Consequences and Punishment: A Fresh Look

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Abstract

The research examines the use of the term and practice of Logical Consequence to determine if what, if any, factual differences exist between it and punishment. An examination using the principles of logic and linguistics was conducted; the analysis revealed that the terms are synonymous logically from a supervaluationism perspective and linguistically from a semantics perspective. The researcher also examined the impacts of using synonymous language by probing into the effects that Attribution theory has on children’s perceptions of control; the deduction that a cycle of learned helplessness is perpetuated by the intrinsic need for control and predictability on both the parts of the practitioner and the child was reached through this exploration. The implications for this research is for dialogue in the Adlerian community for more forthright language to be used when administering interventions that will meet the need of the child for control and predictability which should then lead to more responsible and accountable members of the community.
Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my loving and supportive wife, Regina, my daughters, Yenestra and Tommie. Thank you for your support, patience and encouragement. Without you this paper would not have been possible. My mother, Thomasina Brown, you instilled in me the values of hard work, honesty, integrity and a good education. My sisters Alfreda Fisher, Ruth Brown and Renee Spann, words cannot express my gratitude for your support of me through my journey of higher learning.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background............................................................................................................................................... 6

The Case for a Fresh Look.......................................................................................................................... 6

Scholarly Interpretations of the Word Punishment..................................................................................... 8

Logical Consequences .................................................................................................................................. 11

Deconstructing Logical Consequences......................................................................................................... 14

Principles of logic ......................................................................................................................................... 16

Summary ...................................................................................................................................................... 22

Reconstructing Logical Consequences Based on the Principles of Logic ...................................................... 23

The Linguistic Argument ............................................................................................................................ 26

Summary ...................................................................................................................................................... 30

Punishment as a Logical Intervention: The Fresh Look Defined .................................................................. 31

Attribution Theory ........................................................................................................................................ 32

Attribution Process....................................................................................................................................... 33

Causal Attributions .................................................................................................................................... 34

Causal Dimensions..................................................................................................................................... 35

Bias in Attribution....................................................................................................................................... 37

Learned Helplessness and the Importance of Control .................................................................................. 38

Punish to Empower? .................................................................................................................................... 41

Summary ...................................................................................................................................................... 45

Conclusion ................................................................................................................................................... 46

References................................................................................................................................................... 48

Figures......................................................................................................................................................... 54
Background

In the researcher’s experience working with adolescents ages twelve through seventeen for the past five years, it seems as though using the word punishment instead of consequence has greater effect on them making long-term behavioral changes. The researcher recognizes that language, word use, interpretation, emotional significance, and the decoding that occurs when words are spoken have a profound impact on the internalization of the message. These concepts play a very important role in how the receiver responds.

The researcher has also noticed that the words consequence, punishment and discipline have become synonymous in meaning; one will often hear of justice being served when a criminal receives the consequence of a life sentence in the penal system; when by its very meaning, it is a system of punishment; or putting a child in time-out as a disciplinary measure. In the researcher’s experience of working with adolescents it seems plausible that using the word punishment instead of consequence has greater effect on them making long-term behavioral changes because it gives them the sense that they are in control of the outcome, whereas a consequence can seem to be out of one’s control, much like the weather.

The Case for a Fresh Look

In Adlerian psychology, the approach is one of administering a Logical Consequence for deterring unwanted behaviors and helping adolescents become more involved and productive members of society. The research revealed that being forthright with children, leading them through observed behaviors, and recognizing bias and error in the perceived causes for behavioral issues may be the way to help them to become productive members of the community. The research also revealed that there is an affinity for the use of the term consequences, and a general opposition to the use of term punishment, even when the act or
intervention is the same. This paper will refer to Logical Consequence, title case as the theory; logical consequence, sentence case as the practice; and consequence(s) as the language used.

The movement from an autocratic approach to a more democratic approach in child rearing and development led psychology to think about ways of incorporating the use of more inclusive language. Nash, Pepper and Roberson (1982), wrote in terms of moving to a more democratic society. This means everyone is treated equal, with respect and allowed to make his/her own choices. This includes young children and adolescents. Nash et al. go further to posit that humans need social order and this social order sets the rules for living, which all must learn in order to function effectively in a society. The influence of Dreikurs and Gray (1968), who popularized the approach of using natural and Logical Consequence to win a child’s cooperation and gain more acceptable behaviors, can be seen in countless articles regarding the topic. Scholars support the natural flow of events without the interference of the adult, which is a natural consequence for a certain act or action (Dinkmeyer, Carlson & Dinkmeyer, 1994; Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1996; Dinkmeyer & Mckay, 1973 & 1978; Dreikurs, 1964; Dreikurs & Grey, 1968; Grunwald & McAbee, 1985; Kohn, 1996; Mosak & Maniaci, 1999; and Pepper & Roberson, 1982). According to Nash, Pepper and Roberson (1992) “consequences help a child to learn and respect the order of things and realize it is necessary for effective functioning in society” (p. 389). Nash et al. are referring to the act of administering a logical consequence.

When it comes to instructing and guiding children, the negative connotations have become so prevalent that the term consequence(s) is used to make the distinction between healthy and unhealthy interventions. What remains unclear is the factual difference between logical consequences and punishment from a linguistic and message perspective. Therefore, the question remains as to the message intent and decoding processes that must necessarily occur.
Moreover, the researcher recognizes that language, word use, interpretation and emotional significance that occurs when words are spoken and received plays a very important role in how the receiver responds and, therefore, the effectiveness of any intervention regardless of what designation one chooses to label it.

The word punishment does not mean physical or extraordinary measures. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), 2011, punishment is “The act of applying any stimulus that, when made contingent upon a response, decreases the probability of that response” (p. aspx#p), which in essence is an intervention. However, that does not seem to be the interpretation of punishment that some scholars have chosen to use.

**Scholarly Interpretations of the Word Punishment**

Grusec, Lockhart, & Walters, (1990) state that punishment is “an aversive stimulus that occurs after some specific response and is intended to suppress that response” (p. 113). Azoulay (1999), states:

> [P]unishment can be anything that decreases the occurrence of a behavior: physical pain, withdrawal of attention, loss of tangibles or activities, a reprimand, or even something others would find rewarding but the particular individual does not like. It may be deliberately arranged by another person, or it may occur naturally in the environment. Punishment may be the result of the imposition of one person’s will on another, and it may be arbitrary, but it does not have to be either of these (p.94).

McCord (1997) defines punishment as “the intentional use of pain as retribution for specific behavior or to prevent repetition of a type of behavior, can be considered as a mark of failure in socialization” (p.217).

Nash, Pepper and Roberson (1982), define punishment as imposing a penalty or for a
fault, offense, or violation or in retribution or retaliation; dealing with roughly or harshly.

Punishment is defined as retributive suffering, pain, or loss; severe, rough, or disastrous treatment. Punishment then, as viewed by most adults, is imposed by adults, and the consequences has no direct relationship with the misbehavior” (pp. 391-392).

Nash et al. go on to mention that a consequence may or may not involve physical punishment.

Kohn (1995), states:

Punishments and threats are counterproductive. Making children suffer in order to alter their future behaviors can often elicit temporary compliance… Punishment, even if referred to as ‘consequences’, tends to generate anger, defiance and a desire for revenge. Moreover it models the use of power rather than reason and ruptures the important relationship between adult and child,” (p.1).

Greitemeyer and Kazemi (2008), state “most educators and psychologist agree that punishment does not lead to any positive behavior and thus, tends to only suppress behavior. Once the threat of punishment is taken away, the child may continue to use the undesirable behavior” (p.248). Quoting from Deater-Deckard and Dodge, Joan McCord (1997) states “physical discipline affects children’s aggression, with the magnitude of the influence depending on the severity of the discipline” (p. 215). Azoulay (1999) states “The traditional view in Individual Psychology is that punishment and rewards do not work in child training…the use of punishment and rewards will lead to more rebellion and a power struggle” (p. 91).

For the purposes of this paper, and in accordance with the APA’s definition, the use of the word punishment by the researcher refers to interventions. The scholars have actually defined oppression which means to “burden with cruel or unjust impositions or restraints; subject to a burdensome or harsh exercise of authority or power”(Collins English Dictionary, n.d., para. 1).
In the zeal to eradicate the use of extraordinary and demeaning tactics from the professional repertoire of tools, practitioners, educators, and other adults have banished the word punishment from their vernacular. Punishment has been made synonymous with physical, damaging interventions and abuse. In so doing practitioners have lost sight of its true meaning and intended result. More useful interventions have been rendered practically useless and thereby created a generation of helpless individuals who are lacking in accountability. After research and review of the literature, the author finds that repackaging punishment to logical consequence has not been empirically proven to be effective in making the long-term behavioral adjustments needed to have children grow into responsible and engaged members of the community. Azouly (1999) supports this assertion “the explanation given for the advantages of this approach [Logical Consequence] to parenting skills rests on a contrast with rewards and punishment…this explanation however is often based on a superficial view of modern behavioral psychology” (p. 91).

In order to ensure that the statements above are not misconstrued, it is important to articulate the researcher’s total condemnation of corporal punishment, and acts used to demean and diminish one’s self-concept or self-worth. Inclusion and contribution are central to ensuring one’s standing in his community; to use the word consequences to justify logical interventions has not proven to be effective in making positive difference in children’s behavior (Azoulay, 1999). The researcher asserts that using the word punishment drives accountability and responsibility for one’s own action and directing desired outcomes (for the purpose of this paper, children will be used to refer to children and adolescents)
Logical Consequences

The researcher could not find a concrete definition for Logical Consequences, however there were many implied meanings for the term: Dreikurs and Grey (1968) the founders of the concept state, “Logical Consequences [are] situations where the consequence is, in effect, arranged by parents or another adult rather than being solely the results of the child’s own act…Natural Consequences [are] the natural results of ill-advised acts” (pp. 63 & 68). Dreikurs and Grey (1968) also posit that the delivery of the arranged act is the differentiating factor, “The tone of voice alone often distinguishes one [consequences] from the other [punishment]” (p. 58). They go further to assert that “The formulation of the term logical consequence arose out of the need to describe correctly activities which could not be strictly categorized as natural consequences” (p.62). Dreikurs and others believe that logical consequence is an aid to human progress and can prepare children for the demands of adult life.

A number of proponents for logical consequences (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Bockern, 1990; Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1983; Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 2000; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1990; Mosak & Maniaci, 1999) give examples of a consequence and what a logical consequence entails but not a clear definition of exactly what it is. Carlson & Slavik (1997), describe logical consequences as guided. That does not help one understand its meaning. Brendtro, Brokenleg & Bockern (1990), write about illogical punishment; “Illogical punishments only fuel anger and bitterness in alienated youth” (p. 110). Are Brendtro et al. saying there is such a thing as logical punishment, and if so, is it relevant to non-alienated youth? Is logical punishment really another name for logical consequences? Dinkmeyer & Mckay (1983) state a logical consequence is:

- Expressing the reality of the social order
- Recognizing mutual respect and mutual rights
- Directly related to the behavior
- Imply an element of moral judgment. They separate the deed from the doer.
- Concerned with present and future behavior.
- Invoked in a friendly manner, after parent and teen have calmed down.
- They imply good will.
- Permits choice (p.126).

These give the impression of guidelines for appropriateness and implementation rather than a definition. It does not delineate a logical consequence from punishment in any discernible terms of the act itself. Dreikurs and Soltz (1990) refer to Logical Consequences as

a reorientation of our thinking [as parents and adults] we must realize that we no longer live in the autocratic society that can control children …We can no longer impose our will on our children; we must orient ourselves to the democratic society” (p. 84).

Dreikurs and Soltz (1990) go further to assert that adults also must learn new techniques on how to stimulate proper behaviors from children. They suggest allowing more natural consequences to teach and guide the child because natural consequences are always beneficial but logical consequences can backfire. Dreikurs and Soltz (1990,) state:

Accurate and consistent application of logical consequences is often remarkably effective and may result in amazing reduction of friction and an increase in family harmony.

Children are very quick to see the justice of logical consequences, and they usually accept them readily without resentment. The less the parent talks about “consequences,” the less it will appear as punishment (p. 85).

One major critic of logical consequences is Alfie Kohn. He views logical consequences as a softer and more permissive way of making the punishment fit the crime. He describes
logical consequence as just another form of discipline; except that you must always be friendly and conscious of your tone of voice. Kohn (1996) refers to logical consequences and its technique/intervention as a groovy disciplinarian program. Kohn states:

The groovier programs, following the lead of Rudolf Dreikurs, prefer not to talk about punishment. Instead, punishment is repackaged as “logical consequences”. The student is still forced to do something undesirable (or prevented from doing something desirable), but the tone or the interaction is supposed to be more reasonable and friendly, and the consequence itself must have some conceptual connection to the child’s act: The punishment fits the crime (p. 2).

He begs the question “even if you use so called logical consequence are you not still punishing the child?” (p. 3). Kohn (1996) goes further to state “Mr. Dreikurs may have talked about democracy, but what he apparently meant was the use of meetings [coming together/collaboration] and other “modern” techniques to get students to do what they are told” (p. 4).

Dr. Jane Nelsen, Stephen H. Glenn, Lynn Lott, Cheryl Erwin, Kate Ortolano, Mary Hughes, Mike Brock, Lisa Larson and others (www. Posdis.org 6.20.12) all devoted enthusiasts, supporters, believers and followers of Alfred Adler’s psychology and Rudolf Dreikurs’ ideas on discipline, and who all have written books on the subject of discipline (Positive Discipline in the Classroom, How to Effectively Use Class Meetings and Other Positive Discipline Strategies [1993], Positive Discipline for Teenagers [1994] and Positive Discipline in the Classroom: Developing Mutual Respect, Cooperation, and Responsibility in Your Classroom [2000]), not once mention or discuss the term logical consequence, which is surprising. Moreover, these scholars developed and designed the program “Positive Discipline” which is a program designed
to teach young people to become responsible, respectful and resourceful members of their communities. The authors speak of positive discipline techniques and criteria for effective discipline, which entails being kind and firm at the same time. Dr. Jane Nelsen (2012) gives the following criteria for effective discipline:

Effective discipline…

- Helps children feel a sense of connection. (Belonging and significance)
- Is mutually respectful and encouraging (Kind and firm at the same time.)
- Is effective long-term. (Considers what the child is thinking, feeling, learning, and deciding about himself and his world – and what to do in the future to survive or thrive.
- Teaches important social and life skills. (Respect, concern for others, problem solving, and cooperation as well as the skills to contribute to the home, school or larger community)
- Invites children to discover how capable they are. (Encourages the constructive use of personal power and autonomy.) (para. 3)

**Deconstructing Logical Consequences**

It is important to deconstruct and examine logical consequences in order to explicate and neutralize the potentially controversial assertion above. Essential to the deconstruction process one must first understand the meaning of logical consequence as posited by Dreikurs. *Logical Consequences* are “Situations where the consequence is, in effect, arranged by parents or another adult rather than being solely the results of the child’s own act…[Natural Consequences are] the natural results of ill-advised acts” (Dreikurs & Grey 1968, pp. 63 & 68). Because Natural Consequences are widely understood and accepted, there will be no further examination of that
concept. Dreikurs & Grey (1968) meant Logical Consequences to replace punishment in the process of developing children. The researcher agrees with the intent of the premise. However, the application of Logical Consequences over punishment has been lost in translation and as this deconstruction and examination continues, this statement will become evident. To continue with the deconstruction process, an analysis of the words, logical and consequence must also be conducted to ascertain meaning.

Before defining the word logical, it is essential to understand the roots and origin of the word. Logical is derived from the word *logic* meaning:

1. the science that investigates the principles governing correct or reliable inference.
2. a particular method of reasoning or argumentation: *We were unable to follow his logic.*
3. the system or principles of reasoning applicable to any branch of knowledge or study.
4. reason or *sound* judgment, as in utterances or actions: *There wasn’t much logic in her move.*
5. convincing forcefulness; inexorable truth or persuasiveness: *the irresistible logic of the facts* (Collins English Dictionary, 2012, para.1).

Further deconstruction reveals the origins of the word logic has its roots in mid fourteenth century definition, “branch of philosophy that treats of forms of thinking,” from Old French word *logique*; from Latin *logica*; from Greek: *logike* meaning the “art of reasoning” the feminine form of *logikos* meaning "pertaining to speaking or reasoning," from logos "reason, idea, word meaning "logical argumentation" is from the fifteen century. (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2012). What one can surmise from the history of the word *logic* is that it pertains to speaking, reasoning, and forming coherent arguments.
Now that the root word and its origin is defined, the next step is to understand the definition of the word *logical* according to Random House Dictionary (2012), is defined as:

1. according to or agreeing with the principles of logic: *a logical inference*.
2. reasoning in accordance with the principles of logic, as a person or the mind: *logical thinking*.
3. reasonable; to be expected: *War was the logical consequence of such threats*.
4. of or pertaining to logic. (para. 1)

The second portion of the examination requires that the word consequence be defined. According to Merriam-Webster’s on-line Dictionary (2011), *consequence* is “An act or instance of following something as an effect, result, or outcome” (para. 1). So, to grasp the meaning of what Dreikurs intended, it is fair to conclude that he meant *logical* as reasoning according to and/or agreeing with the principles of logic, and *consequences* as a constructed act to mimic a natural occurrence. To summarize then, a logical consequence is a constructed act designed to appear natural based on the principals of logic. That then begs the question: What are the principles of logic?

**Principles of logic.** Geisler and Brooks (2005) state “logic is a way to think so that we can come to correct conclusions by understanding implications and the mistakes people often make in thinking” (p.13). Engel (2000) states “logic is the study of argument” (p. 7). When Engel speaks of argument he means a part of reasoning in which one or more statements are offered as support for some other statement. For instance, the statement being supported is the conclusion of the argument.

According to Geisler and Brooks (2005) “logic is built on four undeniable laws”(p.16). In order to legitimately reject or accept something as true one must apply one of the four principles.
These laws are self-evident and self-explanatory. This means, in order to reject an argument, one must deny the principle of logic itself; for example, there can be no adult infants. The first principle is the law of non-contradiction. Something cannot be both true and false at the same time in the same context. “This law declares that no statement can be both true and false; thus A cannot equal not-A” (Peng and Nisbett, 1999, p. 744). Geisler and Brooks (1990) offer the following explanation:

… no two contradictory statements can both be true at the same time and in the same sense. Now, if someone tried to deny this and said, “The law of non-contradiction is false,” he would have a problem. Without the law of non-contradiction, there is no such thing as true or false, because this law itself draws the line between true and false. So we can’t call it false without assuming it [calling it false] is true (p. 16).

The second principle is the law of identity, A is A, and if, then statements. The third principle of logic is the law of excluded middle, excluding the middle term of the conclusion. Either a thing is true or false, there is no middle ground. The fourth and final principle of logic is the law of rational inference; without this principle no one could prove any point of his argument. For example, this is when one makes an assumption, cites a case or gives a conclusion. As stated earlier, self-evidence and self-explanatory are the fundamental products of logic which essentially means that in order to deny the statement, one must deny the principle itself.

The fundamental logic principle encompass how certain one is about his probable conclusion, logical certainty; meaning how much weight does one’s probable conclusion have - is it undeniable or can it be challenged? Examples of statements that would carry the weight of logical certainty would be: all fish live in water; all index fingers are the first finger or the second
digit on a human hand; and the best way to see the moon is at night between the waxing crescent and waning crescent phases. Geisler and Brooks (2005) report “Certainty is only possible when one has all the evidence and can draw a conclusion from it” (p.139). This begs the question: did Dreikurs have all the evidence to draw the conclusion that administering logical consequences over punishment will teach the child to be a healthy member of society and diminish maladaptive behaviors and have certainty in that statement? By applying the rules of logic, meaning that logical consequences has self-evidence and self-explanation, logical consequence would have to render absolute. In other words, one would have to assert that administering logical consequences undeniably and indisputably produces healthy adults in every instance.

The law of non-contradiction actually draws the line between true and false. For example, either one is alive or one is dead. According to Geisler and Brooks (2005), “without the law of non-contradiction, there is no such thing as true or false” (p.16). The authors go further to assert that no two contradictory statements can both be true at the same time in the same sense. According to this principle, one must make a choice because if he does not his thoughts would be a continuous series of contradictions without any real affirmations.

The second principle of logic is the Law of identity. According to Aristotle (350 B.C.E) this “is a science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature…For an example, in the science of linguistics, language, letters and words refer to one central meaning” (p.1). Stated another way, an A is an A and as English speakers there is an agreement on the sound(s) that an A makes and the rules that govern those sounds. Without this identity, then letters, words, and language would have no meaning and humans would therefore be unable to communicate or have any understanding of the identity of a thing. Aristotle (350 B.C.E) postulates further that the Law of Identity:
is not the same as any of the so-called special sciences because no other sciences treats
universally of being as being, they cut off a part of being and investigate the attribute of
that part...there are many senses in which a thing may be said to “be”, but all that “is” is
related to one central point, one definite [definition] kind of thing, and is not said to “be”
by a mere ambiguity” (p.1).

For an example, logical consequence is related to one central point, consequence. The
word consequence and its definition [is primary] and is in virtue of its own nature, not the term
logical consequence. As mentioned earlier, according to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary (2011),
consequence is “An act or instance of following something as an effect, result, or outcome.”
According to Aristotle (350 B.C.E), “for not to have one meaning is to have no meaning” (p.6).

The third principle of logic is “The law of excluded middle” (LEM). According to Tye
(1989) Under this principle “a vague sentence [hypothesis] is true if it is true under all eligible
ways of making it completely precise, false if it is false under all eligible ways of making it
completely precise, and indefinite or neither true nor false otherwise. In this approach, simple
sentences about borderline cases are indefinite in truth-value. However, complex sentences
whose component sentences are indefinite may be either true or false” ( p.141). What Tye is
saying is that there is normally a middle section or a borderline within one’s sentence, statement
or hypotheses; and often one speaks or writes skipping over or avoiding the middle piece/section
because it (the middle) must help or support the statement to make it either true or false under all
eligible ways of making it completely precise.

For example, either Albert is smart or not. Suppose that Albert is borderline smart. Since
any acceptable specification of “smart” will guarantee that one of the two propositions, Albert is
smart or he is not, is true then the other proposition is false. One of the propositions is a logical
truth that serves as the main element of a sentence, while the other proposition is false and indefinite. Tye (1989) states “many scholars and supervaluationism [one who uses semantics for dealing with irreferential singular terms and vagueness] believe that many individuals fail to prove or support their case when it comes to this principle” (p.141). Tye goes further to mention that when applying the LEM principle to vague sentences, if applied properly, some of them should fail. Geisler and Brooks (2005) provide this reminder, “Since in logic our goal is to reach an inference from two propositions, slipping the middle term into the conclusion is taboo” (p.39). This type of a mistake is called the fallacy of “Undistributed Middle”. The middle term must refer to the whole. The LEM is simply stating that a claim or statement is either totally true or totally false; there is no middle ground or in between, it must be one or the other. For example, Jack is tall. When one says that the LEM applies s/he is saying that something is or is not.

The LEM applies in various degrees and different ways to analytic statements, synthetic statements, which must be judged empirically. It also, deals with prescriptive statements and descriptive claims. Within these statement there needs to be a defining meaning, standards, characteristic or criteria for the statement. For example, Al is smart. When it is stated that the LEM applies, it means that something is or is not. There is no middle ground. To account for the subjectivity, vague statements such as, ‘Al is smart’, must be operationalized in order to render the statement either true or false.

To see if the LEM applies to a statement one must see if it has an operational meaning, which is either a rule, definition or a specific process of doing something. In logic inferences are analyzed so the operational meaning meets one of the standards as set by the four principles of logic; which includes the law of non-contradiction, law of identity, law of excluded middle and the law of rational inference. Is this statement ‘Al is smart’ true or false? One must define the
degree of Al’s intelligence to determine if Al is smart. To do this, one needs to know what rules, principles, guidelines, formulae, specific processes, criteria, standards or description of smart. In other words, one would need to have the operational meaning of being smart. Once this is determined, it can then truthfully be said that Al is smart and have the principles of logic support the conclusion. So the LEM would apply, and it can be said that Al is smart or he is not.

Applying the LEM with its process of having an operational meaning so that there are no contradictions to the fact or its conclusion, either a thing is true or a thing false. When applying this principle to see if a vague statement, i.e. a hypothesis, is totally true or totally false, one must use all eligible ways of making the statement either totally true or totally false.

The statement “Logical Consequence” that Dreikurs offers may appear to be a clearly understood, simple and acceptable statement. However, according to LEM, this statement is vague, meaning that it does not have an operational meaning - a defining definition, criteria or standards to make this statement totally true or totally false. This statement also cannot be judged empirically. According to this principle, in order for a statement to be true or false it must have an operational meaning. This term leaves one to imply and apply many interpretations of its meaning. In what eligible ways did Dreikurs make his statement precise and totally true? He could not have possibly asked every adult whether or not they experienced a logical consequence or punishment. Nor could he have assessed each of these adults to determine his/her contributions to society to determine levels of positive contribution. Finally, there is no empirical information to positively assert that adults who have received punishment are detrimental to society, while those receiving logical consequences are constructive contributors. Clearly, Dreikurs could not have reasonably applied this principle when formulating his argument/statement. Therefore the term fails in precise meaning under LEM principle.
The fourth principle of logic is the Law of Rational Inference. To apply this law one must first have a syllogism. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) states “a syllogism is a three-step argument containing three different terms” (p.1). A syllogism must have a major premise, minor premise and a conclusion. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) gives an example, “All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is mortal” (p.1). The first assertion is the major premise, the second assertion is the minor premise and the last assertion is the conclusion. In a logically valid syllogism the conclusion follows from the premise. Aristotle asserted that if one knows that both of the premises are true then the conclusion must be true. An example of misuse of the law of rational inference is this: a tomato is red; blood is red; therefore a tomato is blood. The flaw is the major and minor premises share the same characteristics rather than unique characteristics from which to draw a logical and correct conclusion. This type of error is common when one is ignorant of syllogisms.

Is the logical consequence proposition really an argument under the fourth principle of logic, or is it possible it is a personal statement of belief (Cognitive schema)? Next, is this proposition a syllogism? Dreikurs’ Logical Consequence is not a valid proposition, nor is it a syllogism following the fourth principle of logic. Are there three separate terms in logical consequence? No. As one can see, logical consequence under the fourth principle of logic is no more than a statement. Therefore, the fourth principle of logic does not apply in understanding how Dreikurs tied the statement logical consequence to the science of logic.

**Summary.** Supporters of logical consequences explain how to implement logical consequences when working with children to decrease unwanted behaviors as compared to the use of punishment. The argument is very convincing and has been widely accepted as logical. Logical consequence as posited by Dreikurs sounds like a legitimately simple statement, from
which one is easily able to infer its meaning and what it may imply. However, for the purpose of this paper the researcher wanted to go a step further to gain a deeper understanding of the statement. The researcher wanted to further understand what, if any, processes or principles Dreikurs could have followed to help him formulate and develop this statement. Also, the researcher wanted to know if the statement logical consequences as it is understood is actually logical according to the principles.

After deconstructing and researching the term Logical Consequence, the researcher concluded that using the principles of logic, the statement Logical Consequence is not constructed or developed using any of the four principles of logic. At best it follows supervaluationism because there is no clear meaning or definition for the term. Also, there is no empirical evidence that suggests the use of a logical consequence decreases unwanted behaviors in children. It is understandable why one would adopt the Logical Consequence theory, and its approach and techniques because it is very simple, convincing and persuasive. However, this still brings the discussion back to the original question: what is a logical consequence in practice?

**Reconstructing Logical Consequences Based on the Principles of Logic**

Continuing with the first principle and applying it to the second assertion that punishment cannot help a child learn to become a healthy individual of society and minimize maladaptive behaviors, the researcher has shown that Dreikurs could not have applied logical certainty that punishment is ineffective. He would have had to examine all socially responsible adults to assure they had never received punishment during their childhoods. He would also have had to ensure that all maladaptive children and antisocial adults had received punishment. Understanding that there is no universality to either statement and there were no studies or research to prove the claim, one can conclude there is a lack of logical certainty. Therefore, one can reasonably and
logically assert that Dreikurs did not apply the first rule of logic when formulating the theory of Logical Consequence and its effect. Nor could he have established that the effects of punishment is always contrary to helping a child to become a healthy member of society. Finally, it is reasonable to dispute the assumption that punishment will create maladaptive, antisocial and criminal behaviors within the child, based on the principle of logical certainty.

To determine whether Dreikurs applied the law of non-contradiction, it is important to examine the statements contained within the theory of Logical Consequence. As explained earlier, according to Dreikurs, it is important when administering a logical consequence, that one pay attention to tone of voice, otherwise the logical consequence then becomes a punishment. Either a logical consequence is different, separate and apart from punishment or it is not. Stated another way, either a punishment is different, separate and apart from a logical consequence or it is not. Does this then make tone of voice the definition of punishment? If one is beaten with a whip, but the punisher uses a soft tone while counting the lashes, has the receiver of the lash experienced corporal punishment or logical consequence? Evaluating this against the law of non-contradiction, one can more readily determine that the administration of a logical consequence does not meet the criteria of non-contradiction.

When Dreikurs spoke of the theory Logical Consequence and how to apply it so one can get the best results in having a child change unwanted behaviors, he stressed tone of voice. He emphasized how critical it is to speak softly when applying a logical consequence. One can then infer that it is one’s tone of voice that will distinguish and determine the success or failure when using a logical consequence to change unwanted behaviors. Is it also safe to say that this tone of voice is now a property of the theory Logical Consequence and the practice of administering a logical consequence. As previously discussed, all of this is related to the primary (consequence).
Aristotle (350 B.C.E) states when using the law of non-contradiction principle, “we must state whether it belongs to one or to different sciences to inquire into the truth” (p. 4). What Dreikurs essentially did was modified and added to the word consequence without using or following this principle.

It appears that Dreikurs tried to detach the being of consequence (virtue of its own nature) to attribute the word logical. In a sense Dreikurs attempted to convey the idea that a logical consequence is related to the common nature of the word consequence. This explains why the researcher could not find one being (as previously discussed as the law of identity) for the notion of logical consequence. Yet, from the research, there were many explanations for how to apply a logical consequence, but not a clear and agreed upon definition for what a Logical Consequence actually means.

Dreikurs’ theory on Logical Consequence cannot be true if he did not follow the law of identity, which Aristotle (350 B.C.) calls “the science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature” (p. 1). Further, the term logical consequence cannot be viewed as an argument or a syllogism according to the rules/ laws and principals of logic. Geisler and Brooks (1990), assert that for a statement to be considered a logical argument it must provide a reason for the basis of a conclusion. The authors go further to explain how a syllogism should be constructed. As previously discussed, a syllogism is a type of logical argument where the proposition, or statement of truth, is made of at least two premises from which the proposition can be inferred. Based on the information provided, one finds that a Logical Consequence is two separate words put together following none of the principals or rules of logic. However, for the purpose of this paper the researcher will continue to use logical consequence as a statement, argument and proposition. Finally, as declared earlier, to apply the
law of rational inference one must first have a syllogism. As has been argued and summarized above, Dreikurs’ Logical Consequence is not actually an argument or proposition following the rule and law of logic. Therefore, the researcher cannot substantiate the theory Logical Consequence or notion of logical consequence using the principles and rules of logic. However, it is important to examine both the theory and the practice of a logical consequence from a linguistic perspective to alleviate the apparent speciousness of the statement and its inferred conclusion.

The Linguistic Argument

*Linguistics* is the scientific study of language that has three main fields of focus: language form, meaning, and context. *Language form* includes grammar. *Grammar* is the system of rules the user of a language should follow, and includes: the study of *morphology*, which is the formation and composition of words; *syntax*, which is the composition of words into sentences; and *phonetics* which is concerned with the properties of speech sound – how they are produced and perceived.

*Language meaning* is the area of linguistics that focuses on how languages use logical structures to convey and assign meaning and resolve ambiguity. *Semantics* and *pragmatics* are subfields in the meaning category and are concerned with how meaning is inferred from words and concepts; and how meaning is inferred from contexts, respectively. Finally, *language in context* is gaining and applying an understanding of the broader influences of social, cultural, historical and political dynamics. *Evolutionary linguistics* is the study of language origin, with subcategories including *sociolinguistics*, which is an examination of the relationship between linguistic differences and social order and psycholinguistics, which is the representation and function of language in the mind. Other subfields in this category include historical linguistics,
neurolinguistics, language acquisition, and discourse analysis (Akmajian, Demers, Farmer & Harnish, 2010; Barrios, 2012; Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2010).

For the purpose of this paper and to defend the argument as set forth, it is important to focus on language meaning and its use to resolve ambiguity; however aspects of language form and context will also be discussed. To recap, linguistics refers to grammar, syntax, semantics, pragmatics and epistemics (relating to knowing). For example, when one forms a sentence, argument or proposition it is developed by one’s mental structure, which involves her educational training, social and cultural upbringing. Education, social and cultural upbringing forms one’s language, speech, writing and interpretation of words. All of which serve to reduce ambiguity.

Therefore, in order to reduce ambiguity, it is important to examine Logical Consequence using the logical structures of grammar by applying those rules to the term. The first application is the law of non-contradiction. In grammar, proper syntax helps one avoid this. This law is applied to our grammatical structures for applying meaning. For example, grammatical syntax for non-contraction can be observed by avoiding double negatives: “She does not know nothing”. If she does not know nothing, then she must know everything, or at least something. We eliminate possible confusion and reduce ambiguity by clarifying the meaning through the rules of grammar. One would simply state, “She does not know anything”, if one means to convey that she is void of knowledge or one would state “She knows everything”.

One would then have to further remove the ambiguity by clarifying what particular topic in which she may be lacking knowledge or of what particular topic she may have an abundance of knowledge. As one cannot be completely void of knowledge or have full of knowledge of everything. In other words, that sentence must abide by both pragmatic and semantic rules if one
is to identify the context, which is the law of identity and infer meaning, which applies the law of rational inference.

Grammatically, does logical consequence meet the standards for syntax or non-contradiction? One must first look at its fundamental structure. To state that a consequence is logical would imply that a consequence can be illogical. As previously discussed, a consequence is an act or instance of following something as an effect, result, or outcome. *Illogical* then is defined as “Not logical; contrary to or disregardful of the rules of logic; unreasoning: an illogical reply.” (Collins English Dictionary, 2012, p. 1). If a consequence is an act or instance of following something as an effect, result or outcome, that act of following can be unintended, unexpected, misunderstood, misinterpreted, even nature defying, but it cannot be illogical. For a consequence to be illogical would mean that the cause did not produce the effect, result or outcome, which is impossible. The term illogical consequence then cannot be grammatically correct. It is a contradiction in terms. The basic law of physics states for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Therefore if illogical consequence is the opposite of logical consequence, and it is invalid, which would mean that logical consequence is then invalid based on the syntax non-contradiction rule. For example, in comparing the two statements “There are no adult children” and, “there are no child adults”, if the first statement is true, the opposite statement must also be true. This will become clearer as the discussion progresses to the law of identity and the law of rational inference.

Continuing the linguistic argument, it is important to examine the pragmatics linguistic rule of logical consequence, which aligns with the logic principle of identity. To place the theory Logical Consequence in context and identify it to ascertain meaning linguistically would require an explanation as to its process. This is true because it can only be defined in terms of its
enactment. If the only context for a logical consequence is tone of voice and omission of
instruction, then as in the logical argument conclusion, it cannot pass the pragmatics rules
because it lacks a framework that can be contextualized in a way that gives it an identity unique
unto itself. Without this, it does not serve to provide meaning for the actor or the receiver.
Therefore, the term fails the pragmatics identification rule because identity cannot be articulated
formally or colloquially. However, it is important to determine if logical consequence can be
linguistically inferred using semantics.

Semantics is extremely important, perhaps the most important for the linguist argument
because it has the greatest flexibility and at the same time the greatest burden for meaning as
semantics is the study of meaning, symbols and logic. In order to examine logical consequence
against the rules of semantics, the rational inference rule of logic must be suspended. As
previously discussed logical consequence is not a syllogism as it does not have the necessary
components. In order to examine logical consequences from a semantics perspective, it is
imperative that the interrelationship of the words making up the phrase be reviewed. As
previously stated “logical” is reasoning according to and/or agreeing with the principles of logic,
and “consequence” is a constructed act to mimic a natural occurrence. To summarize, a “Logical
Consequence” is a constructed act designed to appear natural based on the principals of logic.
Logical means if the enforcement of a logical consequence is not based on the act itself then
context cannot be provided. Therefore, semantically speaking, a logical consequence is
punishment.

Because of its very construct, there can be different interpretations of logical
consequence. It stands to reason that adolescents may have a different interpretation than adults.
It is also reasonable to assert that children will interpret a logical consequence as punishment regardless of the language used to describe the action. Consider this:

During a class meeting, students in a fifth grade class were asked to brainstorm logical consequences for two students who didn't hear the recess bell and were late for class.

Following is their list of "consequences:"

- Make them write their names on the board.
- Make them stay after school that many minutes.
- Take away that many minutes off tomorrow's recess.
- No recess tomorrow.

- The teacher could yell at them (Nelsen, 2012, p. 1).

The students listed ways for the two students who did not hear the bell to pay for their infraction. There are no suggestions for learning or avoiding the consequence for being late other than to hear the bell. This proves that semantics is important for meaning and the use of the term logical consequence has no different meaning than punishment.

**Summary**

The linguistic argument for a logical consequence being different from punishment has come up short. By applying the rules of syntax, pragmatics, and semantics, the evidence reveals that one cannot linguistically validate the term. As discussed, the syntax rule helps to reduce ambiguity and aligns with the logic rule of non-contradiction. One finds that the phrase does not meet the rule for reducing ambiguity. Since this linguistic rule closely aligns with the rule of non-contradiction in logic, invaliding this term under that rule also invalidated it against the syntax rule. The researcher also used linguistic terms but was invariably unable to substantiate illogical consequences syntactically.
The researcher was also unable to prove the linguistic viability of Logical Consequence under the rule of pragmatics. Pragmatics is concerned with identity. Just as the term failed under the logic principle of identity, it also fails linguistically under the linguistic rule of pragmatics. This is due to the fact that linguistically, a logical consequence does not have a framework that uniquely identifies it either formally or colloquially. Finally, tested against the semantics rule of linguistics, logical consequence is unsuccessful passing. As stated above, semantics deals with inferring meaning and differs from the principles of logic in that it cannot be evaluated based on logic because it is not a syllogism. Also discussed was the fact that the linguistics rule of semantics is concerned with inferring meaning. Since a logical consequence cannot be substantiated under the syntax or pragmatics rules, the only linguistic way to interpret it is using semantics. When using semantics to infer meaning, the researcher finds that a logical consequence is synonymous with punishment. In keeping with the original question that started this paper, the researcher has established that a logical consequence is indeed no different than punishment from both logical and linguistic perspectives. It is important to understand the implications of logical consequence as interpreted and executed and what that means to helping children grow into productive members of society.

**Punishment as a Logical Intervention: The Fresh Look Defined**

As was discussed earlier, according to the American Psychological Association (APA), 2011, punishment is “The act of applying any stimulus that, when made contingent upon a response, decreases the probability of that response” (p. aspx#p). It has been established that logically and linguistically, a logical consequence cannot be established as a thing unique unto itself. It has also been established as a matter of fact, that Logical Consequence in its effect is a repackaging of the word punishment. Both are used as stimuli to change unwanted behaviors.
Dreikurs acknowledged that the salient distinguishing factor is tone of voice. The difference in the process, tools, techniques and methods does not change the evidence. There are no factual differences between a logical consequence and punishment. The goal and the desired outcome for Logical Consequence and punishment are the same: to help the child or adolescent change unwanted behaviors. If this is the fact of the matter, would it not be a simpler and more straightforward approach to be clear and remove ambiguity? After all, this is the goal of logic and communication.

Empowering adolescents and giving adults permission to take leadership roles in cultivating productive members of society is the basis of the argument for a fresh look. In order to elucidate this assertion, it is first important to understand the cognitive approaches to behavior and the factors that lead toward feelings of empowerment rather than feelings of helplessness. It is equally essential to understand how one determines cause. Introducing Attribution Theory into this discussion helps frame and define the need for a fresh look. The principles of Attribution serve as a framework for approaching this fresh look and can give Adlerians more effective and candid language for respectfully interacting with clients.

**Attribution Theory**

Specifically, Attribution, Attribution theory, Achievement/ Casual Attribution and Causal Dimensions will be discussed. Heider (1958) was the first to offer a psychological concept of attribution. Weiner, (1974, 1986) advanced the topic by developing a theoretical framework with which researchers can examine and apply in various fields, including education, law, psychology and other mental health fields (Kearsley, 2011). “Attribution is to say or believe something is the result of [a] particular thing…” (Batool, Yousuf & Parveen, 2012, p. 193). Fisk and Taylor (1991), as cited by McLeod (2010), state, “Attribution theory deals with how the
social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events. It examines what information is gathered and how it combines to form a causal judgment” (para. 2). Achievement also called Causal Attributions, herein referred to as Causal Attributions, is defined as those causal attributes that answers questions of why a particular endeavor succeeded or failed. These are situational and include effort, ability, level of task difficulty or luck. (Graham, 1997, Griffin, 2012). The final principle under this theory is that of Causal Dimensions of Behavior, herein referred to as Causal Dimensions that can be described as properties of causal attributions and include locus of control, stability and controllability. These items can be considered perceptional items, as they are perceived levels of control.

Attribution process. As stated earlier, attribution theory provides a framework for understanding the causes one attributes to outcomes based on the level of perceived control. According to the theory there are three steps to ascribing attribution: 1.) Behavior is observed; 2.) Behavior is judged; 3.) Behavior is dispositioned a cause (Batool et al, 2012; Fisk & Taylor, 1991; Graham, 1997; Griffin, 2012; Kearsley, 2011). The first stage of the process of attribution is the perception of the action; this can be first or second hand. In other words, one cannot have a perception of an action she knows nothing about. Secondly, the perceiver judges the intent of the behavior, which is not without bias. Finally, the perceiver attributes a cause to the observed behavior (See Figure 1).

Step 1: Observed behavior. Behavior, whether successful or not, is observed by a perceiver. This observation can be first hand, meaning it was witnessed by a person or persons, or it can be second hand in that it was relayed to the perceiver by another. Inferences are drawn from this behavior and the inferences drawn dictate responses by the observer as to why the person did what s/he did. Observation is the first step in the attribution process.
Step 2: Judgment of behavior. The judgment step is primarily concerned with intentionality. The perceiver is consciously or unconsciously attempting to determine controllability. The perceiver is endeavoring to answer questions as to whether or not the person was/is able to control his/her behavior/action. Generally, the judgment will attribute two general causes: internal to the individual or external to the individual. For example, a student who is consistently late for class will be judged by the teacher: is the student lazy, incapable, uninterested, or disrespectful? Or does the student have extenuating circumstances that causes him to be consistently late? Because the perceiver is human, s/he are likely to attribute character or behavioral issues to the cause of consistent infractions because humans generally judge based on their individual biases even if extenuating circumstances may be the ultimate case. This discussion on bias will be explored more fully later in this paper.

Step 3: Attribution disposition. The final step in the attribution process is attributing behavior to internal or external factors. If the attribution is believed by the perceiver to be internal, it generally refers to an aspect of the person, personality, or character. If the attribution is believed by the perceiver to be external, it generally refers to environmental or situational.

Causal attributions. Once a perceiver determines if the action/behavior was intentional or not, internal or external, there is an affective reaction that leads the perceiver to make determinations about the person’s future action. As stated above, causal attributions attempt to answer the question of why a particular endeavor succeeded or failed. These attributions include effort, ability, level of task difficulty and luck. By assigning causal attributions to internal and external causes, the perceiver is attempting to reduce uncertainty by, predicting the future based on his/her own assessment of the behaviors observed. Effort refers to the amount of energy an actor puts into the outcome or achievement. Ability refers to the person’s aptitude, skill and
capacity to perform a particular task. *Level of Difficulty* (Difficulty) denotes how arduous a particular task may be. *Luck* is accidental, either fortuitous or detrimental. See Figure 2.

**Causal dimensions.** Finally, there are dimensions to the causal attributions that further assign controllability, predictability, and therefore responsibility to the actor’s behaviors. To reiterate, the causal dimensions include locus of control, stability and control. *Stability* refers to the degree of volatility of the dimension; the likelihood of change within the dimension. *Control* is the dimension given to causal attributions to illustrate the level of control an actor has over these dimensions. These dimensions are allocated to the causal dispositions as follows (Batool, et al 2012; Graham, 1997; Griffin, 2011):

- Effort is considered to be internal, controllable and stable because the actor can exercise a great deal of control
- Ability, an internal attribute, is considered stable but the actor cannot exercise much direct control over his/her ability.
- Difficulty is external, stable and is beyond the actor’s control
- Luck is external, stable, and very little to no control can be exercised by the actor

**Locus of control.** Locus of control is of particular interest to the fresh look as it considers the perception of control of the actor and is explained in more detail in the next section. “A locus of control orientation is a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do (internal control orientation) or on events outside of our personal control (external control orientation)” (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 1985, p. 224).

The concept of Locus of Control was originally conceived by Julian Rotter (1966) as a way to bridge behavioral and cognitive psychology. Originally coined *Locus of Control of Reinforcement*, the construct expected to illustrate that behaviors are guided by reinforcement,
specifically reward and punishment. Through the administration of these reinforcements, individuals come to embrace and internalize beliefs about the causes of their actions. These beliefs then direct the behaviors and the attitude about the behaviors. “A locus of control orientation is a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do (internal control orientation) or on events outside of our personal control (external control orientation)” (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 1985, p. 224). Locus of control (LOC) is conceptualized as a one-dimensional continuum, ranging from external (meaning that the individual attributes external forces such as fate, luck and authority to outcomes realized) to internal (meaning the individual attributes his/her own effort and capabilities to outcomes). See Figure 4.

Research has long established that an internal LOC in children and adolescents results in greater achievement and better performance on cognitive tasks due to feelings of being empowered rather than feelings of helplessness, as would be indicative of one with an external LOC (Bandura, 1977; Dweck, 1976; Harter, 1981; Rotter, 1966; Seligman, 1975; Stipek, 1980; Weiner, 1979). The questions then are: why do some develop beliefs that lead toward an internal LOC, while others attribute external factors to their behavior and feelings of power; and how do attributed causes influence perceptions of control? These questions can be answered by examining the bias in attribution.

The attribution process informs the author’s perspective as it considers the human dynamic to instructing and leading adolescents toward healthy behavioral norms. Logical consequences are strictly cause and effect, with inherent bias and flaws. Beyond the arguments already discussed, the flaw in execution of logical consequences as a non-punitive intervention is that it cannot control against humanness of the perceiver of an action and his/her biases. In this individualistic culture, the research suggests that cultural biases, racial biases and individual
biases influence the administration of logical consequences and, therefore, the amount of helplessness that is internalized within adolescents.

**Bias in attribution.** Earlier in this discussion, the researcher mentioned the fact that the process of attributing cause to an action is not without bias. Ross (1977) conceptualized the *fundamental attribution error* as “the tendency for attributors to underestimate the impact of situational factors and to overestimate the role of dispositional factors in controlling behavior” (p. 183). Heider (1958) as cited by Harvey, Town and Yarkin (1981), states, “[U]nder certain conditions, there is a tendency to attribute the outcome of an action to the person, even though its sources may reside in the environment” (p.346). These assertions would indicate that people, whether by error or bias, may attribute cause to the person based on his/her own values rather than factual extenuating circumstances. Because of this, the action taken or consequences administered to the person exhibiting the behavior, may perpetuate, rather than alleviate or empower the person to change his behavior.

According to Wang (1993), people in individualistic cultures are more likely to make fundamental attribution error than people from collectivist cultures. In other words, individualistic cultures attribute a person’s behavior to internal factors. The issue with this is it leads to *self-serving bias* meaning that successes are attributed to internal factors, such as ability and competence whereas failures are attributed to external factors such as luck or another’s power over them. The *actor/observer* attribution difference is described as “a pervasive tendency for actors to attribute their actions to situational requirements, whereas observers tend to attribute the same actions to stable personal dispositions” (Jones & Nisbett, 1971, p. 80).

What remains is to understand the connection between bias, logical consequences and feelings of control or helplessness. As the examination of the fundamental attribution error
revealed, biases will impact the interventions of teachers, practitioners, parents and other adults interacting with children. If teachers are too ready to assume that lack of homework is due to the effort or ability of the student, it is easy to see how students can be classified with behavioral issues, assigned to special education or labeled lazy if they seem not to comply with requirements, especially those students who are from different cultural backgrounds (Graham, 1997). Fortunately for Adlerians, the Lifestyles Assessment and other tools exist to help understand situational and cultural attributions. Unfortunately, for practitioners in individualistic cultures, there will need to be a consistent unrelenting effort to combat personal values and thoughts of what should or ought to be when attributing cause to behavioral observations. The consistent self-evaluations could prove to be tiring and create burnout or blind spots for the practitioner.

**Learned Helplessness and the Importance of Control**

Learned helplessness is a conditioned response that has been proven in both animals and humans. Where there is a lack of control, real or perceived, the organism will cease to attempt to alter the outcome (Maier and Seligman, 1976). As logical consequences are implemented based on biased information and perceived by the receiver as unavoidable, the behaviors witnessed and attribution assigned, will self-perpetuate. This is due to the organism’s need for control and predictability. Control is an intrinsic need for the human organism; this is evidenced by Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982) who state:

Theorists from a wide variety of perspectives have been emphatic about the importance of control: Adler (1956) depicted control as an intrinsic “necessity of life”; Malinowski (1955) noted among primitives a “desperate” need to believe they could master the world; White (1959), in a now classic review of the literature on “effectance motivation,”
refers to a pervasive, intrinsic need to exercise control over the environment; DeCharms (1968) argued that the urge to be effective in changing the environment is “man’s primary motivational propensity.” Evidence of perceived control can be found in a wide variety of research areas” (p. 6).

In situations where the organism cannot control or avoid the outcome, predictability becomes the next level of defense against chaos. Predictability allows individuals to sustain stability that creates balance along the continuum between order and chaos (Brown, 2010). This need for predictability is also a factor in learned helplessness. Although the situation may be undesirable, the thought of the unknown is even less desirable for those trapped in the helplessness spiral.

The question at this point may be: What does helplessness and perceived control have to do with logical consequences, linguistics, attribution bias, and control? The short answer is this: As children are socialized to view logical consequences as inevitable, the locus of control can become external. This is especially salient when a logical consequence is likened to a natural occurrence like getting wet in the rain. Additionally without being given tools and information to understand their roles, the locus of control in children can become external. When adults are prone to fundamental attribution error, a self-perpetuating cycle that spirals to helplessness is created. See Figure 5. The longer answer follows and forms the crux of this argument against using the term logical consequences in favor of terminology that inherently denotes control and empowerment, thus creating the basis for breaking the helplessness cycle. As previously stated, several factors including the fact that the term logical consequences cannot be validated logically or linguistically; that attribution, locus of control and attribution error and biases impact the messages that are received by the child, however unintended, lead to a sense of helplessness.
What is important to understand is this: If an individual cannot directly exercise control in his environment, deemed as primary control (Rothbaum & Weisz, 1982), a secondary control mechanism will be employed. This secondary mechanism is perceived by the actor as a level of control. For example, if Joe has attempted to alter the situation of passing his math test and realizes he continues to be unsuccessful, and that failed outcome is attributed to Joe’s effort or ability, another way to gain control of the situation is to avoid math tests. So, while Joe’s action may be perceived by the observer and laziness erroneously attributed to him, the fact is, in this example, that Joe is attempting to control his situation. If the attribution errors continue to be made, the cycle of learned helplessness and external locus of control are likely to continue. As stated earlier, an intrinsic striving of the human is for control. This is true regardless of the effectiveness of the striving (Brown, 2010; Chinman, and Linney, 1998; Maier and Seligman, 1976; Skinner, Wellborn, and Connell, 1990). Rothbaum and Weisz (1982), state: “Because control is so valued, the quest for it is rarely abandoned; instead individuals are likely to shift from one method of striving for control to another” (p. 7). Finally, is the concept of predictive control, which is the tendency for those who have attempted and failed at primary measures to undermine the self by adjusting expectancy to outcomes that are predictable.

This need for control is not limited to children. It is inherent to all humans. Therefore, teachers, parents, and practitioners must learn to adjust the need for predictability and control and seriously contemplate the attributions made to observed behaviors and the consequences that are meted out in response to the failure based on the attribution given. Making attributions and meting out consequences feeds the need for closure and certainty, which are elements of control and predictability, but in so doing it is at the risk of long-term control issues for the child and it perpetuates the cycle of helplessness.
Helping children understand their role by looking toward positive alternatives, removing logical consequences from our vernacular, and using the word punishment to explicitly convey control, it is the researcher’s assertion that there will be a positive trend toward empowered, responsible children who will grow into productive, members of society.

**Punish to Empower?**

Krumboltz & Krumboltz (1972) substantiate the researcher’s claim that there are occasions when punishment may be necessary. Krumboltz & Krumboltz (1972) state “A mild punishment may be necessary to teach a child what no means. A young child learns the meaning of the word no or no no by having the word spoken at the same instant that something unpleasant happens to him” (p.186). They go further that in emergencies a punishment may be the only way to save a person from greater danger. Moreover he mentions punishment can get a child to try some other alternative behavior which can be reinforced.

This section explores a change in the vernacular used by practitioners, teachers, parents, and other adults as they interact with children in various learning settings. It is the researcher’s assertion that using the word punishment rather than logical consequence will aid children and adults toward more honest, healthy dialogue and cultivate more empowered and responsible children. To remind the reader, punishment as defined by the American Psychological Association (2011) is, “The act of applying any stimulus that, when made contingent upon a response, decreases the probability of that response” (p. aspx#p). With this definition at the forefront, the discussion can continue to ensure that the proposal is not misconstrued or taken out of context.

As was discussed, the principle of Logical Consequences is punishment repackaged. This has served to confuse both adults and children over the years. The propensity for meting out
CONSEQUENCES AND PUNISHMENT: A FRESH LOOK

consequences has become a way to dismiss leading and put a greater burden on children without giving them the foundational information, education and support to make decisions that will empower them to become productive members of the communities in which they live and interact.

The following recounts an actual incident that occurred between a pair of four-year olds, Jake and Andrew; the teacher’s aide, Ness; and the teacher, Beth which demonstrates the lack of leadership that potentially leads to behavioral issues and learned helplessness: Jake a precocious child, who understands how to get what he wants, chooses to hit Andrew. Ness, the aide, observes the behavior and tells Jake “No, don’t hit; keep your hands to yourself and apologize to Andrew”. Beth, the teacher, literally runs from her office to tell Ness that she should not tell Jake “no”, that rather she should ask Andrew what Jake can do to make him feel better. Andrew, who is visibly upset, chokes through his tears and weepily says “nothing”. Beth then offers to give Andrew a hug and the incident ends (Y.N. Quist, personal communication, September 30, 2012). Here is what was right:

- Ness telling Jake “no”. Hitting is wrong, and an apology was in order. By getting Jake to be accountable for his actions, Ness was leading Jake into responsible behavior. She was also sending Andrew the message that hitting is wrong.

Here is what went wrong:

- There are times when “no” is appropriate. This was one of those times. Asking Andrew what Jake could do to make him feel better was not the central issue. Jake did not hurt Andrew’s feelings, he hit him. Beth also showed Jake that somehow “no”, regardless of his action is not the right response. Additionally, Beth showed...
Jake that he did not have to be responsible for his actions as she stepped in to console Andrew.

In this example, nothing positive was demonstrated to the children, the leadership that Ness exhibited was thwarted. Prognosis: Jake will continue to hit, Andrew will continue to be and feel victimized and neither child will learn empowerment should this continue to be the example.

The purpose of the illustration above was to show how adults in teaching professions have learned passive non-productive interventions rather than leading. In the words of Saul Alinsky, a prominent community organizer, “Never to do for others what they can do for themselves”. Consider this alternative scenario:

Jake hits Andrew. Ness observes and tells Jake “No, keep your hands to yourself and apologize to Andrew”. Jake then apologizes to Andrew and learns that he should not hit and is directly responsible for that action. This empowers Jake in that he fully understands that he should not hit, he should keep his hands to himself and apologize for his action.

As described, Jake is precocious and may not acquiesce. This is where punishment can be utilized effectively. Jake hits Andrew. Ness observes and tells Jake “No, keep your hands to yourself and apologize to Andrew”. Jake refuses. “No, I don’t want to”. Ness can ask Jake questions about why he believed it to be OK to hit Andrew, she can attempt to reason with Jake by getting him to take responsibility for his action of hitting. If Jake continues to refuse to apologize, Jake can then be told, “Since you don’t want to apologize, you must go into time out. This is a punishment for hitting Andrew and refusing to accept that you should apologize for your action. Going into time out is for you to think; you can stay in time out until you are ready to apologize for your actions”.


This approach puts Jake in full control. He is in control of whether or not he chooses to hit again. He is in full control of how long he stays in time out. Jake does not get to control the rules. This is true in pre-school and society at large. Jake will learn to take responsibility for his actions and learn from the exchange. Jake is now empowered to make decisions regarding hitting others and the rules of society. Ness exhibits leadership and guidance as the adult in the exchange. Too often adults expect children to exercise judgment that is beyond their years. Although the researcher agrees that children are little people, they are not little adults. Remember the logic lesson: there are no adult children.

This leads to the discussion on empowerment. A number of researchers (Chinman and Linney, 1998; Dunst, Trivette & Deal, 1988; Kieffer, 1984; Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz, and Checkoway, 1992) have conducted studies on empowerment and although there are different approaches, the central theme is responsibility. In order to have feelings of empowerment the individual must be trusted with the responsibility. Chinman and Linney (1998) propose a positive empowerment cycle that bridges the research on empowering into a collective model. The empowerment cycle proposes allowing adolescents to experiment with different roles which will allow them to form stable identities. Based on the stable identity formed, activities in which the individual can participate will reinforce the identity. The strengths of the person were identified and the person is likely to receive positive feedback and reinforcement which then allows the person to develop new skills and learn how to contribute. This in turn creates a positive bond to the community/institution in which the individual is engaged. The community engagement allows for developmental gains including, positive identity development, positive role choice, and enhanced self-efficacy and self-esteem.
Summary

The fresh look can be summed up as the need to take a holistic approach to interventions. Not only must practitioners examine the impact of attribution, there is also an obligation to recognize the human’s intrinsic need for control. Additionally, practitioners are urged to respect the need for control with the client. It is important to recognize their own need for control as it may cause practitioners to engage in activities that perpetuate the cycle of learned helplessness. Research has shown that what practitioners may view as laziness, lack of effort or inherent issues with ability may be the child using secondary control measures. This secondary control measure is used to create a stable albeit not healthy circumstance for the child as she attempts to predict the outcome and therefore to some extent control her environment.

Leadership and guidance as an imperative are also important for taking a fresh approach to interacting with children and modifying behaviors. Adults cannot reasonably expect children to think or reason as adults do. Practitioners also cannot reasonably expect children to exercise judgment in the way an adult would. The impact of logical consequences as it has been practiced over the years has taken away the intrinsic need for control. Attribution errors and expectations of children to just know what is right has resulted in a disempowered population rather than productive members of society.

An example of using the word punishment as a tool to empower children to take responsibility for their actions was given to illustrate how word choice can have a positive impact on adult leadership and child responsibility which leads to a greater sense of control. It is this element that is missing from the logical consequences model that requires practitioners to take a fresh look and consider options that more closely align with the Adlerian goals of community.
Conclusion

Of significance is clarifying how the use of logical consequence can actually disempower adolescents and perpetuate rather than eliminate undesired behaviors. By contrast, the use of more clear language, i.e. punishment can produce more empowered, community minded individuals.

If the goal of Logical Consequence is to help children and adolescents make better choices, it has unfortunately failed. The problems lie in the speciousness of the term and the fact that it cannot be conclusively defined using any of the rules of logic and only semantically defined using the rules of linguistics. Once defined using semantics, it can most readily be categorized as Adlerian vernacular for punishment. This is unfortunate as Adlerians are educated to be inclusive, community minded individuals concerned with the whole person. The execution of logical consequences as understood has been ineffective.

One can attribute a number of reasons for the ineffectiveness:

- Attributions are made based only on what the observer can see. The perceiver does not have insight into the circumstances, both social and psychological that have led to the observed behavior.

- Consequences by their very nature are uncontrollable. Humans have an intrinsic need to control or at least predict their environments. Absent this control, humans will rely on secondary control measures that perpetuate behavioral issues and increase the propensity for attribution error, thus perpetuating the helplessness cycle.

The researcher asserts that in the age of wanting children to feel better about themselves, parents and practitioners have encouraged children towards an external locus of control, and by
then administering logical consequences rather than leading, the result has been a lack of accountability and control on the part of the children and a lack of leadership and guidance on the part of the adult. The implications are loss of empowerment and learned helplessness.

Information about cognitive methods discussed help validate the claim that use of the word punishment is a better alternative to the use of logical consequence and will hopefully encourage a fresh look at practices and, at the very least, open dialogue within the Adlerian community.
References


Figures

Figure 1: Attribution Theory

Figure 2: Attribution Process w/ Achievement/Causal Attributions
Causal Dimensions

Causal Attributions

Step 3 - Attribution
Disposition

Step 2 - Judged

Intentional

Unintentional

Step 1 - Perceived

Behavior is observed (first or second hand)

External Locus of Control
Believes behavior is guided by:
- Fate
- Luck
- Authority/ Powerful Others
- Other External Forces

Internal Locus of Control
Believes behavior is guided by:
- Personal decisions
- Own efforts
- Internal fortitude

Figure 3 - Causal Dimensions
Figure 4 - Locus of Control

Learned Helplessness

Figure 5 - Learned Helplessness Spiral