen initially shared information about the child's misbehavior by asking him to act out his misbehavior.

The primary message in this prescribing the symptom double bind was "act hyperactive" or "act nervous" (child's definition of hyperactivity). Initially when Christensen asked the child to "be hyperactive" he did not respond. Christensen then focused on the child's capability of control, stating, "you mean when you decide to sit still you can."

The child resisted this idea and yielded more information regarding his hyperactivity. Eventually the child responded in a hyperactive, nervous fashion. The secondary message was, "you can control your misbehavior and therefore are capable of change."

Prescribing the symptom double bind was used in this example to identify the misbehavior during the child's interview. As the child's misbehavior was established, Christensen continued with the counseling session disclosing the child's goal of misbehavior.

#### Time Double Bind

Time is a dimension used to frame the double bind technique. It is incorporated by presenting the counselee a choice of when to change. The counselees are thus able to resist and yield by choosing the time to change.

The time double bind is used by Christensen in the recommendation stage with parents and children. The time double bind, in the following example was used at the end of the counseling session as Christensen established the parent recommendations. The oldest child of this family engaged in misbehavior with parents and teachers by playing dumb. The recommendation was made to provide the child with opportunities for leadership.

Father:           The one thing that she does do--for example she learns a song--when you sit down and say, "Tanya that's great; you've learned the song; you've learned it absolutely correct" she sings the song for six months.

Christensen:   Very steady.

Father:           Yeah, and she wears it into the ground.

Christensen:   Then you have to find more songs to sing.

Father:           But she doesn't want to learn any more songs.

Christensen:   But the point I'm making is life to her is singing the song correctly and until she is sure she can sing the song right she is going to give you all the wrong things.

Father: Yeah.

Christensen: You're going to have to accept her singing this song over and over and over. By you're encouraging that song you're also going to encourage the next song. "Boy, you sure do sing that song beautifully. I have another one that is one of my favorites. I wish you would learn sometime, but not too soon cause I sure do enjoy that one, okay?" So you aren't pushing her into a song, but rather encouraging her about her current successes which will encourage her to do something new.

The time double bind addressed the daughter's impasse between learning a new song and singing the old song. On a primary level the child was encouraged to "learn another song" (yield). The secondary message, "learn a song, but not too soon", allowed the child to resist by choosing the time when the new song would be learned.

### Summary

Five varieties of double bind technique were delineated from the data. Each type of double bind technique was illustrated in this chapter. In every example the primary



and secondary level messages were discussed and a description was presented of where it occurred in the counseling session.

The double bind question was a method Christensen used to present the counselee a choice of comparable options. The choice was presented on a primary level message of communication. All responses were comparable in that a secondary level message of communication was accepted by the counselees as they responded to the question (the primary level message).

The double bind question was used frequently by Christensen in each step of the counseling session.

The "best at being worst" double bind was a unique method used by Christensen. The children were encouraged to be satisfied with their ability to excel (primary level message) and to acknowledge their control of misbehavior (secondary level message).

The "best at being worst" double bind was used by Christensen in the childrens' interview to assist in identifying the misbehavior and disclosing the goal of misbehavior.

The reverse set double bind was used by Christensen with resistant counselees. The counselees were encouraged to continue responding with a no-answer (secondary message). As counselees communicated in this contrary manner they also yielded necessary information (primary level message).

The reverse set double bind was an effective response in eliciting information from parents and children.

Prescribing the symptom double bind was a method used by Christensen. The children were asked to employ their symptomatic behavior in a limited fashion on a primary level message. The secondary level of communication message was that the children were capable of controlling their misbehavior.

Prescribing the symptom double bind was used by Christensen in the childrens' interview to assist in identifying the misbehavior and in disclosing the goal of misbehavior.

The time double bind was a method Christensen used in presenting to the counselee a choice of when to change. On a primary level message of communication the counselees were encouraged for their current behavior. The secondary level message of communication was presenting to the counselee a choice of when to change the behavior.

The time double bind was used by Christensen in the recommendation stage both in the parents' and childrens' interview.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUMMARY

#### Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to identify the double bind technique in Adlerian family counseling and to delineate varieties of this technique. As an outcome of this study there was evidence that:

1. The double bind theory does permit a criterion for defining the double bind technique.
2. The double bind technique does provide a method of viewing certain interactions of Adlerian family counseling which produce change.
3. The double bind technique may be incorporated into Adlerian family counseling.

#### Implications

This study demonstrated that the double bind successfully describes specific interactions between counselor and counselee in Adlerian family counseling. The double bind technique may be employed in the following ways:

1. The double bind question, a method of presenting to the counselee a choice of comparable options, may be used at each step of Adlerian family counseling.

2. The best at being worst double bind may be used to assist the counselor in identifying childrens' misbehavior. This type of double bind allows children to experience encouragement because of their ability to excel and also acknowledge their control over the misbehavior. It is used during the childrens' interview.
3. The reverse set double bind is an effective response to the counselees continuous no-answer. This time of double bind may be used during both the parents' and childrens' interview.
4. This type of double bind may be used in the childrens' interview. Prescribing the symptom double bind is employed by asking the counselee to employ their misbehavior in a limited or different fashion.
5. The time double bind, a method of presenting to the counselee a choice of when to change, may be used during the recommendation stage with parents or children.

The double bind technique enables the counselor and counselor-in-training to more clearly understand the interactions which occur between counselor and counselee in effective Adlerian family counseling sessions. The double bind

technique may be incorporated in programs which train Adlerian family counselors, to assist the counselor-in-training to understand and the counselor educator to describe certain therapeutic interactions.

### Summary

The double bind technique was presented as one method of identifying certain interactions which produce change in Adlerian family counseling. The double bind technique could be an adjunct to the currently existing information regarding Adlerian theory, process and techniques.

Literature related to the double bind theory and its applications as a therapeutic technique were considered in this thesis as well as a review of the operational process of Adlerian family counseling.

The data collected from the Department of Counseling and Guidance at The University of Arizona consisted of verbatim transcripts of Adlerian family counseling sessions. Half of these sessions were taped prior to conception of this study so the data would not be affected by the counselor's knowledge of this study.

The criteria defining the double bind technique was a sequence of events which must exist during the counseling session. This was based on the sequential event outlined in the original research by Bateson et al., (1956) defining the double bind situation.

Verbatim transcripts of Adlerian family counseling sessions were studied for occurrences of the double bind technique. The five varieties of the double bind technique extrapolated from the data are the double bind question; the "best at being worst" double bind; the reverse set double bind; prescribing the symptom and the time double bind.

Each variety of the double bind technique was described, discussing the primary and secondary level messages and describing where in the counseling session it occurred.

The double bind technique may be used to understand certain interactions which produce change in Adlerian family counseling. It may be incorporated in training programs to assist the counselor-in-training in understanding and the counselor educator in further describing the facilitation of Adlerian family counseling.

### Epilogue

The counselor's usage of the double bind technique is solidly based on Adler's counseling style. The following illustration of Adler's counseling style illustrates his use of a reverse set double bind.

To return to the indirect method of treatment, I recommend it especially in melancholia. My suggestion is, "to consider from time to time how you can give another person pleasure. It would very soon enable you to sleep and chase away all your sad thoughts."

I receive various replies to my suggestions, but every patient thinks it is too difficult to act upon. I sometimes give in, admitting that it is

too difficult at present because the patient needs practice and training, by which compromise I carry a milder measure in these forms. "Remember all the ideas you have in the night, and give me pleasure by telling them to me the next day."

The next day such a patient quite probably replies, "I slept all night, when asked for his midnight reflections, even though he had not slept previously for many days" (Adler, 1964, p. 20-26).

Adler's instructions were "Continue to behave in a symptomatic fashion" (do not sleep) and "This is therapeutic for you because it enables you to practice giving pleasure to others as you give pleasure to me by remembering your midnight reflections." If the patients resist Adler's directive as he expects they will sleep which is also therapeutic.

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