# Embracing Cybernetics:
## Living Legacy of the Bateson Research Team

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The communication/ interactional theory[3] created by what has come to be called the Palo Alto Group constitutes one of the most influential conceptual frameworks in the field of family theory and therapy. The Don D. Jackson Archive of Systemic Literature preserves a large collection of research materials out of which communication/ interactional theory was derived. These include published research findings, as well as original research data, audio, and film documents. Of particular interest are 129 transcripts and audio recordings of the weekly meetings of Gregory Bateson and colleagues, Don D. Jackson, Jay Haley, John Weakland, and William Fry. A detailed analysis of these surviving documents was completed, culminating in the first comprehensive overview of these historic materials. This paper describes themes evidenced in these original source materials, and their relevance to the field of family theory and therapy.

## Introduction

The emergence during the 1950s and early 1960s of communication theory and the interactional perspective—as created by what has come to be referred to as the Palo Alto Group—has become the stuff of myth and legend. Behind the legend, however, exists a wealth of published research findings, original research data, audio, and film

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3. Throughout the publications, surviving recordings, and discussions with members of Bateson's Palo Alto Group discussion takes place about use of language that most clearly characterize the paradigmatic shift in conceptual logic pioneered by the team. Information theory, cybernetics, higher order cybernetic, communication, system, and interactional were used at different moments to underscore the shift in focus of attention away from the individual to the relationship between members of an ensemble in the current moment of interaction. Then and now many conceive communication as one directional, in distinct contrast to the conception of communication qua communication in which feedback allows the observer to see the mutual-causality of behavioral exchanges. The term *system* was and remains widely accepted but often means different things to different people, for some describing the intricate way members of a group interact with one another, while to others conveying a very different meaning, such as Bronfenbrenner's widely embraced Ecological Model of individual, micro, meso, exo, and macro systems, of open and/or semi-autonomous systems within systems [parent-child system, couple system, family system, community, culture, etcetera.] As relevant as this conception of system may be, it does not represent the work of the Bateson Research Team. Rather, Bateson team members searched for an adjective and language that most clearly shifted attention away from individually oriented, Aristotelian lineal causality to seeing as primary data the relationship between members of a natural group. In this way the term Interaction or Interactional became most widely used by members of the Bateson Research Team. Thus in this exposition the term Communication / Interaction Theory is used to convey this intentional shift in primary data from the individual to the relationship between people in the present moment.

documents that constitute the flesh and blood of systemic family therapy as a radically alternative paradigm for understanding human behavior and evoking constructive change.

In 1987 John Weakland, an original member of Gregory Bateson's renowned research team, a Senior Research Fellow at the Mental Research Institute (MRI) and co-creator of the MRI Brief Therapy Center, encouraged the creation of the Don D. Jackson Archive to house, preserve, and promulgate these surviving materials. Among this collection of rare original transcripts, photographs, audio and film recordings, case documents, and other surviving materials are a set of 118 transcripts and 11 audio recordings of the weekly meetings of the Bateson research team (Don D. Jackson, MD, Jay Haley, John Weakland, and William Fry, MD). The first transcript is dated February 9, 1955 and the final one April 10, 1958, a three-year span of time in the heart of the 10-year long series of research projects. Each transcript is dated and titled "Jackson Conference" (refer to: Jackson, Bateson, Haley, Weakland, & Fry, [Feb. 9, 1955–April 10, 1958])

A detailed analysis was conducted of the 118 transcripts and 11 audio recordings. This review was carried out in concert with a detailed analysis of the published and other unpublished materials related to the Palo Alto Team that are housed in the archive and elsewhere. The analysis culminated in the first comprehensive overview of these historic materials.

**Approaching the Data**

Bateson said, "Now, the moment you put a cage or an experiment, or a test situation around two persons, you are thereby adding extra labels to the typing of their behavior; and this is one of the reasons we haven't moved into the test and experiment field before. We distrust doing this sort of violence to the data, but in the end, one is always doing some violence" (Jackson Conference, 3/18/58, p. 2).

With Bateson's admonition in mind, principals of hermeneutic analysis (Bernstein, 1983; Bubner, 1988; Hawes, 1977; Packer, 1985) and cultural anthropological methodology as outlined by John Weakland (Weakland, 1951, 1961, 1967) were used as guidelines for developing a textual analysis of the materials. With humility, the authors acknowledge that the method of textual analysis developed to categorize the flow of ideas and themes, and the quotes highlighted are themselves observer imposed punctuations in the flow of exchanges documented in these transcripts and recordings, and as such reflect our biases. Throughout the study an intentional effort was made to reflect a "second-order" view, meaning the approach to research used by the authors includes acknowledging and observing their own observing process in a manner consistent with the perspective articulated by Bateson (1972), Jackson (Ray, 2009); Weakland (Fisch, Ray, & Schlanger 2009), and what Harry Stack Sullivan (1945) termed *participant observation*. The series of 129 dated manuscripts and audio recordings were approached as one continuous conversation.

From this analysis of these documents emerged themes and the development by the authors of the following outline as a means of presentation:

I. The Interactional View
II. Both a First and Second-Order Cybernetic/Constructivist View
        a) Approaching Therapy
        b) Research
III. Communication
        a) Language in Schizophrenia
        b) Toward the Construction of an Interactional Language
                Logical Typing
                Family Homeostasis
                Double Bind
        c) Humor
        d) Levels of Messages/Logical Types
IV. Schizophrenia as a Collective Human Experience
        a) Degree vs. Difference (Normality vs. Pathology)
        b) Double-Bind Concept
                Power—Useful Versus Dangerous Metaphor
        c) Control as Meta-phenomena
        d) Father as Part of a Circular Causal Interaction, Paradox Can Ensue
        e) Father's Utterances and Paralinguistics as Part of a Circular Causal Interaction
        f) Mother's Utterances and Paralinguistics as Part of a Circular Causal Interaction
        g) Dependency
        h) Past vs. Present
V. Milton Erickson
        a) Trance
        b) Trance and the Double-Bind
        c) Trance, the Double Bind, and Dependency
        d) Erickson's Methods
                Belief in the potential of patients
                Use of metaphor
        e) Jackson's Critique of Erickson's Methods

Quotes from these transcripts, interspersed with commentary will be used to outline and discuss these themes.

## I. The Interactional View

An over-arching theme in the work of the Palo Alto Group is that so-called "deviant" or "pathological" behavior does make sense when thought about in terms of how it fits within on-going interactions with others. That is, as unusual as a behavior might appear when contrasted to more conventional behavior, it is comprehensible—logical —when seen as emerging from the nature of the relationships and contexts of which it is a part. Viewing behavior in this way, from the perspective now called a non-normative, non-pathological view, pervades the transcripts. A representative example:

> *Bateson*: We do not assume there is a particular, either historic or functional bug in the family. This is the way families function.

*Weakland*: …a general pattern of functioning.

*Bateson*: The question is not, "What is wrong with the family?" Our question is, "How does this family work as a machine?" This is a different question (Jackson Conference, 4/24/58, p. 3).

## Implications

Seeing and describing behavior in terms of how it forms a part of a larger, on-going pattern is thematic of the work of all Bateson team members throughout their entire careers. This view became reflected in the foundational premises of communication or interactional focused theory. Such interrelated presuppositions as "one cannot not communicate" and conceiving "behavior as communication," "observer imposed punctuation," and including paralinguistic aspects of behavior in efforts to make sense of behavior were presuppositions of the interaction focused theory that emerged from the Bateson team research (Bateson & Jackson, 1964; Watzlawick, Beavin-Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967).

Throughout these documents Bateson, Jackson, Haley, Weakland and Fry recurrently discuss limitations inherent in what Weakland termed the *received wisdom*, (i.e., conceptualizing behavior from an individual pathology and lineal causal view). Exchanges preserved in this discourse reveal an emergence from team member exchanges of what later came to be identified as both simple order (observed interaction within the system as though distinct from the observer) and higher order (awareness on the part of the observer of their own arbitrary attribution of meaning [Bateson & Jackson, 1964; Jackson, 1965a, 1965b]). Team members frequently discussed the limits of individually oriented language, routinely borrowing words and concepts from a wide range of disciplines such as cultural anthropology, cybernetics, information theory, neurology, and others to describe what they were seeing in the behavior of hospitalized patients and their families. *Feedback*, *step-function*, *observer imposed punctuation*, are examples of words created or borrowed from other disciplines used by team members to shift the primary focus of attention away from making sense of behavior as though individuals exist in isolation, to viewing behavior as a part of the relationship between two or more people interacting with one another in contexts of lived experience. Bateson and other team member's use of machine analogy, game theory or prisoner's dilemma, family homeostasis, circular causality, relational quid pro quo, and other concepts are examples of an explicit and intentional effort to create an alternative relationship/contextual epistemology and lexicon.

Bateson team research provided the logic and basis for numerous presuppositions that constitute system theory. An example of one such concept later called "positive connotation," can be found in a paper published by Jackson in the early years of the Palo Alto Group collaboration:

It seems to be difficult for most persons in our culture to give credence to the idea that the individual does the best he can at any given moment. … The terms "lazy," "stubborn," "no will power" are not merely descriptive, but imply moral censure and an unspoken "he could do better if he wanted to." Hence, a psychiatrist is up against social prejudice when he attempts to point out that certain dynamic interpersonal processes over which the individual has no control are responsible for his character traits. (Jackson, 1952, p. 392).

Positive connotation of the behavior of all members of a system is seen as necessary, reflective of the team's consistency of philosophy, and relevant to other basic premises of interactional theory, such as Jackson's concept of family homeostasis which posits that most of the time change is accepted without difficulty, but that when the behavior serves to balance relationships within the family, change or elimination of a symptom may be responded to with behavior that encourages its re-emergence.

In the 2/9/55 conference transcript, Jackson phrased it this way,

> … Patients will set up situations in which they create…they want to re-establish the old situation; it's such a pathogenic way of communicating—why then do they want to have it go on? It is just because it is familiar. (Jackson Conference, 2/9/55, p. 25)

From the interactional perspective of the Palo Alto Group, people do not exist apart from relationships—neither do symptoms. The team spells this premise out in discussing an example of a patient,

> *Bateson*: …symptoms were taken away by the removal of the husband in the sense the symptoms were addressed to the husband… she no longer has an addressee you might say, for the symptoms.
> *Jackson:* …the symptoms have to be addressed to somebody.
> *Bateson*: …and get a certain response from that somebody.
> *Haley*: …I think by nature of this project you get an association… the symptoms have a message. (Jackson Conference, 3/23/55, p. 3)

Understood from a communication or interaction perspective it is as though messages need a recipient to whom the message is directed, and can be understood as an unlabeled (and thus deniable) message about the untenable nature of the relationship.

> *Jackson:* …I had a very striking example recently. A guy who's quite schizoid, he's had one brief psychotic episode I think we agree on. He's not psychotic now. And he made some social moves lately, and before he could help it, he practically admitted that they were very successful. And then cut it off. And about a week went by and he was back to his old isolation, and I raised the question – it was obviously not out of fear or a lot of the excuses. And he got sore as hell and said, 'Do you realize if I keep this up, that I'm going to let those bastards off without giving me anything?' Speaking of his parents. He just pictured that they were going to get away without realizing what they had done to him, and without giving him anything to make up for it. And if he got happy, they would be off the hook. (Jackson Conference, 4/24/56, p. 4)

A consensus is present throughout the transcripts that conventional research methodologies were not adequate for revealing and understanding relational dynamics. Early on and throughout the duration of the team's collaboration there is evident a persistent push to develop an empirically based approach in the study of interpersonal relations and contextual constraints related to behavior.

> *Jackson*: … let me tell you where you will never achieve that in anybody's lifetime. Take a Rorschach and TAT and MMPI, a good standard diary which reveal a good deal about predication, I mean you can establish a lot of general links; you cannot give a woman a Rorschach, and MMPI,

and TAT and establish with any high degree of probability that her children will be schizophrenic. Why not? Because there are so many other variables. There's her husband, there is the grandmother, grandfather, there is the community in which they live, there are [conditions] like rheumatic fever that puts the little girl in bed for a number of months and puts her that far behind and is the straw that makes her never catch up with her peers; there are you see a hundred million things … (Jackson Conference, 4/24/56, p. 11)

Having offices on the grounds of the Menlo Park, California Veterans Administration Hospital placed the team in immediate contact with patients, many with diagnoses of schizophrenia. At the time patients diagnosed as schizophrenic were considered beyond treatment, providing an underserved population with which to work. Weakland (1999) has said that Haley was the first to suggest the team consider studying patients hospitalized for schizophrenia. Jackson, a psychiatrist who had just returned to the San Francisco Bay area after four years study and clinical work under the tutelage of Harry Stack Sullivan at Chestnut Lodge in Rockville, Maryland, already had a reputation for his successful experience in working with patients diagnosed as schizophrenic. Thus schizophrenia offered an ideal subject to investigate the hypothesis of an interactional etiology of symptoms. Work with what often are now called "chronically mentally ill" patients led to an era of family study that Jackson believed to be, "… the most important advance in psychiatry" (Jackson Conference, 4/24/58, p. 2). A transcript from a month earlier reveals:

> *Weakland*: … The more I deal with schizophrenia the more I feel what we are dealing with is fundamental to other mental illnesses.
> *Jackson*: … A lot of things we have done here have changed our approach to therapy.
> *Haley:* ... The disturbance is so great in the family of the schizophrenic it makes a better model to talk about the family than any other kind of pathology (Jackson Conference, 3/27/58, p. 1).

## II. Both a First and Second-Order Cybernetic/Constructivist View

Such dichotomies as modern versus post-modern, constructivism or social constructivism, and *first-order cybernetic*, as distinct from *second-order cybernetic* would not appear in the family literature until decades after these conversations took place. Nonetheless these transcripts epitomize both the way of understanding which is now called first-order cybernetics, defined by Heinz von Forester as the study of *observed systems,* and more importantly that of second-order cybernetics, again defined by von Forester as the study of *observing systems* (von Foerster, 1981). The second-order idea that patient, and family, and therapist, are all vitally involved in their mutual communication is pervasively present in these transcripts. Blame evoking lineal causality recedes as a both/and view emerges. Patient, other family members, and therapist are comprehended as part of a dynamic whole. In the process of therapy (like any experience) interpersonal webs unite—and reality experienced emerges from and interplay of both first and second order cybernetic perspectives.

Embracing both what is now called a first & second order view affected the way Bateson team members

- Conducted therapy,
- Approached research and data,
- Regarded language and communication,
- Conducted themselves with others, and
- Interacted with one another as a team

*a) Approaching Therapy*

All team members were involved in interviewing patients on wards in the V.A. hospital:

> Jackson: One thing I would say is that somebody should be doing therapy in order to provide the kind of experience you can only get in therapy—how the double bind involves you. I don't think you can feel that in just an interview (Jackson Conference, 4/24/56, p. 5).

Therapist actions and utterances were understood as being stimulus, response, and reinforcement, and at times having a disproportionate influence:

> *Jackson*: … we are interested in what class of relationship messages exists in psychotherapy when the psychotherapist does not say anything. It must be happening in psychotherapy, they must be telling the patient what to feel all the time they must be doing it in very indirect ways. Since I give you no cues but me.
> *Haley*: … you would in long-term therapy create people like the therapist.
> *Jackson*: … you create people to believe as you do. You always have patient-in-presence-of-therapist-in-presence-of-patient ad infinitum. (Jackson Conference, 11/28/55, p.7; see Bateson and Jackson, 1964 for elaboration)

Throughout the transcripts team members describe in what is now called constructivist logic behaving *as if*, an explicit awareness of intentionality in how they speak with patients and one another. In accord with an unfailing emphasis of Jackson as clinical supervisor, later described by Haley as, "What did you just do to bring about that response in the patient?" (Haley, 1988), Bateson team members consistently reflect awareness of their own responses recursively affecting patient responses to them.

> *Haley*: … I find myself with a patient who says something, describes some behavior, but I am not surprised that this guy does this. But, if I behave as if he is normal and therefore I am surprised that he does this, even this tends to pull him up. If I looked at him as a guy who would naturally do this, and I am not surprised, this is altogether a different thing … (Jackson Conference, 4/2/57, p. 6)

*b) Research*

An important theme in the transcripts is the Bateson team approaching the study of patients in a way that took themselves equally into account with other data, casting off ideas of objectivity, and uncompromisingly throwing themselves into the interactional mix. Group members regularly challenged one another to be mindful of the implications of causal logic revealed in how they spoke with one another:

*Jackson*: … you're making the mistake that was made in physics for centuries, and that is you put yourself in the role of the observer, which you are not free to do.
*Haley:* …Not free to do?
*Jackson*: …You can't be an unbiased observer and interpolate from your experience … (Jackson Conference, 11/17/55, p. 9).

Emergence of both a first order and second order perspective are found throughout the transcripts and audio recordings, and in the later publications of members of the group as each went on to pioneer these ideas in research, theory and application (Bateson, 1972; Fry, 1967; Haley, 1976a; Jackson, 1959; Weakland, 1974).

## III. Communication

Another redundancy found throughout the transcripts and recordings, representing a broad theme that most if not all other recurring themes fit within, is the notion that language serves to create and define the world and relationships in which we all participate.

*Jackson*: …You are never in one kind of relationship.
*Weakland*: …Defining it becomes the signal for change. (Jackson Conference, 3/28/57, p. 3)

The identification of the manner by which all behavior, including symptomatic behavior, is part of a gestalt or on-going relational dynamic pervades the team discussions and is seen as key to unlocking double binds of schizophrenia. Prefiguring what later has been called *social constructionism* by some (McNamee & Gergen, 1999), and a cybernetics of cybernetics by others (Brand, 1976), the Palo Alto team's early and consistent use of a both/and conceptualization of observed and observer embraces complexity. In so doing the Palo Alto Group set the stage for the development of virtually all systemic models of family and brief therapy including Jackson's conjoint family therapy (1957a, 1959); Haley's strategic (1976b), the Mental Research Institute brief therapy approach (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974), Minuchin's structural (1974), deShazer and Berg's solution-focused brief therapy (1982), Milan systemic family therapy (Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin & Prata, 1978), and other methods of practice more recently articulated where the unit of analysis shifted from the individual in isolation to the relationship between people.

*a) Language in Schizophrenia*
Like all behavior, the team approached language as if it made sense in context.

*Jackson*: … Isn't there a point here that we talk as if there were only one level; that the patient means what he says …
*Haley*: … but we operate on the assumption [that] they don't … which is what I watch all the time (Jackson Conference, 4/27/55, p. 3).

Jackson consistently displays an ability to contextualize the literal meaning of a message to possible relationship based meaning(s), emphasizing the schizophrenic's acuteness and deftness for communicating a wealth of information with one utterance.

> *Jackson*: … girl comes in, sits down, and kind of grins, and says, 'Well, my mother had to get married, and so now, I'm here.' And now, to me, it takes a tremendous amount of cleverness, almost to say, which turned out and which I found immediately, that her mother had been illegitimately pregnant and hated this girl and so on…
> *Haley*: She is simplifying an enormous range in one short…
> *Jackson*: She did it with acuteness that also takes interpersonal line-up into account. If you simply give me a blank statement that she is a schizophrenic and has a weak ego, you see, or some kind of nonsense, then I don't think it takes into account her ability to do this kind of thing. On the other hand, in a lot of her talking she did with me, she did a lot of odd things that were very hard to follow, so while I've been thinking about such a list as what does she do all right and what not all right, and what has that got to do about the way I'm treating her too (Jackson Conference, 2/9/55, p. 5).

The team's approach to interviewing patients and their families as a method of research, and later to conduct therapy, characteristically evidenced a tendency to positively connote intentions, and to assume contextual fit. Jackson particularly avoids language that emphasizes impairment rather than potential. Any behavior displayed by patients, particularly behavior that appears strange, is best understood by looking at it in relation to the contexts and relationships of which it is a part, and to others, including the therapist. One function of schizophrenic language for its utterers is protection of others and themselves from the consequences of making a clear statement about how they see themselves in relation to others.

> *Jackson*: … it is fundamental to the theory…that we talk to other people as we talk to ourselves. This is part of the schizophrenic's problem. They can't even let themselves know what they won't let somebody else know…at least, I can think, 'you dirty bastard' here if I don't feel I can say it to the person (Jackson Conference, 4/27/55, p. 2).

Use of ambiguous language open to multiple interpretations, avoiding being pinned-down, and shifting back and forth between literal and metaphorical meaning are frequently used methods of using language to regulate closeness-distance, and to handle the double bind:

> *Jackson*: …I think he has developed language as a weapon, and screened out more than most of them and he uses dropping of the voice and any kind of caricature or facial expression to supplement this which gives him quite a gamut of things to hide behind (Jackson Conference, 2/9/55, p. 7).

From a perspective of physical or emotional illness, symptomatic behavior is often conceived of as indicating pathology, usually within an individual to be treated pharmacologically and/or with cognitive behavioral therapy. From a communication theory, interactional perspective the same behavior is accepted and responded to as though it is an example of the repertoire of ways the person has for influencing and handling others with whom they live. Behavior is understood not as pathology but as

part of an ongoing exchange of communication between the people involved in which the behavior of all simultaneously brings forth, reinforces and perpetuates the behavior of one another.

### b) Toward the Construction of an Interactional Language

Three interrelated concepts introduced by the Bateson Team members are central to shifting from an individual, pathology conception of behavior as though happening in isolation, to a relationship and contextual understanding of behavior qua behavior: Logical typing; family homeostasis and the double bind (Bateson, Jackson, Haley & Weakland, 1956; Jackson, 1957a).

#### Logical Typing

Bateson et al. (1956) used Whitehead and Russell's (1910) logical typing to conceptualize behavior as communication:

> The central thesis of this theory is that there is a discontinuity between a class and its members. The class cannot be a member of itself nor can one of the members *be* the class, since the term used for the class is of a *different level of abstraction—*a different Logical Type—from terms used for members. … In formal logic there is an attempt to maintain this discontinuity between a class and its members, we argue that in the psychology of real communications this discontinuity is continually and inevitably breached, and that a-priori we must expect a pathology to occur in the human organism when certain formal patterns of the breaching occur … at its extreme will have symptoms whose formal characteristics would lead the pathology to be classified as a schizophrenia. (Bateson et al., 1956, p. 251)

Logical typing provides a way to conceptualize the complexity of communication.

#### Family Homeostasis

Family homeostasis emerged from observations that:

> … psychotherapeutic efforts with one member of a family might be hindered, or another member might become disturbed as the member in treatment improved … these observations, in connection with existing ideas about homeostatic systems, suggest that a family creates such a dynamic steady-state system; the character of the members and the nature of their interaction—including any identified patient and his sick behavior—are such as to maintain a status quo typical of the family, and to react toward restoration of this status quo in the event of any change, such as is proposed by the treatment of any member" (Jackson & Weakland, 1961, p. 32).

Family homeostasis provides a conceptual tool for grasping the protective and interconnected nature of behavior.

#### The Double Bind

The double bind concept is based on the idea that communication taking place in the present between members of the identified patient's primary group of intimates is the most relevant source of explanation for behavior:

… in actual human communication a single and simple message never occurs … communication always and necessarily involves a multiplicity of messages, of different levels, at once. These may be conveyed via various channels such as words, tone, and facial expressions, or by the variety of meanings and references of any verbal message in relation to its possible contexts. The relationships among these related messages may be very complex. No two messages, at different levels of communication, can be just the same; however, they may be similar or different, congruent or incongruent. (Jackson & Weakland, 1961 p. 31)

The double bind does not represent an isolated instance of incongruent message. Rather, it is a prevailing style of communication, which occurs within a family or other primary group over time. One frequently observed kind of double bind pattern exists when, for example, there is a pattern of communication within the family in which at one level an adolescent is given a message to be responsible. Simultaneously, at a different level, a contradictory message conveys that he or she is incapable of acting responsibly. The relationship is one in which the adolescent feels it is of vital importance to accurately respond to these incongruent messages, and there is a prohibition against commenting on the incongruence, or on leaving the situation. The double bind provides the means by which to grasp the almost intangible nuances of behavior as communication. It is in the context of complex and often contradictory messages within the matrix of family relationships that the symptomatic family member's behavior finds meaning.

Logical typing, family homeostasis, and the double bind are mentioned throughout the transcripts as concepts developed to address dissatisfaction with individual oriented language for describing interactional dynamics.

*Haley*: …I see things I can't put into words very well. The thing to do is to find a way to talk more clearly about what I see. (Jackson Conference, 3/23/55, p. 6).

Recall behaviorism was in its infancy in the early 1950's, and thus within the behavioral sciences, the languages of individual pathology and Freudian psychoanalysis dominated. Haley and Jackson were most persistent in developing new/more interaction focused language.

*Haley*: … I am not sure what you mean by anxiety, when you say that … you speak of it as something that exists as something separate from what is going on.
*Jackson:* …let me caution you that in physics for example…it's already been said, not by Einstein, but certainly by some of the other really great names that they see no hope of getting beyond having things like electrons as mere concepts…in effect, to get beyond the speed of light. So hope that we may, we may be dealing with a concept like the electron in dealing with anxiety and all we see is an effect.
*Haley*: … I hope we go further in dealing with anxiety. (Jackson Conference, 2/23/55, p. 5).

Team members demonstrate awareness that with language we participate in creating meaning attached to experience, and explicitly posit that accepting without scrutiny of relational and contextual implications inherent in the use of individual pathology

oriented language plays a great role in what Jackson (1964, 1967a) called the myth of mental illness.

> *Jackson*: … By recognizing mental illness, we don't know what we're really  doing to muddy the waters, to stir things up. (Jackson Conference, 11/28/55, p. 1)

The transcripts reveal the Bateson team members placed great importance on being able to describe typical interactions they observed in the interaction of family members, with the explicit belief that these maneuvers or behavioral exchanges were what kept the symptomatic person and other family members bound together in a symptom perpetuating way. In trying to develop a language to describe these interactional dynamics, the team called them *gambits*. One typical gambit they named the *celotex maneuver* or *control gambit* used by the mother of the schizophrenic.

> *Jackson*: … the *celotex maneuver*, [is] the absorbing of everything. With Mrs. M (a patient's mother), this is usually accompanied by some kind of permissive noises, polite 'm- hmmm,' or 'you go right ahead.' …Maybe this particular gambit is usually accompanied by the signal which says, 'I'm giving you permission to do this.' And the permission has to be explicit. I'm not saying that's true, I'm just saying maybe it is. (Jackson Conference, 4/24/56, p. 6)

Another was called the *yes/no gambit*.

> *Jackson*: … There must be some kind of rough leveling that's possible. For example, suppose I say, you ask me, 'Can I go to the movies,' and I'm your Papa and I say, 'Yeah, you can go ahead.' And this is a conscious awareness of saying 'yes' and 'no.'
> *Weakland*: …I had an example of that with Mrs. V (mother of patient), I was discussing how did her father feel about her getting married to Mr. V, and she says, 'He said, 'that is up to you, you can do that if you want to.'' Which made it so damn clear to everybody but her that he was saying, 'You're going to get in trouble, as you will see later on.' But she was busy interpreting this as he's such a nice Papa he gave me (permission), it was all right with him.
> *Jackson*: …Well, suppose we call this the 'yes-no' statement.
> *Haley*: …I don't feel that would clarify it, but go on. (Jackson Conference, 4/24/56, p. 8)

A third frequently observed maneuver was called *the denial gambit*, in which the mother portrays herself as innocent of any incriminating implication or accusation.

*c) Humor*

Team discussions frequently focus on the complexity of conversation and the use of humor to handle or defuse double bind aspects of transactions.

> Bateson: …I have a suspicion that the contrast between the double bind and humor is going to be somehow a hot question. That humor is sort of benign double bind.
> *Jackson*: …It's the breaking out aspect of it, I think.
> *Bateson*: …Yes, or it's the double bind in which the reinforcements are rewards instead of being penalties, or something of that kind.
> *Weakland*: …One of the points that was brought up with that was that we should look at both the preceding and the following relational setting to the humor. What is the situation that precipitates the humorous behavior?

*Bateson*: …Not the joke, but the context of the joke.
*Weakland*: …And the outcome or the apparent function of the joke.
*Fry*: …What is the relationship between (person making joke) and the rest of the people in the room that makes it funny at that particular time? I mean, what difficulty exists there? (Jackson Conference, 4/24/56, pp. 1–2)

Humor or joking is viewed within context,

*Weakland*: … It seems to me that the personal function of the joke can not only be determined by the immediate situation, but also by what things are going on. You have got to set it in relation to what has been going on before. (Jackson Conference, 10/1/57, p. 1)

And the use of humor to implicitly comment on the double bind (Fry, 1967),

*Fry*: …it's so hard for the child to say to the mother, 'Well, you've really got me in a very bad situation, I feel very uncomfortable.' Explaining how uncomfortable he felt in that situation. In a sense what this…boy is doing is making a comment to his father instead of - as you say he can't tell his father, 'you old bastard, you've been so mean to me, and I felt so badly and so forth,' but he's making a joke out of it…
*Jackson*: …Yeah…all I'm saying is that I think it came out as a laugh, because he couldn't go all the way, and really feel it as a disjunctive, 'look, I'm finished.'
*Haley*: …We're assuming that in this outline of the project one of the gambits of father and mother or patient is humor, as a way of handling the situation. (Jackson Conference, 4/24/56, p. 4)

*d) Levels of Messages/Logical Types*
Among the most noteworthy contributions of the team is to make sense of transactions in terms of levels of messages and logical types (Bateson, et.al, 1956; Watzlawick, Beavin-Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). Grasping the complexity of multi-layered exchanges made possible the development of the double-bind concept. The transcripts document how much the team struggled with these ideas.

*Haley*: … The trouble I have here is … it took me about a year and a half on this damned project to find out what a logical type is and we never really discussed it … It's tied up with this damned classification system where they get a general classification within a specific classification. Where you have a label which is different, the label "cow" is different from the cow, and it's a difference in messages—whether its messages about messages, or what … (Jackson Conference, 5/25/55, p. 7)

Some of the ideas the team wrestled with pertaining to *levels of messages/logical types* included the potential for confusion between levels of messages. Pertinent to double bind theory is the idea of one message classifying another and the potential paradox generated by conflicting messages within a message.

The team consensus was that one way of describing communication is using this general structure:

I (1) am saying (2) to you (3) in this situation (4).

Figuring out ways of handling these four elements appears to be what the symptomatic member of a schizophrenic transaction has trouble with, responding enigmatically as a way out of the seemingly impossibly emotionally charged double bind situation, which implies a definition of the relationship.

## IV. Schizophrenia as a Collective Human Experience

*a) Degree vs. Difference (Normality vs. Pathology)*
The transcripts indicate that for members of the Bateson team, all behavior came to be seen as part of a collective repertoire. That is to say that all members of the human species are capable of and could resort to the manifestation of even the most severe symptomatic behavior, if immersed in relational vicious cycles with others that call forth, reinforce and perpetuate disturbed behavior. In accord with the teaching of Sullivan (1945), Jackson contended the behavior of the schizophrenic and the apparently non-symptomatic individual differs only in degree. Haley posited it was a difference in the experience or trauma that can throw one into psychosis.

> *Haley*: … it isn't a matter of more or less…it's a matter of whether something happens or doesn't.
> *Jackson*: … they get to know about how many times a rat can jump at a door when it is closed before they become apathetic, and I don't know why the human animal should be different—completely (Jackson Conference, 3/23/55, p. 22)

Jackson voiced the idea of continuous trauma, as the constant reinforcement of living in a nexus of double binding exchanges that can bring forth and reinforce the display of specific symptoms as a way of handling unmanageable interpersonal situations (Jackson, 1957b). From an interactional perspective, there is no use of such concepts as normal or deviant, only patterns of behavior of which all participants are a part. There is no use of either/or dichotomies between healthy and pathological. Rather such concepts are understood as existing on a continuum emerging from the nature of relationships and contexts.

> *Jackson*: …but I was saying with all sincerity, for all example(s) you could give me of discontinuity I will give you an example in a normal person which is exactly the same thing, only a difference in degree. I've never known this to fail and I've never had any kind of phenomena come up with schizophrenics that there isn't a parallel for not even in an analogous way, but an exact way with real life … (Jackson Conference, 2/16/55, p. 7)

*b) Double-Bind Concept*
Another important aspect of the Bateson team research was development of the double bind concept as a way to comprehend and describe the complex interactions of the schizophrenic patient and his family members (Jackson & Watzlawick, 1963). As described earlier in this text, in a double bind situation members of a family:

1. Cannot not care about
2. Cannot escape from
3. Cannot comment on incongruence

*Jackson*: …If you can imagine the problems of a rat in a maze, in a situation that he could not follow, well, if you could imagine a human being in that maze (Jackson Conference, 2/16/55, p. 18).

The team research developed an interactional etiology of schizophrenic symptoms:

*Haley*: … We have a hypothesis, that schizophrenia is describable as behavior which is a product of the interaction within the family and this interaction has a particular kind of characteristic which we call the double bind. (Jackson Conference, 3/13/58, p. 4)

Double bind communication was understood as precipitating an emotional breakdown at certain critical points in a schizophrenic's life as they move toward independence.

Team members differed on what the double bind looked like. Jackson and Bateson contended that only participants could feel the double bind. At least for a period of time during the meetings, Haley and Weakland contended that double bind exchanges could be observed and counted. Eventually, all members of the team abandoned quantitative research methods. Disagreement amongst team members involved Haley and Weakland wanting to be able to represent and show the double bind to others. There was a period of time in which a chicken or egg debate emerged, with Haley and Weakland voicing the view that the team must first define a theory, then see patients, while Jackson and Bateson contended the team first see patients, then define theory based on the experience.

*Power—Useful Versus Dangerous Metaphor*

Significant difference existed between Bateson and Haley about the metaphor of power (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976). For Haley, differences between he and Bateson over the concept of power had been exaggerated (Haley, 1988), while Weakland (Ray, 2004) said such creative differences were essential to the emergence of communication theory:

Our group was very small, only five people essentially, yet it was remarkably diverse, in terms of our background, our training, our interests, our opinions, and by no means least our personalities. As a result of this our differences were frequent and they were considerable. Nevertheless, largely these took place within a context of a common concern, a common curiosity about human behavior and a belief in the central importance in this of how people behave and interact with each other. And I think as a result of this peculiar combination of similarity and diversity, our interplay and even our struggles were central for *the gradual moving toward some sort of a development of some common fundamental ideas rather than moving rapidly towards some superficially agreed on views.* And that is what I most hope may continue in the future. (Weakland quoted in Ray, 2004, p. 2; italics added by authors)

Haley's conception of power echoes that of Jackson who wrote,

> Many… think of *power* as if it were the kind of near absolute it was when sword length and physical strength were crucial determinants in human affairs. But if power is defined as the ability to influence relationships in a predetermined direction, then power in a society must represent the current values of that society. Since values are created in a dynamic social system, they must change with consequent shifts of power. (Jackson, 1967b, p. 38; italics in original)

Thinking of power as created in a dynamic system, and in terms of the ability to influence relationships, can be useful.

Bateson, in contrast, saw danger in the metaphor of power:

> Power is something which a very large number of people believe in and a very large number of people want. And if you want it, and if you believe in it, and you can find other people who will believe in it too, you can in a certain sense, have it. But, they say it corrupts … what does this mean? Is power an appropriate word to use to describe what goes on between people? The word comes from a physical chemical universe in which power is a … clear and meaningful concept. From this concept we… make a metaphor, a way of talking about what goes on between people… that I suspect is not only wrong but dangerous … The world is on the whole circuit structured; because it is structured in circuits … we find if only we would leave it alone the world is on the whole self-corrective … Because what happens to this affects that, which affects that, which comes back and balances things up in various complex ways most of which are not understood. Now, if that is the sort of world we live in … and say we want more of … [Whatever behavior we choose], what is going to happen? Either we are going to over [regulate] or we are going to boost the thing in some way to try to get more of [what we want] and whatever we do we shall in fact be arguing not in circuits but in lineal sequences… which is the "if a then b then c, and we want c so we will go a, b, c," (Bateson quoted in Ray, 2007, pp. 862–863)

Bateson goes on in this vividly clear description of the complexity of systems, to caution that thinking in terms of power can be dangerous, "if that way of thinking is not a reasonably good mirror, representation of the way in which the thing you're attacking is organized you will wreck its organization, it's that simple" (Bateson quoted in Ray, 2007, p. 863).

Still, we find value in thinking about power as the ability to influence a relationship. Rather than reductionistically accepting as irreconcilable views of power attributed to Haley and Bateson in either/or terms, the authors find reconciliation of these differences in the writings of Jackson, who said,

> If one does not know what to do, if one is feeling anxious, confused, overwhelmed by the patient, it is certainly the time to do nothing. Therapeutic interventions should be thought out and done in an atmosphere where the therapist has some reason, on the basis of his past experience, to know what he is doing. (Jackson, 2000, p. 11)

### c) Control as Meta-phenomena

The concept of control is, perhaps, the most misunderstood idea of the team. Jackson and Haley had an on-going disagreement about the concept of control related to differences about past versus current causality. Haley emphasized that the idea of control was more about defining the nature of the relationship rather than dominance / subordination. Jackson's view presaged the primary shift to a both/and view, believing

individuals exchange behaviors in the present in defining a relationship and that often there must be a prior relationship. Said more precisely, in the attempt to define a relationship, one or both persons unwittingly attempt to impose an explanation created out of a web of restrictions learned in other relationships (Bateson, 1979; Jackson, 1967c; Ray & Borer, 2007; Sullivan, 1945), in order for a struggle over control to ensue. Haley believed that relationship was instantaneous and assumed. Struggles over who will determine the nature (definition) of relationships are presumed to be a necessary ingredient in the double bind. The Celotex maneuver is an example.

> *Jackson*: …The permit (of the celotex maneuver) is what's important, 'I am letting you say this,'— she even said that explicitly.
> *Fry*: She implies that her permission is necessary for him to go ahead and say it. This is the point?
> *Bateson:* Yeah, she thereby establishes that relationship. (Jackson Conference, 4/24/56, p. 8)

### d) Father as Part of a Circular Causal Interaction, Paradox Can Ensue

The topic of control entailed discussion of paradox inherent in understanding communication in terms of logical levels of abstraction. If, for example, one is allowing the other to be in control, who then is really in control?

> *Haley*: … If A lets B control, then B is in control. But yet, he isn't in control because he's *let* A be in control. Now there's a paradox, and a double-level one.
> *Jackson*: …In terms of control, if again the importance of this presuming a relationship is brought in then B is saying, "This is more important to you than it is to me," "See, I'll let you," which means you have more relationship to me than I have to you. Which also gives him more control, but can leave one wondering, "Did I want this before she offered?" (Jackson Conference, 4/24/56, p. 12)

Confusion of member and class in interactions between members of intimate groups such as the family can create confusion of one's own signals, and contribute to patterns out of which symptomatic adaptations can emerge.

### e) Father's Utterances and Paralinguistics as Part of a Circular Causal Interaction

Although only implied in the published findings of the team (see for example Bateson, Jackson, Haley, & Weakland, 1956, 1963; Weakland, 1960), the transcripts show how observations of family interaction resulted in the team explicitly abandoning the idea of blame toward a particular family member, especially the mother. The father characteristically played the integrally necessary part of *passive permitter*.

> *Jackson*: …all of the importance that this kind of father has in this kind of family is the ability to intervene or to not…fundamental, the schizophrenic's relationship with her own mother is the real pathogen…and the husband trying to intervene there is just like her father could, if he will. So, that if he is dead, therefore, or divorced, or passive, it makes little difference. (Jackson Conference, 4/24/56, p. 14)

To avoid confusion, communication theory as set forth by Bateson, Jackson and other research team members intentionally avoided use of such concepts as role. When the focus of attention is shifted from the nature of individuals interacting with another

person to the nature of the relationship between people interacting as though they are exchanging behavior in an unwitting effort to define the nature of a relationship, then interactional patterns and mutual causality emerge. For more detailed description the reader is referred to the concepts of family rules and the relational quid pro quo (Jackson, 1958, 1965a, 1965b).

> *Haley*: … Funny thing about Papa in that … interview is that again and again the implication is that papa didn't do something. And again and again Papa turns it around to where he says, 'I didn't do anything wrong.' And he just won't accept it that it could be wrong *not* to do something. (Jackson Conference, 4/27/55, p. 16)

Weakland calls it a conspiracy of deception in which all family members are involved. It is as though the father is not allowed by the rules of relationship to see what is going on. Unwilling or unable to behave differently and preserve his relationship with his wife, the father serves as scapegoat for the family and helps inhibit the symptomatic son from improvement:

> *Jackson*: … He'd rather have himself attacked than have his feelings mount in relation to her…He's both a sort of agent provocateur and a self-made target. Really I think the main thing is the shift in focus that his comments provide.
> *Weakland*: … Yeah, provoke but provoke it over somewhere else. (Jackson Conference, 5/29/56, p. 10)

Haley says of the family's treatment of the father, "they either ignore him or jump on him" (Jackson Conference, 6/30/57, p. 6). Jackson states, "That's a beautiful justification for the way she's treated Joe (the schizophrenic son). She says, 'I have to be this way, you forced me to' (to the husband). And of course … she's right" (Jackson Conference, 5/29/56, p. 12).

Thus, exchanges of blame accusations shift attention any time one member attempts to clearly define the relationship (Jackson & Haley, 1957; Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1978; Watzlawick, Beavin-Bavelas & Jackson, 1967).

*f) Mother's Utterances and Paralinguistics as Part of a Circular Causal Interaction*
Recognition that all members of the family behave in ways that bring forth and perpetuate one another's behavior is a basic premise of systemic or interactional theory that can be traced directly back to the Bateson team. The relationship between mother and symptomatic child is extremely important, however, it was noted early on that "momma was never alone" (Jackson Conference, 4/27/55, p. 15).

Maintaining control over closeness and distance is a frequently observed pattern discussed throughout these transcripts. It was postulated that to manage her own anxiety the mother would behave in ways that draw the patient close to her, only to push him away when he or she responded. Study of patterns of interaction between mother, child, and father were central to developing the idea that families in schizophrenic transaction could not clearly define the nature of the relationships without feeling threatened.

*Jackson*: … the mother does not know that she is an unfeeling person really; if you don't believe it, just talk to these mothers and see how much they always have an alibi, there is always some reason why—she cannot stand to see herself as cold; she has to pretend with the kids that love is there if they only knew how to get it. (Jackson Conference, 2/23/55, p. 23)

The nature of the relationship between the mother or father and symptomatic child invariably sets the child up for failure, and subsequently a return to the previous definition of the relationship anytime the child was about to succeed (i.e., maturity and growth). For example:

*Jackson*: … She (patient) started a music theory course when she was seventeen at San Mateo Jr. College and her mother joined the course after about two months or so. At that time the patient was tops in the class and after mother joined the class, she promptly never wrote any music and ended up getting some kind of a 'D' or flunking grade. She finally told me that – whereas actually she had always spoken of her mother as the musician and her own inability to do anything. She always said to herself, 'You can't do anything.' You would think ordinarily that she would be pleased to know that she could beat her mother, but she isn't … (Jackson Conference, 2/16/55, p. 4)

Weakland sums it up, "This is her whole problem. She was righter than momma and couldn't stand to be" (Jackson Conference, 2/16/55, p. 9).

Success in commenting on the nature of the relationship threatens the relationship:

*Jackson*: [There are] overt and covert messages … 'succeed, but don't really, because I can't handle it if you do.' (Jackson Conference, 5/25/55, p. 11)

*Haley:* Success threatens relationship and calls forth implicit comments that can be denied as comments: [my patient] "sent his mother a Mother's Day card that said, 'Thinking of you on Mother's Day because you've always been like a mother to me.' (Jackson Conference, 5/22/56, p. 27)

The Mother herself is also in a bind:

*Jackson*: … if you think of the double-bind as a two-way street, that there is mother's aspect of it … you can't avoid putting mother on the spot, cause she is in the double bind herself." (Jackson Conference, 5/25/55, p. 9)

In the final summary statements made by members of the Bateson Research Team at the end of the fourth and final funded research project Bateson clearly described the change in thinking about blame and causality that emerged in the research projects:

I was and recurrently am surprised that what we deductively expected would be true of a. schizophrenia, b. families, & c. therapy is so much truer than we had expected. This includes: The double-binding mechanism of the family, whether phrased as the Prisoners Dilemma or otherwise. The fantastic redundancy of family patterns of interaction which will continually work to regenerate the *status quo ante* when any change is introduced. While [mothers in the study] amply confirmed our ideas about the schizophrenogenic mother, [they] have moved me a long way towards believing that at least for some schizophrenic families *it is an error to locate the pathogenic focus in the mother. Indeed, one of the more important slow changes which has occurred in my thinking has been in the direction of skepticism regarding all localizing of function in cybernetic systems.* (Weakland, Unpublished report, 1961, June 15; italics added by authors)

*g) Dependency*

Dependence and how to change the nature of it seems at the heart of efforts to redefine the nature of relationships, and can be too threatening for families in schizophrenic transaction.

> *Jackson*: …something you're mad at but can cling to. (Jackson Conference, 2/16/55, p. 2)

The interpersonal dilemma is equally impossible for all members of the family:

> *Bateson*: I must not show affection because I will be rejected if I do, and I must not not show affection because I will be rejected if I don't" (Jackson Conference, 12/8/55, p. 3).

And later,

> *Bateson:* … Well, now, what is roughly happening is if we have two individuals, A and B, if A gives signals of type A1 then B gives B1 which drives A to give A2. But if A gives A2, B gives B2 and B2's drive him back to doing A1. And both of these (B1 and B2) are punishing acts… If I do not express love for her (A1), she freezes (B2). So, I must not express love for her (A2). If I do not express love for her, she blames/rejects me (B2), so I must express love for her [...they are approach and withdrawal moves]… (Jackson Conference, 12/8/55, p. 6)

Bateson went on to outline the general form taken by dependence:

> *Bateson:* …What I mean by dependence…when I say A is dependent upon B, I mean that there are sequences interchanged between A and B having the general form 'ABA' in which the first 'A' is an asking, the 'B' is giving what is asked for, help and such, and the second 'A' is the acceptance of that by 'A.' (Jackson Conference, 12/15/55, p. 2)

## Diagram of Dependency:

*A*          *B*          *A*

**(ask)      (help)      (accept)**

The dynamics of dependency, however, are not always so clear cut:

> *Bateson*: … One of the things that's very conspicuous is that the definition of dominance overlaps this very much. A dominates B would be represented by a similar diagram in which the first "A" is a command, and not an asking, the "B" is the obedient act, and the second "A" is the reinforcement for that obedient act… I mean, who decides—A grants, B gives something which A desires, and A squeals … Now, how are you going to decide whether that is what you call 'asking' or whether it is what you will call 'commanding.' And it's a damn thin line. (Jackson Conference, 12/15/55, p. 2)

**Dominance:**

    *A*          *B*            *A*

**(command)   (obedient act)   (reinforcement)**

The schizophrenic was seen to be not just a sponge-like helpless recipient of the double bind, but an impetus as well.

*h) Past vs. Present*
The team had an on-going discussion about the origins of dependency. Is dependency best understood as beginning in infancy or in the present? Jackson thought both important, but leaned toward learned expectations beginning in infancy, and Haley emphasized reinforcement in interactions taking place in the present. Why is the nature of relationships so important to the schizophrenic? For Jackson, the importance/dependency formed in the past, when the person who developed ways of dealing with others that are called schizophrenic was biologically helpless. Haley often emphasized that it is not important to look into the past to understand relationships in the present.

> *Jackson*: … I don't see how you can postulate, Jay, that this guy gives one damn why when his mother comes to see him, that she stiffens, and it becomes such a terrific problem unless you postulate his past. Why does this woman of today mean so much to him? (Jackson Conference, 12/8/ 55, p. 28)

From Jackson's characteristic both/and perspective, ignoring the past learning of dependency and focusing only on the present leaves a schizophrenic's behavior devoid of interactional/learning context within which learning contingencies shape the repertoire of an individual's behaviors. The past was necessary to understand habits of the present, although the patient understanding the past was not necessary for the patient to change in therapy. For Haley, the past was merely a codified image that you carry with you into the present.

**V. Milton Erickson**

By mid-1955 the Bateson team had developed the double bind hypothesis to a point where they wanted to discuss it with other eminent researchers, including Milton Erickson. Bateson had a relationship with Erickson going back to the early 1940s. Team members believed there to be a similarity between hypnotic trance and the double-bind communication observed to occur in family interaction between a person displaying schizophrenic behavior and other family members. Bateson (1955) wrote a letter to Erickson requesting a meeting. The letter begins:

May 24, 1955

Dear Milton,

I write to you because at long last my research project seems to have reached a theoretical position where we know some of the questions we would like to ask you about hypnosis. Two members of my project, Jay Haley and John Weakland, have been doing some minor experimenting with hypnosis since Jay attended your seminar in San Francisco. It has become more apparent that a better understanding of hypnosis would carry us forward in our work. …

A week later, Erickson responded by letter showing great interest in the project, and inviting Bateson to send members of his research team to Phoenix to confer. Within two weeks Haley and Weakland made the first of what would become routine visits to meet with Erickson several times a year for the next seventeen years, and triggering regular visits by Erickson to Palo Alto to confer with the Bateson team. Subsequent Bateson team transcripts evidence a growing belief among the team members in the relevance of similarities between formal trance inductions on the one hand, and on the other hand formal styles by which some families interact with one another observable in families in which a member manifests symptomatic behavior.

Some of the trance related topics to which entire Bateson team meetings were devoted, for example the Jackson Conference dated May 25, 1955, includes

*a) Trance*
- Is trance situation specific?
- Do these kinds of transactions occur in everyday life?
- What are contexts in which trance occurs and why?
- In what other contexts might the presence of trance induction rituals be observable in everyday life, for example faith healers, driving a car, typing, coaching, etc.?

*b) Trance and the Double-Bind*
An example discussed at great length involved what Erickson described as a *stay awake example*:

*Erickson*: I can hypnotize you (I can make you obey my commands).
*Subject*: You cannot hypnotize me (You can't make me obey your commands).
*Erickson*: Stay awake (Don't obey me).
*Subject*: Therefore, if I obey his command I go into a trance, because obeying his command means going into a trance. If I don't obey his command, I go into a trance because he's commanding me to stay awake. (cited in Jackson Conference, 12/8/55, p. 16)

What the Bateson team had labeled a double bind is central to this interaction: If I disobey your command, "don't obey," I am disobeying. If I obey your command, "don't obey," I am disobeying. So, if I obey, I am disobeying, and if I disobey, I am obeying.

> *Jackson:* … Can one disobey the command, 'don't obey'? (Jackson Conference, 12/8/55, p. 16)

## c) Trance, the Double Bind, and Dependency

Often in intimate interpersonal exchanges and also in trance a blurring of the line happens between self and other:

> *Haley*: …who's you and who's me, are you doing that because I told you to or because you're doing it? (Jackson Conference, 12/8/55, p. 24)

## d) Erickson's Methods

Sensitivity to and utilization of interactional dynamics together with a trust in his own benign motives and abilities, permeate Erickson's method of therapy.

> *Haley*: … What happens between Erickson and patient happens between therapist and patient, but takes a long time to establish. He calculatedly sets it up and makes it happen. He won't just let it happen, he makes it happen … (Jackson Conference, 6/12/56, p. 7)

> *Weakland*: … "Erickson takes everything as a move towards him. He says resistance is an offer to play; that means he takes the positive aspect of anything and uses it to build an interaction … (Jackson Conference, 1/10/56, p. 5)

### *Belief in the potential of patients*

Another characteristic of Erickson's method emphasized in the Bateson team transcripts was his demonstration of belief in the patient's potential. Erickson displayed a scientist's interest in interactional phenomena generally. Like Jackson, Erickson also explicitly believed insight was not necessary for change (Haley, 1976a).

> *Haley*: … One thing he has that a traditional analyst doesn't have, that's a terrific respect for the potentiality of a person. Give them half a chance and they'll go like a rocket is what he seems to feel … (Jackson Conference, 6/12/56, p. 9) … it isn't analytic or Rogerian … it's *his* (Jackson Conference, 6/12/56, p. 2).

Another characteristic of Erickson's method, which is also characteristic of Jackson's therapy approach, was rhetorical dexterity in reversing sides of a complementary interaction:

> *Haley*: … If they (patients) want to get one-up, he lets them, if this is important to them. He lets them. He uses himself that way constantly (Jackson, 6/12/56, p. 12).

### *Use of metaphor*

Erickson frequently accepted patients' metaphorical statements as literal and vice versa, regularly employing what was also thematic in the work of Jackson (1955, 1959, 1961, 1963) and would later be characterized as paradoxical intention. Erickson created directives from the patient's metaphors, accepting a patient's behavior and extending it to its logical extreme by means of *reductio ad absurdum*. The Bateson team members, especially Haley and Weakland, were fascinated by Erickson's

emphasis on words used, language, and tone rather than content, as well as his often not selecting a central problem, but rather initiating change by focusing on changing a symptom. Another influential characteristic of Erickson's therapy included his explicitly giving directives.

> *Haley:* Erickson shows a willingness to take charge, to respond and arrange people's lives. (Jackson Conference, 4/10/58, p. 1)

*e) Jackson's Critique of Erickson's Methods*
While it is evident Jackson studied and admired the work of Milton Erickson, like Bateson, he is very cautious, one might even say wary of it, at times even questioning Erickson's motives:

> *Jackson*: … one of the things that bothers me about Erickson is that I really can't determine and I don't think I could unless I had some kind of an association with him over a period of time, what his concern is really about. It seems to me that in reading his stuff his concern is to be—is to demonstrate his own cleverness by being effective. And that this is somewhat different from an attempt to get some gratification out of relating. Which is what I think more therapists are maybe after. (Jackson Conference, 1/17/56, p. 10)

And elsewhere,

> *Jackson*: … I know the joy of doing something clever, it's a wonderful feeling to hit the thing on the head and carry it off, but I can't attribute much length of time
> *Fry*: … The question is whether it improves the situation or further complicates it. (Jackson Conference, 6/12/56, p. 8)

Jackson observed that the interviewing techniques used by Erickson were not especially innovative, having been pioneered by other well-known therapists such as Frieda Fromm-Reichmann and Harry Stack Sullivan. He also compared Erickson's behavior to that of the mother of the schizophrenic in the double bind quality of some interactions. The flavor of Jackson's critique of Erickson was not negative but cautious when considering the longevity of any change produced.

> *Jackson*: … we can get off base … [when we] look at things in terms of the fact that they work rather than try and understand them … (Jackson Conference, 1/17/55, p. 16)

To balance the caution he sometimes voiced about Erickson's approach, Jackson was also quite complementary of Erickson's work a number of times in the literature, and acknowledged having been influenced by him (Jackson, 1944, 1961, 1963, 2000).

**Group Interaction and Emergence**

Review of these transcripts fully supports John Weakland's observation that communication theory was not a product of one individual, but rather of the emergent quality of the interaction between members of the Bateson team. "The rich body of

ideas that constitute Interactional Theory emerged not so much from any one individual, but, rather, as the product of the *interaction between* the members of what has become known as the Palo Alto Group" (Weakland, 1988, p. 3). Indeed, one of the most significant observations derived from analysis of the actual transcripts and audio recordings of the Bateson team interaction is a close correspondence between the premises of the communication/interactional theory they created and the team members' actual behavior in relation to one another as displayed in the transcripts, and evidenced in subsequent contributions made by various team members to the literature that helped launch the field of family theory and therapy (Bateson, 1972; Ray, 2005, 2009; Watzlawick, Beavin-Bavelas & Jackson, 1967; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974).

**Part Played by Members of the Team**

With regard to the utterances characteristic of various team members, some of the most prominent redundancies displayed by can be summarized as follows:

*Don D. Jackson, MD*
Throughout the transcripts Jackson consistently interacted as an expert, teacher and clinical supervisor. Jackson possessed a vast knowledge of neurology, physiology, psychodynamic theory, and interpersonal interaction, as well as being an incredibly gifted therapist (Haley, 1988; Weakland, 1988; Watzlawick, 1988). The influence of one of Jackson's principal mentors, psychiatrist Harry S. Sullivan, is readily discernible. Sullivan's premise, "We are all much more simply human than otherwise, be we happy and successful, contented and detached, miserable and mentally disordered, or whatever" (Sullivan, 1945, p. 7), helped shape Jackson's manner of being with clients and interpersonal style with other team members. Jackson displays unwavering compassion for and belief in the abilities of the patients he saw, and those seen by other team members. A closing example:

> *Haley*: "I was more in sympathy for her at the end of the interview than I was with the patient. And I didn't realize this until sometime later."
> *Jackson*: "Well, that's good, otherwise you [couldn't] do therapy with them" (Jackson conference, 5/29/56, p. 12).

*John H. Weakland*
Haley(1988) has said of Weakland that he was present in all the important interactions out of which the Communication or Interactional View emerged. Characterized by one of his protégés as the "least known, well-known figure in family therapy" and "a master at the fine art of 'doing' nothing" (deShazer, 1999, pp. xiv), Weakland continuously served to bring the group back to the focal point of inquiry. As pacesetter of the group, and even though his contribution of spoken utterances was smaller in comparison to the other team members, Weakland had enormous impact on the direction of discussions.

Jay Haley

Haley was the youngest member of the team. His contribution could almost be characterized as impatient or precocious as the part he played in the interactional dynamic often placed him in the forefront of these exchanges—a kind of a team provocateur. Haley and Jackson shared a commitment to the profound importance of language with particular inclusion of paralinguistic aspects of exchanges, and to what is now termed a second-order cybernetic realization of the idea that the patient was not the sole person present in therapy.

*Gregory Bateson*

As principal investigator and creator of the research team, Bateson's presence frequently took the role of clarifier and teacher in the group. His broad command of information, intellectual stature, and open yet disciplined manner had a huge impact on the direction of discussions. He was not heavy handed, rather took the lead only when it was his area of expertise. In this manner he held this group of incredibly curious, creative, brilliant investigators together as a team for an incredible 10 years.

The nature of the discourse was such that clarifying interactions between members were allowed to emerge, with no apparent or distinct responsible party imposing a lead. Each member of the team played an important part in the dynamic; shaping and changing the course of the discussions, thus, the emergent quality.

**Conclusion**

Reflecting on Bateson research team interactions as preserved in these transcripts and recordings, the authors are struck by the highly original nature of the ideas that emerged, and the decisive and pervasive extent to which they have influenced and continue to influence the work of contributors to the fields of ecology, epistemology, and throughout the so-called hard and soft sciences. Within the behavioral sciences the shaping nature of this influence certainly permeates first-order and second-order family theory, family therapy, brief therapy, communication theory, and what are presently termed *narrative* and *post modern* (Hoffman, 1993; Anderson & Goolishian, 1989; White, 1989) views of understanding human behavior and or evoking change. Along with the work of other pioneers of family theory and therapy from that first era of research, such as Nathan Ackerman, Murray Bowen, Theodore Lidz, Margaret Singer, Lyman Wynne, Stephen Fleck, and others, the Bateson team's ideas form the ground from which the study of family process emerged as an alternative orientation for understanding human behavior.

Analysis of these materials leave little doubt about the pervasive influence of this team of researchers in creating the foundation for communication theory and interaction focused family and brief therapy. Beginning with the ten-year collaboration of the Bateson research team members (Bateson, Jackson, Haley, Weakland, and Fry); through collaborations of various team members with Milton Erickson and others, one can map the ever widening influence of the team's

contributions in the emergence of most if not all models of systemic practice. The first purely interaction focused therapeutic approach was articulated by Jackson, which he labeled conjoint family therapy (1957a) and interactional psychotherapy (1961) to distinguish the approach from individual focused approaches. Jackson, also went on to establish perhaps the world's first free standing family research center—the Mental Research Institute (MRI) where the first family therapy training program was established funded by the U.S. Federal Government with Virginia Satir, MSW as first Director of Training (Satir, 1964).

Like water is to the physiological make-up of all living creatures, concepts from Bateson Team research infuse most if not all systemic models of practice, including Jay Haley's strategic therapy (Haley, 1963, 1976b), MRI brief therapy (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974; Weakland & Ray, 1995), Salvador Minuchin's structural family therapy (1974), Milan systemic family therapy (Palgazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1978; Cecchin, Lane & Ray, 1993, 2010), cognitive behavioral marital and family therapy (Stewart, 1980; Jacobson & Margolin, 1979), solution focused brief therapy (deShazer, 1982), Tom Andersen's reflecting team (1987), more recently evolved models of systemic/strategic therapy (Nardone & Watzlawick, 2007; Ray, Stivers, & Brasher, 2011), currently fashionable evidence-based approaches (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1989), and the Fifth Province approach in Ireland (Byrne & McCarthy, 2007), among others. All of these approaches have adopted central or organizing tenets introduced by Bateson's research team. The Bateson research team is inescapably present as a living legacy to us all, and a reminder of our own recursive participation in the world of which we are a part**.**

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