



Edited by
David A. Winter and Nick Reed

THE WILEY HANDBOOK OF
*Personal Construct
Psychology*

WILEY Blackwell

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For Don and Fay

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Foreword

I was driving down to the Cherokee Strip along the southern tier of Kansas to visit a Native American artist. My route took me near Perth, where George A. Kelly was born. Going south from the Flint Hills and out of Wichita for a while I turned right on a county road when I saw the sign “Perth 6” (miles). As a student of Dr. Kelly I had heard of his lonely childhood there. I was curious; besides, I was looking for a convenience store to get gasoline, a restroom, and a bite to eat.

When I arrived I found that all of Perth was on the right. On the left were miles of flat fields, all barren since the wheat season was over. On the horizon was a small clump of trees. First, on the right, came a cyclone fence behind which was a graveyard. Then came a graveled lane with no curb or gutter. This was the main street of Perth. I turned in.

I passed the small white church. After two side streets and about 17 houses, I was at the outer limit on the north. No commercial establishments existed except for the old and the new grain elevators. Almost every western Kansas town that has a railroad spur has a grain elevator. The town was vacant except for one barking dog. I imagined that the entire town was surely at some community event in another town. Everything was clean, kept up, and without trash. The lawns were neatly mowed. Neither elegantly rich nor ramshackle houses were to be found. Seeking a moment of subjective privacy I left the car and waded through weeds to the back of the new grain elevator. Jumping ahead of me were hundreds of grasshoppers. I then realized why the yards were so uniformly well groomed. It was to fend off the grasshoppers.

With nothing to explore (or eat) I drove back to the graveyard to look for Kelly’s parents’ graves. At the far end of the new section I found them. They shared a single attractive red granite marker. Unlike the other graves the place of birth was inscribed. Kelly’s father was born in Iowa. His mother was born in Barbados.

I was overcome with the loneliness of the place, just as Dr. Kelly had described. There had been no children of his age. His parents home schooled him in his early years. This schooling continued as the family had an abortive ranching venture into the even more vacant eastern Colorado grasslands. While there, one of Kelly's chores was to collect buffalo chips from the prairie grass for his mother's cooking fire.

As I drove away from Perth, I envisioned how Kelly could spend his time day after day dreaming and imagining a world much to his own unique making. Perth seemed emblematic of George Kelly himself: proper and practical. Proper, that is, in his personal demeanor but highly proactive, as we shall see, in his thinking and writing.

When I arrived at The Ohio State University for graduate school in clinical psychology in the fall of 1950, Kelly was at work on his theory (1955). His several graduate students were doing research on aspects of it. He kept his students closely involved with his theory, not only by doing research but also by criticizing the text of his forthcoming publication. He was generous with recognition, for example, by calling various thesis findings "the Bieri effect" and "the Lundy effect."

Originally the theory was called role theory, then role construct theory, then personal construct theory. The term role was shunned as others were creating role theories that could be confused with his. The term construct became increasingly attractive because it conveyed the notion that each person builds a structure for viewing the world.

Kelly's early teaching experience included drama and school plays. Their influence on him might be drawn from the parallel between Kelly's theory and the views of Paul Meier (1994). Meier is an actor, director, international consultant on dialect and accent, and a professor of drama. In approaching the art and philosophy of the theater, Meier focuses on the development of the actor as a person. Soon after birth a person makes the physical distinction between self and non-self. Self is that inside the skin and non-self is everything else. Proceeding on in life, persons accumulate a myriad of "pairs of opposites" to govern their activity. As pairs of opposites increase in number, lives become richer and more complex. For the art of stagecraft, three notions are of import. One is the loneliness of the individuation of the person as this all takes place. Meier assumes a striving to merge back, first to the mother but also to other entities. Examples are falling in love, the dance, and the becoming part of a team—athletic, commercial, combat. On such occasions the self-distinction is yielded over, and the person is a part of a larger unit. The ecstasy of sex represents a momentary attempt to give up self and merge. The second notion is fusion,

i.e., that moment in time when the person is in the process of giving up his own constructs and becoming part of a larger unit. The third notion is “the mirror.” As one is engaging with another role, one sees a reflection of oneself. As the audience responds to the actor, both they and the actor see reflections of themselves.

These ideas are not far afield from the anthropological tenet that human nature is affiliative and conjugal, thus creating families, clans, and tribes where the unit need not be viewed as the individual.

Meier’s pairs of opposites relate, of course, to Kelly’s notion of constructs. The merging and fusion described by Meier parallel Kelly’s notion that the person is trying out various sets of constructs (i.e., various roles). Meier’s concern is in the art and creativity of the stage. The concern of Kelly is the transition—the subsuming and revising—to allow the person to “get on with it” for a better life. Both authors use the term “fit.”

A significant issue arises for both authors when pairs of opposites (i.e., bipolar constructs) are at odds between the actor and the part to be played. A prime example involves the bipolar “Good” vs. “Evil.” Persons tend to see themselves as good and to see evil somewhere out there in the rest of the world. What happens when the actor assumes the role of a character who is “evil,” and therefore counter to his own self-characterization? On the stage this can take one of two directions. The actor may reserve part of his original self (his own pairs of opposites) and act out the role figure as one to be despised. Or else the role may be played so that “evil” is fully embraced. Such a performance and fusion make the character more pitiable, calling out for help and compassion. Kelly’s focus was not on the art of presentation but upon helping the person see the consequences of his contradictory constructs.

In both the instances of Meier and Kelly, they are confronted with the cultural values and what is acceptable at that particular time. If the culture would not accept with unconditional sympathy the role of a terrorist or a Hitler, then both authors have thrown the role-taker and his own society against each other. For the personal construct therapist one is confronted with whether to allow the psychological transition to emerge with complete freedom or to insert value judgments based upon societal and personal dictates. Should the leaders in the western world have more reverse role-playing with terrorist role figures?

Having used good vs. evil as an example, it is now evident that the implications of contradictory pairs of opposites (constructs) are applicable to all other construct dimensions as well. In this sense, the “assuming of a role” is a step more complex than the notion of constructive alternativism.

Once Kelly's volumes were published, many tried to categorize them as cognitive, existential, psychodynamic, and so on. Kelly resisted being cast into a category. The book itself resisted such categorization. Kelly's resistance was justified, if only for the reason that people want to categorize or even preempt its content as "nothing but" another brand of theory except under new labels. This is a form of intellectual laziness since, if such can be confirmed, then there is no need to deal seriously with the new lexicon. Kelly was very aware that such a view would undermine the importance of his volumes. But there was more than that. Kelly, as a matter of personal self-esteem, wanted to see his work as creative and drawn from whole cloth. After publication, questions were asked about the absence of references to other work. Kelly rejected and made fun of this. On a humorous note, one day before a case conference, he said that he thought that he might answer these critics by writing an additional chapter full of references and entitle it "Apologetics." He then explained to us that apologetics is a branch of religion concerned with proofs of the existence of God.

Although Kelly tried in some cases to act as if his theory was above antecedents, on other occasions he capitulated to the pragmatism and influence of John Dewey (see Paris & Epting, 2015). In this respect Kelly complied with his own theory by having contradictory hierarchies that could be applied as needed.

Many changes have occurred over time in the methods to pursue knowledge. Kelly's constructivism may be viewed as opening a new era. In the medieval period the prescribed pathway to advance knowledge was through meditation (Abelard, 1995, 2006). To be skilled in meditation enabled one to believe in God. In turn, God, apparently to acknowledge this belief, provided the person with knowledge. In the 1100s this view was upended by a young French priest, Peter Abelard. He insisted that logical and psycholinguistic analysis was necessary for truth to be affirmed. With accumulated truth came knowledge. With knowledge came the capacity to believe in God. With this shocking reversal, a change occurred in how people were viewed. Instead of being a passive flawed recipient of knowledge the person has an active role in acquiring and advancing knowledge.

Not only Abelard but also the great plague helped set the stage for the Renaissance of the 1300s to 1500s. With the horrendous death toll, wealth became amassed into small centers. A leisure and banking class began to fund art and science endeavors in great numbers. Such a creative era was not possible during periods when all resources were devoted to survival. Without these influences the Renaissance might not have happened. It became another era for knowledge-seeking. The person became not only a

critical analyst of text but also an “observer of the natural world.” The word “science” became part of the lexicon, and in 1450 the Gutenberg printing press spread knowledge beyond the elite. It set the stage for the ditto machine of Kelly’s era.

But human impediments remain. These occur when a unit of incomplete or inadequate knowledge becomes treated as absolute truth. It has become “etched in stone,” so to speak. These impediments have been researched and described in different ways. Viewed within learning theory (Ebbinghaus, 1885), if a choice is reinforced (validated with an anticipated outcome) only part of the time (as compared to all of the time), then that habit of choice will resist extinction and become entrenched. As viewed by psychoanalytic thinkers, some ideas, wishes, and fears, only occasionally exposed, will become reified and treated as absolute truths. Herb Simon (1957, 1978), psychologist and Nobel laureate in economics, coined the word *satisficing* to account for the fact that people do not examine all logical possibilities in decision-making but instead will sample decision alternatives until they find one acceptable. In other words, they will “settle for half a loaf” and commit to it rather than exhaust the range of decisions possible to consider.

These so-called “human impediments” create a situation in the knowledge record where many ideas considered absolute or firm truth actually have little or no truth. For the absolutistic thinker, a disconfirmation is highly disruptive. This is because it bears upon other notions within the knowledge rubric. Many related constructs must also be revised or discarded. This chaotic transition has been called a “paradigm shift” (Kuhn, 1962). It is more prone to occur among absolutistic thinkers. With relativist thinkers, each new bit of knowledge is accepted with a degree of confidence less than 100%. The trauma of corrections is usually not as difficult.

The genius of George A. Kelly is that he set these “human impediments” as the opposite pole of “constructive alternativism.” Thus a new era is opened where the person is not only the analyst of thought and the observer of the natural world but also a challenger of the way in which knowledge is set on record. Objects, events, and ideas that are “out there” are continually questioned for certitude. Constructive alternativism becomes the antithesis of the notion that one, and only one, answer is correct.

The simple rules of constructive alternativism include

- a. Prediction of an event has no single right answer.
- b. More than one construct may be valid in event prediction.
- c. An event may have different dimensions of outcome and may require the same or different constructs to predict it.

- d. Predictors may contradict each other in content; yet have utility in predicting outcome.
- e. A valid predictor may replace or supplement another highly accepted but less efficiently valid predictor.
- f. To predict an event does not mean that you understand it.
- g. Understanding should lead to another question or hypothesis.

Sixty years have gone by. Kelly's views have prospered. Regular international and regional congresses occur. Journals have been initiated. Books have been written. The time is overdue to "rank the matrix" of personal construct theory with a handbook. This handbook, as planned by David Winter and Nick Reed, is user-friendly for both the novice and the veteran. Within each section is, first, a review of the status of the area. Then come the chapters with views at the cutting edge. The contributors are worldwide in origin. The "center of gravity" of the field appears to have moved away from America. Applications of the theory range from war-ravaged children to the hard rules of business. Attention is still paid to fundamental issues. For example, "anticipation" has different meanings. In terms of scientific pragmatism, anticipation refers to predictive utility. In contrast to this, Butt (2004) emphasized understanding, especially through the method of phenomenology. This is an alternative meaning for anticipation.

As an example, I had the opportunity once to study 227 patients admitted to a coronary care unit with acute coronary attacks (Cromwell, Butterfield, Brayfield, & Curry, 1977). One aim was to predict which ones would have a recurrent coronary attack and/or die within 90 days. Results indicated that psychological measures of anxiety and depression were stronger predictors than electrographic and blood enzyme variables. Such research is pragmatic in that useful and accurate prediction was the aim. Once done, however, then a better understanding of the results becomes important. Understanding may lead to new questions and new research. This anabolic-analytic cycle, from hypothesis-building to hypothesis-testing, parallels Kelly's notion of loosening and tightening of construct systems in the Creativity Cycle. Prediction and understanding can be viewed as the two faces of anticipation.

Implicit in these chapters is a dilemma regarding the climactic point in PCP philosophy. Some focus upon the meaning of an event as the consummatory phase. Others view the meaning as only a transitional phase that leads to another testable hypothesis. For them the latter is the consummatory phase. On one level of description meaning-makers and hypothesis-seekers could represent different life orientations. On another

level of description the two climactic points are iterative, one phase always leading to the other.

With the constructivist the endpoint of all advances in knowledge, whether it is logically reasoned or empirically investigated, is the quest to anticipate and validate. Whether one is discussing the lives of people, the nature of death, or the origin of the universe, the final record ends in a question, not a conclusion. The antithesis of constructivism is exemplified by a subset of physicists (e.g., Greene, 1999) who have maintained that if superstring theory can be confirmed, the nature of the universe will be explained completely and this area of inquiry will be closed. Such a view overlooks the natural human tendency to move always toward one more question. Borrowing from a bit of Unitarian levity, the way to drive a personal constructivist out of the community is to set fire to a huge question mark on his front lawn.

Rue L. Cromwell
November 23, 2014

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Preface

This book will be published 60 years after George Kelly's *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (1955). Kelly considered that one of the specifications of a good theory was its ultimate expendability, but judged by this criterion, Kelly's personal construct theory has clearly failed as an earlier personal construct psychology handbook (Fransella, 2003), a review of the literature on the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of his magnum opus (Walker & Winter, 2007), and now the present handbook have all demonstrated a very broad, and growing, range of applications of his ideas.

This handbook commences with a reprinted chapter by Fay Fransella introducing the reader to the notion of a personal construct. Fay, together with Don Bannister, was instrumental in introducing Kelly's theory to an audience beyond its country of origin, including the editors of, and several of the contributors to, this volume. Fay and Don were members of the "Kelly Club," formed in the U.K. in the 1960s, and we are very pleased to be able to end the handbook with a previously unpublished paper by another highly influential member of this club, Miller Mair.

Between these two contributions are 38 original chapters, divided into seven sections, each concerned with a particular aspect of personal construct psychology or area of its application. Each of these sections commences with a review chapter by an authority, or authorities, in the field. These chapters are intended not only to introduce newcomers to work in particular areas, but also to update readers who are more familiar with personal construct psychology on key new developments. The remaining chapters in each section provide specific illustrations of work in the fields concerned. The book concludes with an appendix introducing personal construct psychology and its terminology.

It has been a pleasure to have been joined in this venture by authors from 12 different countries, ranging from former students of Kelly and others who have contributed to the field for many years to some who are in the

early stages of their careers. We are indebted to them for their enthusiasm, for the quality of their work, and for their tolerance of editors whose construing must at times have appeared irritatingly tight.

Editing the handbook has validated our construction of personal construct psychology as still being vibrant, radical, and highly relevant to an extraordinarily diverse range of topics. Indeed, the only area in which it seems obsolescent at times is Kelly's use of the language of his day, specifically of the masculine pronoun. We could have inserted *sic* in brackets every time that this occurs, but in the interests of ease of reading have not. So, please read each occurrence of the masculine pronoun to include the feminine and, similarly, each generic occurrence of the word "man" should be deemed to include "woman."

David A. Winter and Nick Reed
January 2015

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1

What Is a Personal Construct?

Fay Fransella

At its simplest, a construct is a jargon term embedded centrally within George Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory. It is the unit of his theory and that which is commonly thought to be measured in some form of repertory grid. It is a porthole through which we peer to make sense of the events swirling about us. One property of a construct is bipolarity. I am therefore going to start by telling you two things I think a construct is NOT before telling you what I think it is—that is, I am going to start by defining its opposite pole.

What a Construct Is NOT

Constructs are not concepts

However, they're not *totally* different. A construct does share some similarities with a concept. Both are concerned with similarity between things—cups, for instance—which make them different from other things. Both involve the notion of abstraction.

But who *says* which things are similar and thereby different from others? There is a not always implicit notion that things really are different and that a *concept* is a property of things as they really are. In contrast, a *construct* is something that is created by an individual, personally. Its reality exists, not in the things themselves, but in the interpretative act of the individual person.

Whereas a concept is a way in which cups are alike and thereby different from all other things, a construct is a way in which cups are alike *in contrast to* some other things. The concept of “cups” is *different from* the concept

of “saucers.” Thus the opposite of “cups” is “not cups.” The construct of “cups” may well have an opposite which is “saucers.” The opposite of a construct is not irrelevance but is a matter of contrast. It is one of the assumptions of personal construct theory that people think in terms of contrast. This notion of bipolarity is central in personal construct counseling, as we shall see.

A construct is not a rule

In spite of what Theodore Mischel wrote in his 1964 paper entitled “Personal Constructs, Rules and the Logic of Clinical Activity,” constructs are not rules. As Tschudi (1983) pointed out, Mischel’s argument that constructs are rules and that Kelly’s attempt to promote them as predictive devices is invalid is, itself, invalid. The arguments are complex and cannot be covered with justice within this talk.

An essential feature of a construct is that it is the basis of our predictions about ourselves in relation to our world. As I shall emphasize later, personal construct counseling and therapy is based on the fundamental premise that change can only come about if a person is able to find alternative ways of construing—and thereby predicting—the problem situation. The person has to reconstrue.

Constructs are not rules and they are not concepts

What a Construct IS

So, what are constructs? I want to mention 10 main features that define a construct for me.

It is an abstraction

First, a construct is an abstraction. It is a way in which an individual makes sense of events and the world. We abstract our OWN meanings from the swirl of events confronting us and thereby impose our OWN meanings on the world. Constructs are indeed personal.

It is bipolar

Second, a construct is bipolar. It is a way of discriminating between things, events, people. It is a way in which some things are seen as being the same and *by that same token* as different from others—it consists of two poles.

It makes more psychological sense to point to a window and say “That is not a door” than to point to a leaf and say “That is not a door.” Constructs are pathways of movement. We may not find it too exciting to move from seeing something as a door to seeing it as a window—unless of course we want to walk through it—but it makes a big difference to a woman to move from seeing herself as an unattractive fat slob to being a slim attractive female.

A knowledge of what a client construes as being the opposite of a course of action or self-perception is vital for the counselor or anyone trying to understand themselves or others. Only then can we glimpse possible answers to such questions as “What is that person NOT doing by doing what he IS doing?” Or, “What are the penalties involved in moving from being a fat slob to being an attractive slim woman?” Something is preventing change—what is it? The answer often lies at the contrast end of the construing.

It is linked to fellow constructs

I have been guilty of distorting the theory of personal constructs somewhat by forcing myself to talk as if “the construct” exists alone, as a discrete entity. It is not and does not. A third feature of a construct is that it is linked in a hierarchical structure. It is through this hierarchical structure that we view and experience the world.

This notion of hierarchy is used when trying to understand the relative importance of issues. The procedure of “laddering” is vital here (Hinkle, 1965). This helps the person spell out the ways in which they construe the world at higher and higher levels of abstraction. These superordinate personal constructs are the mainsprings of our existence. As Hinkle and others have shown, the higher, the more abstract, the more superordinate a construct is, the more it is likely to resist change. This enables an explanation to be given, for example, as to why it is that a manager is failing in his current job. The job has changed from being one in which the essence of being a good manager is to ensure that everyone does what they are supposed to do, to a new style of facilitative management, where caring for and interest in the individual are paramount.

The counselor may find that the manager construes himself as someone who must always have control of his world—loss of control threatens him with personal chaos. Providing an environment in which staff can work at their best means loss of control over events—control is handed over to others.

No wonder he has problems. He is being asked to behave in a way that is foreign to him. He can no longer predict his own behavior let alone

that of others. In such a situation the manager might find his current experiences of the world intolerable. He may construe his feelings as indicating he is “unwell.” Perhaps he sees himself as—or someone else says he is—depressed. He comes to the counselor with “depression.” The personal construct counselor will regard this symptom from the theoretical perspective that it is “a way of giving meaning to otherwise chaotic experiences.”

Constructs are used at different levels of awareness

As well as talking as if constructs were discrete units—which they are not—I have been talking as if all constructs are available in conscious awareness. My fourth point is that they are not. The level at which we are operating here is highly cognitive. But that manager did not consciously “decide” to “be depressed.”

If you were now to redirect your focus of attention—if you have not done so already—to what else you are experiencing, you may find visceral or autonomic sensations which you construe as indicating that you are annoyed, excited, anxious, or just plain bored. Your constructs are operating at nonverbal levels of awareness. Our guts often tell us that we do not like a stranger long before we have consciously worked out why. Sometimes our behavior remains a puzzle to us for a long time—perhaps some people here still have behaviors that they do not really understand. This would suggest nonverbal construing at work. Our constructs, at whatever level we are using them to make sense of the world, link directly to our behavior.

A construct is the basis of anticipation and prediction

Fifth, when we interpret (construe) a situation in a certain way, we are thereby making predictions about what will come next.

The meaning of the construct is embedded in the theory’s Fundamental Postulate and its first elaborative corollary to do with construction. These state that *a person’s processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which they anticipate events* and that we anticipate events *by construing their replications*. We look at the undifferentiated flow of events before us and note that something repeats itself. We abstract the nature of these observed replications in events and note how these differ from others. We have formed a construct. By noting an event as something that is being repeated, we are able to predict the future course of events.

At a simple level, I may construe my pain in the head as a headache. I may move on from that and say “If you have a headache, take an aspirin because

they are good for headaches.” That may look like Mischel’s rule, but a prediction is involved—“My headache will get better if I take an aspirin.”

Constructs are ways of controlling our world

Sixth, the better able we are to predict our world, the more control we have over it. Kelly says:

Constructs are the channels in which one’s mental processes run. They are two-way streets along which one may travel to reach conclusions. They make it possible to anticipate the changing tide of events . . . constructs are the controls that one places upon life—the life within him as well as the life which is external to him. (Kelly, 1955, p. 126)

Control over our personal worlds comes with the ability to predict and having these predictions validated—at whatever level of awareness the construing is taking place. This could be taken as a part-statement of optimal functioning.

Constructs are inseparable from our behavior

Our behavior is the way in which we test out those predictions resulting from the constructs we are using to make sense of an event. My behavior here is based on my understanding (construing) of what is required of me. I make certain predictions about such events as this. There are, indeed, implicit rules governing how you and I behave. But they are not immutable facts. They are still predictions. I will not know whether or not my predictions are correct *until I have “behaved.”* If, in the course of this talk, I see evidence invalidating my predictions—you all start pulling faces—I have a number of courses of action open to me. One is to acknowledge that I got it wrong. I might try some other ways of construing the situation. Perhaps I have wandered into the wrong place—perhaps this is where people get mass facials—but whatever way I decide to reconstrue and make sense of the situation, the very act of reconstruing means that I will change my behavior. *Because behavior is the experiment we conduct to test out the validity of our construing currently being put to the test.*

Kelly’s notion that all behavior is an experiment is one of the unique features of personal construct theory and is crucial to working within this framework. Seeing the client as a personal scientist and his or her behavior as an experiment results in the relationship being one of inquiry rather than

interpretation. The essential question becomes “What is the basis of this experiment my client is conducting that makes him or her behave in this self-defeating way?” Gone is any attempt at imposing a counseling program on the client based upon some theoretical interpretation of the client’s behavior. The client and only the client has the answers. The counselor’s job is to help the client find out what those answers are.

Just as constructs are inseparable from behavior, so they
are from feelings

The invalidation I could experience here if I thought I had got it badly wrong could be enormously threatening to me. I might not react to invalidation by simply reconstruing the event. I might argue (not necessarily at a conscious level of awareness) that I had got it wrong on this occasion, but that this did not invalidate me as a person who, by and large, gets these sorts of things right. Or I could decide that this is the *n*th time I had got it wrong. The evidence has to be accepted. This would then mean that I was no longer the sort of person I thought I was. That would indeed have far-reaching implications for me—it would be a threat of profound proportions.

We experience emotions when we are aware that our constructs and our use of them are either about to change radically or are not up to the job at hand. Threats of major proportions may involve constructs that are “core.” Such constructs have no verbal labels. We have probably created them at a very early age. They are to do with our “life processes.” Because they have never been given verbal labels they can only operate via experience, feelings, or somatic functions. These core constructs relate to psychosomatic problems. They may also be related to “acting out” behavior. For, as Kelly says, what can you do with a nonverbal construct except behave it either via action or our body?

When faced with a client who appears to have problems involving core constructs, the person’s whole being is involved. It will be a long and hard road for the client. In my view, this is an area that separates counseling from psychotherapy.

Constructs form the basis of choice

Personal construct theory suggests that we have certain freedoms. For instance, we are free to choose whether or not we see ourselves as *reliable* or *not caring about time*. That is, our freedom of choice lies in moving from one pole of our constructs to the other. But this choice is also determined by our perception of what is likely to lead to the greater elaboration and

definition of our whole construct systems. Sitting in the car in a traffic jam, it may seem a most desirable thing to change myself from someone who is *reliable* to someone who *does not care about time*. But this one possible change confronts me with a series of other changes. That construct has linkages throughout my “system.” I may heave a sigh of relief and conclude that life will offer much more for me as a “not caring about time person” and I wonder why it has taken me so long to discover this. However, I suddenly start to feel something very bad is happening as I come up against a basic personal value. This says that people who are *reliable* are people who *think others are important*, whereas those who *do not care about time* are *self-centered and uncaring of others*. I do not change. I may accept the fact that I have got myself into this situation and that no amount of horn-blowing is going to make any difference. I reconstrue the situation as one in which—“Yes, I am going to be late—and I am sorry for this and for those waiting. But I am going to make sure that next time I allow for the possibility of traffic being bad.” Irrational beliefs may be consciously acknowledged but reconstruing will only take place if it does not violate some superordinate construct.

The Choice Corollary provides personal construct theory with its motivational aspect. I strive to move in those directions that are likely to provide me with the chance of the greater extension and elaboration of my system. The person who has been obese since childhood continues to be so because it is from this perspective that he has the greater chance of developing himself. That may look strange at first sight. But not if you consider his alternatives. He has none. He has been obese as long as he can remember. For him to suddenly become slim would be to step into an unknown world of how he relates to people. For the world we know is the one in which we have the greater opportunity to develop—however we may dislike aspects of it. The way to change is to learn what sort of a person we will be when inhabiting the world to which we want to move. We do this by reconstruing.

Constructs and Counseling

I want to look specifically at constructs and counseling. Constructs are not in any way “things” to be sorted out. They are the directions in which a person moves in living. In counseling that direction comes from the client and not the counselor. The relationship is one in which counselor and client work together in the task of getting the client on the move again; developing new constructs or modifying old that result in greater predictive success in the direction in which the client wants to move.

Helping another reconstrue is not easy. An essential skill the personal construct counselor must have is the ability to subsume—dwell within—the client’s construing system. The counselor puts their own construing system—with all its value-laden constructs—to one side, so as to dwell within the client’s construing system for moments at a time so as to minimize the risk of distortion. The goal is to view the client’s ways of experiencing the world through the set of professional constructs spelled out in personal construct theory. These may be to do with identification of areas of dangerously loose construing—perhaps indicative of thought disorder; regnant construing—shades of rational emotive therapy’s mustabations; areas of constriction; the involvement of preverbal core construing and so forth. When the counselor has an idea of what is holding the client back from moving in their chosen direction, possible alternative directions appear. There are, after all, always alternative ways of looking at any event.

In Summary

The ways in which we experience the world relate to the system of personal constructs we have created to make sense of that world. They are an integral part of the ways in which we behave and feel. Our personal constructs are the ways in which we experience our being.

Note

This essay, based on a talk by Fay Fransella, is reprinted from D. A. Lane (Ed.) (1989). *Attributions, beliefs and constructs in counselling psychology*. In *Counselling Psychology Section: British Psychological Society Occasional Paper* by permission of Nick Reed.

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Part I

Personal Construct Psychology and Its Philosophy

Personal Construct Theory and Philosophy

Trevor Butt¹ and Bill Warren

Introduction

Over a decade and a half ago Warren (1998) discussed the general philosophical dimensions of personal construct psychology (PCP) under a heading *Links and Latencies*. This was a descriptive chapter acknowledging the specific references Kelly (1955, 1991a, 1991b) had made to different thinkers and philosophical ideas, as well as discussing ideas that may have been congenial to the theory had Kelly known more about them or better understood them. The present review is aimed at enlarging the theme of the philosophical dimensions of PCP by way of refocusing the *links* and the *latencies* in terms of reviewing thinking on the philosophical dimensions of PCP since the late 1990s. This is something of a daunting task given developments in relation to both philosophy and personal construct psychology. Other contributions to the present volume give different takes on the theory, such that this present chapter is intended to introduce both the theory behind PCP and the philosophical grounding of it to a potentially new audience. This is the preferred alternative to attempting to do justice to cataloguing outcomes of work done or in progress concerning its specific placement in relation to particular matters, for example, postmodernism (see Botella, 1995), and poststructuralism (Eustace & Bruni, 2006).

We will look at the development of constructivism in some detail, however, as it is claimed that PCP is a primary exemplar of it. Constructivism has been referred to as a “fuzzy set,” and there is some confusion about exactly what constitutes it. We will argue that it represents an interesting synthesis of pragmatism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. As such,

it brings together and makes explicit the philosophical links and latencies related to the psychology of personal constructs.

Links

Pragmatism

The most prominent philosophical link in PCP is certainly with pragmatism. As Warren (1998) observed, Kelly was sparing in referencing his sources. He did, however, write that “the philosophy and psychology of John Dewey can be read between the lines of the psychology of personal constructs” (Kelly, 1955, p. 154). In this section, we will see some of the ways in which this is indeed the case. Dewey was a key figure in the development of pragmatism (see Menand, 2002; Thayer, 1982). Along with his friend and fellow-pragmatist George Mead, Dewey had worked at Chicago University. Both saw themselves principally as psychologists, and Dewey served as president of the American Psychological Association in 1899. After the rise of John Watson (a student at Chicago) and behaviorism, however, they found themselves sidelined by the new orthodox psychology. Dewey was henceforth seen as a philosopher and Mead as a sociologist. Pragmatism had thus been eclipsed by behaviorism when Kelly was active between the 1930s and 1960s.

Pragmatism, which Thayer (1982) describes as a movement rather than a philosophical doctrine, flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in North America, and permeated its cultural life. At its heart is a skepticism toward one merely accepting received wisdom and theory-driven beliefs and practices. Dewey’s focus was on how individuals think and solve problems, and he prized “an experimental type of mind” (we can see here Kelly’s *person as scientist*), one which forms and tests hunches, guesses, and hypotheses to search for a solution to a problem.

Cromwell (2011, p. 331) quotes the physicist Niels Bohr as saying that the job of science is not to represent reality, whatever that is. It is instead to develop productive ways of talking about the world. So there is an implicit primacy of construction here that very clearly chimes with the tenets of PCP. Talking about the world in productive ways emphasizes that ideas and truths are not somehow “out there” awaiting discovery. Instead they are constructions of the world that compete for viability, both within the individual and between individuals. Menand (2002, p. xi) notes that for the pragmatist, ideas are tools just “like knives and forks and microchips.”

Their job is to help us get a grip on the world so that we can navigate our way in it. There is not necessarily one solution to any problem. We use the tools we have to make our way in the world as effectively as possible. As in constructive alternativism, events bear more than one construction, and are judged not in terms of their “truth,” but their usefulness. For pragmatists, the meaning of a proposition is in its consequences. For William James (see Thayer, 1982), acknowledged as the founder of pragmatism, a truth is a belief that proves useful to the believer.

Constructive alternativism is thus a doctrine that Kelly refined primarily from the works of Dewey. In his *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, Dewey (1948) tells us approvingly of an address by “a distinguished English man of science” (p. xvi) in which the author emphasizes that important advances in science rarely comprise “new knowledge which can be added to the great body of old knowledge” (what Kelly calls “accumulative fragmentalism”). Instead, a new perspective arises that disintegrates the old. What is needed is “a Ministry of Disturbance, a regulated source of annoyance; a destroyer of routine; an underminer of complacency” (p. xvii). Here we see pragmatism’s skepticism of received wisdom *par excellence*.

An important feature of Dewey’s pragmatism was its rejection of what he saw as the dualisms that had become received wisdom in philosophy and psychology. The separation of the person from the world, self from others, and mind from body had become the uncontested starting points for scientific investigation. Dewey was a century ahead of his time in criticizing the “spectator theory of knowledge,” in which there is a sharp distinction between “inside” and “outside,” and the job of the senses is simply to represent the world “as it is in reality,” whatever that may look like. For Dewey, the boundary between the organism and its environment was a permeable one. Emotions occur when disturbance at this boundary occurs. In an article in 1896, he had argued strongly against psychology taking the reflex arc as its model of action. It artificially fragments a complex sensori-motor action and posits a passive organism that is kicked into action by a stimulus. If the cycle can be said to begin anywhere, it does so in the case of a person with an inquiry, not a prod or a poke; unless the prod or poke has meaning to the individual by reason of it generating a puzzle or question. In Kelly’s words, “man is a form of motion” (1955, p. 48), and each person his or her own scientist conducting inquiries.

The separation of self from others was a dualism that was critically elaborated by G. H. Mead (see Thayer, 1982). It was Mead who first established what Kelly refers to as sociality, the construction of others’ constructions of

the world and of oneself. For both, the self is a social construction, and not some spiritual gyroscope at the person's center. Here is Kelly:

Some writers have considered it advisable to try to distinguish between "external" events and "internal" events. In our system there is no particular need for making this kind of distinction. Nor do we have to distinguish sharply between stimulus and response, between the organism and his environment, or between the self and the not-self. (Kelly, 1955, p. 55)

Perhaps the most damaging dualism for psychology is the Cartesian mind/body split. Dewey saw this as deeply embedded in Western culture since the advent of Pauline Christianity. It has resulted in misleading questions such as: do cognitions cause behavior, or are they merely epiphenomena? Let us remind ourselves here of Kelly's Fundamental Postulate: "A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the way in which he anticipates events" (Kelly, 1955, p. 46).

It is essential to note that he refuses to reduce "a person's processes" to how we think, feel, and behave. To separate these into separate faculties is to further propagate the myth of Cartesian dualism. "The person's processes" emphasizes the practical impossibility of separating out these components of action.

Latencies

Here we will consider latencies, that is aspects of personal construct psychology that "lie beneath" Kelly's theory, under three headings: phenomenology, existential phenomenology, and hermeneutics.

Phenomenology

What in the Anglophone world is called continental philosophy mainly comprises the phenomenological family. Spiegelberg (1960, pp. xxvii–xxviii) alerts us to the problems with terms like "movement" or "school" in relation to phenomenology and the difficulty of writing a history of something where the "variety is more characteristic than its connecting unity" (p. xxviii). Kelly (1969a) stated clearly that the psychology of personal constructs was not a variety of phenomenology. He imagined that phenomenology was concerned with the private study of consciousness, and therefore had no focus on the social world that was basic to the pragmatism of both Dewey and Mead.

He thought it perpetuated the Cartesian dualism to which he was strongly opposed, focusing on a private self within the body:

phenomenological man cannot share his subjective plight, for even his most beloved companion is a manikin fabricated out of his own moods. A blind poet, imprisoned alone in a cell whose walls he cannot touch, the only sound man hears is the ringing in his ears. (Kelly, 1969a, p. 24)

With this rejection, it is difficult to imagine that phenomenology was or is latent within personal construct psychology. However, it is clear from the above quote and elsewhere in Kelly's work that Kelly misunderstood what phenomenology was. In his day, many of the latencies with phenomenology will not have been apparent because so much of it was not yet translated into English. Perhaps all he had to go on was the very selective interpretation of phenomenology that Rogers had endorsed. Phenomenology focuses on the study of experience and resembles pragmatism in that it comprises a family of approaches (Moran, 2002) and has its own developmental history. So diverse is this family that Husserl (1859–1932)—if not exactly its founder, certainly the key thinker in its development—commented in a letter that he was a leader without followers (Moran, 2002, p. 89). Again, like pragmatism, there is no central dogma. Rather, it is characterized as a method or practice—a way of philosophizing. Merleau-Ponty (2004, p. 39) stated its aim as allowing us “to rediscover the world in which we live, yet which we are always prone to forget.” This “forgetting” is due to the pre-conceptions with which we approach it; culturally common constructions that obscure the events themselves. Of course, we can never encounter events in the raw—they are always construed. But phenomenology's aim is to help us realize these constructions as such.

Existentialism and existential phenomenology

Arguably, the most prevalent or best known form of phenomenology since the mid-twentieth century has been existential phenomenology. Sometimes referred to loosely and generally as existentialism, it combines the phenomenological approach with the philosophy of existence. Whereas Husserl's phenomenology might be seen as “top-down,” searching for essences in perception, existential phenomenology is by contrast “bottom-up,” starting with the existent—that is, the person in the world. We can see an immediate congruence with PCP here, albeit that congruence must be seen with a little less enthusiasm in the light of Soffer's (1990) insights. Existentialism's

focus was on what this position saw as the immense paradox with which human beings are faced. That paradox was between the two true propositions: (1) on the one hand, the individual's absolute worth, yet (2) his or her ultimate worthlessness (in terms of nature, and other people—who will always be “the other” and never fully knowable). The task for the philosopher was to understand how this paradox might be dealt with so as to make life worth living, and living in an “authentic” way. This was a universal and macro-level problem concerned with the *Being* “writ large” (why/how does anything exist?) but also, more for some (e.g., Heidegger) and less so for others (e.g., Sartre), with *being*. The last, *being*, goes to the real world of people going about their lives and the sense and meanings they make. In simple terms, existential phenomenology applies the method or practice that is phenomenology—in one or other of its guises or formulations—to the domain of questions that concern the *Being* (if such exists) and the *being* of human beings. The psychology of personal constructs can be seen as an existential phenomenological approach in that it has this real-world, individual focus. Similarly, emotions are defined not in objective terms, but in terms of the person's action and experience. When we look at Kelly's (1955) analysis of the self-characterization sketch, his recommendations are those a phenomenologist would use: look closely at the protocol and read it again and again for meanings that might not be immediately apparent. Rephrase it with different emphases to see if yet further meanings emerge, and so on. Kelly's point is that we should never assume others see the world as we do. His method is like Husserl's; trying to get us to stand back from our fore-structure (our own construct system) and view things afresh.

Importantly, too, the existentialist's person is rooted in the social world, far from the “blind poet, imprisoned in his cell” derided by Kelly. The stress on intersubjectivity is the hallmark of existential phenomenology. There is no Cartesian dualism, no spiritual center to the person. “There is no inner man. Man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xi). For contemporary personal construct theorists, existential phenomenology bears a strong resemblance to existentialism (Butt, 2008; Warren, 1998). Holland (1977) went as far as to label Kelly “a reluctant existentialist.” Whereas Rogers and Maslow used its vocabulary, their variant is scarcely recognizable when compared to the European original. Equally, while Kelly had shunned it, yet he reinvented it using his own terms and structure.

Like Sartre, Kelly saw the person as self-inventing. Both were concerned with the person's choices, along with the ensuing anxiety and guilt that particular choices may generate. The Garden of Eden myth features in

several of Kelly's later papers (Maher, 1969), but is central in two: "Sin and Psychotherapy" (Kelly, 1969b) and "Psychotherapy and the Nature of Man" (Kelly, 1969c). The former is perhaps a pivotal paper in the Kelly canon (Butt, 2008). In it Kelly emphasizes that constructs are not in some cognitive domain "behind" action, but, rather, are immersed in it: we construe in action. We choose between alternatives that we see as open to us and choose that alternative that makes most sense to us. We then have to hope for the best, because we cannot see where every choice will take us (and this is where we encounter anxiety and guilt). When humankind ate from the Tree of Knowledge, it chose to live by adventure rather than lead a life of passivity and blind obedience. There can be no return to the Garden of Eden and neither should there be. Kelly believed that the ultimate choice between good and evil was unavoidable, and his catalogue of efforts to evade it strongly resembles examples of Sartrean Bad Faith.

Hermeneutics

Phenomenology is said to have taken a "hermeneutic turn," just as hermeneutics has been said to have taken a "philosophical turn." The latter was when an activity concerned with understanding biblical texts with reference to who wrote them, when they were written, and in what context they were written, took on a wider field of questions. The former is generally traced to Husserl's shift of focus in his discussion of language and thinking (e.g., Noe, 1992). Historically, *hermeneutics* (customarily derived from the ancient Greek mythological god, the "messenger" Hermes, god of such activities as language, meaning, interpretation) appears in the ancient Greek world in Plato and Aristotle in discussion around language and interpretation and shared/idiosyncratic interpretation and meaning. Heidegger's and Gadamer's work focused on the importance of uncovering "deeper" or "hidden" meaning, an exposure thereby of something of *Being*, from language employed by human beings; language "writ large."

Chiari and Nuzzo (2010) discussed personal construct psychology in the context of developments in constructivist thinking more generally. While they intentionally focused on a number of areas that opened up the important matter of transcending traditional dichotomies, their reflections highlighted the significance of hermeneutics in and for constructivist psychology. This was in terms of the location of various members of the constructivist family in relation to one another, but, specifically in relation to personal construct psychology, in terms of the stress on narrative or a *narratologic approach* epitomized in Mair's (1988) psychology of

“storytelling.” Arguably, personal construct psychology is a hermeneutic psychology. It is clearly primarily concerned with the interpretation of the meaning of events to the individual, and not the explanation of behavior in terms of lawful relationships.

In the social sciences, reference is made to what is termed the hermeneutic circle. This means that interpretation takes place when we circle between whole and part in order to appreciate the meaning of something. So, like pragmatism, meanings are contextual and are only understood as we place the part (event) within its context (whole). An action can only be understood by seeing how it fits in with how it is construed by a person. Objective assessment based on a stimulus-response pattern may well not reveal this. Kelly’s recommendations for interpreting self-characterization sketches are a good example. One strategy he suggests is that we read a passage over and over again, stressing different words in order to see how the meaning of a sentence changes within different contexts. Further, in a recent study drawing on the work of Gadamer, Peck (2012) argues by way of a cogent critique of Kelly’s ideas on language that a more formal elaboration of personal construct psychology in terms of Gadamer’s work would be fruitful. Such an elaboration, he argues, would provide both a corrective to the problem of language in personal construct psychology and strengthen the point we are making here. In any event, the location of its development out of pragmatism does not present a significant difficulty given the compatibilities between that perspective and both phenomenology and hermeneutics.

Constructivism

In constructivism we see a synthesis of pragmatism, existential phenomenology, and hermeneutics (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2010). Constructivism proposes that we construct as well as discover the world that we inhabit. Central to constructivism is the pragmatists’ point that ideas are like tools. There will be many viable constructions of reality, drawing on many different theories. When a strategy works, it does not tell us what reality is like, merely that the strategy worked. Chiari and Nuzzo (2010), drawing on von Foerster, give the example that there will be many ways of opening a lock. We might perhaps use a key, a credit card, or a needle. These do not give us a picture of the lock.

Kelly’s personal construct theory is seen as one of the main forerunners of contemporary constructivism. Others, according to Chiari and Nuzzo

(2010), are Piaget's genetic epistemology, narrative psychology, social constructionism, and the autopoiesis of Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. In this section, we will begin by outlining constructivism, pointing out what distinguishes it from its contrast, objectivism. We will note how it draws on pragmatism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, and then briefly indicate some of the differences and controversies within it.

What is termed objectivism is what is regarded by most laypeople as "common sense." It holds that the world is known to us through our senses; we come to know it through contact with it and thus are able to negotiate our way in it. Orthodox psychology very much supports such a doctrine. Perception relates the features of the world through touch, vision, and hearing. Cognition is about the way in which we come to know the world. Learning focuses on how we adapt to and change our environment. In all this, a separation between person and world is assumed. When Watson's behaviorist manifesto was adopted by the discipline in the early twentieth century, the dualism between person and environment was reinforced by psychologists' determination to model themselves on nineteenth-century physicists. Objectivism and its experimental method became the only legitimate ways to study behavior.

Both pragmatism and phenomenology are against dualisms that separate mind from body, self from other, and person from environment. We have seen that John Dewey had warned in 1896 of the folly of taking the reflex arc as a paradigm in psychology. The separation of person from environment obscures the way of seeing the systemic and inseparable relationship between them. The reflex sees the environment as impinging on a passive organism, leading to an involuntary response from it. However, if the cycle begins anywhere, it does so with the person's curiosity, a question that is manifest in his or her action. Instead of "behavior," driven by "motivation," it is more useful to think of a person's action (or what Kelly termed "construing"), infused as it is with perception and purpose. Dewey had derided the objectivist view of a person disinterestedly registering the "real" world via senses as the "spectator view of knowledge." Each person is in an inseparable symbiosis with his or her environment. The same point had been at the center of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology: "Perception is precisely that kind of act in which there can be no question of setting the act apart from the end to which it is directed" (1962, p. 374).

Constructivism, like pragmatism, sees perception as guided by the organism's purpose and action. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991), building on the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, coined the

term “enaction” to capture the way in which action embodies perception and purpose. Perception is not a matter of information processing, of representing a pre-given real world in the senses. This is objectivism. The only alternative to it is not mentalism—the idea that the world as perceived is a projection of a pre-given mind. As we have already noted, this was the mistake made by Kelly in his critique of what he wrongly thought was phenomenology. Enaction is a better alternative, one that sees the person and the world as intertwined and, as it were, replying to each other in a closed system. Drawing on Varela’s experiments on the neuroscience underpinning color vision, Varela, Thomson, and Rosch (1991) show how colors are not “out there” in a “real world” waiting to be discovered. They are not simply the interpretation of wavelengths of light—this is merely the physicist’s way of talking about color. It is no more real than what we see. Different animals with different eye-structure pick up entirely different images that we cannot imagine, and this is because their visual systems have evolved pragmatically to assist them in their interactions with the world. This Kelly had endorsed with his claim that there is a real world, but we can only ever know it through our constructions of it. Of course, although we can separate construct from element in our attempt to analyze this interaction, in practice the two are inseparable. Constructivism sees both the world and cognition as emerging out of the relationship between them.

Types of constructivism

We turn now to the confusion that can ensue from the difference between constructivism and social constructionism. Social constructionism was launched by Kenneth Gergen in the 1980s. Gergen had worked tirelessly for many years, virtually as a lone voice, arguing against the individualism at the root of Anglo-American social psychology. The social world was quite invisible in it, the assumption being the primacy of individual atoms that came together to make up society. The individual had a concrete reality, while society appeared as some abstract entity “out there.” In contrast, social constructionism emphasized the primacy of the social world. Gergen reached “take-off velocity” with an article in the mid-1980s that clearly resonated with many, because quite suddenly social constructionism began to proliferate. Some within this camp see constructivism as still asocial and still based on individual cognition. The individual is seen as having too much agency.

As Chiari and Nuzzo (2010) argue, it is easy to cast the psychology of personal constructs as a weak “epistemological” type of constructivism, one

that begins with and privileges the knowledge of the knower. However, we must remember that Kelly's primary focus was in clinical psychology. His concern was with how constructions differ (the Individuality Corollary) rather than how construing is held in common (the Commonality Corollary). All the same, he stressed the tension between the two corollaries (Butt, 2008). We must also remember that there is no Cartesian self in personal construct theory. As we have already seen, self versus not self is a dualism that Kelly had no time for. Instead of self, Kelly talks of "core role structure." This is not a simple translation of the self. It does not denote an inner Cartesian entity, but instead construing based on the constructions of significant others (and as we have seen, Kelly took this formulation from George Mead). So what other psychologists think of as self, Kelly argues emerges from interaction.

In this way, personal construct theory really does transcend the realism/idealism dichotomy and thus qualifies as a strong form of constructivism. Chiari and Nuzzo (2010) argue convincingly that it is this primacy of interaction that is the hallmark of true hermeneutic constructivism. Kelly well understood the socially constructed nature of the person, just as Dewey had. However, once constructed, the person is, to some extent at least, a center for choice and agency. Unlike in some forms of contemporary social constructionism, the individual is not an empty vessel, through which social forces and discourse flow without resistance to produce passive movement.

Conclusions

We hope that this review of the philosophical dimensions of personal construct theory places it in its historic-philosophical context. Historically, the zeitgeist in which it germinated and emerged was one in which the philosophy that was pragmatism held sway in the U.S.A. Philosophically, pragmatism is highly compatible with the phenomenology that Kelly rejected but likely, and through no fault of his own, misunderstood. Thus has subsequent reflection within the community which explores and advances the theory of personal constructs been able to derive a conclusion that it represents a *hermeneutic constructivism*. It is philosophically rich and it brings that richness to therapeutic contexts as well as to theoretical reflection and applied research.

Kelly's contribution to pragmatism was to bring it to bear on the world of clinical psychology. The thread that runs from pragmatism to constructivism is that the world we perceive is both found *and* made. To the naive

observer, it appears that we discover a preexisting world with our senses and scientific experiments. But these “discoveries” are largely constructions that, if they are viable, allow us to get a grip on the world. It is important to remember that other viable constructions are possible. For the psychologist trying to help other people, it is therefore essential to realize that each person does not construe the world in exactly the same way.

Note

- 1 Sadly, Trevor Butt did not live to see the publication of this chapter, which we hope will be a fitting tribute to his long and very significant contribution to personal construct psychology. (Eds.)

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George Kelly

A Revealing Moment

Franz R. Epting

Alvin Landfield has recounted a number of times that Kelly once made an unexpected comment to him during a conversation that took place in the early 1960s (Fransella, 1995; Landfield, 2011; A. W. Landfield, personal communication, October 2, 2007).¹ During a visit Kelly made to see Al at Purdue University, he and Kelly were discussing Frank Shaw's life and untimely death from a heart attack at age 43. Frank was one of Al's closest friends and a colleague in the Psychology Department of Purdue University. Shaw had been working on a "Theory of Reconciliation" which aimed to provide a way for seemingly opposite positions to be reconciled (Shaw, 1966). Al thought Kelly might be interested in this project, since it might be possible for opposite poles of a personal construct to be reconstrued using Shaw's reconciliation theory. During the conversation with Kelly, Al made the comment that he often thought of Frank Shaw "because he was so curious about life that he had the courage to jump off someplace in the universe just to find out [what would happen] . . . I kidded Frank [but] really [I] was not kidding. I figured that if he [Frank] kept on with some of this reconciliation that he might end up with God." Al reports that soon after he told this story about Frank, Kelly came forth with a most unexpected comment. "We were talking about Frank and how dare he do this and Kelly made one comment. You know what he said, 'Life is a continual threat' and then he said, 'Al, you know I have been under threat all my life'" (personal communication, October 2, 2007). This sudden drop of the conversation into deep intimacy caught Al by surprise and he did not know whether or not to pursue the conversation at that level. After all, it was such a rare event for Kelly to be that intimate and self-revealing. Not

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knowing what to say, Al let the conversation drop and they went on to talk and do other things.

Kelly might have thought Al was trying to talk about how threatened he was by Frank's death and wanted to reciprocate with a disclosure of his own. Or perhaps Kelly felt comfortable talking about his own threat because Al had completed his dissertation on the topic of *threat* with Kelly at Ohio State University about a decade before and even had his own theories of threat included in Kelly's two-volume book. For some reason really unknown, Kelly suddenly began to talk about his own personal threat in an open way. But alas it was just too much too quickly for Al. Kelly was usually such a formal person, even though he was very friendly and showed a great deal of concern and loyalty to all his former students. However, he was not usually overtly affectionate or informal in their presence; he was much more likely to say nice things about them behind their backs. Al made the observation that Kelly was an important validating agent in his life but he restricted his validation to professional matters rather than personal ones. Al goes further to make this speculation: "I doubt that he had many personal friends. If so, I think they may have been outside the field of psychology" (Landfield, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

My guess is that Kelly styled his way of being a professional person on his mentor at the University of Iowa, Carl Seashore. Even though Seashore was quite supportive of Kelly he assigned him to another member of the faculty, Lee Travis, for academic advisement. After all, Seashore was dean of the graduate school as well as chairman of the Psychology Department at Iowa at the time. Seashore was a very dignified man with a formidable presence, who adhered to the high standards of social and professional conduct of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He must have become quite fond of George even though he had only known him for nine months, the time it took for George to complete his PhD. In fact Seashore came to visit George and his wife Gladys in Kansas, where George took his first job (J. Adams-Webber, personal communication, May 25, 2004).

It is not difficult for me to believe that Kelly was using the term *threat* in the way he defined it in his theory: the awareness of the likelihood that core understandings of life's contexts are about to undergo comprehensive and imminent change. In his book, Kelly lists death as a first example of an event that is likely to be threatening to most people. "We describe it as threatening to them because they perceive it as likely to happen to them and as likely to bring about drastic changes in their core constructions" (Kelly, 1955, p. 490). Perhaps it was Al's conversation about Frank Shaw's death from a heart attack, and his having the courage to jump off some

place in the universe just to see what would happen, that started Kelly's thinking about his own life and how threat had played such a major role in it. At least this is another possibility to consider; after all it had only been two years since Kelly himself had suffered a major heart attack.

This is not to say that threat dominated Kelly's life to the exclusion of other features which have been discussed in previous biographical accounts such as Fransella (1995) and Neimeyer and Jackson (1997), as well as in the full-length biography I am presently undertaking. All I am saying here is this was a *revealing moment* in his life, not a *defining moment*. I do not mean to imply that Kelly felt the Sword of Damocles constantly suspended over his head. Let us just say that threat was an important part of Kelly's life from time to time. In addition I do not want to get too technical here and insist that Kelly was using threat in a formal-theoretical way, but what seems clear to me is the fact that Kelly found himself repeatedly in circumstances where he felt trapped and felt that life, as he knew it, was becoming intolerable. Perhaps it was these life circumstances that Kelly used to frame his foundational philosophical position, constructive alternativism. Both Dennis Hinkle (2000) and Jack Adams-Webber (personal communication, May 25, 2004) remember Kelly saying, "Never get caught with your alternatives down." Kelly was always insisting that you do not have to paint yourself into a corner, that reality is softer than it first appears and that there are always other ways to go about things even though the range of alternatives can get very narrow at times. After all, "man is always free to reconstrue what he may not deny" (Kelly, 1963, p. xii). Kelly often cautioned that you can't go willy-nilly off into a wished-for world searching for alternatives without things ending up pretty badly. The alternatives open to us had better be influenced by the situations in which we find ourselves. Being a true pragmatist, he is not concerned with reality as such but what we are able to do with it; "the open question for man is not whether reality exists or not, but what he can make of it. If he does make something of it he can stop worrying about whether it exists or not" (Kelly 1969a, p. 25). Alternatives are to be tried out to see if they fit better, thereby providing us a better space in which to live (Paris, 2011).

This feeling of being trapped started very early in Kelly's life, as Jacqueline Aldridge reports (personal communication May 12, 2004). She remembers her father told her about feeling very isolated and alone as the only child of a couple who decided in early adulthood to take a leave from the Presbyterian ministry and begin farming in rural Kansas. Kelly's parents were well educated and well traveled. His father had graduated from Princeton's Theological Seminary and his mother was from a merchant sailing family

and had been born in Barbados during a stopover on a merchant voyage to South America. Fortunately Kelly's father had brought an extensive library of books with him to the farm, and Jackie remembers her father saying that the greatest gift his father ever gave him was his library. Al Landfield remembers reading a letter, now lost, in which Kelly recalls, as a kid, sitting on a stool looking out at the world from the rump of the cow he was milking. He knew he had to get out of there, obtain a proper education and gain access to a larger world. He even put together the chassis of an old car in order to drive to a nearby school. When the vehicle proved unreliable, he convinced his family to let him leave home in 1918 at age 13 and move to the "big city" of Wichita, Kansas, to live with his uncle's family. Being very bright, in only a few years he parlayed his way around junior high and high school to enter in 1921 Friends University there in Wichita at age 16. It was at this Quaker university that he made his first real friends. Al Landfield makes much of the relationship between Kelly's early isolation and his feeling so trapped. In a 2008 letter to me he wrote, "When Kelly said to me, 'I have been under threat all my life', I think he was giving evidence that he felt very different from others. Was he trying to understand others because he felt so different from them? He placed emphasis on the Sociality Corollary (productive relationships with others are established by understanding the way others look at life). He was talking about himself and applying it to others." Certainly Fay Fransella (1995) came to the same conclusion about Kelly's talking about himself and applying it to others when she cites Kelly's awareness of his own inconsistencies being the basis for his Fragmentation Corollary (in every person there is room for many contradictions).

In addition to making his first real friends, his experiences at Friends University provided a theoretical foundation for the professional contributions he would later make. It was there that he started to read John Dewey's version of American pragmatism. I contend, with the benefit of hindsight, that it was at Friends Kelly first found a way to match up some of his personal experiences with the theoretical concepts he found in Dewey's pragmatism. In no way do I think he was fully aware that this was taking place. For example, Rorty (1999, p. 6) says, "Dewey urges that the quest for certainty be replaced with the demand for imagination." There could not be a better foundation for the creation of his fundamental postulate than constructive alternativism, the assumption that "all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement" (Kelly, 1955, p. 15). Access to the pathways of our wellbeing lies in the direction of using our imagination to come up with constructive alternatives

rather than confining our efforts to pinning things down in order to ensure certainty. When asked about what he thought of Dewey, Jack Adams-Webber reports Kelly saying that he was not sure that Dewey really was a psychologist but if he were, he was the best psychologist there has ever been (personal communication, May 25, 2004). What Kelly was able to do was not only use Dewey's pragmatism as the basis for a comprehensive psychology, but also turn it into a *constructivist* psychology addressing the full range of human concerns (Epting & Paris, 2006). Thankfully, Kelly's indebtedness to pragmatism is now widely recognized (Butt, 2000; Procter, 2014²). It was also at Friends that he was exposed to the Quaker ideas of world peace, particularly as these ideas related to Woodrow Wilson's efforts to establish world order through the creation of a League of Nations. No doubt it was at this time that Kelly developed his abiding interest in international relations.

Before I go any further, it might be a good idea to remind everyone that my purpose in writing this chapter is to understand what Kelly said to Al Landfield about threat and to use this as a prism to examine Kelly's biography. In undertaking this task there is so much we do not know and so much we will never know. To the best of my ability, what I will do now is to attempt to show how threat kept recurring throughout Kelly's life.

After he graduated from the University of Iowa with his PhD in 1931, he took his first job teaching psychology at Fort Hays Kansas State College. There he found himself confronted with people in real need of help and realized that his graduate work in experimental and physiological psychology was insufficient to the task. Given the challenges he faced, he was able to begin articulating the rudimentary foundations for his theory of personal constructs by having clients engage in therapeutic role-playing (an early form of fixed-role therapy), which was first described in the 1943 Master's theses of two of his graduate students, Ethel Edwards (1982) and Alexander Robinson (1982). He did not feel ready, just at that time, to publish these ideas under his own name. Feeling isolated and alone at a school so far from other centers of learning, he began to think of World War Two as a way out. By this time he had amassed quite a background by obtaining a physics and math undergraduate degree from Park College in Missouri, after leaving Friends University, receiving a Master's degree from the University of Kansas in labor relations, serving as a draftsman at the Watkins Aircraft Plant in Wichita designing aircraft, and obtaining statistical training from Sir Godfrey Thompson at the University of Edinburgh during a year's study abroad. Using this background, he taught himself to fly, became the head of the pilot-training program at Fort Hays, obtained a commission in the

U.S. Navy as a lieutenant, and was placed on duty in the Aviation Psychology Branch of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington DC in November of 1943. What a creative alternative he found to test out! You don't have to paint yourself into a corner; never get caught with your alternatives down.

After the war, he obtained an associate professorship at the University of Maryland. In 1946, after only a year's stay there, he was offered and accepted a full professorship and directorship of the clinical psychology program at The Ohio State University in Columbus, a program that would soon be widely recognized for its excellence. Most importantly, at Ohio State he could finally start formally writing out his theory of personal constructs. With his two-volume book finished in 1953 and shipped off to the publishers (Kelly, 1955), he took his first sabbatical leave from Ohio State in 1954 for a visiting appointment at Montclair State Teachers' College in New Jersey to work on the use of television in classroom instruction. Returning to Ohio State in the fall of 1955, he celebrated the long-awaited publication of his book and patiently waited for the reviews, which did not appear until the end of 1956. Jerome Bruner entitled his review "A Cognitive Theory of Personality," while Carl Rogers called his "Intellectualized Psychotherapy" (Bruner & Rogers, 1970). Although the reviews were appreciative of his efforts as the best of the decade, they lacked any strong notes of enthusiasm for his new way of thinking about psychology. For the most part the reviews did not perceive the extent of the departure Kelly's constructivist theory offered from the established psychological theories. In fact one of the reviews was dismissive of his new theory, while praising the techniques he offered (McArthur, 1956). Al Landfield comments that Kelly faced severe criticism of his theory: "Kelly must have felt lonely as a professional theorist. The criticism of his work was enormous" (personal communication, July 14, 2008). While I am not sure how threatening the reviews were, they were certainly not comforting. After a very heavy work schedule in the years after the publication of his book, he suffered a major heart attack in August of 1959 at age 54. You would think that his heart attack posed a major threat in every sense of the term, but his most self-revealing 1960 paper about his heart attack dealt mainly with anxiety (Kelly, 1977). Certainly his heart attack would have made him very anxious. In his way of defining anxiety, he was not able at the moment to comprehend all that was happening to him.

Somehow he was able to muster the courage and strength to meet this crisis in good style by taking a relatively brief leave of absence from the university, and was able to go on a previously arranged trip around the world in June of

1960, which he describes in a brief biographical sketch. “During the year 1960–61 my wife and I traveled around the world on a project financed by the Human Ecology Fund in an effort to apply the construct theory to certain international problems. During this trip I lectured in London, Oslo, Copenhagen, Louvain, Madrid, Prague, Warsaw, and Moscow” (Kelly, 1966).

I do not mean to skip too lightly over the threat that his heart attack posed, but I have in mind a statement that Kelly made about death not being profoundly threatening in some cases. “It [death] is not so threatening to those who see either their souls or the fundamental meaning of their lives as being unaffected by it. In such persons the core structures are not so likely to be affected by the prospect of death” (1955, p. 490). Perhaps Kelly’s Presbyterian religious beliefs served him well. He was very active in his church in Ohio and even delivered some sermons to the congregation there. I would be very surprised, however, if his religious beliefs were either literalistic or simplistic, but they may have protected him from being profoundly threatened by his heart attack. I feel more confident in asserting that the heart attack was not as threatening as it was anxiety-provoking, since his 1960 paper about it dealt mainly with anxiety and not threat.³

Just before or just after the heart attack, he became aware of the astonishing lack of financial support he had been receiving from the university when compared with others in his department. Just how devastating a blow this was for him should not be underestimated. His daughter Jackie says he was ashen-faced when he returned home the day he became aware of the discrepancy between his salary and those of his colleagues. Luckily, he was able to go to the dean of the college and get the situation rectified. As accustomed as he was to the rough and tumble of university life, he was not prepared for this event. I think this was profoundly threatening and it changed the way he looked at his position at Ohio State and what it would mean to him to continue his work there.

After returning from the world tour, he was able to take advantage of the international attention his theory was beginning to attract, particularly from Don Bannister in Great Britain, Han Bonarius in the Netherlands, Michaela Lifshitz in Israel, and a number of others (Neimeyer, 1985). They were all able to make trips to Ohio State for extended amounts of time. Bannister’s enthusiasm for the theory appeared to be boundless, and he organized a conference in Kelly’s honor at the University of London’s Brunel College in 1964. As a graduate student at Ohio State at the time, it was my impression that Kelly was very pleased with all the international attention he was receiving. It provided an atmosphere of great expectations for what his theory might become.

The next major threat came when the clinical program at Ohio State started to come apart at the seams, so to speak. Many faculty members were leaving because of the conservative atmosphere in Columbus. This was the period following Joseph McCarthy's rants in the U.S. Senate and during the vicious attacks of the House Un-American Activities Committee; communists and homosexuals were seen to be lurking everywhere, especially on U.S. college campuses. The atmosphere became very tense when a Marxist speaker was barred entrance to the Ohio State campus. It was during this time that Kelly agreed to take the leadership of the clinical program once again. The current director, Julian Rotter, left for a job at the University of Connecticut in the more liberal northeast. Kelly made a noble attempt to pull things together at Ohio State and bravely proposed a pre-doctoral international internship program. Students in the clinical psychology program would have the opportunity to go abroad for a year before completing their PhD. The Ohio State administration, however, did not support this forward-thinking and ambitious venture. Again Kelly felt trapped and needed a way out in order for life to remain truly worthwhile. If he stayed, the threat that his creative imagination might be dulled or that his muse would desert him altogether was just too much. Fortunately there was a way out. Abraham Maslow facilitated his being offered, at 60 years of age, an endowed chair in psychology at Brandeis University near Boston. Even though he and Gladys had to abandon their "dream house" and friends in Ohio, what a joy it was for him to leave, and to go at long last to an eastern school, and a very liberal one at that, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Without realizing it, he was much too ill to undertake such a trip. There was the stress of physically moving house, as well as the challenge of adjusting himself to teaching in a non-APA-approved clinical program. Brandeis had a small but very distinguished faculty that offered a PhD in general psychology. In this program, Kelly of course taught graduate courses, but for the first time since the very beginning of his career he was obligated to teach undergraduates as well. Because of his heart condition, he was having a difficult time walking up the stairs to his classrooms. Dennis Hinkle (2000) remembers that even at home he had to use oxygen; however, others doubt this to be the case. Nevertheless, he was able to turn out some of his most advanced papers on the philosophy and psychology of his theory and envision a new book that he planned to entitle "The Human Feeling."

He was able to face this last threat, of feeling he must leave Ohio State, very bravely by refusing to accept circumstances that might hem him in. Unfortunately, in little more than a year and a half after reaching Brandeis, he literally gave way. He died on March 6, 1967, from complications

following a gall bladder operation. Much earlier (1963), in his paper “The Autobiography of a Theory,” he made a statement of how he intended to meet the eventual end of his life, and that was by valuing imagination over certainty at every turn:

But, still, if I had to end my life on some final note I think I would like it to be a question, preferably a basic one, well posed, and challenging, and beckoning me to where only others after me may go, rather than a terminal conclusion—no matter how well documented. There is something exciting about a question, even one you have no reasonable expectation of answering. But a final conclusion, why that is like the stroke of doom; after it—nothing, just nothing at all! (Kelly, 1969b, pp. 51–52)

Notes

- 1 All specific details of Kelly’s life not otherwise sourced come from personal communications with Jacqueline Kelly Aldridge.
- 2 No doubt there were other influences such as the work of Korzybski, Moreno, and perhaps Vaihinger. Dewey, however, was the earliest and most pervasive influence.
- 3 I am forever indebted to Fay Fransella for pointing out to me that this paper was to be the chapter on anxiety which Kelly planned to use in a new book entitled “The Human Feeling.”

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Personal Construct Psychology in Relation to an Integrative Constructivism

Jonathan D. Raskin

Personal construct psychologists have historically had an uneasy relationship with constructivism. Some have objected to it on philosophical grounds, arguing that George Kelly's (1955/1991a, 1991b) personal construct psychology (PCP) is best viewed as a critical realist, not constructivist, approach (Noaparast, 1995; Stevens, 1998; Warren, 1998). Others have worried that constructivism has the potential to overshadow PCP, placing the latter in a precarious position (Fransella, 1995, 2007). Others still have argued that constructivism is broad and ill-defined—or, at the very least, is less theoretically and methodologically developed than PCP (Fransella, 1995; Winter, 2015). These concerns arise in part because constructivism and its precise relationship to PCP typically go unspecified. To remedy this, I present four premises of an *integrative constructivism* and address how PCP—in conjunction with other forms of constructivism—both fits within it and contributes to it. My goal is to offer a meta-framework that lets PCP maintain its own integrity as a theoretical unity, while also offering a set of shared premises that permit PCP's inclusion under a superordinate integrative constructivist banner.

Premise 1: People as Informationally Closed Systems

Premise 1 views people as *informationally closed systems* (Raskin, 2011, 2014; Raskin & Debany, 2012). To say that people are informationally closed is also to say that they are only in touch with their internal experiences, which in turn

means that everything one knows is personal, private, and generated by one's own processes (von Glasersfeld, 1995). Put another way, knowledge does not move from "outside" to "inside" a person. Rather, what is outside sets off biological and psychological processes inside; through these processes the person generates—or constructs—understandings. Constructions, therefore, are internally devised, even though people treat them as reflections of an outside world. They are private products of a system never directly in touch with anything outside itself. How one's system is built, not external events themselves, informs the kind of knowledge one can construct; radical constructivists refer to this as *structure determinism* (Maturana & Varela, 1992). A human being's eyes and a bat's sonar, for instance, do not take in the world as is. Instead, both are set into action by particular forms of outside stimulation to which they are sensitive. Once triggered, internal processes are activated, from which understandings are constructed. Bats and people, respectively, experience their understandings as representations of a presumed external world—even though their understandings are actually personal and private constructions determined more by internal processes than external events (Quale, 2008; von Glasersfeld, 1995).

Premise 1 and personal construct psychology

While radical constructivists unambiguously describe people as informationally closed systems (e.g., Maturana, 1988; von Glasersfeld, 1990), Kelly did not explicitly employ the terminology of informational closure. However, it can be read between the lines of PCP. The Fundamental Postulate and the Dichotomy Corollary provide two examples of how PCP can be viewed as presuming informational closure.

The Fundamental Postulate PCP's Fundamental Postulate holds that people's processes are "psychologically channelized" by how they anticipate events. This "channelization" occurs "through a network of pathways" (Kelly, 1991a, p. 34). Consequently, people are not in direct contact with the world; they are in contact with a channelized network of constructive processes (Raskin, 2015). Kelly (1991a, p. 43) said that a person's psychological channels "structure his thinking and limit his access to the ideas of others." Hence, he implied a closed system. The world triggers constructive processes, out of which a channelized network of constructs is generated. However, neither the constructive processes nor the resulting channelized constructs ever directly touch a world beyond them. In this way, we can say that the person in PCP is informationally closed. Thus, the Fundamental Postulate reflects the spirit of Premise 1.

Dichotomy Corollary The Dichotomy Corollary also can be interpreted as supporting the idea of construct systems as informationally closed. It states that “a person’s construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs” (Kelly, 1991a, p. 41). Dichotomy is what makes constructs *bipolar*. To say that a personal construct is bipolar is to say that it consists of perceived opposites—“what aspects of a situation are similar to *and thereby* different from other aspects of that situation” (Fransella, 1995, p. 41, italics in original). The bipolar nature of constructs is what makes meaning personal and private. It is what distinguishes *constructs* from *concepts*:

There is a not always implicit notion that things really are different and that a *concept* is a property of things as they really are. In contrast, a *construct* is something that is created by an individual, personally. Its reality exists, not in the things themselves, but in the interpretative act of the individual person. (Fransella, 1989, p. 1: see Chapter 1, this volume)

In moving from concepts to constructs, we shift from seeing our understandings as replicating the world to viewing them as personal interpretations separate and distinct from the world. Importantly (and in keeping with PCP’s Individuality Corollary), our constructs—these dichotomous abstractions about how situations are similar to and different from one another—vary by person (Kelly, 1955/1991a); each person’s constructions are devised within a psychologically private experiential world. In discussing the composition of construct systems in relation to dichotomy, Kelly declared: “By this we mean that the system is composed entirely of constructs. It consists of nothing but constructs.” Constructs are only in touch with other constructs, therefore a construct system is a closed system: “Its organizational structure is based upon constructs of constructs, concretistically pyramided or abstractly cross-referenced in a system of ordinal relationships” (Kelly, 1991a, p. 43). Information does not get in or out. What is presumed to be outside serves as an impetus to develop or revise constructs inside the system. Outside action sets constructive processes into motion, but does not dictate the dichotomous abstractions generated.

Premise 2: People as Active Meaning-Makers

Premise 2 holds that *people are active in constructing meaning*; they draw distinctions and in so doing devise ways of understanding (Raskin, 2011, 2015; Raskin & Debany, 2012). The outside world may initiate, or trigger,

internal processes. However, once triggered, the person actively constructs understandings in the hope of producing viable knowledge. Consequently, events never determine people's constructions. Instead, people actively develop meanings whenever their sensory systems are set in motion. Premise 2 builds on Premise 1 because active construction processes always occur personally and privately within an individual's informationally closed system. Knowledge is not passively received from outside, but actively constructed in a person's private experiential world.

Premise 2 and personal construct psychology

Premise 2 is typical of constructivist approaches. Activity is central to Ernst von Glasersfeld's (1995) radical constructivism, which is rooted in the assumption that knowledge is actively built up by the cognizing subject as an aid to survival (not as a way to replicate the world). This is quite similar to the view of the person posited in PCP. The Choice Corollary and the metaphor of *behavior as an experiment* exemplify how PCP is consistent with Premise 2.

Choice within limits Kelly's (1955/1991a) emphasis on people as active meaning-constructors is most obvious in his Choice Corollary, which says that people choose for themselves the poles of their constructs that they believe will best allow them to extend their understandings. In this way, people are active in their construing. Importantly, while people make choices within the confines of their construct systems, this does not mean they are completely free to construe any way they wish. There are always constraints—a viewpoint found in both PCP and radical constructivism. Radical constructivists point to constraints when discussing structure determinism (Maturana & Varela, 1992)—how one's system is built, after all, makes some constructions possible, but rules out others. Von Glasersfeld (1995, p. 13) noted that it is not just one's biological structure that limits constructive choices, but also one's psychological structure; construing is active, but not entirely free because "it is inevitably constrained and limited by the concepts that constitute the scaffolding."

In making this point von Glasersfeld (1995) quoted Kelly himself: "To the living creature, then, the universe is real but it is not inexorable, unless he chooses to construe it that way" (Kelly, 1991a, p. 6). Von Glasersfeld saw radical constructivism and personal construct psychology as complementary in conceiving of people as active and free within clear limits. His psychological "scaffolding" seems comparable to Kelly's

personal construct system. In both conceptualizations, meaning is actively built up by the cognizing subject, but the resulting meaning structures limit and frame the options available for construing circumstances. In sophisticated forms of constructivism, active construing is free—but not unrestricted. In this respect, personal construct psychology fits comfortably beside radical constructivism beneath a broader constructivist meta-framework.

Behavior as an experiment Positing “behavior as an experiment” was Kelly’s (1969a) way of making clear that he did not see people as passive respondents reacting to events in a predetermined manner. Rather, he saw them as actively devising ways of construing situations and then putting these constructions to the test. Thus, Kelly’s notion of behavior as an experiment fits with the constructivist premise of people as active meaning-makers. Unfortunately, a common misunderstanding of personal construct psychology springs directly from the idea of behavior as an experiment. When discussing behavior as experiment, Kelly (1955/1991a, 1991b) invoked the metaphor of the “person as scientist.” This has often been mistaken by cognitive-oriented psychologists as suggesting that emotionally adjusted people think rationally, just like scientists ostensibly do—with rational ideas accurately mirroring reality.

For instance, Craske’s (2010) overview of cognitive-behavioral therapy published by the American Psychological Association repeatedly invokes the person-as-scientist metaphor in precisely this manner, albeit without citing Kelly. From a cognitive-behavioral frame, clients are taught to be personal scientists, reality-testing their ideas and discarding those that fail (Craske, 2010). While Kelly believed people should test their constructs and discard those that fall short, he was skeptical about the traditional view of knowledge as one-to-one reality correspondence. What places Kelly in the constructivist camp is his insistence that there are always constructive alternatives to accepted understandings; constructs are best evaluated in terms of their viability. Nonetheless, the person-as-scientist metaphor has often been taken as proof of PCP being a cognitive theory—client problems will resolve once they rationally acknowledge how things are.

However, in describing people as scientists, Kelly was not saying that client improvement depends on converting them into logical positivists seeking singular interpretations of truth. Rather, he was suggesting that psychologists consider their clients active meaning-makers who test their understandings in daily life. That is, Kelly encouraged psychologists to see their clients and research participants as no different from themselves.

People are not merely scientists; scientists are also people (Vaughn, 1996). As Kelly put it:

What is so special about a psychologist? He experiments? Who doesn't? He enacts his questions? Don't we all? His inquiries produce more questions than answers: Who has ever found it to be otherwise? . . . Now that we think of it, does the psychologist do anything that other men do not do . . . ? Is he a scientist—a creature apart—whose own behavior is explained by his undertakings, while the behavior of other men is explained only in terms of stimuli, motives, physiology, and the momentum of their biographies? (Kelly, 1969a, p. 15)

Such sentiments strongly reinforce a view of people as active meaning-constructors. Therefore, personal construct psychology appears consistent with Premise 2.

Premise 3: People as Social Beings

Premise 3 emphasizes the relational aspects of human meaning construction by maintaining that *people are inherently social*; they use their “intersubjective experiences” to confirm their personal constructions (Raskin 2011, 2015; Raskin & Debany, 2012). This premise is important because it makes clear that construing is inevitably contextual. How a person construes events is always connected to social circumstances rooted within relationships.

Premise 3 and personal construct psychology

Premise 3 stresses the social and contextual basis of constructivist theories. It reflects further similarities between PCP and radical constructivism, while including a role for social constructionism.

Sociality and intersubjective experience Kelly's (1955/1991a) Sociality Corollary holds that people adopt relational roles by construing each other's construction processes. The more effectively they do so, the more intimate these roles are (Leitner & Faidley, 1995). This is similar to von Glasersfeld's (1995, p. 24) notion of *intersubjective experience*, in which each of us devises subjective internal environments and populates them with “repeatable objects” that are seen as “external and independent.” Repeatable objects to which we attribute sentience (i.e., other people) are assumed to have the same meaning-making abilities that we see ourselves as having. We experience an intersubjective reality whenever others respond

to us in ways that we interpret as indicating they understand things as we do. We use sociality—our constructions of others’ construing—in order to relationally coordinate and confirm our own private understandings. Relational coordination is central to how people construe events. PCP is consistent with Premise 3 in this regard.

Sociality and social construction Premise 3 builds on Premise 1’s assertion that knowledge is personal and private by adding that it is simultaneously social. There is no contradiction here because PCP’s Sociality Corollary and radical constructivism’s intersubjective reality make social interaction central to meaning construction. As the Sociality Corollary maintains, how well people construe one another’s construction processes affects the kinds of relational coordination in which they can partake. The intersubjective reality produced through sociality makes us feel as if others share our constructs. While strictly speaking this is not so (as Premise 1 makes clear, constructs are personal and private), we often functionally treat our constructs as if they are shared and, importantly, we suffer no ill effects from doing so (Raskin & Debany, 2012). When subsuming another person’s constructs, we do not actually take in these constructs; we merely devise constructions of the other person’s constructs in a way that feels to both them and us as if we have replicated how they construe events. As such, relational coordination and a sense of shared knowing occur, which invariably influence the personal and private construing processes of the individuals involved.

Another way of thinking about this is that Premises 1 and 3 can be viewed as two sides of the same coin—as a form of “double aspectism” (Raskin, 2014). When relying on Premise 1, we treat constructions as personal and private. We study the individual person’s construct system and attend to how it yields particular predictions and interpretations. When switching to Premise 3, we treat constructs as undeniably contextual. Sociality becomes central. Construing one another’s constructions produces the experience of shared understandings—what are often called social constructions (Raskin & Debany, 2012). Thus, Premise 3 incorporates Kelly’s theory in a manner that allows personal construct psychologists to treat personal and social aspects of construing as two aspects of human meaning-making.

Premise 4: People as Ontological and Epistemological Construers

Premise 4 says that *people construe both “ontologically” and “epistemologically”* (Raskin & Debany, 2012). This premise undermines critiques of constructivism as endorsing an “anything goes” relativism. *Ontological construing*

occurs when people treat their constructs as reflecting an independent world. When psychologists employ terms like “mind,” “self,” “cognition,” and “emotion,” they usually treat these words as referring to real things about which they can make assertions (Raskin, 2015). Though these terms can also be taken as humanly created understandings, most of the time when psychologists use them they are treated as real things with an independent existence. This is because whenever people construe ontologically, they consider their constructions as reflections of an outside, independently existing world (Raskin, 2011). People—even those calling themselves constructivists—construe ontologically much of the time.

Epistemological construing occurs when people move from construing the world to construing their construing (Raskin, 2011; Raskin & Debany, 2012). Constructions previously taken for granted as reflecting an outside world become the locus of examination. When construing epistemologically, questions about the constructive origins of terms like “mind,” “self,” “cognition,” and “emotion” become salient. The legitimacy of such terms is considered and constructive alternatives are potentially entertained.

Dividing construing into ontological and epistemological modes permits constructivists to “tack back and forth from assertion and belief to reflection and reconsideration—as we all do throughout the course of daily life” (Raskin, 2015). Constructions may be relative in that they are inextricably tied to one’s location in time and space, but they are never “anything goes” because what goes is constrained and shaped by both ontological and epistemological forms of construing (Raskin & Debany, 2012). Constructivists are free to make theoretical assertions because, when they do, they are simply operating from an ontological mode. When they shift to an epistemological mode and deconstruct the terms they previously asserted as real, there is no inconsistency or incoherence. Ontological and epistemological modes of construing are different, but equally valuable depending on the purpose at hand (Raskin, 2011; Raskin & Debany, 2012).

Premise 4 and personal construct psychology

PCP is consistent with Premise 4 due to its grounding in constructive alternativism and its endorsement of Vaihinger’s philosophy of “as if.” Its compatibility with Premise 4 is further supported by efforts to conceptualize PCP as a form of pragmatism.

Constructive alternativism PCP is grounded in the seminal notion of *constructive alternativism*, which holds that there are an infinite number of ways to construe events (Kelly, 1955/1991a). People are not beholden

to a given construction. They are always at liberty to entertain alternatives and, depending on their goals in a given moment, there is no problem with them shifting among different (and even incompatible) constructions—so long as those they adopt prove viable to the desired ends. Kelly’s theory therefore provides a strong impetus for Premise 4’s contention that people can alternately construe ontologically and epistemologically.

The philosophy of “as if” Constructive alternativism was influenced by Hans Vaihinger’s (1924/1952) *philosophy of “as if,”* wherein constructions are explanatory fictions adopted or discarded in different situations depending on their utility. Kelly (1964/1969b) acknowledged Vaihinger’s influence:

Vaihinger began to develop a system of philosophy he called the “philosophy of ‘as if.’” In it he offered a system of thought in which God and reality might best be represented as paradigms. This was not to say that either God or reality was any less certain than anything else in the realm of man’s awareness, but only that all matters confronting man might best be regarded in hypothetical ways. (p. 149)

Ontological and epistemological modes of construing can be seen as two hypothetical ways—or paradigms—of understanding. When we act “as if” concepts like “mind,” “self,” “cognition,” and “emotion” are independent entities ripe for experimental study, we construe ontologically; when we act “as if” they are human inventions to be used, discarded, or deconstructed, we construe epistemologically. The philosophy of “as if” undergirds Premise 4.

Pragmatism Trevor Butt (2008) has argued that PCP is best viewed as a modern exemplar of philosophical pragmatism, where knowledge is evaluated in terms of its utility. Explanatory fictions—what PCP calls personal constructs—are merely possible ways of understanding things. Kelly comforted newcomers to his theory in ways remarkably consistent with (and influencing of) Premise 4:

Kelly asserts that he has no complaint with other theories. Instead, the reader is invited on a theoretical adventure. She should not jettison old theories in favour of new. Instead, new ideas are to be tried on for size, all the time tested in terms of their practical implications. Are they useful? We can see immediately the pragmatic roots of the theory, and the use of constructive alternativism. (Butt, 2008, p. 27)

Just as one need not abandon ontological construing before construing epistemologically, one need not abandon other theories before entertaining constructivism. PCP and Premise 4 reflect philosophical pragmatism.

Conclusion

My purpose has been to articulate four premises of an integrative constructivism and show PCP's relationship to them. I contend that PCP fits comfortably within, as well as helps theoretically ground, a broader constructivist framework. In so doing, PCP retains its integrity while contributing to a larger constructivist movement—one whose theories provide interesting and potentially generative constructive alternatives worthy of personal construct psychologists' consideration.

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Philosophy and Psychology

The Distinctiveness of the Theory of Personal Constructs

Bill Warren

The following discussion is intended to suggest, if not argue, the “distinctiveness” of the theory of personal constructs in terms of the inherent and explicit interweaving of philosophy and psychology within it, and implied and encouraged by it. Limitations of space preclude acknowledgment of all those who are part of the ongoing reflection that informs the present discussion; those familiar with the theory and its literature will know who these contributors are, those not so familiar will be made so by the present volume.

Philosophy and the Theory of Personal Constructs

One of the first things that is apparent when opening the first volume of Kelly (1955) is that here is something “different.” Again, in his introduction to the republication of the first three chapters of the original work, Kelly (1963) adds that if a reader starts murmuring to him or herself the terms that have been thrown overboard, then they can be sure they have “lost the scent”:

it is only fair to warn the reader about what may be in store . . . In the first place, [the reader] is likely to find missing most of the familiar landmarks of psychology books. For example, the term *learning* . . . That is wholly intentional; we are throwing it overboard altogether. There is no *ego*, no *emotion*, no *motivation*, no *reinforcement*, no *drive*, no *unconscious*, no *need*.

There are some words with brand-new psychological definitions, words like *foci of convenience*, *preemption*, *propositionality*, *fixed-role therapy*, *creativity cycle*, *transitive diagnosis*, and *the credulous approach*. . . the reader who takes us seriously will be an adventuresome soul who is not one bit afraid of thinking unorthodox thoughts about people, who dares to peer out at the world through the eyes of strangers, who has not invested beyond his means in either ideas or vocabulary, and who is looking for an ad interim, rather than an ultimate, set of psychological insights. (Kelly, 1955, pp. x-xi, Kelly's emphasis)

Under a subheading "The Philosophical Position," Kelly (1955) asks the question: "Philosophy or Psychology?" (p. 15). He characterizes the difference between the two disciplines as the former being concerned with studying "the forms of thought," which he calls *logic*, and the latter being concerned with "the actual thinking behavior of people" (p. 15). Kelly's view, however, is that the characteristics of thinking in its "essence" are characteristic also of the thinker: "that the essential of scientific curiosity must underlie human curiosity in general" (1955, p. 16). His is something of a narrow view of philosophy, albeit that it is not a straightforward question just what philosophy "is." The etymology signifies a "love of wisdom," wisdom generally pursued by way of the activity of critical inquiry which exempts nothing from such inquiry; Socrates is the classic example. Philosophy also emerges as substantive positions concerning one or other of Kant's four fundamental questions of philosophy. That is: "What can I know? What can I hope? What ought I do? What is the nature of 'Mankind'?" These questions open up, respectively: *epistemology* and *metaphysics*, *theology* and *philosophy of religion*, *ethics* and *morals*, and metaphysics again now as *ontology*, and *philosophical anthropology*. In some cases problems and issues are in focus, in others a substantive position is developed which embraces all of the questions; the "substantive position" is exemplified by such thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, and Hegel.

Kelly (1955) first locates his theory in terms of a range of positions or perspectives provided by some important philosophers, and expressed in some important philosophical ideas. He then states his "philosophical position," that is *constructive alternativism*, quite simply: "we assume that all of our present interpretations are subject to revision or replacement" (p. 14). Additionally, there is the openness of the theory which encourages those who explore it to uncover significant affinities with other important philosophical traditions and ideas. These were not discussed by Kelly in detail because he was plotting the position of personal construct theory

only “*roughly* with respect to some of the types of philosophical systems with which scholars are familiar” (p. 16, my emphasis).

That he discusses his theory in terms of some traditional philosophical problems and positions is perhaps less surprising when some contextual influences on him are considered; influences to which he could not have been blind. One such is the influence of the work of John Dewey, another is the zeitgeist to which Dewey contributed, and another is pragmatism more generally. Dewey insisted on the interconnectedness of three disciplines that addressed the health and welfare of the individual and society: psychology, philosophy, and education (pedagogy). This was related to progressive education, which Dewey championed, a movement in relation to which Cremin (1961) distinguishes two phases. First was the “progressive impulse” (1876–1917) when the U.S.A. was still remembering but recovering from the Civil War which could have so easily fractured its unity, was developing into a significant industrial power which could have easily damaged its social cohesion, and where in the Western world generally the ideas of thinkers like Darwin and Marx were circulating. Second was the “progressive era” (1917–1957) during which progressive education was argued, disputed, put into practice, and exported abroad. Thus was progressive education the “engine” of the wider and deeper effort to apply the “promise of American life—the ideal of government by, of, and for the people—to the puzzling new urban-industrialized civilization that came into being during the latter half of the nineteenth century” (1961, p. viii). The theory of personal constructs has, that is, a social, economic, political, and even geopolitical context in the times in which it had its gestation and birth. The key theme for these times is *change*. Indeed, this is “up front” in Kelly’s original work as a prior conviction: “the universe is continually changing with respect to itself . . . within our universe something is always going on” (Kelly, 1955, p. 7). Yet, “life is more than mere change,” and Kelly equally “emphasizes the creative capacity of the living thing to represent the environment, not merely to respond to it” (1955, p. 8).

Kelly’s (1955) “up front” discussion of the alignments of his theory with various philosophers and philosophical ideas is unusual among psychologists of non-continental European origin; though less unusual when the influence of Dewey and other of the pragmatists is remembered. His discussion is relatively brief and he acknowledges that he was not intending to try to elaborate that which represents a “philosophical point of view” (his theory) into a “complete philosophical system” (p. 16). Indeed, the consolidation of the “viewpoints of the clinician, the historian, the scientist, and the philosopher” (p. 5) tells against categorizing the theory.

Bannister and Fransella (1971) described personal construct theory in less philosophical terms as presenting a “framework which is cousin to history and poetry, while embodying the kind of systematic attack, public definition and experimental articulation which are the universal aspects of science” (p. 12). Maher (1969), however, comments on the fact that organizing Kelly’s unpublished papers in terms of any system of classification (for example, theory, psychotherapy, particular topic areas) was not only problematic for the work of a man who eschewed categorization, but also difficult because “perhaps more than most psychologists, Kelly wrote in such a fashion that issues of theory, epistemology, methodology, and practice are always intimately connected” (p. v).

The specifics of the philosophical dimension have been well traced within the literature of the theory of personal constructs, including offerings in this volume and in Fransella (2003). They may only be pursued here by way of illustration. Thus, we first note that Kelly made specific comment on the situation of his theory in relation to *epistemology* (he identifies the theory as falling within the area of *gnosiology*), to aspects of *positivism* (it would have been helpful if Kelly had expanded at least on the “abstract features of [Comte’s] system” to which he refers [Kelly, 1955, p. 17]), to *empiricism* and *pragmatic logic*, and to an affinity with *rationalism*. *Ontology*, too, gets mention, and he here identifies with *monism* (*substantival monism*, which is also neutral, that is, is silent as to whether the “stuff” of the world is mental or physical), and with Spinoza’s *attributive pluralism*. Reserved for more detailed comment were *phenomenology* and *determinism versus free will*. As to phenomenology, he had a view limited by the accessibility of key thinkers in this “movement” and his discussion is marred somewhat by a general misunderstanding of this philosophy. The present volume (Chapter 2) addresses the significance of phenomenology in personal construct theory such that it is not pursued here. Suffice to note the relevance of this important development in philosophy for the theory of personal constructs. The identification of the theory as a *hermeneutic constructivism* is a most comfortable and a most useful identification. It is comfortable, in particular, by reason of the “hermeneutic turn” in phenomenology and the elaboration in constructivist literature of what Kelly might have said about phenomenology had he known it better. It is useful because it opens up new perspectives on some of the traditional philosophical issues noted above, and because it facilitates dialogue within the constructivist “family” (Chiari & Nuzzo, 1996).

The matter of *determinism and free will*, a vexing issue in philosophy generally, is dealt with by Kelly in a fashion that characterizes his efforts to

dispense with all dualisms. His main interest is in determinism which concerns the relationship between subordinate and superordinate constructs in a construct *system*. Determinism in the universe “out there,” an integral universe in which there is an essential continuity, which “flows on and on . . . and never actually doubles back on itself” (Kelly, 1955, pp. 20–21), is of far less interest. The last is a determinism which operates between antecedent and subsequent events in the universe; a consequence may have one or many antecedents, but only happens once. In regard to this determinism we might say, simply, “So what?” as “there is not much point in singling” (p. 21) out a particular consequence as having been determined in a universe which flows on and is a continuity “not essentially divided into independent events” (p. 20). What is more important to Kelly is the determinism in the control a superordinate construct has over its elements; but while determinism here characterizes the construct’s control over its subordinate elements, “freedom characterizes its independence of those elements” (p. 20). Thus, “determinism and freedom are opposite sides of the same coin—two aspects of the same relationship” (p. 21).

Subsequent reflection amongst those interested in the philosophical aspect of the theory of personal constructs has ranged widely. Matters of *realism and idealism* are resolved in terms of the rejection of dualisms in the theory, consistent with its specific grounding in pragmatism, or in the direction of arguing a form of realism: naive, minimal, or ontological as distinct from epistemological realism. In relation to realism we have to contend with Kelly’s (1955) statements: “We presume that the universe is really existing” (p. 6), or one of “the three prior convictions about the universe that we have emphasized . . . is that it is real and not a figment of our imaginations” (p. 7). However, while a tentative conclusion of personal construct theory being a form of realism might be justified, the “best fit” is with *hermeneutic constructivism*, which allows this question to be reframed in a helpful manner. The compatibility between Kelly’s ideas and existentialist philosophy has been raised, and disputed and clarified; as might be expected of a position or perspective as complex and varied as is existentialism (at least in its better known public face). At the end of the day, however, Kelly may have a better grasp of “fathoming the roots of meaning” than do the existentialist philosophers or the existentialist psychologists and psychotherapists (Soffer, 1990).

This first aspect of our discussion hopefully illustrates the manner in which the theory of personal constructs is expounded, consciously and intentionally, in terms of an interplay between psychological and philosophical themes and thinking, issues, and perspectives. There is, however, a further matter

that goes to the last interplay and derives from its location in terms of a particular field of philosophy, that is, the philosophy of science.

Philosophy of Science

Closer to Kelly's initial publication, Rychlak (1968) developed his "philosophy of science for personality theory," acknowledging how Kelly had specifically addressed matters that attract the attention of philosophers and philosophers of science and, in the last case particularly, which could and should be given attention by theorists of personality. Rychlak sees Kelly as having charted a course between a number of positions, offering a helpful perspective on various core problems in psychology *considered as a science*. One such is the matter of *prediction*. In his discussion of what he calls Kelly's "highly original resolution" of this problem he notes how Kelly, instead of trying to use an *extraspective* theoretical formulation to explain client and clinician behavior, drew a similarity between them and between all humans on the basis of an introspective account. Thus is the distinction between observer and observed (the "subject" in psychological study) rejected, the inconsistency between "the psychologist who thinks about himself one way (introspectively) and his client another (extraspectively)" (p. 162) resolved. This idea provides the basis of the *reflexivity* of the theory of personal constructs. The philosophy of science dimensions of the theory of personal constructs have also been considered in terms of it representing an example of a Galilean, as distinguished from an Aristotelian, mode of science (Warren, 1990). In essence, it is more interested in searching for regularity in the data itself (a Galilean mode), that is, here, the constructs, words, behaviors of an individual, than it is in attempting to fit that data to a preconceived system of accepted truth, to impose understandings of things. The last, for example, might be the taxonomies established by Aristotle, or the universal functional implications of the invariant structure of personality, levels of consciousness, and stages of psychosexual development developed by Freud.

These last matters go to a much larger canvas than can be examined here, but one aspect of thinking in philosophy of science of interest to our more limited purpose is a distinction arising in the debates between philosophers of science in the 1960s and 1970s; such figures as Kuhn, Popper, Feyerabend, Polanyi, and Lakatos. That general debate had turned around accounts of just what science "is," and how it might be distinguished from "non-science," but one particular idea is taken up here. This is Lakatos's (1970)

discussion of a *stagnating or degenerating* research program and a *progressive* research program. Lakatos prefers the expression “research program” to “theory” and suggests that radical (revolutionary) changes in science follow from the collapse of a dominant program which has become stagnant or is degenerating by reason of it no longer producing novel results, or its theory not keeping abreast of its empirical findings. In the stagnating or degenerating stage a “true” scientist will consider its abandonment. The progressive program is one in which its theoretical growth anticipates its empirical growth, and one which continues to predict novel facts. This is highly consistent with Kelly’s (1955) discussion in relation to a good scientific theory that it should “encourage the invention of new approaches to the solution of the problems of” men and women and of their society (p. 24). Further, note Kelly’s insistence that any theory is transient and the more practical and useful it is the more vulnerable it is to new evidence. Thus the theory of personal constructs “will have to be considered expendable” . . . it is “at best an ad interim theory” (p. 14).

It can be argued that the theory of personal constructs is attended by a progressive research program. One piece of evidence is the breadth and depth of the work it promotes; the present volume is illustrative of that breadth. While the present chapter is constrained from fully cataloguing it, some examples in the wide range, and the exploration of one in particular, are illustrative here. As to examples, the last half-century or so has seen personal construct psychology developed well beyond its strict range and focus of convenience. Work in such fields as education, organizational psychology and management, supervision, sport, coaching, and in the area of criminology, to name but a few, now populates the literature. In relation to the chief factor in our present claim concerning “distinctiveness” it is relevant to indicate some areas traditionally arising in philosophy or raising philosophical issues to which the theory of personal constructs has been found to have something to say. There has been work in areas such as politics, social justice, postmodernism, poststructuralism and neostructuralism, anger (the most puzzling of the emotions for the philosophers), social-cultural life, logic, ethics, religion, art, aesthetics, and law. Finally, here, at the level of the theory itself Peck (2012) has critiqued the theory of language in Kelly’s work and proposed a reworking along the lines of Gadamer’s theory of language, and a consequent reshaping of the Fundamental Postulate and some of the corollaries.

In relation to our broader focus here, albeit perhaps taking something of a liberty, one field is singled out for brief noting because it goes into broader and deeper questions of the sort addressed by philosophy; that is, law.

The legal context has attracted the attention of the theory of personal constructs, generally in the practical forensic-criminological context; for example, early work in relation to car theft, delinquency, police officer stress and victim empathy, and to murder and mass murder. At a more theoretical level, however, Warren (2008) discussed the theory in a jurisprudential context and raised its potential relevance for different systems of law, and for therapeutic jurisprudence (Wexler, 1990). Extending this further, there are resonances between the theory of personal constructs and the theory of law propounded by a thinker of some considerable stature (and/or controversy): that is, Jurgen Habermas (1992/1996). A psychology which focuses on the “inner outlook” of people, which assumes a democratic mentality that functions in a climate of both “freedom from” and “freedom to,” and which champions a genuine education that promotes the individual’s capacity to participate, would seem to resonate with Habermas’s theory of law as a *discourse theory* grounded in his *theory of communicative action*. Indeed, both Habermas and personal construct theory appear relevant to the view of the renowned legal philosopher H. L. A. Hart (1907–1992) that any adequate philosophy of law must include the point of view of both the external “observer” and of the internal “participant” (Hart 1961/1994). This topic invites further attention (see also Chapter 37, this volume).

Thus, this second aspect of our discussion suggests that the theory of personal constructs continues to represent a wide-ranging, progressive research program in Lakatos’s terms, one which is continuing to generate novel empirical results, and reflective and reflexive ideas in terms of its core theory. It is inherently open to revisions to its core theoretical position (for example, in relation to its theory of language), as it is receptive to the addition of new corollaries, and it is engaged productively with other perspectives in the “family” that is constructivism. Throughout, it remains open to being discarded, which would appear to be unusual amongst psychological theories, which can become rather entrenched and things of unshakeable commitment, such that intellectual honesty is lost (Lakatos, 1970, p. 92).

Psychology for Personality and Psychotherapy and “Humankind”

There is a third and final point here relevant to the interweaving of philosophy and psychology in the theory of personal constructs, and it has two aspects. This is, first, that “the theory of personal constructs is the only

theory of personality *and* psychotherapy” (Chiari & Nuzzo, 1996, p. 27), but, also, a psychology and a psychotherapy based in an “interplay of the durable and the ephemeral” (Kelly, 1955, p. 3), the investigation of which may help the individual to restructure his or her life. Second, it can be asked whether there is also a “position” in relation to Kant’s fourth question: What is humankind?

The first matter is exemplified in Kelly’s discussion of the *range* and *focus of convenience* of the theory of personal constructs. That is, respectively: “human personality and, more particularly, to problems of interpersonal relationships” (1955, p. 11), and “the area of human readjustment to stress.” Thus did he believe that “it should prove most useful to the psychotherapist because we were thinking primarily of the problems of psychotherapy when we formulated it” (p. 12). He contrasts the origins of his theory with that of, for example, psychoanalysis. This, he suggests, began as a psychotherapeutic technique but progressively enlarged into a “personality system” (p. 11). This is the opposite of personal construct theory, where the theory of personality was consciously developed in tandem with psychotherapy, and was grounded in the philosophical position that was *constructive alternativism*.

The primary question of interest in the theory of personal constructs is not “What do *people* think/believe/value/feel etc.?” but “What does *this person* think, etc.?” The model of the person is “person as scientist,” framing hypotheses about how the world is and testing those hypotheses. People then modify their hypotheses and their system if their hypotheses are invalidated—that is, if they are “well”—or refuse to modify and “press on regardless,” if they are not “well.” The focus is on the “inner outlook” of the person who comes to therapy, how they understand things and the extent to which their understanding relates to the problem they bring to therapy. It argues that *human beings* as part of their inherent, inescapable makeup strive to make sense, make meaning, and understand the “booming buzzing confusion” with which they are confronted from birth and in which they have to make their way.

A quarter of a century after its first appearance, the theory of personal constructs was hailed as an *idiographic approach* by Jones (1971). However, he also noted that it nonetheless stressed that what the individual did had its greatest significance in the social world of the individual “as shown by its emphasis on interpersonal constructs, roles and role-playing” (p. 282). That point made and accepted—and, indeed, important, particularly within the domain of psychotherapy—Kelly did not think that an exclusive use of an idiographic frame was helpful. He accepts the separation of *nomothetic*

and *idiographic* disciplines “as a useful abstraction, but not as a concrete classification” (Kelly, 1955, p. 41). Thus, too, is personal construct theory not blind to the influences on the individual of culture, class, ethnicity, etc. In essence, the theory of personal constructs “starts with the individual” and generalizes to people in general, and when Kelly writes of “man the scientist” he means “all of mankind in its scientist-like aspects . . . mankind rather than collections of men” (p. 4). The idiographic approach is significant in its *primacy* or *priority*, but any exclusive use of it would not take us very far because, while any psychologist when describing a case may well be presenting an idiographic study, “if the description is to have any thread of meaning running through it, he must relate his selection of relevant facts to principles of human behavior” (p. 42).

Kelly’s view that too great an emphasis on the *idiographic* against the *nomothetic* is ultimately counterproductive ought to have significance to debates around and between personal constructivism and social constructionism, which engage the wider social dimensions of life and the social philosophies that attempt to make sense of them. However these debates play out, Kelly has “the social” well covered. Further, as an aside, the significance of individual agency in personal construct theory sees it avoiding the criticisms of radical psychology or anti-psychiatry which went to, among other things, the “domesticating” nature of much therapy, which tried to adjust the suffering individual to the very social environment which may well have been generating their suffering in the first place, rather than seeking to change the root causes in particular social structures or systems by “insurrection” if not revolution.

Thus, in terms of our core focus here, the theory of personal constructs can be suggested again to go to the wider realm of reflection on the human condition, here that which developed under the impetus of Kant’s fourth question above and which is systematized as *philosophical anthropology*. The last is an old discipline which has various definitions, but here its characterization is taken from Kant’s (1796–1797/1978) notion of “pragmatic anthropology”; that is, an inquiry into “what man makes, can, or should make of himself as a freely acting being” (p. 3). Thus, too, this is an echo of the existentialist’s search for “the origins of meaning” in the context of self *and* other.

All of these last matters do not suggest that personal construct theory represents a substantive philosophical position, or that it resolves issues traditionally addressed by philosophers. The significant point is that Kelly “does what he does,” that is, he specifically devotes space and comment at the very outset of his account of his psychological theory to traditional

philosophical matters. He then states his psychological theory in terms of its underlying philosophical position and locates its philosophical roots, generating thereby a theory of very wide reach and potential for illuminating philosophical matters. At the very least, this is unusual in psychology.

Distinctiveness: Different from Others, Unique

The theory of personal constructs is “different”—its original and its subsequent literature invite the reader into places that other theories of personality and of psychotherapy do not. It is “difficult”—it requires a very significant shift in one’s thinking, particularly the thinking of psychologists trained and educated over the past century. It may be “wrong” or “lacking”—but, ultimately, it does not care: “theories should be considered ultimately expendable” (Kelly, 1955, p. 44). To date it has not been shown to be totally wrong or lacking, and a good argument is available, albeit but sketched here, that it supports and is supported by more a progressive than a degenerating research program. Its difficulty level is not insurmountable, as evidenced by the breadth and depth of work conducted across many fields of psychology as the focus of convenience initially stated by Kelly (clinical psychology) has been broadened to many fields and questions within psychology, some with insights for other fields of human inquiry which address more philosophical matters. Philosophy of law and philosophical anthropology are examples of this and invite reflection. Thus is Bannister and Fransella’s (1971) observation that personal construct theory “has a massive range of implication” (p. 9) well taken, and this in no small way derives from the fact that it is consciously framed with philosophical issues in mind. It may not be “unique” in psychology, but hopefully its distinctiveness has been highlighted here.

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6

So Distant, Yet So Close

Kelly, Maturana, and Their Constructivist Theories

Gabriele Chiari

George A. Kelly was a North American psychologist born on a farm buried deep in the prairies of Kansas. Humberto R. Maturana is a South American biologist, born in a crowded town. Deepening our knowledge of their life experiences, we could find many differences. Notwithstanding this, the ideas developed by Kelly and Maturana serve as an example of Kelly's Commonality Corollary: "to the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his psychological processes are similar to the other person" (Kelly, 1955, p. 90).

To begin, it is worthwhile to note Kelly's concern for the maintenance of existence besides the conservation of identity. Whereas the latter is a traditional issue for psychology, the former is a key question for biology, rarely dealt with by psychologists. Moreover, Kelly (1980) ventured to give a psychological definition of life, and to rephrase his Fundamental Postulate in a Biological Postulate: "It is the nature of life to be channelized by the ways events are anticipated" (p. 29). In turn, Maturana crosses the frontier of psychology, suggesting a biology of cognition. Cognition is a phenomenon that emerges as a kind of realization of the organization of the living, and is constitutive of their being, so as to say that "to live is to know" (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p. 174).

Kelly's participation in the development of psychotherapeutic approaches founded on a constructivist epistemology has been widely acknowledged, even though his pioneering contribution did not lead to significant elaboration of his original personal construct therapy. Also, Maturana's contribution to constructivist psychotherapy has been recognized (Ruiz, 1996).

Given as established the crucial contribution of Kelly and Maturana to the development of constructivist psychology and psychotherapy, some authors have occasionally alluded to the affinities between them, but very few (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2010; Kenny, 1988) have elaborated them. The theme of this chapter is their similar construction of experience as reflected in their theories.

Kelly's and Maturana's Epistemological Roots

Both Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory and Maturana's (Maturana & Varela, 1987) theory of autopoiesis share the idea that we cannot know reality as it is, nor even represent it symbolically as cognitivism assumes. Rather, people interpret their experience: construe events, as Kelly says, or bring forth a world, in the words of Maturana. Kelly (1955) called the philosophical root of his theory *constructive alternativism*: "we assume that all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement" (p. 15). Maturana uses the expression *ontology of observing* to mean that there is no given reality independent of the operations of distinction made by the person.

Yet their similar starting points develop in different directions. Whereas Kelly elaborated his theory by taking into consideration the constructs that give structure and meaning to personal experience, Maturana describes the entities brought forth by the observer's operations of distinction. Anyway, Husserl's (1913) phenomenological theory of intentionality helps us in that it assumes a complementarity between the act of perceiving and what is perceived: in his terms, between the *noetic* and the *noematic* aspects of an intentional act of consciousness. Keeping in mind the noetic/noematic correlation which indicates the unitary structure of act and object, I would like to show how many of Kelly's and Maturana's notions can be usefully compared and somehow integrated (see Table 6.1).

Construing Events, Objects Brought Forth

According to Kelly, a construct is a reference axis, upon which one may project events to make some sense out of what is going on; it is "imposed upon events, not abstracted from them." A construct "comes from the person who is to use it," not from nature, and does "not stand for anything or represent anything": it is, in itself, the kind of contrast one perceives and not in any way a representation of objects (Kelly, 2003, p. 10).

Table 6.1 Comparison between Various Aspects of Kelly’s and Maturana’s Constructivist Theories.

<i>Noetic Pole (Kelly)</i>	<i>Noematic Pole (Maturana)</i>
personal construct	simple unity
construction system	composite unity
core/peripheral constructs	organization/structure
Modulation and Choice Corollaries	structural determinism
core role and maintenance processes	structural intersection
role relationship	structural coupling
permeability	structural plasticity

Also for Maturana it is an observer that, through an operation of distinction, brings forth an object (an entity, a unity) and delimits it from a background. Here, in the unity/background complementarity, lies the aspect of contrast so central in Kelly’s definition of a construct.

Moreover, Maturana maintains that an observer, through further operations of distinction, can decompose a simple unity into components. One can distinguish, say, a cell as a simple unity, but also treat it as a composite unity when one distinguishes in it a membrane, a nucleus, ribosomes, mitochondria, and so on. The composite unity is distinguished by the observer as a simple unity in a metadomain with respect to the domain in which its components are distinguished, and there is a constitutive relation of mutual specification between them.

The distinction between simple and composite unities is parallel to viewing a personal construct as a whole or in the context of the person’s construction system of which it is an element. Within a construction system there may be many levels of ordinal relationships, with some constructs subsuming others and those, in turn, subsuming still others.

Invariance through Change

Maturana’s distinction between organization and structure

A very important notion in Maturana’s theory seemingly absent from Kelly’s theory is the distinction, applicable to composite unities, between organization and structure.

Whereas Kelly uses the term “organization” in referring to the arrangement of personal constructs in hierarchical systems (Organization Corollary), Maturana defines the *organization* of a composite unity as the configuration

of static or dynamic relations between its components that specifies its class identity as a composite unity that can be distinguished as a simple unity of a particular kind. Consider a chair. We recognize an object as a chair because we distinguish in it a raised surface (the chair seat), four legs, and a back. But this is not enough: imagine if the back were parallel to the seat, and the legs perpendicular between them. We have no name for such an object. A chair is a chair because we distinguish some components, which have a particular relation with each other.

On the other hand, by *structure* Maturana means the actual components plus the actual relations that occur between them while realizing it as a particular composite unity characterized by a particular organization. In plain words, to some objects we attribute the class identity “chair” because we recognize in them the same organization, even though their structures are different: different materials, different shapes, different colors.

It should be clear that a composite unity conserves its class identity only as long as its structure realizes in it the organization that defines its class identity; if the organization changes, the unity loses its class identity, that is, “disintegrates.” In this case, either we are unable to attribute to the object a class identity, or we can attribute to it a new class identity if the structural change realizes in it a different organization. For instance, a chair without a back becomes a stool; with arms is an armchair; with folding action and inclining footrest, a recliner; with wheels, it is a wheelchair, while a permanently fixed chair is a seat; when hung from above, a swing; when provided with electric energy, it becomes a rather uncomfortable chair.

Structural determinism and structural intersection in Maturana and Kelly

It is important to stress two implications of the distinction between organization and structure. The first is that any change in a composite unity is determined by its structure (Maturana uses the impressive expression *structural determinism*): external agents can act only as “perturbations” that can only “trigger” (but not determine) structural changes. Kelly clearly shares this view in relation to the construction process, even though he pays less attention to the linguistic tricks able to promote his ideas. The Modulation Corollary states that the variation must take place within the person’s construction system. In Kelly’s terms, “one does not learn certain things merely from the nature of the stimuli which play upon one; one learns only what one’s framework is designed to permit one to see in the stimuli” (Kelly 1955, p. 79); and the Choice Corollary implies that the

person can never make choices outside the world of alternatives he or she has erected for himself or herself.

The second implication derives from the observation that the components of a composite unity can participate in the realization of different organizations, thus showing a *structural intersection*. For example, one can distinguish in a person (including oneself) as many organizations as one likes (e.g., the organization of oneself as a woman, a mother, a psychologist). All of these are different composite unities defined by different organizations, conserved and realized in different domains of existence. When an observer distinguishes more systems structurally intersecting with each other, he or she distinguishes the realization of more different composite unities through the same body. Of course, the conservation of the class identity “mother” implies the conservation of the class identity “woman,” but not the contrary: to be a mother one has to be a woman, but one can be a woman without necessarily being a mother. All the organizations the person can distinguish imply the conservation of the autopoietic organization in its domain of existence: the molecular domain.

As far as I know, in Kelly’s theory there is only a single reference to such a possibility in connection with the transition of guilt, even though I guess that it would be very easy to conceptualize it within a person’s construction system. Kelly (1955) observed that “we are dependent for life itself upon an understanding of the thoughts of certain other people” (p. 503), and that “our constructions of our relationships to the thinking and expectancies of certain other people reach down deeply into our vital processes. Through our constructions of our roles we sustain even the most autonomic life functions” (p. 909). Guilt, using the terminology of the theory of autopoiesis, corresponds to a disintegration of the organization of self, which can imply the disintegration of the autopoietic organization. If usually the conservation of identity depends upon the conservation of life, sometimes existence can depend upon the conservation of identity: a possibility that, as far as I know, Maturana does not take into account.

Coming back to the distinction between organization and structure, what is applicable to chairs is applicable to all the objects (concrete or conceptual) populating our personal worlds. Maturana, as a biologist, is interested in living beings and in showing how all living systems share the same organization (the *autopoietic organization*) realized through all the different structures we recognize in them, from the first prokaryotes in the primordial soup to the human. It is the autopoietic organization to make of a living being a living being. Psychologists and psychotherapists are more interested in people, and the distinction suggested by Maturana can

be a useful conceptual tool also to them. I would like to introduce it in personal construct theory in reference to what is usually called “self” or “identity.”

The Relational Emergence and Development of Self

To begin, both Kelly and Maturana see the emergence of self as the crucial result of recursive processes. It is crucial because the self as a construction has a peculiarity in respect to other personal constructions: it refers reflexively to the very system that operates this kind of distinction.

Maturana offers a particularly detailed account in this regard. To be concise, Figure 6.1 shows how any level may recursively become a domain of objects that operate as a ground level for further recursions (Maturana, Mpodozis, & Letelier, 1995). Kelly, in a less orderly fashion, describes a similar view. A mother and her newborn child share their encounters with events, including their own behavior, thus developing “a fair understanding, each of what the other is talking about” (Kelly 1969, p. 28). Once the child is able to construe events, a group of them can be construed as alike in a

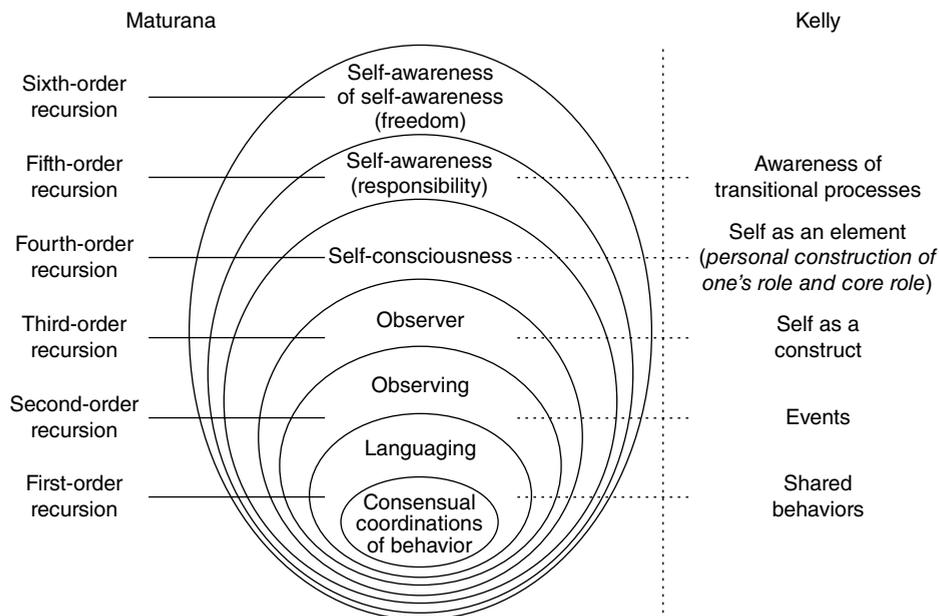


Figure 6.1 The Emergence of Consciousness through Levels of Recursion According to Maturana and Kelly. *Source:* Maturana, H. R., Mpodozis, J., & Letelier, J. C. (1995). Brain, language and the origin of human mental functions. *Biological Research*, 28, 15–26.

certain way and, in that same way, necessarily different from other events. “The way in which the events are alike is the self,” a construct pole. The self “can now be used as a thing, a datum, or an item in the context of a superordinate construct” (Kelly 1955, p. 131): the *personal construction of one’s role* becomes possible via the comparisons between oneself and other people. More specifically, a role is based upon *role constructs*, whose elements are the presumed constructs of certain other persons; that is, upon one’s interpretation of the thinking of the other people in relation to whom the role is enacted.

Maturana covers the topic of the relationships between living systems by using another incisive expression of his: *structural coupling*. As long as a living system conserves its autopoietic organization, it is structurally coupled with its environment, including other living systems. Being structure-determined, each participating system is, with respect to the other, both a source and a target of perturbations. With the passing of time the recurrent interactions lead to a structural congruence between them and to a co-ontogenetic structural drift within a consensual domain.

Also, in Kelly’s view, one’s relationship with another person is not determined by what the other does, but by one’s interpretation of what the other is doing and thinking; and the other person simultaneously does the same thing. In this circular process each is a source and a target of perturbations, and the two (or more) persons’ construction systems change congruently. Moreover, according to Maturana, the possibility for a composite unity to undergo structural changes in its structural coupling with the environment without losing its organization depends upon its *structural plasticity*: a notion very close to that of *permeability* used by Kelly in his Modulation Corollary.

Coming back to Kelly’s view of identity, not all the constructs composing the personal construction of one’s role have the same importance. In fact, one very important notion in Kelly’s theory of personality and psychotherapy is that of *core* and *peripheral constructs*. The former are “those which govern a person’s maintenance processes—that is, those by which he maintains his identity and existence” (Kelly, 1955, p. 482), whereas “peripheral constructs are those which can be altered without serious modification of core structure” (pp. 482–483).

Some of the constructs constituting the personal construction of one’s role are core constructs: thus, by *core role* Kelly means the set of the most invariant aspects of one’s construction of oneself, his conceptualization of personal identity. The distinction between core and peripheral constructs, when applied to the element “self,” can be regarded as the noetic counterpart of the distinction between organization and structure. A clinically

relevant disorder sees the organization of self endangered, and a reconstructive psychotherapy is aimed at fostering structural changes that allow its restoration or conservation in the face of future perturbations.

Kelly's Professional Constructs Revisited

The framework resulting from a consideration of core role in terms of organization of self allows consideration of the professional or diagnostic constructs envisioned by Kelly from a different perspective (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2010).

In their relationship with the environment people continuously undergo structural changes—the person is “a form of motion”, as Kelly (1955, p. 48) aptly wrote. Such structural changes allow the conservation of some organizations and result in the disintegration of others. It is suggested that Kelly's professional constructs have primarily to do with the conservation of the organization of self in its domain of existence: the social domain (see Table 6.2). In particular, some of them refer to the recognition or the anticipation of its possible disintegration, whereas others refer to the structural changes able to preserve its integrity, starting from the assumption that any structural change represents the attempt at conserving the organization of self and adaptation. This implication, in Maturana's theory, derives from the fact that, being organizationally closed, the system necessarily subordinates any change to the conservation

Table 6.2 Kelly's Transitional Processes Translated into the Language of the Theory of Autopoiesis.

<i>Transitional Processes</i>	<i>Kelly's Definition</i>	<i>Translation in Maturana's Terms</i>
Guilt	the perception of one's apparent dislodgment from one's core role structure	the awareness of the disintegration of the organization of self
Threat	the awareness of an imminent comprehensive change in one's core structures	the anticipation of the possible disintegration of the organization of self
Anxiety	the recognition that the events with which one is confronted lie outside the range of convenience of one's construct system	the distinction of structure without organization

of its identity; in Kelly's theory, the same implication can be found in the Choice Corollary, which states that any choice is "in favor of the alternative which seems to provide the best basis for anticipating the ensuing events" (Kelly, 1955, p. 64).

Again making reference to the levels of recursion leading to self-consciousness, it is suggested that the experience of one's transitional processes is compatible with what Maturana (2005) calls "self-awareness" or "consciousness of our emotioning" (pp. 72–73).

Consider the transition of *guilt*. Kelly (1955) defined the experience of guilt as the "perception of one's apparent dislodgment from [one's] core role structure" (p. 502), or the "sense of having lost one's core role structure" (Kelly, 2003, p. 18). Dislodgment from, or loss of, core role: that part of people's role structures by which they maintain themselves as integral beings. In both cases, the person no more recognizes himself or herself as the person he or she believed himself or herself to be, and his or her whole social world is affected dramatically by such a change. In Maturana's noematic view, the person has undergone structural changes that resulted in the disintegration of the organization of self, and is unable to distinguish a new organization in the resulting structure.

The transition of *threat* is defined by Kelly (1955) as "the awareness of an imminent comprehensive change in one's core structures" (p. 489). Although role structures are not mentioned in the definition of threat, Kelly gives examples of threat that clearly refer to core role. Death is threatening to people who perceive it as likely to happen to them and likely to bring about drastic changes in their core constructs; clients about to undergo therapy can be threatened by the prospect of radically changing their outlook; other persons are threatening when they appear to exemplify what the perceiver once was but no longer is, or when they appear to expect the perceiver to behave in the old ways and it would be too easy to regress. In the above examples of threat the core role always appears affected. Actually, I am suggesting that in many instances threat is ultimately a *threat of guilt*, that is, the anticipation of the possible disintegration of the organization of self.¹

As to *anxiety*, defined by Kelly (1955) as "the recognition that the events with which one is confronted lie outside the range of convenience of one's construct system" (p. 495), it can be redefined, in its extreme form (that is, chaos), as "structure without organization," a distinction of unities whose structure does not realize, or no longer realizes, a particular organization from the observer's point of view. If the particular organization that is no longer realized—because it is invalidated and abandoned in personal

Table 6.3 Processes Relating to the Endangerment/Disintegration and Conservation/Restoration of the Organization of Self.

<i>Processes Relating to Intimations of Endangerment/Disintegration</i>	<i>Processes Relating to Conservation/Restoration of the Organization of Self</i>
Threat	Constriction/Dilation
Fear	Tightening/Loosening
Guilt	Level of Cognitive Awareness
Anxiety	Permeability/Impermeability
	Aggressiveness
	Hostility

construct theory's terms—is the organization of self, the confusion can be devastating. In this particular case, anxiety is the outcome of guilt.

Then, in my opinion, threat, guilt, and anxiety (as well as fear, the awareness of an imminent change less comprehensive than in the case of threat) are the professional constructs that refer to the person's self-awareness of intimations that the organization of self in the social domain is endangered or has actually disintegrated (see Table 6.3).

Other professional constructs refer to processes aimed at permitting the conservation or the restoration of the organization of self. This is the case of dilation and constriction, of tightening and loosening, of the level of cognitive awareness, and of permeability/impermeability. It is also the case of aggressiveness and hostility. Although Kelly listed aggressiveness and hostility among the constructs relating to transitions, they play an important role in the restoration or conservation of the organization of self. Aggressiveness can favor the resolution of anxiety following guilt and the ensuing distinction of a new organization, whereas hostility is one's extreme attempt to conserve an organization already disintegrated by pushing other people to validate it.

Conclusions

I hope to have been able to suggest the striking similarities between Kelly's and Maturana's constructivist theories. Now, a troublesome question seems worthy of an answer: why is the theory of autopoiesis more popular than personal construct theory?

A first possible answer is that the theory of autopoiesis, due to its subject matter, can be applied to many fields, from the biology of cognition to organizations, from sociology to psychology. However, in all these fields

what has been derived from the theory are its epistemological tenets and their implications, and it is just the similarities between the epistemological assumptions of Kelly and Maturana that I have tried to point out. I suspect that the theory of autopoiesis is widely applied and discussed because of the clarity of its epistemological assumptions. In Maturana one can find a formal exposition that makes his theory appealing, though controversial or even indigestible, to the scientific community. His ideas are as difficult to grasp as Kelly's, due to their originality, and to their being so far from common sense and the dominant views in biology and psychology. His writing is as prolix, redundant, and bare as Kelly's is sophisticated and flowery. Yet Maturana knows how to promote his ideas, whereas one has to work hard to read Kelly's 1,200 or so pages and gain an overall understanding of their content. Should this be the case, maybe there is still time for granting Kelly's theory the popularity it deserves, primarily but not exclusively in the field of psychology and psychotherapy.

Notes

This is a revised version of the paper "If Kelly Would Have Met Maturana: Some Reflections," presented at the XI Biennial Conference of the European Personal Construct Association (EPCA), Dublin, June 29–July 1, 2012.

1 Kelly (1955) uses the expression "threat of guilt" once (p. 877), in relation to aggression leading to guilt.

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Part II
Methodology

Methodologies of Assessment in Personal Construct Psychology

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Introduction

Although Kelly (1955) worded the formal structure of his theory in abstract terms, he was conscious of its development in a clinical context. In his book (volume 1), between the chapters setting out his theory and his primary assessment tool, the repertory grid, is a chapter entitled “The Clinical Setting.” In this often overlooked chapter, Kelly sets out his clinical requirements for an assessment tool (Kelly uses the term “test,” but that was a reflection of the times, when assessment meant a “test”). He lists five functions that an assessment tool should provide. It should define the client’s problem in ways that the therapist can use; it should reveal the “pathways and channels” wherein the client might be able to change; it should furnish the therapist with testable clinical hypotheses; it should reveal psychological resources of the client that the therapist might not otherwise detect; and finally it should reveal problems of the client that the therapist might otherwise overlook. It is clear that there are many assessment tools that could fulfill at least some of these requirements (and some that might struggle to meet any). Interestingly, Kelly saw the repertory grid as primarily relating to only one of these functions, the provision of “a preliminary list of clinical hypotheses” (1955, p. 219). Kelly thought of it as a diagnostic instrument “that can be applied to the practical needs of the psychotherapist” (p. 219). It has become much more than that.

While Kelly did not elaborate on how an assessment tool might relate to his theory more generally, the theory does have implications for assessment tools. Only a couple of these can be seen in his clinical requirements. All his

clinical requirements assume his basic premise (Fundamental Postulate) that a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the way in which events are anticipated. The only additional requirement (corollary) is that constructs should be able to be modified to incorporate new events or reassess old ones (Modulation Corollary). However, most other additional requirements of the theory impose some limitations on assessment tools more generally (rather than simply clinical utility). A key requirement of the theory as a whole is that choice needs to be possible in the system. Thus, an assessment tool needs to be able to elicit alternatives relevant to the future events in a person's life. This is not just true of clinical situations but also in other settings such as education, marketing, etc. Choosing alternatives implies that they differ. Kelly's theory accounts for this by introducing a differentiating function for constructs (the "pathways and channels"), initially as a dichotomy requirement (the Dichotomy Corollary), but more generally as a bipolar one. Together with his requirement that not all constructs are relevant to the same group of events (his Range Corollary), these three requirements are necessary for all assessment tools to be applicable in Kelly's theory. Other requirements may hold in assessments in specific settings. For example, the sociality requirement is of importance in clinical settings, particularly for Kelly. In his formal exposition of the theory, Kelly refers to "events" as the elements in the system but when he elaborates on his assessment technique, the repertory grid, the elements have become persons because Kelly saw the construal of self and others as central, because such interpersonal relationships are of particular importance in clinical settings. Kelly was careful to distinguish between constructs more generally and those elicited by the repertory grid technique as he referred to the latter as role constructs (1955, p. 209). Thus, his original name for the procedure was the role construct repertory test. In a similar way the requirement of commonality of construing becomes important in organizational settings where the perceptions of a group rather than an individual are of interest. One corollary, the Organization Corollary, is responsible for the development of a range of techniques for eliciting and testing the hierarchical relationships among constructs (as implied by the corollary) by Hinkle (1965). It is also important because it is the only aspect of the theory that deals with the structure of the construct system. However, it is also the corollary that has been subject to most criticism (for a summary see Bell 2004a). When an attempt is made to represent constructs logically (Husain 1983) or as mathematical sets which follow from the Range Corollary (Castorina & Mancini, 1992; Chiari, Mancini, Nicolo, & Nuzzo, 1990) both poles of the subordinate construct must be nested under one pole of the superordinate

construct. While Kelly's initial formulation of the Dichotomy Corollary was consistent with these representations, his subsequent use of triads of elements was not (Husain, 1983, footnote p. 18).

The Bipolar Nature of Assessment in Personal Construct Psychology

It seems only fitting that the principal assessment techniques put forward by Kelly to accompany his theory embraced his Dichotomy Corollary: one technique was principally quantitative, the repertory grid, the other almost wholly qualitative, the self-characterization. Quantitative and qualitative is not a particularly useful distinction for the assessment process since all assessment procedures contain qualitative material, and most contain some quantitative procedure (e.g., allocating responses to categories, or enumerating instances). From a Kellyan perspective, a more useful approach is to consider procedures in terms of the constraints imposed on the client. This is important as personal construct psychology (PCP) is framed in terms of the perceptions and understanding of the client (call it constructivist or phenomenological if you like). The extent to which the client is constrained, either by the language he or she has to work with and/or the structure of the task, will affect the account given by the client. It should be noted, however, that in general the less constrained procedures tend to be qualitative and the more constrained quantitative.

Unconstrained Narratives

While such a technique is amongst the oldest forms of psychotherapy information-gathering (yes, I mean you, Freud), it seems to have made little impact in PCP. Possibly the first to draw attention to the value of an interview as providing information in a PCP context was Leitner (1985). He acknowledged that simply asking respondents to tell him about themselves was useful in a clinical context but that a more structured interview was needed for research purposes. Subsequently Neimeyer has used narrative accounts in grief counseling and in psychotherapy settings (Neimeyer, 1993). While not confined to the clinical setting, a narrative clearly meets most of Kelly's requirements for a clinical tool. Further, it is the method that is most likely to produce a sequence of events, thus providing information on process and change. Burr, King, and Butt (2013)

offer suggestions about how a PCP perspective might add some enlightening structure to the narrative process in an interview situation (Neimeyer used journals written outside the therapy session) by focusing on concrete or specific examples from experience (a technique also widely used in organizational selection settings). In analyzing the data of unconstrained narratives there are a number of alternatives. Feixas and Villegas (1991) have developed a structured personal construct approach to narrative data, specifically autobiographical texts, and various forms of phenomenological analysis can obviously be used to structure the information obtained. From a data-analytic perspective, these approaches are labor-intensive and will be more expensive in multi-respondent research settings rather than therapy processes. Personal construct content analysis through various systems which could be computerized (Feixas, Geldshläger, & Neimeyer, 2002; Landfield, 1971; Viney & Caputi, 2012) would also be possible, although these are essentially quantitative transformations of nominal data and would not capture the sequencing information that is the key advantage of such an approach.

Self-Characterization

In the self-characterization procedure, the client is asked to write a character sketch of himself or herself in the third person as might be written by a friend who knew him or her “intimately and sympathetically, perhaps better than anyone could know” him or her. The importance of writing it in the third person was stressed. Kelly suggested the obtained character sketch could be analyzed through a number of criteria, again with the ability to uncover a sequence of experiences. However, the criteria were complex, which may account for a general lack of enthusiasm for this approach. Neimeyer (1993) has suggested a simplified set of 14 evaluative criteria (many from Kelly), and of course the general verbal qualitative analysis methods referred to in the preceding discussion could also be used.

Although this technique was published simultaneously with the repertory grid, its next appearance in the literature was not until 1972 (Fransella, 1972). This could be partly due to the complexity of Kelly’s interpretive procedure, but also to the spirit of the times—a time when qualitative data were looked on as “unscientific.” Since that time it has only attracted sporadic attention, although Hardison and Neimeyer (2007) have recently provided an attempt to link its information to that of other personal construct methodologies. However, the technique is likely to be used more

widely in an informal sense in non-research settings. Published examples tend to depart from Kelly's method of analysis. Fransella (1981) used the information in a more clinical qualitative fashion, Winter's (1992) example was written under headings which provided neat construct poles, and Hardison and Neimeyer (2007) looked for construct poles which were then categorized by a coding system.

Characterization of Others

Crockett (1965) devised the technique known as the Role Category Questionnaire. In the original version of this measure, eight persons were defined according to three facets, older/peer, female/male, and liked/disliked, but in later versions this was reduced to two persons they know well, one liked, the other disliked. They are then asked to spend a few minutes comparing and contrasting these people, and then describe each person as fully as they can (usually in a limited time). Data obtained are usually analyzed quite simply—unique constructs are identified and counted as a measure of cognitive complexity (Bieri and Blacker [1956] used a similar count as a measure of cognitive complexity in a repertory grid context), although Crockett preferred the term “cognitive differentiation.” Clearly more could be done with these data, particularly by examining the nature of the constructs in a qualitative fashion. A more generalized approach has been described by Rosenberg (1977). Participants were required to generate a list of at least 100(!) people they were, or had been, acquainted with. Each of these 100 people was then described by self-generated terms in two classes: characteristics of the person, and feelings of the respondent about that individual. Subsequently Rosenberg found he could reduce the number of people required to 35. The characteristics and feelings were defined as bipolar. Both Crockett and Rosenberg referenced Kelly and used similar terminology (i.e., referred to characteristics or attributes as “constructs”). However, similar techniques have been used in other theories. The 100 (and the 35) people used by Rosenberg included “me-now,” “me-past,” and “me-ideal,” three self-figures somewhat similar to those employed in a similar free response generation of characteristics in the Selves Questionnaire that Higgins (Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985) used to make measurements for testing of his self-discrepancy theory. Earlier Higgins (Higgins, King, & Mavin, 1982) used a similar approach with self and four friends as the figures. In that study he indicated that the task was derived from a similar

procedure by Zajonc (1960), and found it produced similar constructs to those obtained from repertory grids also administered to respondents.

More specific uses within the personal construct domain have applied the characterization notion to co-workers (Sypher & Zorn, 1988), business entrepreneurship (Watson, Ponthieu, & Doster, 1995), mothers of a child (Davis, Stroud, & Green, 1989), and marriage (Kremsdorf, 1985). Sypher and Zorn and Watson et al. broadly followed the Crockett analysis (i.e., counting constructs) although both studies also employed content analysis of the constructs identified, as did Kremsdorf (1985). Davis et al. (1989) differ from Kelly in their analysis of the data, looking for descriptions of the child, feelings of the mother, and contexts in which behavior occurs.

While, as noted above, characterization of the self is rarely employed in research contexts, free response characterization of others clearly enjoys widespread usage with the choice of elements adjusted to suit the particular research domain.

Laddering

This is the second most widely used technique in personal construct psychology (after the repertory grid). Devised by Hinkle (1965) along with several other techniques designed to identify superordinate and subordinate relationships between constructs, it is used individually in clinical settings, but outside personal construct psychology it is used in consumer preference studies of larger groups. It proceeds by asking the respondent to say which pole of a previously elicited construct is preferred and then say why it is preferred. This reason forms one pole of the new construct, and after eliciting the contrast pole the procedure is repeated with the new construct. Whether this just-laddered construct is superordinate to the previous one is not clear. Of course, superordinate can simply mean more important or of greater value and laddering is consistent with this, but the notion of hierarchical structure requires there to be an asymmetric relationship between the two constructs (or more correctly, the two construct poles). Hinkle (1965) appeared to provide limited support for the notion that laddering produces superordinate constructs by showing that constructs elicited by laddering had more implicative relationships than the original generating constructs. However, a recent reexamination of his data (Bell, 2014) showed that superordinate (laddered) and subordinate (repertory grid) constructs equally implied each other. Butt (1995) first questioned the hierarchical assumption, demonstrating that the most general/abstract

construct emerged in the middle of the laddering process, not the end. Neimeyer, Anderson, and Stockton (2001) rebutted this, claiming support for ladderred constructs being superordinate. However, their criteria were essentially surrogate measures involving the abstract or concrete nature of constructs and the latencies required to elicit them, rather than testing whether the relationships between constructs were consistent with a hierarchical requirement (asymmetry). While the self (which is the basis of personal construct laddering) is an important factor in clinical settings, it does constrain the production of ladderred constructs. Laddering as used in consumer research is not so constrained. Interestingly, it is in this domain that concerns about the hierarchical assumption of laddering have emerged. Van Rekom and Wierenga (2007) had respondents complete an implications grid (see the section on this technique below) from the ladderred constructs (in this domain they do not use the term laddering, preferring the terms concepts-attributes-values or means-ends). They found a substantial proportion of implications were reciprocal rather than unidirectional.

Laddering is undoubtedly an important tool in generating self-relevant constructs, although it seems unwise to assume that this necessarily indicates a hierarchy.

The Repertory Grid

The technique itself

The repertory grid is the first assessment technique to generate quantitative data directly from the respondent. Although Kelly saw it as a means to generate preliminary clinical hypotheses, these hypotheses often depended on manipulations of the quantitative data in the grid. While it is probably still used to generate hypotheses in clinical settings, it is now used in a much broader range of ways, principally to obtain a representation of the construct system and its elements, either through a visual configuration or through some summary measure garnered from the quantitative data. But like the less constrained techniques previously discussed, it is also sometimes used simply to generate constructs. These differing purposes can take advantage of the fact that the repertory grid can vary in the degree to which respondents are constrained in their freedom to provide truly idiographic data. These constraints differ according to the three phases of repertory grid data collection: specifying elements, eliciting constructs, and relating constructs to elements.

The first step is to specify the elements. The most constrained way in which elements are specified occurs when the researcher provides the set of elements. It is not always recognized, but Kelly's original procedure of using role titles to select individuals is also a constraint, as in order to choose a person to fit a specific role a respondent might choose someone of whom they know less. Haritos, Gindidis, Doan, and Bell (2004) found constructs elicited with role title grids to be less differentiated than those from grids where respondents simply listed acquaintances, suggesting unconstrained choice of acquaintances could include persons better known by the respondent and therefore a basis for finer distinctions among them. But, as noted earlier, little work has been carried out to improve our understanding of how element selection affects the structure of grids.

The next step is to elicit constructs. Again the most constrained form of constructs is that of researcher-supplied constructs. This seems to be looked on with less favor—at least with strict Kellyans—as it goes against the original aim of individually generated constructs. However, it enables constructs to be mapped across a group of respondents. This assumes that the supplied constructs satisfy the commonality of construing requirement of the theory. Bell (2000) has suggested a way in which this requirement can be assessed.

There has been substantial research into methods of eliciting individual constructs, including eliciting constructs from one or two elements rather than Kelly's original formulation involving three. Where there is contrast (i.e., two- or three-element elicitation) there has been conflict as to whether that contrast should be expressed as "different from" or "opposite to." It would seem the contrary pole may either be an opposite or a difference. (In Kelly's original example, the contrary pole of "male" would be "female" but the opposite pole would be "not male.") Another problem is how to form the pairs or triples of elements. Consider 10 elements. Exhaustively (though not as exhausted as the respondent) there would be 45 pairs and 120 triples. Since most grids have roughly the same number of elements as constructs, it is clear some combinations will not be examined. Some designs reduce the problem. A common practice in clinical elicitation via triples is to include the self, and thus other elements are only included in pairs. There is also the possibility of using statistical sampling designs, although this only works for certain numbers of elements. Consequently the selection of element groups also provides some constraint on the freedom of expression of the respondent in the repertory grid.

The final step is to locate the elements within the constructs. Kelly's original idea was to locate elements at one pole or the other—or neither

(if an element lay outside the range of convenience of a construct). Elements in this last category present a problem for subsequent quantitative analysis since they are not missing at random but as part of the system. Other variants have included ranking and rating, the latter being the most common form of grid data. Rating data can take many forms, each of which also imposes some constraint on the respondent. Problems with variants of rating data are of course a more general concern in the social sciences.

Data analysis

Kelly was well aware of the advantage of being able to analyze the data of a repertory grid quantitatively. A grid produces a lot of data and quantitative data allow for a reasonably objective means of summarizing it. (It must be remembered that the 1940s and 1950s were something of a golden period for quantitative data in psychology, with the development of factor analysis and classical test theory.) He developed an idiosyncratic method of “factor analysis” aimed at the clinician as it was “simple” and required little sophisticated computation. Simple it wasn’t, and there seems to be only one published study of it (Arthur, 1965). What has been forgotten, however, is why Kelly devised this analysis. His purpose was to find a way of representing relationships among constructs and among elements to aid the therapist in working with the client. Traditional factor analysis (actually principal components analysis) only considered relationships among constructs (Levy & Dugan, 1956) with the conventional aim of identifying the factors. Kelly’s original purpose was revived by Patrick Slater (1964, 1965) in a form of principal components analysis that also enabled a composite representation of both elements and constructs. Slater’s innovation required substantial computer resources, but at the time the Medical Research Council of the United Kingdom funded a service where grids of therapists and researchers could be analyzed in this fashion. Slater subsequently reported that when the service ended in 1973 it was analyzing 10,000 grids per year. This number of grids cannot be accounted for by published research in the U.K. during that time, so it must be assumed that most of these analyses were in a clinical context—showing that Kelly’s purpose in devising the grid was validated. Another way of representing relationships among constructs was through cluster analysis, an approach pioneered by Shaw and Thomas (1978). At the same time as this representational approach to the grid was widespread in the U.K., the approach to analyzing grid data in North America was focusing on summary indices. While this procedure began in 1955 with Bieri’s index of cognitive complexity, in the

early 1970s it proliferated, with a number of ad hoc indices, many of which were devised by Landfield. This may have reflected a greater use of the grid in research settings, since summary indices can easily be incorporated into experimental data sets amenable to traditional hypothesis-testing. This “Atlantic divide” can be seen still to exist today. A recent review of personal construct methodology by American authors (Hardison & Neimeyer, 2012) doesn’t even mention the Slater type of analysis. Both approaches constrain the information available from the grid (any summary must), but the loss of information is more severe in the summary measure approach (see also Chapter 9, this volume).

As well as the loss of information, there are other problems with many summary measures. Often they are given names such as Intensity (Bannister, 1960), Ordination (Landfield, 1977), and the Functionally Independent Construction index (Landfield, 1971), which give little clue as to the nature of the index. Intensity is actually a form of average correlation between constructs. Other indices, such as Ordination, and the Functionally Independent Construction index, have a certain arbitrariness in their rules for calculation and have not fared well in psychometric evaluations (Chambers, Grice, & Fourman, 1987; Soldz & Soldz, 1989). Chambers et al. showed that grids with random data show greater ordination than real grids, while Soldz and Soldz showed that the number of functionally independent constructs is largely dependent on the number of midpoint ratings. Another problem is that indices are sometimes tied to particular rating formats. The identification of functionally independent constructs will depend on the number of rating points (it was devised with a 13-point rating scale, -6 to +6). The calculation of an Implicative Dilemmas index (Feixas, Saúl, & Sánchez, 2000) is based on use of a five-point rating scale. Calculation of this index also illustrates another problem with some personal construct indices as there can only be an implicative dilemma between two constructs if the correlation is above 0.30 (or perhaps 0.35). There is no logic in choice of an arbitrary cut-off. Finally there is the problem of unrecognized similarity between measures. PVAFF (Jaspars, 1963), the percentage of variance accounted for by the first factor (component) of construct correlations, is closely related to Intensity since both are predicated on summaries of correlations. Neither of these indices is ideal, although studies may show correlations between these and other variables, if grid data fulfill certain conditions. In general terms, however, Bell (2004b) has shown Intensity cannot distinguish between fragmented, simple (termed monolithic in PCP terms), or complex structures while PVAFF can identify fragmented construct structures but cannot distinguish

between simple and complex structures. Some summary measures, those that can be computed at a construct level, may prove more useful with appropriate analyses (see Chapter 9, this volume).

Such summary indices include Intensity and number of Implicative Dilemmas, which can be calculated for constructs separately. Other indices, such as asymmetric predictive coefficients (Bell, 2004a; Gaines & Shaw, 1980), could also be summarized separately by construct.

Dependency Grids

The term “dependency grid” was introduced by Fransella and Bannister (1977) to clarify the purpose of Kelly’s situation-resource grid, introduced at the same time as his repertory grid, with resources (people on whom one could depend) taking the place of elements and situations (where one needed assistance) of constructs. The grid was simply completed by indicating which persons were or could be useful in which situation. Kelly saw these data in a similar way to the way in which he used his repertory grid—he looked for groupings of situations and groupings of resources through factor analysis (he did not specify whether the factor analysis was his variant or a more conventional approach). Subsequent approaches have focused more on developing indices (e.g., Walker, Ramsey, & Bell, 1988) to represent the degree to which (in an overall sense) the respondent was dependent on others.

Implications Grids

As indicated in the first section of this chapter, Kelly’s theory has one corollary concerning the relationships among constructs (the Organization Corollary). This corollary posits that relationships are of a superordinate–subordinate nature. Hinkle (1965) devised an implications grid to assess this. Hinkle introduced the implications grid to test whether constructs elicited from laddering were superordinate to those initially derived from the repertory grid technique. He did this by counting the implicative relationships and found the elicited constructs had more of these than did the original constructs. He did not distinguish between unidirectional implication (as is implied by the theory) and bidirectional (or reciprocal) relationships. However, the presence of implicative relationships does not necessarily imply the relationships are of a superordinate–subordinate type.

Somewhat earlier and in another context, Hays (1958) also assessed implicative relationships between characteristics. One of his aims was to identify characteristics that were more central rather than superordinate. It is possible to see central characteristics as equivalent to the “core constructs” of Kelly’s theory.

The implications grid departs from the structure of both Kelly’s grids. Kelly’s grids contain two facets: either elements and constructs or situations and resources. This has an advantage in that our understanding of a construct (situation) is based on data from a number of separate elements (resources), providing a well-anchored definition of the construct or situation. The implications grid contains only one facet, constructs, which are evaluated in terms of a single element, the self. Hinkle’s discussion in his thesis considers the possibility of examining implicative relationships from the point of view of another person known to the respondent, as obviously our understanding of others (and to some extent, probably ourselves) does depend on the implicative relationships of constructs for others. However, this would increase the workload of respondents, and life may well be too short for that. Further, it assumes that the respondent can use the grid in a dichotomous fashion since the procedure is dependent on “slot-rattling” (i.e., changing from one pole to the other) as the instruction for finding implications is to identify which other constructs would switch poles if poles were switched for the respondent on the target construct.

There have been few uses of implications grids. One reason is that the respondent must make many judgments as each characteristic (construct or construct pole) must be compared with each of the others. Fifteen constructs would generate 210 such comparative judgments. Another possible reason for its lack of use is that until Caputi, Breiger, and Pattison (1990) devised a general method for mapping implicative relationships, methods of analysis were crude and indirect. Even today this methodology is not generally available in grid-analysis packages, although the number of ways implicative relationships can be assessed has increased since 1990 (see Chapter 8, this volume).

Resistance-to-Change Grids

The resistance-to-change grid was also devised by Hinkle (1965). Hinkle saw it as a method of identifying core constructs, since according to the theory, core constructs are most resistant to change. Like the implications grid it assumes that the respondent can use the grid in a dichotomous

fashion since the procedure is dependent on “slot-rattling.” The respondent considers all pairs of constructs, and for each pair is asked to indicate that if they had to move away from their preferred pole on one of these constructs, which construct they would change on. The construct on which the self is less changeable is that more likely to be a core construct. The technique does not appear in the literature and is unlikely to have been widely used by others. Jones (1992) refers to use of a “change grid,” but it is not clear that this was a resistance-to-change grid, since Hinkle (1965) was not referenced in relation to it, although he was referenced as the source of the laddering technique also used.

Questionnaire Approaches to Personal Construct Assessment

This is the most constrained class of assessment procedures in the personal construct domain since any respondent is constrained by the language he or she has to work with (the questionnaire items are supplied) and the structure of the task (responding on a fixed rating scale). Perhaps not surprisingly, there only seems to be one such kind of assessment. Chambers and O’Day (1984) devised the Personal Construct Inventory, an 80-item self-report inventory of six subscales. Items are rated on a five-point rating scale (strongly agree through strongly disagree). The six subscales purport to measure Anxiety, Guilt, Threat, Hostility, Looseness, and Preemption. The first four of these are familiar concepts in psychology, and are usually seen as attributes of a person. For Kelly, these were “dimensions of transition” since they were characteristics generated by changes in a person’s construct system. Looseness and Preemption referred to specific kinds of constructs. None of these characteristics are readily assessed with any of the grid methods, and consequently Chambers and O’Day set about creating an inventory to measure them in a nomothetic sense, and reported subscale reliabilities and inter-correlations. The scale has been little used in subsequent published research. Watson, Winter, and Rossotti (1997) reported on the psychometric properties with data collected from outpatients in a psychology clinic. They found satisfactory internal consistency only for three of the subscales, Anxiety, Guilt, and Hostility, and some correlations with other scales measuring similar characteristics (e.g., Anxiety and Guilt). Anxiety and Guilt also correlated with some grid measures, although Looseness, which should have correlated with grid construct complexity measures, did not.

It is possible that further developments in this area could be useful in the personal construct domain. While the concept of personality traits finds little favor in construct circles, the notions that a person develops some characteristic ways of construing their world, and that persons may share common ways of construing, provide a basis for the development of scales in a construct framework that can still function in accordance with other demands of the theory. Just as for Kelly an element may lie outside the range of convenience of a construct, modern psychometric item response theory allows for items to be omitted if they are irrelevant or ambiguous for a person.

Conclusions

This review has shown that, unlike other theories that provide a framework for human behavior, Kelly's theory is closely linked to the assessments that need to be made for the theory to be put into practice. Furthermore, from the outset Kelly embraced a range of assessment techniques, from the quantitative to the qualitative, a range that has since been refined and extended, and such techniques, in particular the repertory grid, have found favor in the widest imaginable range of applications outside the generating domain of clinical psychology. Would Kelly have been surprised by this? I suspect not. Most likely he would attribute it to some obscure philosophical position called "constructive alternativism."

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Assessment of Hierarchies of Construing

Peter Caputi

Man looks at his world through transparent patterns or templates which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed. The fit is not always very good. Yet without such patterns the world appears to be such an undifferentiated homogeneity that man is unable to make any sense out of it. Even a poor fit is more helpful to him than nothing at all.

(George Kelly, 1991a, p. 7)

George Kelly (1955/1991a) referred to these templates (or transparent patterns) as constructs. They form the basis of his psychology of personal constructs. Indeed, much of what is presented in this handbook centers on constructs and construing. Kelly argued that we use constructs to make sense of our world, to provide meaning to events in our world. We engage in sense-making as incipient scientists, making and testing predictions (or anticipations) of events, and revising predictions on the basis of this “hypothesis-testing.” Kelly proposed that prediction is construing. “To predict is to construe movement or trend among surrounding events” (1991a, p. 86). Kelly argued that this process could be understood in terms of “if-then” relationships. For instance, if I ignore the email flag on my computer and keep typing this chapter then I will complete it. More importantly, if I complete this chapter on time then the editors will be happy. I know from past experience that ignoring the email alerts will mean that I stay focused, and complete the set task in a timely fashion. Notably, the contrast is implicit in this abstraction. I know that if I complete my task on time then the editors will not be disappointed (or angry!). Anticipation, then, can also be

understood in terms of “if-then-but-not” relationships. These if-then relationships are the basis of what Dennis Hinkle (1965) coined as “implicative relations.” Such relationships are implicit in Kelly’s Organization Corollary, “each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs” (Kelly, 1991a, p. 39). People, therefore, make sense of their world using systems of interrelated constructs—a primary relation being one of hierarchy. “Within a construction system there may be many levels of ordinal relationships, with some constructs subsuming others and those, in turn, subsuming still others” (1991a, p. 40).

In this chapter, I review and discuss approaches to assessing hierarchies of construing. These approaches provide us with ways of exploring and understanding not just the content of systems of constructs (the construct labels), but also the processes of construing (how poles of constructs relate to one another). I also distinguish between grid-based and non-grid-based methods of assessment of hierarchy. Quantitative data collected via grids can be used to assess construct relationships. However, there are also non-quantitative approaches to assessing hierarchy. Both approaches will be reviewed in this chapter.

Grid-Based Approaches

Repertory grid approaches

There are numerous assessment methods that fall within a personal construct psychology framework. The repertory grid, based on Kelly’s (1955/1991a, 1991b) role construct repertory test, is a popular assessment tool used to capture a snapshot of the representation of a person’s construct system, how he or she makes sense of aspects of their world. In order to attain this representation, we need to ascertain how elements (the “things” we try to make sense of in our worlds—people, events, experiences) are related to constructs. Elements and constructs can either be elicited by the person completing a grid, or supplied by the researcher or clinician. The respondent then rates or ranks the elements along each of the construct dimensions. The result is a matrix of quantitative associations between elements and constructs. These data can be used to explore and answer questions about the characteristics (including hierarchy) of a person’s construct system.

There are several excellent texts on analyzing and interpreting the repertory grid (see Caputi, Viney, Walker, & Crittenden, 2012; Fransella,

Bell, & Bannister, 2004; Jankowicz, 2004). Summary measures of the properties of construct systems have been identified in the literature (see Fransella et al. [2004] for an excellent discussion of such measures). While some of these measures assess the extent to which constructs are associated or correlated with one another, other indices measure the extent to which the construct relationship is asymmetric. An asymmetric relationship occurs when the relationship between constructs X and Y is different from the relationship between Y and X . Implicative construct relationships are asymmetrical, e.g., if X implies Y , but Y does not imply X then Y is “superordinate” to X . For example, a client may hold the view that if someone is “psychologically weak” then she or he will be “emotional.” However, the client may also hold the view that “showing emotions” does not always indicate “psychological weakness.” It follows that these types of relationships are of interest when trying to represent or assess hierarchical construct systems. Asymmetric indices that have been used to explore hierarchy include Somer’s d , the uncertainty coefficient (Gaines & Shaw, 1980), and proportionate reduction in error measures (Smithson, 1987) (see Fransella et al., 2004). Bell (2004) demonstrated that a simple method for assessing grid structure is by comparing row and column averages of a matrix of asymmetric construct statistics. This strategy can then be used to establish whether particular constructs predict others.

While these measures of asymmetry are useful, they essentially provide *descriptive* information; they do not attempt to *model* the grid data. That is, they do not attempt to model the relevant theoretical properties or features of the data. However, methods such as hierarchical classes analysis (De Boeck & Rosenberg, 1988) have been applied to grid-based data to obtain representations of construct hierarchies. For example, this approach has been used to examine the construct systems of sufferers of post-traumatic stress (Sewell, 1997; Sewell et al., 1996). Grid analysts have also proposed the use of methods based on fuzzy set theory and formal logic analysis to examine the “logical structure” of construct systems (Gaines & Shaw, 2012; Smithson, 1987). Formal concept analysis (Willie, 1982) has also been used to model repertory grid data. For example, this technique has been used to model the construct systems of patients with anorexia (Spangenberg & Wolff, 1987) and why people get tattoos (Caputi, Bell, & Hennessy, 2012; Caputi & Hennessy, 2008). It has been argued that implicative relations can be best represented by mathematical structures known as quasi-orders. A quasi-order is defined by the characteristics of reflexivity (a construct pole implies itself) and transitivity (if pole X implies pole Y , and pole Y implies pole Z , then pole X also implies pole Z). An approach to

modeling repertory grid data, based on quasi-orders, was proposed by Caputi (1997). Details of the algorithm are also described in Caputi, Bell, et al. (2012).

Quasi-orders are closely associated to another mathematical structure, partial orders. Partial order scalogram analysis (Shye, 1985) is one approach used to model partial orders. Recently, Bell, Winter, and Bhandari (2010) have applied partial order scalogram analysis to explore hierarchical relationships in dependency grid data collected from survivors of child sexual abuse. A dependency grid (or what Kelly called the situational resources repertory grid) is a variant of the repertory grid. In this form of grid, the respondent is asked to consider a set of difficult or stressful situations and relate them to a set of people they would go to for assistance in those situations.

Hinklean approaches

Dennis Hinkle's 1965 dissertation represents one of the most significant and influential contributions in personal construct psychology. At a theoretical level, Hinkle's theory of implications represents a genuine elaboration of Kelly's theory. His contribution to personal construct methodology is also significant, including the development of grid-based assessments, namely, the resistance-to-change grid and implication grid, as well as non-quantitative assessments such as laddering. These provide direct assessments or representations of construct hierarchy. This is in contrast to repertory grid-based approaches, which assess hierarchy indirectly.

A major theme in Hinkle's (1965) dissertation is an understanding of the process of change in a person's construct system. The resistance-to-change grid provides a direct assessment of the extent to which an individual resists changing construct relationships. Superordinate constructs are assumed to be more resistant to change than subordinate constructs. Note, there are some variations from Hinkle's original instructions on completing this grid type (Fransella et al., 2004). The following description represents a variation of the instruction set. To complete this grid, the respondent is asked to consider two constructs from a set of elicited (or supplied) constructs, and asked to identify the preferred pole of each of the two constructs. The respondent is then asked to consider the situation where he or she were to wake one morning and these preferred poles would have changed to the other poles of the constructs. He or she is then asked to identify which of the poles designated as preferred for the two constructs they would find more difficult to change. The process is repeated using all possible pairs of

constructs. The argument is that the more personally important the construct is to an individual, the more resistance there is to change on that construct. A simple approach to analyzing the resulting data is to sum the number of times a construct has been identified as resistant to change in each construct pair, and then rank order the sums.

A second grid form, the implication grid, can be used to capture construct implications (Hinkle, 1965). The implication grid is related to the resistance-to-change grid, and in my view is the more interesting “cousin” of the resistance-to-change grid, because it provides a method of identifying how constructs (or construct poles) imply other constructs (or construct poles). This grid form involves working with a set of elicited or supplied constructs. The respondent is presented with constructs from this set one at a time, and asked to indicate if, by changing poles of a particular construct, they would also change on the remaining constructs in the set (change would indicate construct implication). Constructs are paired twice and superordinate, subordinate, and reciprocal implicative relations are noted (Hinkle, 1965). The result of this interview process is a “matrix” of construct implications.

The bipolar implication grid is a variant of Hinkle’s original grid (Fransella, 1972). Revisions to Hinkle’s procedure were proposed by Fransella on two grounds. First, the instruction set was complex and not suitable for a population other than university students (Fransella et al., 2004). Second, an assessment of implicative relations at the polar level may be more informative (and theory-appropriate, given the importance of bipolarity in the definition of constructs), especially when considering change in people’s construct systems (Fransella, 1972; Fransella et al., 2004). Typically, respondents completing a bipolar implication grid may be presented with one pole (\mathcal{Y}) of a construct and asked to consider the poles of all remaining constructs one at a time. The respondent would then be asked to imagine that “if all you know about a person is that he is \mathcal{Y} . What from all of these other characteristics . . . in front of you would you expect to find in a \mathcal{Y} person[?]” (Fransella et al., 2004, p. 73). The respondent is not allowed to select both poles (characteristics) of the other constructs. The result of this procedure is a matrix of data that identifies implicative relations at a polar level.

A variety of methods for analyzing implication grids are discussed in the literature, including techniques for exploring the structural properties of construct systems. Caputi, Breiger, and Pattison (1990) grouped some of the existing methods of analysis into three broad categories. The first class of analyses (coined Hinklean procedures) represents simple methods

for analyzing grid data. For instance, the entries in the rows and columns of an implication grid can be summed and rank-ordered. Likewise, the total number of implications in the grid can be compared to the total number of possible implications as a summary of cognitive structure (Crockett & Meisel, 1974; Fransella, 1972). However, for such measures to be meaningful, the grid data must conform to a mathematical structure known as a total order. Total orders have the properties of quasi-orders but do not allow for reciprocity. This type of relation between constructs (or construct poles) is strict and atypical of implicative relations.

The second class of analyses identified by Caputi et al. (1990) consists of methods used to identify clusters of construing. Approaches proposed by Fransella (1972) and Honess (1978), and the application of Hays's (1958) model of trait implication, are included in this class. While useful, these measures still fall short of modeling implication grid data in a way that is consistent with mathematical structures that are consistent with the Organization Corollary, or Hinkle's (1965) elaboration of that corollary. For instance, Honess's (1978) technique is based on the extent to which constructs are dissimilar, instead of assessing whether one construct is more dominant than another (that is, modeling an asymmetric relation). The approaches identified in the third class of methods come closer to modeling the relational characteristics of implication grid data. Included in this category are methods proposed by Honess (1982), Landfield and Cannell (1988), and Eden, Jones, and Sims (1979). The types of features identified by these analyses include asymmetric, transitive, and intransitive links between construct poles as well as reciprocity and circularity of implicative links.

An approach to modeling construct hierarchy that is consistent with theory was proposed by Caputi et al. (1990). These authors developed an algorithm that modeled implication grid data as quasi-orders. As well as being theoretically consistent, this hierarchical modeling approach allows the researcher to assess how well the model fits the data by comparing observed data to fitted implicative relations. Furthermore, the fitted representation of the data can be depicted graphically. Any "pockets" of inconsistency between observed and fitted relation may be of theoretical (and clinical) interest.

Non-Grid-Based Approaches

Kelly was known to have stated that if you want to know something about a person, just ask them! Questioning and structured interview techniques are important "tools" in the assessment repertoire of personal construct

psychology practitioners. Two strategies for eliciting constructs and assessing how constructs are hierarchically related are laddering and pyramiding.

Laddering

Laddering (Hinkle, 1965) is a questioning technique that is assumed to elicit constructs of higher-order abstraction. How does this technique work and what is the logic behind it? Let's start with the theory behind why the technique might work. Personal construct theory tells us that constructs (more specifically, construct poles) are interrelated. An important inter-construct relation is subsumption (Hinkle, 1965). That is, one construct may subsume another. A construct may subsume another in two possible ways (Kelly, 1955/1991a). First, to use Kelly's example, the construct *good-bad* may subsume the construct *intelligent-stupid* in that the pole *good* may subsume the pole *intelligent*. In other words, all elements of the pole *intelligent* are also elements of the construct pole *good*. In this case, *good* is said to be superordinate to *intelligent*. A second interpretation of subsumption makes use of the proposition that constructs are abstractions (Kelly, 1955/1991a). When we discriminate between elements or make sense of events in our lives we attribute properties to those events. This is a process of abstraction. When a construct "abstracts" across another, it subsumes that construct as a dimension (Kelly, 1955/1991a). I mentioned in the opening to this chapter that anticipation and prediction (in the form of "if-then" relations) are a fundamental aspect of construing. If-then statements are implicative statements. The definition of a construct, then, involves "a statement of the location of a construct dimension in the context of a hierarchical network of construct implications" (Hinkle, 1965, p. 2). This proposition may be stated as a "new" corollary of personal construct theory, which ten Kate (1981) referred to as the Implication Corollary. The notion of ordinacy is clarified with respect to this corollary. A superordinate construct is defined as one "whose polar positions are implied by other constructs," while a subordinate construct is one "which implies polar positions on the other construct" (Hinkle, 1965, p. 23).

The laddering process begins by eliciting a construct using an established construct-elicitation method (such as triadic elicitation). The interviewer then asks the interviewee which pole of the construct he or she prefers. Once the preferred construct pole has been identified, the interviewee is asked the question "why" he or she prefers that pole. This step usually elicits a pole of a new construct. The interviewer then asks "What is the opposite of that?", thus eliciting the other pole of the new construct. This

new construct is assumed to be superordinate, more abstract, and thus more important within the interviewee's construct system. The steps of identifying a preferred pole, asking why that pole is preferred, and then eliciting the opposite pole can be repeated on these new constructs to "climb up" the ladder of assumed construct implications.

Recently, a good friend and I were discussing our preferences for certain wines. We started off with discussing preferences for red and white wines. Interestingly, it occurred to me that we were laddering. To illustrate laddering, let's imagine that we ask someone whether they prefer, in general, red or white wines. The questioning and responding go as follows: Do you prefer red or white wines? I prefer red wines. Why is that? Why do you prefer red wines? I like full-bodied, smooth wines. What's the opposite of that? Rough. Why do you prefer full-bodied, smooth wines? I prefer them because they are flavorsome and rich. What's the opposite of flavorsome and rich? Thin and watery. The result of questioning is the assumed elicitation of higher-order constructs based on preferred construct poles. In this example, the construct flavorsome-thin is assumed to be superordinate to full-bodied-rough.

While laddering appears easy to use, it requires practice and experience to be used appropriately and well. Consequently, several authors (Fransella, 2003; Neimeyer, Anderson, & Stockton, 2001; Walker & Crittenden, 2012) have provided excellent guidelines for undertaking and facilitating laddering. The reader, especially the novice user of personal construct psychology-based tools, is encouraged to review these guidelines.

Pyramiding

In a sense, pyramiding (Landfield, 1971) allows a researcher or practitioner to "move or climb down" ladders of construct implications. Several authors (e.g., Fransella, 2003; Walker & Crittenden, 2012) have pointed out that pyramiding is easier and more flexible to use with clients than laddering. While laddering makes use of "why" questions, the pyramiding technique makes use of "what" and "how" questions to explore construct hierarchies. Moreover, a series of "what" and "how" questions results in a "pyramid" of constructs.

To illustrate, a counselor may ask a client to describe a significant person in his or her life, say their mother. The client may say that his or her mother is *kind*. The counselor would then ask "How would you describe someone who is not kind?" The client's reply might be that the person is *nasty*. Next, the counselor would ask "What sort of person is someone who is *kind*?", to

which the client might reply, someone who is *loving and considerate of others*. At this point the counselor has yielded the pole of a new construct and can ask the client to elicit the opposite or contrast pole of *loving and considerate to others*. The counselor would now explore the construct pole *nasty* by asking “What sort of person is someone who is *nasty*?”, to which the client might reply, someone who is *self-centered*. Similarly, the counselor can now elicit from the client the contrast or opposite pole of *self-centered*. What emerges from this series of questioning is a pyramid structure of constructs: the construct *loving and considerate of others* and its opposite pole subsumed under the pole *kind*; the construct *self-centered* and its opposite pole subsumed under the pole *nasty*.

Concluding Remark

The Organization Corollary is one of the more fascinating aspects of personal construct theory. It assists in understanding the process of construing, why we behave as we do! In this chapter I have reviewed both quantitative and qualitative approaches that analysts have proposed for assessing construct hierarchy. Both strategies have strengths and weaknesses. As with any personal construct method, which approach is adopted will depend on the intended purpose of the user. In terms of the quantitative methods, I have distinguished between approaches that are descriptive and summarize implicative relations, and approaches that model these relations. Ongoing research and development of techniques for assessing construct hierarchy is warranted, and can build on existing work reviewed in this chapter.

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Using Linear Mixed Models with Repertory Grid Data

Mark Heckmann and Richard C. Bell

Introduction

While the repertory grid was developed to provide information in a therapeutic context, its quantitative data also make it suitable for assessment in research contexts. Winter (2003) evaluated the use of measures derived from repertory grid data. A notable feature of this paper was the contrast between results for construct-based measures and results for element-based measures. Element-based measures (such as self-ideal distance) were more likely to return significant findings than were construct-based measures. It is not immediately evident why this should be so. It is possible that elements tap into more important things. We know elements usually account for more variation in a grid (Bell, Vince, & Costigan, 2002). We also know some element measures are consistent with measures employed in other theories, for example self-ideal difference can also be found in self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), where it has been shown to be associated with depression. Another possibility stems from the kinds of measures associated with elements and constructs. Element measures are usually based on specific elements, whereas construct measures are usually some aggregate index calculated across all constructs. A reason for this difference is that in most grids elements are defined by role titles, some of which are unambiguous, such as self now and ideal self, while others have a degree of ambiguity, such as “a person I dislike.” The less ambiguous element role titles enable these data for these specific elements to be treated as common measures across grids. The same situation does not hold with constructs. Particularly in clinical contexts, constructs are elicited individually (rather than supplied

by the researcher) and therefore have been seen as not comparable from one respondent to another. This means the construct data have to be treated as “replications” within each individual grid and represented by a summary measure for the grid, which can then be compared across grids. It is not clear that the summary measures will always be strictly comparable. For example, is a summary measure based on six constructs equivalent to a summary measure across 24 constructs? Are means (such as in the intensity measure described in Chapter 7) the best measures if standard deviations vary substantially? More generally it can be seen that the complex data generated by the two-facet (elements and constructs) structure of the repertory grid have been lost. Summary measures are typical of conventional psychological tests where test items are designed to be replications and do not have the differential complexity of constructs in repertory grids. While constructs do not have the a priori basis of comparison that role titles provide for elements, it is possible to generate a comparison basis by coding constructs into categories after they have been elicited using, for example, the relatively simple coding scheme devised by Feixas, Geldschläger, and Neimeyer (2002). Such coding would allow for an integration of the qualitative information of the constructs with the quantitative information from the grid ratings. A data-analysis technique that allows us to carry out analysis at the level of construct rather than at the grid level is a *linear mixed model*.

Linear Mixed Models

Linear mixed models (also known as hierarchical linear models, multilevel models, or random effects models) are termed as such because they are a variant of the general linear model (the model that underlies both analysis of variance [ANOVA] and regression) that contains mixed effects, both fixed effects (the between subjects factors of ANOVA) and random effects. Random effects are associated with factors in the design which represent groupings of observations that we do not base our hypotheses on, but nevertheless wish to take into account when testing our hypotheses with the fixed factors. A typical example is to be found in educational research designs where students are the observations of interest, but the fact that they are grouped by school means that the school effect needs to be taken into account in assessing things like the relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement. Another example lies in within-person measurements, such as assessments of therapy process. Traditionally this

would be modeled with a repeated measurements design. However, it can also be modeled with a linear mixed model where subjects are treated as a random effect. A substantial advantage of this latter formulation is that all subjects do not have to complete all assessments, as is required in repeated measures analysis, since mixed-model analyses handle missing data.

Although mixed models were first formulated in the 1860s, it was not until 1971 that a general robust estimation method was developed, over 10 years more before the first specific software was available, and another 10 years before easily accessible software became available. Early programs were specifically oriented toward group-structured data (with educational applications in mind), but such analyses eventually became available in more general ANOVA-like settings, such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, and could be applied to grid data (Bell, 2009), although researchers had to be able to carry out prior substantial spreadsheet manipulation to put the data in a form that could be readily analyzed. Until the present time, there has been no specific software oriented to mixed-model analysis of repertory grid data. A new program, *multigrid one*, now enables grid researchers to carry out such analyses easily and simply.

Multigrid One

Multigrid one is a Web-based software (<http://multigridone.openrepgrid.org>) to analyze multiple repertory grid data using mixed models. The main motivation for the development of the software was twofold. On the one hand, mixed models are a class of statistical models that have only seldom been used in the grid community. Yet when analyzing data on the construct level across many grids, this class of models might be appropriate. *Multigrid one* seeks to facilitate the use of mixed models with grid data. The second motivation refers to the step of *data preparation* before applying any statistical models. When analyzing grid data, very often index measures on the grid and/or the construct level need to be calculated and merged into a data set. This is often a tedious task when working with repertory grid data. Currently, there are no programs available that simplify this step of data preparation. *Multigrid one* seeks to fill this void. The software can calculate several measures on the grid and on the construct level for a batch of grids and merge the results into a single dataset. Hence, *multigrid one* may still be of interest for researchers who do not want to use mixed models but need to prepare the data for other types of analysis with the software.

The program *multigrid one* is free to use. It relies on programs available in the open source language R (R Development Core Team, 2011). Some of these are general statistical routines written outside the personal construct psychology (PCP) domain, while others belong to the R grid package, OpenRepGrid (Heckmann, 2011; www.openrepgrid.org). The code of *multigrid one* is open source and can be found under www.github.com/markheckmann/multigridone. It is released under a GPL license and can thus be adapted, modified, and redistributed under the same license. Interested researchers are welcome to contribute to the development of this software.

The remainder of this chapter provides an introduction to *multigrid one* to show how it can be used. The Web page is organized through six steps (0 to 5), each of which corresponds to a tab in the familiar Windows structure.

Step 0. Info >> General information on the software

The opening screen shows the general structure and contains information on how to use the program as shown in Figure 9.1. It briefly describes the five subsequent steps of analysis the user is guided through (see arrow A). On the upper left, a tutorial video can be opened that explains each step in

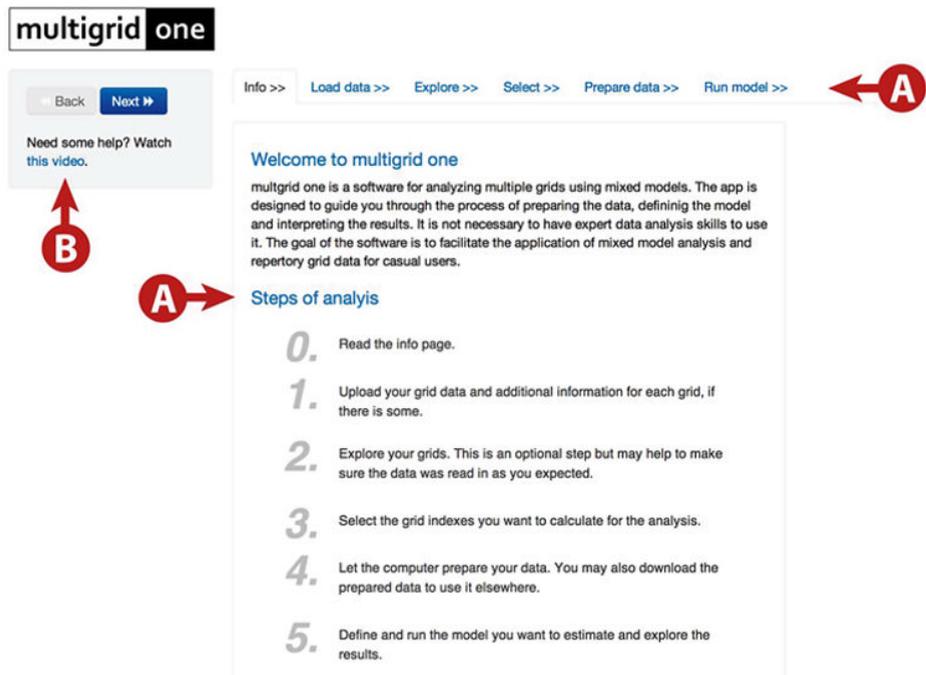


Figure 9.1 Step 0, The Opening Screen.

detail (B). On the bottom of the page (not shown in the figure) there is a link to a discussion site for questions or suggestions concerning the software.

Step 1. Load Data >> Upload grid data and additional information

Pressing the *Next* button on the upper left takes us to the *load data* section. There are two kinds of data you can upload: *grids* (A, Figure 9.2) and *additional information* for each grid (e.g., depression scores, socio-demographic information; B). The essential one is the uploading of the grids themselves. The grids currently must be in a text file format as used by OpenRepGrid. Future versions will allow more formats (gridstat, Gridcor, sci:vesco, Excel files, etc.). Click on the *More Info* link on the lower right (E) to obtain additional information on the grid data formats that can currently be processed. You can start exploring the capabilities of *multigrid one* by downloading some sample grids (already in a suitable format; C), saving them on your computer, and then using the *Choose File* button (D) to upload them (grids are from a study by Haritos, Gindidis, Doan, and Bell, 2004). *Choose Files*

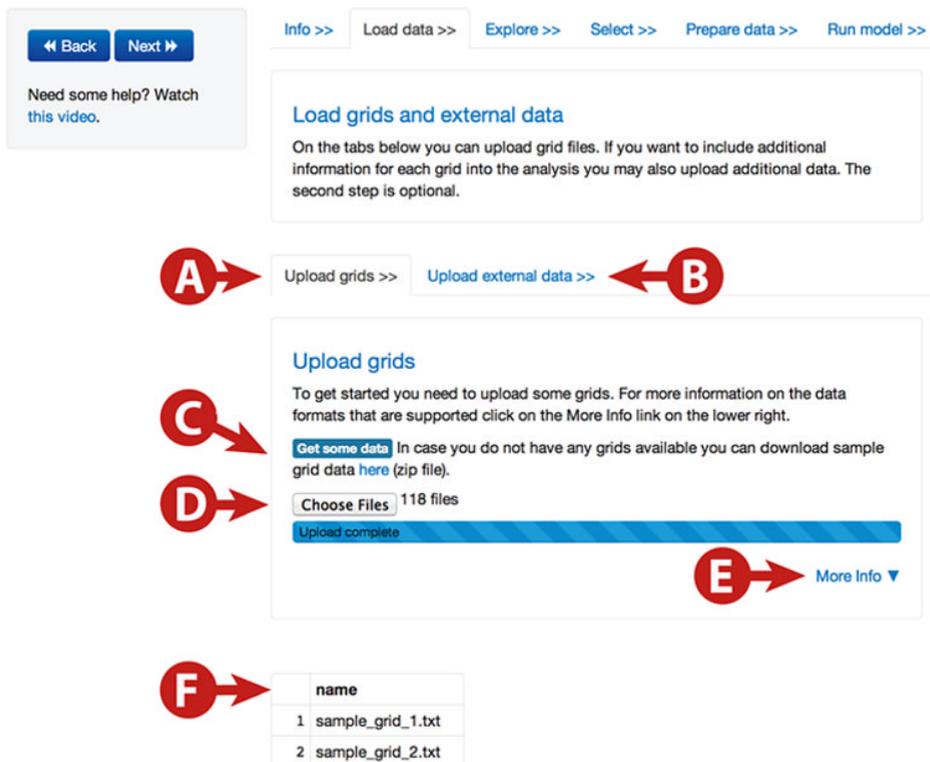


Figure 9.2 Step 1a, Load Data.

Upload grids >> Upload external data >>

You can include additional information on the *grid level* (e.g. depression scores for each person) or on the *constructs level* (e.g. an importance rating for each construct) into the analysis. To do this you need to upload a datafile containing the information.

A → **Get some data** In case you do not have any additional data available you can download this datafile (csv file) that corresponds to the grids from the previous tab.

Skip step? If you do not want to include additional information in the analysis skip this step.

B → Choose File additional_data.csv

C → More Info ▾

grid	sex	depression
1	1 female	21
2	2 female	30

Figure 9.3 Step 1b, Load External Data.

opens a standard Windows Explorer window. Highlight the separate grid files you want to analyze and click *Open*. A bar shows the progress in uploading the grids. After uploading the grids successfully, the uploaded grid file names are listed at the bottom of the page (F).

Pressing the *Next* button directs you to the *Load External Data* tab (Figure 9.3). For some research questions, e.g., “Does depression explain the variability of construct intensities?”, additional information on the grid or construct level is required. You can upload an external data file (in .CSV format) by clicking on the *Choose File* button (B). Again, a sample .CSV file can be downloaded (A). There is more information on how the additional data must be formatted if you click on the *More Info* link (C). After uploading the additional information successfully the data is displayed at the bottom of the page (D). Note that adding external data is an *optional* step. If your analysis does not require any external information, skip this step.

Step 2. Explore>> Inspect your grids

This is an entirely optional step but may help to make sure all the data is read in correctly. If you have just typed up the grids, you can flick through the grids here (Figure 9.4, A). This can be a useful step to ensure the grids

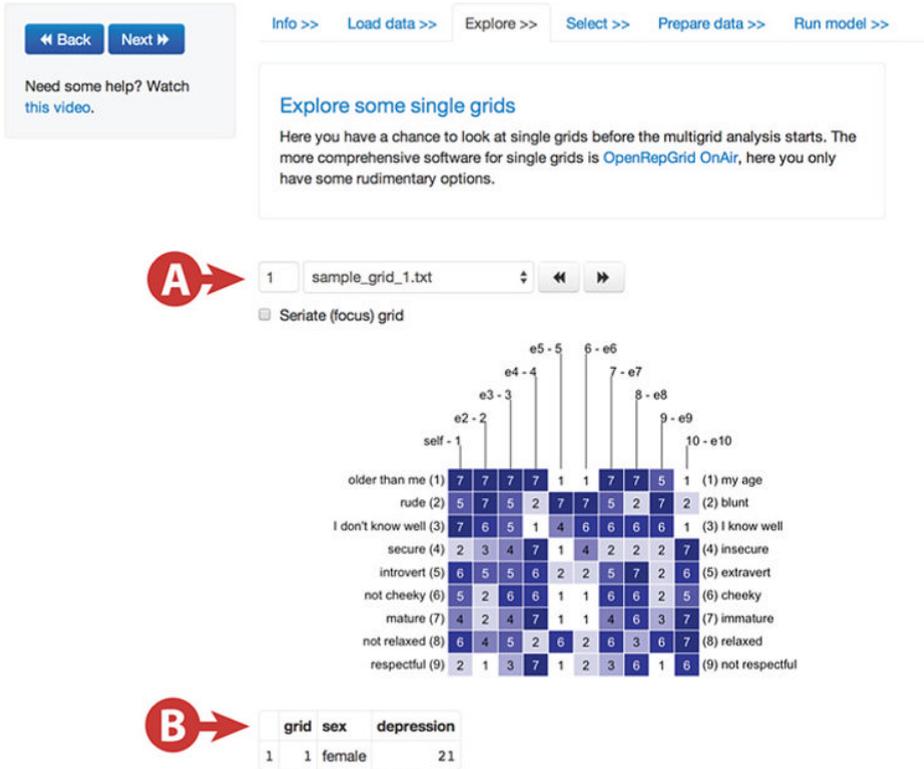


Figure 9.4 Step 2, Explore Your Grids.

are stored as you intended. If you added external data, you will find the data corresponding to each grid at the bottom (B). For subsequent analyses this step is not relevant.

Step 3. Select >> Select the grid indexes you want to calculate

This is a central step during data preparation. In order to conduct an analysis we need to have data. Usually for grid analysis a number of measures that have been devised in the literature (e.g. Intensity, percentage of variance accounted for by the first factor [PVAFF]) will be of interest. *Multigrad one* can calculate several measures on the grid and construct level for all grids and merge the results into a dataset. In Figure 9.5 there are two tabs at the bottom (A and B) on which you can select which measures on the *grid level* (C; e.g., PVAFF) and on the *construct level* will be calculated. At the end of each measure the name of the variable the measure will have in the prepared dataset is indicated in brackets (e.g., the *percentage of variance accounted for by the first factor* will be named *pvaff* in the dataset [D]).

◀ Back Next ▶

Need some help? Watch this video.

Info >> Load data >> Explore >> **Select >>** Prepare data >> Run model >>

Select variables and indexes

For mixed models you can use input data on different hierarchical levels. Use the following tabs to select which variables, indexes and measures you want to include in the prepared dataset on the grid as well as on the construct level.

Info Uncheck all indexes you do not want in the dataset.

Important! If many grids and many indexes are included, the preparation may take a while.

Grid level **Construct level**

The following measures will be calculated for each grid (variable name in parenthesis):

- Number of elements (*ne*)
- Number of constructs (*nc*)
- Percentage of Variance Accounted for by First Factor (*pvaff*)
- Average intensity of constructs (*avg.int.c*)
- Average intensity of elements (*avg.int.e*)
- Average total intensity of grid (*avg.int*)
- Average root mean square correlation (RMS) across all constructs (*avg.rms*)

Figure 9.5 Step 3, Select Variables and Indexes.

Step 4. Prepare data >> Let the software prepare your data

To start the process of data preparation, press the *Prepare!* button (Figure 9.6, A). Depending on the number of grids and the number of grid measures requested, this process may take a few minutes. After completion, the first 100 rows of the prepared dataset are shown at the bottom of the page (C). In case you want to conduct the rest of the analysis with another software package or you simply need the prepared data for another purpose you can download it as a .CSV file (B). Up to this point *multigrid one* may simply serve as a data-preparation program for a batch of grids. If you want to run a mixed model with the prepared data move on to the *Run model* section.

Step 5. Run model >> Define and run the model and explore the results

This is the central part of the analysis. The *Run model* section will guide you through the process of *selecting a model*, *selecting which variables* to use with the model, to *run the model and explore the results* (Figure 9.7, A).

◀ Back Next ▶

Need some help? Watch this video.

Info >> Load data >> Explore >> Select >> Prepare data >> Run model >>

Prepare data

On the previous page you have selected the variables and indexes you want to include into the dataset. Press the button to prompt the dataset preparation. After the data has been prepared you can proceed to the model section. Be patient in case a large number of grids are processed.

Info You can download the processed data as a .csv file. This may be useful if you want to apply other models which are not available here.

Keep missings when merging additional data
 Show first 100 rows only

Prepare! Download

A → ← **B**

C →

	grid	filename	construct	cname	avg.int.c	c.int	sex	depression
1	1	sample_grid_1.txt	1	older than me - my age	0.32	0.13	female	21
2	1	sample_grid_1.txt	2	rude - blunt	0.32	0.49	female	21

Figure 9.6 Step 4, Preparing the Data.

◀ Back Next ▶

Need some help? Watch this video.

Info >> Load data >> Explore >> Select >> Prepare data >> Run model >>

Model and variables

Up to now you have created a dataset containing all the necessary information for the analysis. Below you can select between several scenarios and the corresponding *model type*. After choosing the appropriate model you can select which *variables* to use in the model.

Select model >> Select variables >> Results >>

Select a model

Note Here, only several standard scenarios are considered. If you want to specify other models you need to download the dataset and do this in any stats software.

- Nullmodel**

This model uses data on construct level as the dependent variable (e.g. intensity scores for each element). The independent variable is usually the grid, as the constructs are nested within grids. This model e.g. assesses the percentage of variation that is due to differences between persons.
- One grouping variable**

This model is like the nullmodel but you can additionally add a grouping factor to see if the factor levels differ with regard to the dependent variable.

A → **B** →

Figure 9.7 Step 5a, Selecting the Model.

Step 5a: Select a model

As stated above, the main purpose of this program is to facilitate the use of mixed models with grid data. For this purpose we implemented several models that correspond to standard research questions for grid data. Of course many more model specifications are possible, which the program does not cover. To get started choose a model specification according to your research question (B). The standard models currently covered are:

- 1 *Nullmodel*: As a starting point for any analysis it is usually good to know how much of the variation of the dependent variable is due to variation within and how much to variation between persons. The intra-class correlation (ICC) reported in the output will answer this question.
- 2 *One grouping variable*: Do two or more groups differ on average with respect to the dependent value? For example, is there a gender effect with respect to construct intensities?
- 3 *One numeric predictor at the person level*: Does a numeric independent variable at the person level explain the average level of the dependent variable (random effects)? For example, does depression (person level) vary systematically with construct intensities (construct level)?
- 4 *One numeric predictor at the person level plus one grouping variable*: This model combines the prior two models, for example, does depression (person level) explain the variation of construct intensities (construct level) and is there a difference between the two groups?

The software is thought to be a facilitator for the use of mixed models with grids only. More advanced approaches using more complex models, model comparisons, etc. require substantial knowledge of mixed models and are not included in the software. If you are familiar with mixed models you may still use this program to prepare the data and proceed with the analysis using a statistical program of your choice.

To proceed with our analysis we will select the *One grouping variable* model (B). This model can be used to assess if two or more groups differ with respect to a dependent variable on the construct level. Let's assume we are interested in the question of whether the mean construct intensities differ according to sex.

Step 5b: Populate the model

After selecting a model move on to the *Select variables* tab (Figure 9.8, A). On this tab you can populate the model with variables from the prepared dataset. As the number and type (metric or nominal) of independent

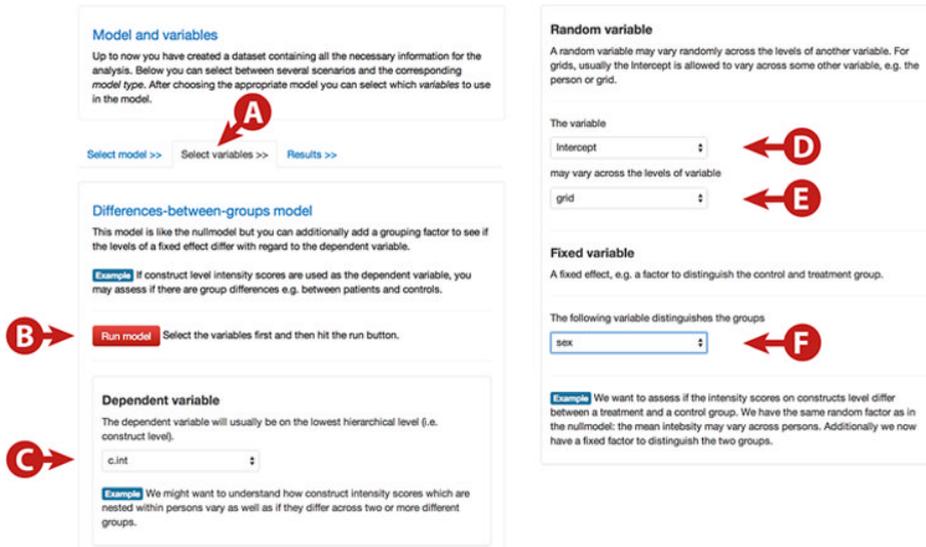


Figure 9.8 Step 5b, Populating the Model.

variables depend on the type of model we choose, the structure of this tab slightly varies across models.

Before prompting the estimation of the model (B), the variables must be defined. First, we need to select which variable is the dependent one (C). In this example we are interested in the question of whether the construct intensities for men and women differ. In the prepared data set the variable for construct intensities was named *c.int* (C, see step 3).

The reason why we use a mixed-models approach instead of a simple ANOVA is that we want to analyze *nested data*. For the analysis of grid data this usually means that for each person or grid (or generally speaking for each unit of analysis) we have more than one dependent value. This is always the case when we analyze measures on the construct level, as it is the case here with construct intensity scores. In technical terms it is said that the variable *construct intensity is nested within persons (or grids)*. Being interested in differences in construct intensities, we will assume that the average level of construct intensity will differ across persons. To reflect this in our model, persons are considered a random factor and the intercept (D) (i.e., the average value of the dependent variable) for each person is allowed to vary across the levels of the random factor (E).

Lastly, we need to include the sex variable, which has the name *sex* in the dataset (F). This is a fixed effect, as there are two clearly distinguishable groups. Now we are ready to run the model (B).

Step 5c: Explore the results

Pressing the *Run model* button will automatically take you to the *Results* tab (Figure 9.9, A). The first graph of the results output is a visualization of the raw data (B). The scores of the dependent variable (i.e., construct intensities) are shown on the y-axis. On the x-axis you find the grids (the random factor), which are ordered by their mean value on the dependent variable. Additionally the levels of the fixed effect variable (sex) are distinguished by color and shape. Without resorting to the statistical output below, we can already see that the groups differ. There are many more grids from female participants on the right side of the graph (i.e., with high mean construct intensity values) than from male.

The ANOVA table (C) contains the statistical tests for each variable included in the model. Here, the estimated parameter values are tested against the hypothesis that the effect is zero. The first row tests if the (overall) intercept may be zero. This is not of any interest as construct intensity scores cannot be negative. The second row contains the results for the variable sex. Here we see that there is a statistically significant sex effect present in the data ($p = 0.0002$).

Below, in the section *Random effects and residual variances*, the variances of the random effect variables and the residual variance are printed (D).

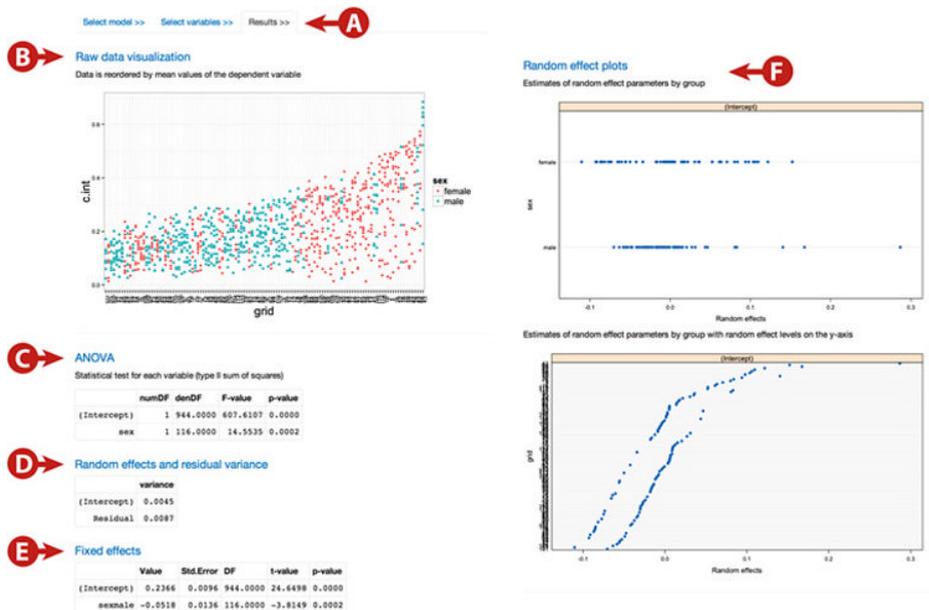


Figure 9.9 Step 5c, Model Results.

In our case the intercept was allowed to vary across persons (grids; i.e., each person has a different base level of construct intensity). Hence, we see the variance of the intercepts across all levels of the random factor, i.e., for all persons. The residual variance reflects the variance that could not be explained by the group variable or the random intercept. This information has little diagnostic value for our case though.

In the *Fixed effects* output (E) part you find the estimated parameters for the fixed effects. Here, we are interested in the variable *sex*. Generally, to use nominal variables in a regression model, a nominal variable with n categories is converted into $n-1$ numerical variables (this process is called dummy-coding). The software does this automatically. As *sex* has two categories we will find *one* effect in the output. The first level of the group always is the reference category (in our case the category *female*). The results are deviations from this category. The value for the reference category is found in the first line (*Intercept*). This means women on average have an intensity score of 0.2336. The effect *sexmale* refers to level *male* of variable *sex*. The effect expresses the additional value for the category *male* compared to the reference category *female*. This means that men have a slightly lower overall value for intensity (by 0.0518) than women as *sexmale* is negative. The effect is significant at the 1% level ($p = 0.0002$).

The two plots in the section *Random effect plots* (F) visualize the difference between the levels of the group variable *sex*. The upper plot shows the random effects (i.e., the intercepts for each person) for the two groups ordered by size and by group. We can see that the bulk of values for women is located more to the right than it is for men. This reflects the results that women on average have higher intensity scores than men. The lower plot also contains the random effect estimates but additionally each grid on the y-axis. We can see that the lines for women and men differ, with the line for women being displaced slightly to the right.

As a result of the output we can conclude that there is a relationship between *sex* and construct intensity: women on average have higher values than men. Note, however, that the data set is artificial, so no substantial claims can be made on the basis of these results.

Conclusion

From a personal construct perspective there has always been a drawback to using grids in research. In order to relate information in a grid to other information (such as a test score or a defined group) it has been necessary

to summarize data across constructs (the basic element of personal construct psychology) to form a summary measure for the total grid. A recent statistical development, mixed-effects models, enables this drawback to be overcome. This chapter has outlined how mixed-effects models can be applied to grid data using the Web-based software *multigrid one*. There are many research situations where these kinds of models can be applied. We hope that *multigrid one* provides an easy way to get started with mixed models and grid data and that the existence of the software will facilitate the use of this class of models in research using grids.

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Nonverbal Assessment Methods

Beverly M. Walker

Initially clarification of definitions of nonverbal techniques and what constitutes assessment within a personal construct framework is necessary. These issues will be explored together with the relevance of the nonverbal to personal construct theory (PCT) and reasons for their use. Illustrative examples of methodologies will be presented, clarifying the relevance of the verbal to the nonverbal.

Can Construing Be Nonverbal?

Some may be surprised that a chapter on nonverbal techniques might be included in a PCT monograph. The assumption is made that construing is a verbal process, with constructs synonymous with verbal labels, frequently a pair of adjectives such as “good-bad” or “energetic-lazy” marking the poles of the discrimination. But Kelly repeatedly indicated that word labels were not synonymous with constructs.

In this context he used the term “preverbal.” He drew links with the notion of the unconscious but considered that the preverbal had a wider range of convenience than the unconscious, encompassing “personal constructs which are communicable by means other than words, and including personal constructs which are only partly immobilized because of their poor symbolization” (Kelly, 1955, p. 466). Current PCT usage confines the preverbal to construing formulated prior to the development of formal spoken language, discriminations that nevertheless may continue to be used throughout life. The terms “nonverbal” or “tacit” construing are applied to discriminations that are not clearly verbalized, irrespective of their origins in any part of the lifespan, “*lived discriminations* channelizing an

individual's actions and perceptions, which may or may not be represented adequately in symbolic speech" (Neimeyer, 1981, p. 105).

What Is Assessment in a PCT Framework?

Human assessment commonly occurs within a relationship, such that one person sets up a situation to obtain information about another. Data are collected and a conclusion reached on that basis. Teachers, for example, set examinations to assess students' understanding of material; clinicians administer groups of psychological tests to evaluate the strengths, and especially problems, of their clients; researchers attempt to assess the performance of groups on some task under varying controlled conditions. A critical component is the communication of something about a person(s) to another. (While self-assessment can occur, this arguably involves communication within the personality, what Kelly [1955] might describe as raising levels of cognitive awareness.)

Within traditional assessment paradigms the assessee is considered the producer of data, passively responding in a controlled testing situation. However, PCT views individuals in all contexts as active, interpreting and testing out hypotheses about the world. Interactions, communication, actions, reactions—all are part of active engagement in the ongoing, recurring processes of validation, invalidation, consolidation, and revision. Consequently the distinction made by traditional interventions between objective processes of assessment and of intervention breaks down. All PCT assessments are dynamic, with the potential to engender change. Analogously, in most (perhaps all) interventions the relationship between intervener and client is one of co-experimentation. Both partners are in the business of collecting data to help understand more fully the potential for movement and, as such, are engaged in assessment.

In the interests of making this chapter manageable, it will focus on techniques that have been developed or used *predominantly* to collect information about a person, rather than specifically to facilitate change (cf. Stein, 2007). Such assessments are administered in research and/or intervention contexts.

Distinguishing the Verbal from the Nonverbal?

For current purposes, what is verbal is assumed to be spoken or written words that are expressed in socially agreed on (and hence communicable) configurations, known as languages. The notion of the "nonverbal," by its

very semantic form, contrasts with the “verbal.” Consequently, nonverbal techniques do not make use of words, and hence language.

There is no socially agreed way of making sense of many such nonverbal productions as there might be if one answered a simple question. Some behavioral communications *are* socially and culturally agreed upon, such as nodding the head or shaking hands. At different historical periods and/or in different cultures there is a level of communication by pictorial inclusions or omissions in works of art. These encoded meanings are not necessarily recognized in any comprehensive fashion by people from a different era, culture, or level of art familiarity, as exemplified by seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting (Harris, 2008).

However, the distinction between verbal and nonverbal is not clear-cut. The verbal in its spoken form involves some nonverbal component, whether integral to the voice (such as tone, volume, or clarity) or accompanying facial expressions or movements. Even in written form some nonverbal cues may be present. Additionally, the nonverbal, if it is to be communicated, generally necessitates some verbal (spoken or written) adjunct to allow that to happen. An expert in Dutch painting iconography can explain many of the subtleties to non-experts.

Consequently the proportion of nonverbal to verbal in any communication, and hence assessment, is largely a matter of degree. Arriving at an operational definition of what will be included in this chapter, mention will be made of some nonverbal techniques that are adjuncts to the verbal, but the particular focus will be on those techniques where the nonverbal has priority. The verbal is secondary, even tangential. What might be explored by using the nonverbal is clearly the issue.

Why Use Nonverbal Assessment?

Given that the purpose of assessment involves an increase in understanding of the assessee by the assessor, and since the nonverbal is less readily a vehicle of communication, why use such a technique for assessment? A variety of reasons have been proposed.

Most obviously some participants may not be able to readily verbalize so that the assessor can understand, as with children. A common form of nonverbal task is drawing, which children in Western societies readily incorporate into their play. Asking them to draw solves the motivational issue. Further, drawing and other play activities are generally more developed than the complex communication afforded by language. Individuals with

histories of verbal communication difficulties, including cultural language barriers, may be more comfortable communicating nonverbally. Conversations can be undertaken, with people finding ways to express themselves when words are hard to find.

Not that language is a panacea. Language gives a false sense of security, a conviction that something is communicated or that something is understood, contrary perhaps to reality. Use of the same words does not inevitably guarantee identical meaning. Indeed, it might be argued that it rarely does. So one might wish to transcend the inevitable limitations of language.

A common reason for using the nonverbal is to access discriminations that cannot be, or are not, expressed in words. Ravenette (1997) used the metaphor of “diving beneath the waves,” bypassing the linearity of language that “necessarily simplifies complexities and contradictions” (Harter, 2007, p. 174). People have highly rehearsed ways of describing problems, events, and themselves. The nonverbal can bypass these well-worn ruts, loosening, introducing more spontaneity. Additionally there are the discriminations that are nonverbal, that have never been verbalized or are no longer language-accessible, but which are evident in our nonverbal behaving. These need to be handled carefully, especially at the level of assessment, as they may involve core construing, central to identity and survival and hence to intense therapeutic intervention (Stein, 2007).

With adults, perhaps requests to do tasks that often would be considered the province of childhood, such as drawing or playing with buttons, temporarily changes the frame of the problem. A respite of levity is introduced with the potential to refocus “from a difficult problem that needs to be resolved to an interesting phenomenon that we can explore and try to understand” (Frances, email to author, December 9, 2013).

The Visual and the Nonverbal

In bringing together nonverbal techniques used by PCT I was struck by the domination of visual methodologies. However, far from being a PCT-specific issue, this is widespread. Some (e.g., Berger, 1972) have argued that vision is the most fundamental of the senses. Others consider that there is an increasing historic trend toward the primacy of the visual. Jenks (1995) argued that our modern world is intrinsically “seen,” such that “looking, seeing and knowing have become perilously intertwined” (p. 1), a phenomenon that Jay (1993) referred to as “ocularcentrism.” Given this bias, the visual predominance of PCT nonverbal assessment techniques is unsurprising.

Examples of Nonverbal Assessment Methods Used in PCT

These methods could be compared in a number of ways. The chosen basis for comparison was theory-related distinctions, viz. using nonverbal techniques to explore what we make sense of (elements), ways we make sense of them (constructs), the relationships between elements and constructs, and the processes relevant to construing.

Using nonverbal objects as elements (triggers for construct elicitation)

Ravenette has used nonverbal techniques extensively with children, both as diagnostic instruments, and to open avenues for intervention. He considered the advantages of such approaches to include a means of “systematization of the questions in a way that does not put the child in the embarrassing position of having to talk about himself in the first person” (Ravenette, 1999, p. 22). Similarly, Dalton (1996) emphasized combining ways for the adult to understand the child’s perspective with a “structure within which the child can feel safe to explore” (p. 22).

Ravenette (1999) developed several Portrait Gallery techniques. For example, he presented children with a grid and asked them to draw pictures of the faces of people such as Self, Mum, Dad, Sister, Class Bully, etc. as the elements. This both actively involved the child in the activity and provided concrete, personalized representations of the elements to be construed. The drawings could be triggers for a conversation to gain clarification of the child’s peopled world. In another version, in order to explore feelings, the child was asked to distinguish between two schematic faces, one happy, the other sad, saying three things about each. The child was asked to fill in additional blank faces to illustrate other feelings, again elaborating in words.

Another of Ravenette’s (1999) techniques focused on problems at school and consisted of provided drawings of school situations. The child chose three and was asked a series of questions. One focused on the child’s “awareness of psychological, situational or interactional sequences” (p. 75), e.g., “What do you think is happening?” “How do you think this came about?” The child’s awareness of his or her own thoughts, feelings, and actions was explored by a second group, e.g., “If this child were you, what would you think? What would you feel? What would you do? What difference would that make to anyone?” (p. 75). Ravenette thought that

the most revealing questions concerned the impact the child felt his or her actions might have on others, their “potency in the world.” Consistent with Kelly’s focus on contrasts as perceived alternatives, and hence possibilities for change, the final question was: “If the child were not him, what sort of a boy would you say he was?”

As part of the formal assessment of a philosophy of education subject for a teaching qualification Southall (1994) asked students to use the metaphor of a journey to indicate key issues, concepts, and influences experienced during the subject, representing this as a drawing. The results were often highly creative as budding teachers portrayed treks through the jungle or outback, train or spaceship journeys, milestones, etc. in their journey through approaches such as pragmatism, existentialism, and constructivism.

Using the nonverbal as construct elicitation

The most common approach to using the nonverbal as constructs also involves drawing. Again Ravenette (1999) provided the inspiration by addressing the critical aspect of construing, viz. its bipolarity, creating an important differentiation between a PCT approach and the broader psychological drawing literature.

Assuming children’s drawings “point to aspects of knowing that exist at lower levels of awareness than that of verbal articulation,” Ravenette (1999, p. 127) presented the child with a page on which was drawn a line, curving down at the end. The child was invited to turn this into a picture. Ravenette did not anticipate that the child could provide an initial articulate explanation so the request to draw another picture, the *opposite* of the first, would assist in understanding the original. The child was required to “return to his or her drawing with new eyes and in the process become more fully aware of what he or she has created” (p. 128), thereby elaborating their understanding.

Adapting this methodology to adults, Cornelius (2000) argued that such an approach allowed for less edited and more “free-flowing” construals from work-based non-therapeutic groups, as well as increasing “participation and reflection” (p. 56), than techniques beginning with words. Working with older adults, Robbins (2005) used drawings to explore a contrast to self—the ideal self. She found that, while some older individuals were not comfortable drawing, others preferred it to writing. The result was often a rich range of constructions concerning their lives that previously had not been evident.

The most sophisticated approach to using drawings as diagnostic tools was presented by Foster and Viney (2007, 2012). Foster and Viney (2012) explicitly considered utility of drawing in the context of Kelly's (1955) transitive diagnosis (one that remains subject to revision, a hypothesis about the central issues needing to be addressed). They considered drawings most pertinent to understanding the client's view of the problems they confront, what others see as the problem, as well as evaluation of the client's construction system. Participants taking part in workshops on menopause were asked "to draw a situation and its opposite, focusing on a choice you are facing or have made in relation to menopause" (Foster & Viney, 2007, p. 150). A variety of "diagnostic indicators" were then used to analyze the drawings. They advised caution concerning drawing interpretation. While the provision of the opposite reduced ambiguity, the importance of focusing on recurring themes, relating these to other sources, was stressed.

A rare empirical investigation of nonverbal construing (Neimeyer, 1981) involved two grids—a standard grid (with role figure elements and verbalized construct poles) and another with the same elements but nonverbalized poles. A variety of materials were provided for selection to symbolize nonverbal (termed "tacit") construing, including pictures of people, geometric designs, tactile media, and drawing materials. Pairs of elements were chosen and the participant used the tacit construing materials to indicate "some important way in which the two figures are opposite" (p. 109).

For both grids participants rated each element on the chosen constructs. The most important of the results indicated that meaningfulness, as measured by extremity of ratings, was greater for the verbal grid. However, when the ratings for each of the two elements from which constructs were generated were compared, the nonverbal constructs produced more extreme ratings than verbal ones. Neimeyer regarded this as "theoretically provocative," suggesting that "tacit discriminations, while intensely meaningful at their *focus* of convenience, may be less permeable, less clearly applicable to a *range* of elements than are their linguistically articulated parallels" (p. 110, original italics). Further, the tacit grid contained more ordination of constructs, "a measure of the subtlety with which any given construct is applied to a range of role figures" (p. 111), suggesting greater superordinacy for nonverbal construing. This study merits replication with a larger sample, incorporating more recent grid-analysis developments and providing more information about how the participants used the nonverbal materials.

Using the nonverbal as a technique to relate constructs to elements

At the simplest level numerous studies have provided some form of physical representation of the scale for each construct on which the elements are to be located. Examples include providing a ruler or sorting elements printed on cards into piles.

The Human Grid (Frances, 2006) has been argued to be particularly useful for groups struggling with conflict (e.g., structure vs. flexibility) as a defusing approach to mapping the problem. The group facilitator describes sympathetically the two poles as well as positions in between. With one pole at one end of the room and the contrast at the other, people are asked to position themselves physically along the dimension, corresponding to their conflict position. The facilitator asks why particular positions were chosen. This representation of the nature of the conflict maps out clearly the issues while simultaneously engendering more respectful understanding of other members' positions, reducing tension and encouraging curiosity (Frances, 2006).

A pioneering attempt to explore social relationship construing nonverbally was conducted by Riedel (1970). Participants were provided with a series of 3×3 grids and templates for different-sized circles. Participants drew two circles within chosen grid squares, representing their relationship to selected individuals (the circles) from Kelly's role elements (self-mother, self-boss, self-person disliked, etc.). This task was completed under three conditions: self-appraisal, other appraisal (i.e., circles drawn the way the person thinks other social objects would draw them) and ideal appraisal (the way they would most like the relationship to be). The size, location, and placement of the circles were analyzed, in effect creating a physical means of representing each relationship "by recourse to a number of . . . bipolar variables: up-down, left-right, large-small, close-remote" (Riedel, 1972, p. 152). While the theoretical rationale for interpretation of differences found was underdeveloped, the potential utility of this methodology remains unexplored.

Examining processes by nonverbal techniques

Some nonverbal techniques do not fit readily into the above sections. Such methods can be used in various ways or are oriented to exploring processes of construing.

My own work, involving student projects and theses, focuses on photography. Participants are asked to take a number of photographs answering

the question: “Who am I?” A set of categories is developed, with photographs scored according to whether or not the category is present. Participants provide written information about what they have photographed, and, in some studies, why they have done so. This verbal accompaniment is considered secondary to the photograph itself, but is at times essential to clarify the participant’s intention.

Exploring Kelly’s notion of constriction as a way of dealing with anxiety, Bailey and Walker (2003) compared clinically anxious to non-anxious individuals, predicting that the latter would be less constricted than the former. The relative constriction of people’s self-concept was operationalized by the range of different categories scored for each set of photographs taken. Kelly’s prediction was supported, with the anxious group having significantly fewer photographic categories than controls.

Further evidence of the utility of this nonverbal constriction measure was provided by Hanich and Walker (2007), exploring the relationship between depression and constriction. Depressives and controls were compared on constriction measures derived from a repertory grid and the range of different categories in the photographs scored. The depressives showed significantly more midpoint ratings for the elements “self” and “future self” and had fewer photographic categories than controls. These midpoint measures and the category range for photographs were negatively correlated. Further analyses of the content of the photographs, including the use of metaphor, were conducted.

Refinement of this methodology was undertaken by Doyle (2012). Participants provided verbal clarifications of the photographs, including why each was important to them. She differentiated manifest from latent content, as well as levels of abstraction. A further methodological exploration involved using the photographs as elements within a resistance-to-change grid.

One technique intertwining assessment and therapy is that which takes an object as a metaphor for something else. One example is Frances’s (2007) description of found-object metaphors, whereby clients were asked to choose an object in the room that represented something for them. Discussion of the object helped to open up conversations, especially when circumstances were not easily verbalizable, or to move away from very rehearsed accounts. The task appeared to facilitate loosening, enabling broader understanding of problems, what she termed “associative elaboration.” A subsequent return to the metaphor may facilitate non-threatening tightening, though Frances indicated that “verbal accounts are not always the most meaningful thing happening.”

Combining the visual with the tactile, Morris and Appleby (2012) explored the experience and needs of people and families who were at risk of inherited prion diseases (“the Stranger”). Participants chose a button to depict that Stranger. Morris considered that this technique facilitated the articulation of difficult-to-access construing, allowing participants to elaborate “construing from the button as they hold it, look at it, turn it around and even compare it with ones they nearly picked” (email sent December 17, 2013). Such interaction brought levity to the serious discussion, as well as helping to locate their experience outside of themselves.

Conclusions

This review has brought together a wide variety of techniques that have been used as assessment tools in varied contexts. Looking at them together there are several striking themes.

One is the importance of the verbal. With the exception of Neimeyer’s approach (which needs follow-up), other writers integrate the nonverbal with the verbal to some degree. This is in part because the focus here is on assessment, and, as outlined, that involves clarification and communication. The verbal reduces the ambiguity. This is different from a therapeutic aim, for which the verbal may be unnecessary for change to occur (Harter, 2007). Frances (email to author, December 7, 2013) was struck “by how verbal our work with nonverbal material is—we stimulate new kinds of talk basically.” The nonverbal opens up for consideration topics, emotions, reactions, strengths, and weaknesses that the verbal initially may not.

A second feature is the total reliance on vision, with the exception of Neimeyer (1981) and Morris and Appleby (2012), unlike therapeutic use of nonverbal methods that would be broader. Further, the approaches used tend to be fairly traditional, drawings and photographs predominantly, with little exploration of newer mediums provided by the Internet and digital technologies. One might argue that these latter may be unnecessary if currently used methods do the job. However, younger generations may be less amenable to participation in activities that they might consider outmoded, as we have found recently with people preferring digital cameras to disposable ones. Also, different material, both verbal and nonverbal, is publicly accessible via the Internet, presenting interactions in a variety of contexts that may not be evident in an interview.

Finally, there is a diversity of approach that both reflects and encourages creativity, personal construct theory in action. It is to be hoped that this

review might encourage further elaboration. Such techniques bring us closer to exploring the full potential of PCT, emphasizing, as they do, playful creativity and that “constructions are not symbolized by words,” but are only expressed in “pantomime” (Kelly, 1955, p. 16).

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Experience Cycle Methodology

A Qualitative Method to Understand the Process of Revising Personal Constructs

Lindsay G. Oades and Fiona Patterson

Introduction

George Kelly's later writing emphasized the process of construing. The Experience Cycle Methodology (ECM) is based on Kelly's Experience Cycle, which is a five-phase cycle where a person may invest in their prediction and possibly experience construct revision if invalidated (Oades & Viney, 2012). After describing the Experience Cycle the five main principles upon which the ECM was developed are described. A proforma for ECM as a semi-structured interview is provided. Four case examples are given to illustrate the use of ECM and how it assists understanding of the construct revision process. The examples are from the experience of adolescents who are living with selective mutism. As will be described further, this is a condition whereby children, adolescents, and adults experience difficulties with speaking in select environments, despite having age-appropriate vocabulary skills and academic abilities. The examples illustrate phases in the rich and, in this case, anxiety-provoking experience of trying different ways to approach, and sometimes talk in, these select environments. The chapter concludes with reflections from a researcher regarding the use of ECM with people in clinical environments.

Experience and the Experience Cycle

The Fundamental Postulate of personal construct theory indicates that people are like scientists who strive to make sense of events, experiences, others, and themselves (elements) by detecting repeating themes (constructs) and this enables them to make predictions about their future experiences. If a prediction is validated, the construct system might be preserved, whereas should a prediction be invalidated, the construct system might be modified. Optimal functioning occurs when a person successfully completes a cycle of experience and is able to confirm or disconfirm their previous prediction and reconstrue as necessary (see Figure 11.1). The inability to reconstrue when predictions are disconfirmed is key to understanding psychological disturbance.

A range of clues is provided as to the level of anticipated change in the construct system. The emotional components of Kellyan “anxiety,” “threat,” “fear,” “guilt,” and “hostility” are important factors in this process. Feeling fearful indicates that one’s current view of the self needs to be changed to make sense of events. However, this is at a relatively shallow level and not linked to a person’s “core self” constructs. Feeling threat arises when a person recognizes imminent change of more superordinate “core self” constructs. Guilt is the feeling associated with being dislodged from the “core self.” Hostility occurs in the face of invalidation when a

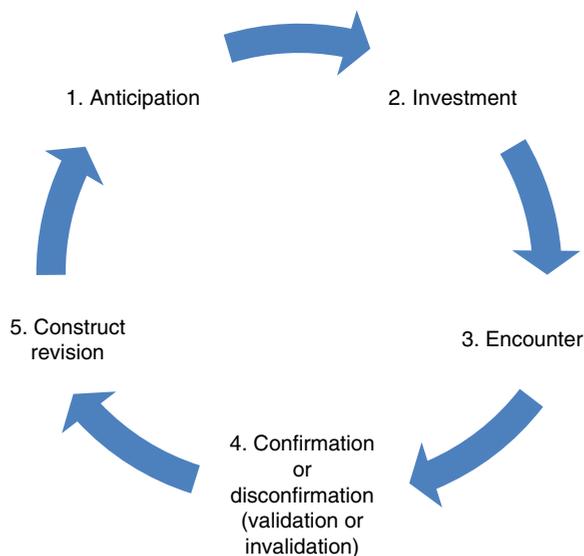


Figure 11.1 Kelly's Experience Cycle. *Source:* Oades & Viney (2012).

person attempts to protect himself or herself from change by trying to prove that he or she is right.

Describing the Experience Cycle Methodology

There were five main principles that guided the development of the Experience Cycle Methodology (Oades & Viney, 2000, 2012), as follows:

- 1 The methodology will be consistent with personal construct theory in terms of its theoretical constructs.
- 2 The methodology will emphasize the process nature of construing, consistent with Kelly's later writings.
- 3 The methodology will be consistent with the non-questionnaire ethos espoused by Kelly.
- 4 The methodology will be primarily qualitative and idiographic, so as to highlight personal meanings through narrative, yet still be able to integrate with quantitative research.
- 5 The methodology will be simple and flexible so that it may be used by both researchers and practitioners.

Experience Cycle Methodology was designed as a semi-structured interview schedule (see Table 11.1) in which participants are guided through the Experience Cycle as described by Kelly (1970) (Oades, 1999, 2000;

Table 11.1 Experience Cycle Methodology Interview Proforma.

Anticipation Phase

- *What things were you predicting would happen when you did x?*
- *What options did you see open to yourself at this time?*
- *Were you concerned what others may think of you or what you may think of yourself?*

Investment Phase

- *How much did it matter to you at the time?*

Confirmation/Disconfirmation Phase

- *How did things go compared to what you initially thought would happen?*
- *What feelings did you have about this?*

Construct Revision Phase

- *In general, what did you learn from your experience of xyz?*
 - *Did you change as a result of your experience?*
 - *Did you change the way you view xyz?*
-

Oades & Viney, 2000, 2012). Open-ended questions are asked in accordance with the five phases of the Experience Cycle and emphasize the process nature of construing, which Oades and Viney (2000, p. 168) call the “construct revision pathway.” Qualitative narratives at each phase of the cycle are quantified by provision of a coding score. The original questions were designed to take 15 minutes to administer in a face-to-face interview (Oades & Viney, 2000).

The ECM also includes the ABC technique (Tschudi, 1977) as a method of examining the advantages and disadvantages of change, as in Tschudi and Sandberg’s (1984) exploration of the advantages of symptoms for clients. This will become evident in the case examples now described.

Case Examples of Adolescents with Selective Mutism

Fransella (1987) examined the reconstruing process of people who stutter in previous personal construct-oriented research. To illustrate the use of ECM, several examples from adolescent females experiencing selective mutism are now provided. In addition to the richness of the experience in general, it is important to examine the potential construct revision pathway—that is, if constructs changed, what was the pathway experienced? Moreover, these examples also illustrate the adaptability of ECM, which in this case was conducted via instant messaging or email.

Selective mutism is a condition whereby children, adolescents, and adults experience difficulties with speaking in select environments, despite having age-appropriate vocabulary skills and academic abilities (Kumpulainen, 2002; Nowakowski et al., 2009). Many theories have attempted to conceptualize selective mutism, but due to the heterogeneous nature of the condition the etiology remains unclear. However, there are some common features and, more recently, a relationship between selective mutism and anxiety has been recognized (Anstendig, 1999).

Due to the nature of the condition, it is difficult to gain the perspective of the individual. Popular methods of research in this area are the use of case studies and parent reports. Omdal (2007) and Omdal and Galloway (2007) have attempted to explore the experience of selective mutism from the perspective of the individuals themselves using projective tests and retrospective accounts, but these methods have limitations. For example, the poor reliability and validity of projective tests have been well documented (Bornstein, 1999; Hiller, Rosenthal, Bornstein, Berry, & Brunell-Neulieb, 1999) as well as the influence of the administrator on participant response

(Burley & Handler, 1997). Retrospective accounts have been criticized for the possibility of memory distortions and reinterpretations (Hassan, 2005). Therefore, a method for eliciting current perspectives using objective methods would be preferable. The Internet provides a possible method of communication that may be useful for gathering information from people with this type of condition.

The ECM interview was administered over the Internet either via instant messaging or via email. Each participant decided on their preferred method depending on their levels of anxiety. For example, some participants found instant messaging too “intimate” because of the immediate interaction with another, which raised their anxiety levels. These participants, therefore, preferred the email method of communication.

A semi-structured interview guide was used in accordance with the five phases of the cycle as per Table 11.1, with *x* referring to speaking and *xyz* referring to living with selective mutism. The demographics of the people answering the ECM questions are summarized in Table 11.2.

The bold text in Table 11.3 represents the construct revision pathway as reported by Oades and Viney (2012). That is, a person is more likely to experience significant construct revision, in the domain at hand, if they make tight predictions, have invested in the prediction, and the prediction is invalidated.

The participants’ narratives were coded separately by two different raters to check inter-rater reliability. The second rater was independent of the study and blind to the participant details. Any discrepancies in coding were

Table 11.2 Demographics of People Living with Selective Mutism (SM).

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Resides</i>	<i>First Language</i>	<i>School/ Employment Status</i>	<i>Age When SM First Recognized/ Diagnosed</i>
Louise	19	White British	U.K.	English	Recently withdrew from university due to SM	12
Abbie	15	Hispanic	U.S.A.	American English	Attends high school	Recognized at 11 Diagnosed at 14
Emily	16	White British	U.K.	English	Attends secondary school	Diagnosed in early childhood
Mary	19	White	Canada	English	Educated via online and mail services	No formal diagnosis

Table 11.3 Category Groupings of Experience Cycle Methodology Data.

<i>Phases</i>	<i>Groups</i>	
Anticipation	(1) Tight Prediction	(2) Loose Prediction
Investment	(1) High Investment	(2) Low Investment
(Dis)Confirmation	(1) Validation	(2) Invalidation
Construct Revision	(1) Significant Revision	(2) Minimal Revision

Table 11.4 Category Groupings of Experience Cycle Methodology Data from Louise.

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Category Grouping</i>	<i>Quote/Evidence</i>
Anticipation	Tight Prediction	<i>“I thought that my words would come out in a jumbled, nonsensical manner and my voice would be all choked and squeaky.”</i>
Investment	High Investment	<i>“I knew that the consequences of failing to speak at this important time would have a great blow to my self confidence and others confidences [sic] in me. But it also mattered because it was a big opportunity to greater [sic] my self esteem and improve my confidence about speaking. I thought the benefits of success would outweigh the risk.”</i>
(Dis) Confirmation	Invalidation	<i>“I think it went okay and much better than initially thought.”</i>
Construct Revision	Minimal Revision	<i>“I learnt that in situations where the benefits of speaking outweighed my anxiety over speaking itself it is worth taking the risk.”</i>

discussed and a consensus agreed upon. A raw percentage agreement of 91.67% was reached between raters.

The individual examples of people with selective mutism are now provided.

Louise

The outcomes of Louise’s Experience Cycle questions are presented in Table 11.4. A quote from each of the phases is provided to support the coding.

Table 11.4 illustrates the processes that Louise goes through as she anticipates speaking. Combined with Table 11.5, the implicative dilemmas she experiences become evident.

Table 11.5 ABC Technique Applied to Louise Speaking and Not Speaking.

<i>A1</i>	<i>Not Speaking</i>	<i>A2</i>	<i>Speaking</i>
Preferred?		X	
B1	Disadvantage of not speaking “Frustration at nobody knowing what I’m thinking and missing opportunities.”	B2	Advantage of speaking “I can let people know what I’m thinking and stop people thinking I’m rude or stupid for not speaking.”
C2	Advantage of not speaking “People are less likely to try and engage with me, so I feel less anxious overall.”	C1	Disadvantage of speaking “There is pressure to keep up the higher level of social interaction which tires me out a lot.”

Table 11.6 Category Groupings of Experience Cycle Methodology Data for Abbie.

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Category Grouping</i>	<i>Quote/Evidence</i>
Anticipation	Tight Prediction	“I thought I’d faint or be judged by everyone. Terrified I’d fail and never be able to speak out loud again.”
Investment (Dis) Confirmation	High Investment Invalidation	“It was a constant worry day and night.” “It went very much better [than anticipated].”
Construct Revision	Significant Revision	“I learnt that you haven’t failed unless you’ve tried.”

Presented in Table 11.5 are the advantages and disadvantages of speaking and not speaking for Louise. A1 and A2 are Louise’s problematic position (symptom of selective mutism) and her desired position. The B1 and B2 positions identify the possible reasons for change. However, C2 and C1 are factors that prevent change for Louise, i.e., she is less anxious when she does not speak, and the pressure of social interaction is tiring.

Abbie

Abbie’s phases of experience are similar to those of Louise, in that both of them made tight and negative predictions about what would happen if they spoke. They also reported high investment in the event, in this case strong feelings of worry and anxiety. In both cases, the predictions were disconfirmed and things went better than anticipated.

Emily

Emily's responses to the Experience Cycle questions are presented in Table 11.7.

Mary

Mary's responses to the Experience Cycle questions are presented in Table 11.8.

Table 11.7 Category Groupings of Experience Cycle Methodology Data for Emily.

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Category Grouping</i>	<i>Quote/Evidence</i>
Anticipation	Loose Prediction	<i>"I don't know . . . it might have shocked them if they heard me talk, and it might have drawn attention to me."</i>
Investment	High Investment	<i>"[It mattered] a lot."</i>
(Dis)Confirmation	Invalidation	<i>"completely different! They just responded normally and carried on with everything."</i>
Construct Revision	Significant Revision	<i>"those particular girls are prepared to accept me whether I speak or not . . . I should feel fine speaking around them because of how they responded to me; they won't be shocked or question me loads, or judge me . . . they'll just get on as normal."</i>

Table 11.8 Category Groupings of Experience Cycle Methodology Data for Mary.

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Category Grouping</i>	<i>Quote/Evidence</i>
Anticipation	Tight Prediction	<i>"just that I would be extremely nervous and may appear that way to others."</i>
Investment	Low Investment	<i>"it didn't matter too much to me at the time."</i>
(Dis)Confirmation	Validation	<i>"I thought . . . that they were noticing my anxiety and laughing to themselves in their head [sic]."</i>
Construct Revision	Minimal Revision	<i>"I felt a little proud but not fully because I felt that I looked and sounded stupid."</i>

Follow-up of Research Participants Living with Selective Mutism

Attempts were made to follow up the participants three years after the original data collection. Four of the original participants agreed to take part. Once again they were asked to complete the ECM schedule via email or instant messenger, detailing a *current* speaking experience.

Emily

The follow-up responses to the Experience Cycle questions offered by Emily are detailed in Table 11.9.

Emily also provided an accompanying narrative regarding her current situation:

“some days my anxiety is bad, I am still very much restricted by the Selective Mutism, but other days I am more able to speak. For example, I can ask teachers questions or say full sentences . . . Overall, I think my ability to speak in social situations is improving.”

In contrast to Emily’s original ECM results, it seems that she has begun reconstruing her experiences in response to the invalidation of tight predictions in which she is highly invested. Her original results indicated that although her experiences tended to be invalidated, her predictions were loose, thereby maintaining her difficulties with speaking.

Mary

Mary’s current responses to the Experience Cycle questions are detailed in Table 11.10.

Table 11.9 Category Groupings for Experience Cycle Methodology in Emily.

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Category Grouping</i>	<i>Quote/Evidence</i>
Anticipation	Tight Prediction	“ <i>I would be judged, the words would come out wrong or my voice would sound strange or shaky, or that people wouldn’t hear.</i> ”
Investment	High Investment	“ <i>[it mattered] a lot.</i> ”
(Dis)Confirmation	Invalidation	“ <i>not as bad . . . as I think.</i> ”
Construct Revision	Significant Revision	“ <i>I am changing and becoming more confident.</i> ”

Table 11.10 Category Groupings of Experience Cycle Methodology Data for Mary.

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Category Grouping</i>	<i>Quote/Evidence</i>
Anticipation	Tight Prediction	<i>“I was predicting a positive outcome such as sounding confident, clear and loud (louder than my usual low volume).”</i>
Investment	Low Investment	<i>“It . . . [being judged by others]. . . was constantly running through my mind.”</i>
(Dis)Confirmation	Invalidation	<i>“It didn’t go too well.” “I felt a bit disappointed in myself and defeated by Selective Mutism. I also felt embarrassed.”</i>
Construct Revision	Minimal Revision	<i>“I don’t have . . . much control over my ability to speak.”</i>

It seems that although Mary made a tight prediction about her speaking experience, her investment was low because of concerns about what others might think of her. As such, any revision to her construing was minimal. She reports that she is still as “constrained as much as ever by having Selective Mutism.”

Researcher’s Reflections on Using Experience Cycle Methodology

The feedback from the participants upon completing the ECM interview for the purposes of the research involving selective mutism was a positive one. Participants found it relatively simple to complete in spite of the restrictions placed on the communication style because of their condition (i.e., having to converse over the Internet).

In addition, the ECM invited hypotheses about *why* a person might fail to reconstrue their experience, inasmuch as anticipation and construct revision appear to be mediated by the processes occurring during investment. Whilst Kelly may not have distinguished these, it is exciting for the purposes of applying an intervention that could focus on these aspects to enable change. That is, as per Table 11.3, further exploration of tight predictions and high investment is warranted.

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Part III
Society and Culture

Personal Construct Psychology, Society, and Culture

A Review

Harry Procter

The psychology of personal constructs emphasizes the essential importance of social constructions.

(George Kelly, 1955, p. 503)

Man's circle of society . . . is a sort of loosely compacted person, in some respects of higher rank than the person of an individual organism.

(Charles S. Peirce, 1905, p. 421)

In 1978, Procter and Parry wrote that personal construct psychology (PCP) had underestimated the extent to which people's construing has a social origin. However, we also concluded that Kelly's psychology is *compatible with sociological theory* and that he had substantially resolved the problem of the dialectic between the constraint of our culture and our personal freedom. It is a privilege to revisit this area after 37 years, during which there has been abundant social and cultural PCP writing, too much to do justice to in this brief review. The literature has been particularly blessed with contributors giving the inside perspective from countries enduring great troubles and/or transitions over this period, including South Africa (Du Preez, 1980), Yugoslavia (Stojnov, 1996), Germany (Scheer, 2003), and Israel (Kalekin-Fishman, 2009). Kelly himself was raised in rural Kansas and set up clinics in the Dust Bowl of the 1930s Midwest. He found the construing of an agricultural student to be "held firmly within the terms of the class and groups to which the young man sees himself as belonging"

(Kelly, 1955, p. 693) (i.e., his *social identity*: see later). However, Kelly still denied that we are victims of our biography and emphasized that cultural control lies within our own construct system and is imposed only in the sense that it has limited the kind of evidence at our disposal (1955, pp. 692–693). In this chapter I will be critiquing this view but will conclude that PCP provides an elegant and useful framework for subsuming and integrating the social and the personal.

The Micro–Macro Debate

Kelly envisaged the construct to be the drawing of a cleavage line at some point across a continuum. We can focus here on a number of polarities: *micro–macro*, *agency–structure*, *individual–collective*, *personal–social*, *self–other*, and *private–public*. Each of these has different meanings, but comprises a cluster of related constructs which define the debate in which an attempt is made to address the problem of reconciling the different worlds or domains that the distinctions set up.

Incidentally, we are here touching on using PCP as a useful *critical theory* or *method*, one that has hardly been exploited but that has potentially a broad application. It involves examining the constructs used in any discipline or approach and exploring the attributes of these dichotomies according to Kelly’s theory—their governing superordinates, subordinates, implications, and manner of use. For academic disciplines such as psychology, sociology, or anthropology are nothing other than construct systems—domains of shared construing, no different from other examples which concern us here, namely societies, cultures, institutions, and groups of all kinds. We may begin to research an area by constructing a “bipolar dictionary,” as Du Preez (1980) did when he compiled a list of 45 constructs used in the proceedings of the South African Assembly as the ruling National Party continued to impose and maintain its racist system of apartheid.

The micro–macro debate can be approached in different ways. The micro can be ignored, as is done, for example, by some sociologists and social constructionists, culminating in the poststructuralist Barthes’s (1967/1977) “death of the author.” Foucault, for example, largely focused on the macro, although toward the end of his life he admitted that he had “hampered himself by overemphasizing truth and power at the expense of individual conduct” (Foucault, 1989; Martin & Barresi, 2006, p. 261). Durkheim (1952) focused on macro variables in his work on suicide rates as sufficiently explanatory, and was explicitly impatient with the idea that individuals are

a valid source of data about the determinants of their behavior. Biological and cognitive psychology are often guilty of ignoring the social and the macro altogether. The micro and macro can be left as incompatible domains, but these may then “interplay” or “interpenetrate,” or an attempt can be made to *bridge* the gap utilizing a particular construct or phenomenon: *identity* is a notable example here, which will be examined later. Kalekin-Fishman (2003a) concluded that none of the sociological paradigms succeed in bridging the macro–micro gap in providing an image of the individual that is “true to life,” but that with PCP it becomes possible to trace *specific connections* between macro-frameworks and the individuals that make up society. She argued that several of the corollaries can perform this and suggests a rewording of the Fundamental Postulate: “The psychological and sociological processes of subject and object are channeled by the ways in which relational events are anticipated” (Kalekin-Fishman, 2003b, p. 32). There is no need, she said, to distinguish between psychological and sociological channeling.

PCP has a number of features that make it “compatible with sociological theory”: (1) its openness, or “constructive alternativism,” allowing a person potentially to take on any particular cultural content; (2) Kelly’s abandonment of the necessity for particular drives or motivation, seeing the person already as “a form of motion”; and (3) the notion of the *construct* itself, for this can be applied easily not just to “persons” but to groups, culture, societies, and classes, as Kelly (2003) made clear. This central idea of the construct provides a “bridge” between the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and anthropology, allowing PCP to provide an overarching theory and method to unite the macro and micro. Kelly was not alone in proposing bipolarities to describe groups or cultures—it has a rich tradition in anthropology, e.g., Bateson (1942) with his concept of *end-linkage* and Lévi-Strauss with *pairs of oppositions*. Fransella (1984), in her comparison of constructs with Durkheim’s “social representations,” concluded that the construct is “equally applicable to the study and understanding of a number of individuals or a group as to a single person” (p. 159).

Societal, Cultural, and Group Construct Systems

Kelly (1962) used the term “decision matrix” to describe the characteristic construct systems of different European nations. For example, he contrasted the construing of communism and capitalism that he encountered in Georgia and Czechoslovakia, relating these to their very different histories

and cultural practices. Very early in his career, Kelly (1932) had described the pattern of group behavior as a *super-pattern* into which the individual sub-patterns fit (cited in Fransella, 1995, p. 124). This anticipates the later descriptions of systems theory, which influenced the writer's own notion of *family constructs* (Procter, 1985). Similarly, Oxley and Hort (1996) talked of an *ecology of meanings*, defining culture as a body of concepts or constructs potentially available and constantly tested and developed by individuals. Balnaves and Caputi (1993) used a notion of *corporate* as distinct from social and personal constructs, presenting a table in which the three are described. Whether we need such a typology remains unclear, however. We can argue that constructs are constructs whether they are used by cultures, groups, or individuals.

Where is the *site of decision-making*? This raises current issues such as “corporate responsibility” and “institutional racism” in police forces for example. If groups have constructs just like individuals, are they then *agents*, capable of making choices and decisions and responsible for these? Du Preez (1980) took up this question in detail, concluding in the affirmative in his discussion of *collective agents*. In political parties the commonality that is expected of members is the basis of political power. We can choose to describe a team's performance as collective action or as the actions of individual members. Du Preez concluded that persons may be both individuals and members of a collective agent—one description does not preclude the other. Kelly wrote that an adult “yields his independence bit by bit in exchange for power” (1969, p. 193). A person makes this choice when joining an organization, although people may try to deny responsibility for its actions, arguing that “the decision made itself.” Laing and Esterson (1964) used the useful construct of *praxis* versus *process* to capture this distinction. Although we always act in a way that involves choice and responsibility, we are continually confronted by the relentless *process* of the ongoing and unfolding social and historical context in which we are situated. Of course, from a PCP point of view, process is not an external given—we construe it in a certain way, have responsibility for the way we do so (more than we usually realize), and how we do so makes a great deal of difference.

The Personal and the Social: Identity

In his discussion of political parties, Du Preez (1980) argued that politics is centrally concerned with maintaining and imposing an identity system. Parties attempt to win privileges for their members and supporters in relation

to members of other groups. The aim of the party is to create commonality, which is the basis of political power, and it will impose severe discipline to ensure that its members conform in all important issues. Du Preez used Strawson's (1959) distinction of *characterization* versus *categorization* to classify constructs of self and other. The former are attributes such as *bright-stupid* and *hostile-peaceful*. The latter are categories such as *male*, *English*, or *psychologist*. He drew on the work of Tajfel and Turner (1979) in their concept of *social identity*, in which people construe themselves as members of a group whose identity is defined against other groups. For Tajfel the identification with the group provides self-esteem and a place in society, and the group confers a positively valued identity on its members. In PCP terms a social identity category may become a superordinate construct for the person, for example in Britain, a Labour Party supporter as opposed to a Tory. This will subsume a set of subordinate *us* versus *them* constructs: distinctions which characterize a member of the in-group to members of the out-group and which govern attitudes and policy applied to a whole variety of issues. In this way our constructs are "imported" from groups and society, although for PCP they will take on personal meaning as they are applied in the context of our unique experience and biography.

John Turner regarded social identity as a way of bridging the apparent gap between the individual and society, seeing it as the major vehicle for the adoption of norms and societal construing by individuals. He insisted on giving the individual and group an equal weight: "our understanding of both is irretrievably impoverished through neglect of this interaction" (cited in Haslam, Reicher, & Reynolds, 2012, p. 208). He went on to develop self-categorization theory, which in many ways complements and elaborates PCP. Its *dimensions of comparison* are effectively identical to *constructs*, and he saw these as arranged in *levels of abstraction* in a similar way to Kelly's hierarchical construct systems. He valued groups, seeing them as ways of creating positive change. In his discussion of prejudice he argued that we should not be too quick to judge stereotypes: "we will only ever be able to address them if we understand how they make good sense to the people who hold them from where they stand in the world" (Haslam et al., 2012, p. 208), a statement reminiscent of Kelly's *credulous approach*. For Fransella, stereotypes have an important use for us in defining oneself against them (Fransella, 1977, p. 24; see also Stojnov, 2013). Turner's work, however, remains within a nomothetic tradition backed by evidence from experimental situations. For example, Hogg and Abrams (2012) quoted as an example of Turner's meta-contrast effect, in which intergroup differences are maximized and intragroup differences minimized, that if a

male and two females talk, self-conceptualization is likely to be in terms of sex category membership. Whilst such general trends might emerge from experimental group data, in practice construing is unique and personal and based on many factors, including context, situation, and agenda. It would be inconsistent with PCP to assume that choices are influenced by some sort of force or motivation.

In his discussion of totalitarianism, Kelly said that “people actually do think in the *grooves* marked out for them . . . when they haven’t bothered to go through any complicated process of making up their minds to it” (1962, p. 36). People commonly do unthinkingly absorb and take on prevailing construing and repeat a party line or media “sound-bite.” Is such construing part of the *personal construct system*? The important psychological construct *core* versus *peripheral* construing comes in here. For Kelly (1955, p. 482), core constructs were those by which a person maintains his or her identity and existence. Otherwise the construing is still in the person’s system, but remains peripheral, modifiable without affecting his or her core identity. An ideological peripheral construct may be used through conformity, not wanting to appear different, and for fear of exclusion or, in extremis, threat to one’s life and family. The “complicated process” of extricating oneself from core cultural controls cannot be achieved by simply ignoring or fighting cultural constructs: one must “construe his way out . . . and approach the matter from the standpoint of overriding principles” (Kelly, 1955, p. 182); in other words, utilize a framework superordinate to the constructs and values in question.

During the height of the Yugoslav conflicts, when Serbs were being vilified in the world’s media, Stojnov, Knežević, and Gojić (1997) studied the perceptions of identity in a group of Serbian students. Using repertory grid methodology, they were able to identify constructs falling into one of four groups denoting core and peripheral personal and social identity (see Figure 12.1). One third of the sample dealt with the tarnishing of their national identity by seeing what they saw in the media as lies and propaganda. However, two thirds divorced themselves from the category: the construct *being Serb* versus *being some other identity* was placed in the domain of peripheral personal identity, even though they had not been personally responsible for any atrocities. For Du Preez, to understand someone’s identity, we have to construe his or her core constructs. We may think nationality or race is the key to the person’s identity, whereas they assert, for example, that their religion, being a musician, or being loyal to their family are far more important (Du Preez, 1979).

<p>Social identity (Core)</p> <p>Healthy–ill High self-respect–low Clever–stupid Loved–unloved Accepted among friends–not</p>	<p>Social identity (Peripheral)</p> <p>Professionally actualized–not Stubborn–compliant</p>
<p>Personal identity (Core)</p> <p>Honest–dishonest</p>	<p>Personal identity (Peripheral)</p> <p>Resourceful–unresourceful Sensitive–insensitive High self-esteem–low Rich–poor Being Serb–being some other Identity</p>

Figure 12.1 Position of Serbian Identity within Students' Construing. *Source:* From Stojnov, Knežević, & Gojić, 1997

Weinreich's (Weinreich & Saunderson, 2003) sophisticated identity structure analysis (ISA) draws upon PCP and other approaches to formulate a system that does justice to the complexity of the topic. Weinreich's approach is idiographic and recognizes that the very nature of identity and its complex structures varies from one culture to another. In earlier work, he looked at members of minority ethnic groups where young people, particularly girls, experience high levels of conflicted identifications with significant others in their own group, including *contra-identification*, a determined effort to dissociate and be different from the qualities of key figures. People may resolve this *identity diffusion* or remain with highly conflicted loyalties, a situation Kelly would describe using his Fragmentation Corollary. The latter allows us to make sense of contradictory construing, for example where the Auschwitz commandant Hoess had the ability to commit mass murder and yet function in his family as a kind father (Reed et al., 2014).

Power

Kalekin-Fishman (1995) used Lukes's work to analyze Kelly's position on power and empowerment. Lukes described three dimensions of power. The first is power of *individual* actors, observable at the behavioral level as *what happens*, for example, the use of force, tactics, or resources to control others. Kalekin-Fishman saw Kelly's careful consideration of and focus on the

client's meanings, as opposed to imposing abstractions, as the basis for empowerment in personal construct psychotherapy at this level. At the second, *institutional*, level, Lukes discussed what is not necessarily observable behaviorally: *what does not happen*, for example, in the control of the agenda, or the avoidance of opposition through circumvention. Kalekin-Fishman considered Kelly's vision of the collaborative therapeutic relationship in which formulations are shared in a joint agenda as a significant gesture toward empowerment at this level. The processes at these two levels have been graphically described by Willutzki and Duda (1996) as they examined in detail the construing and tactics of the presiding and dominating professors mercilessly subjugating the powerless members in faculty board meetings in a university.

It is only at the third, *ideological*, level, though, that true empowerment and liberation from subjugation and oppression can be achieved. Here the underlying social discourse permeates the construing of both powerful and powerless alike. These are the "grooves marked out for us" that Kelly described. In terms of gender construction, Cixous (1988) listed the constructs or "binaries," for example, *Father/Mother*, *active/passive*, *head/heart*, and *intelligible/sensitive*, and noted how these tend to cluster together in discourse to privilege the first term whilst the second term is obscured and rendered invisible, leading to disempowering gendered construing and practices. O'Sullivan (1988) saw Kelly as underestimating the impact of patriarchal society but defended him against feminist critiques of therapy as simply breeding adjustment. She argued that feminism and personal construct psychotherapy, in its stress on clients' ends and ventures, are not incompatible. Kalekin-Fishman (1995) accused Kelly of not seeing the inequalities of gender, underplaying racism and the effects of victimization, and seeing class relations as stable and unchangeable aspects of reality. She argued, perhaps anachronistically, that his inability to overcome the biases of his place and time is evident in PCP as well. Validation of existing construing in itself, she insists, is not sufficient to enhance autonomy and confront disempowerment. However, she did feel that, with reanalysis and revision, PCP can address its lacunae. She is surely right, for if discrimination and oppression are governed by and perpetuated via bipolar social constructs, then PCP methodology is ideally placed to identify them and demonstrate their use and abuse in situations, practices, and policies and to deconstruct them.

Kalekin-Fishman (2005) drew on Foucault's notion of "capillary power" that is carried to the extremities of society (i.e., to individuals, the micro) through "infinitesimal mechanisms" and examined how normative construing is reproduced and perpetuated in "plain talk"—casual everyday

conversations between acquaintances captured in the corridors of the university. Through countless millions of such encounters, the power-laden construing is kept alive and sustains the ideologies that privilege certain groups and categories of people, for example Western middle-class norms and conventions that define what is appropriate behavior.

Of course, power is a bipolar construct whose contrast may be powerlessness or docility, but it may also be contrasted with *resistance*, and indeed it is only with resistance that the mechanisms of power are made visible (Stojnov, Džinović, & Pavlović, 2008). Stojnov and his colleagues studied school underachievement, bringing together the thinking of Kelly and Foucault. They argued that underachievement, often blamed on maladjustment or deviance, is best understood as a relational cycle of power versus resistance. This can be summarized in the form of a “bowtie” diagram (Procter, 1985, see Figure 12.2) in which a cycle of corrective measures is met with further resistance, rebellion, and underachievement. By contrast, from the PCP perspective, the child, seen as irrational and failing, is better understood as a person with a valid point of view, making choices which are construed as having advantages: independence, power, and a highly valued identity which is vigorously defended. In this way, PCP compensates for Foucault’s own acknowledged lack of proper consideration of human agency in his analysis of the mechanisms of power. In fact both thinkers, according to Stojnov and his colleagues, share a rejection of the idea of subjectivity as a manifestation of an underlying *essence* which can be discovered, seeing instead positions maintained and developed in joint action (see also the many writings of Trevor Butt, for example Butt, 2004).

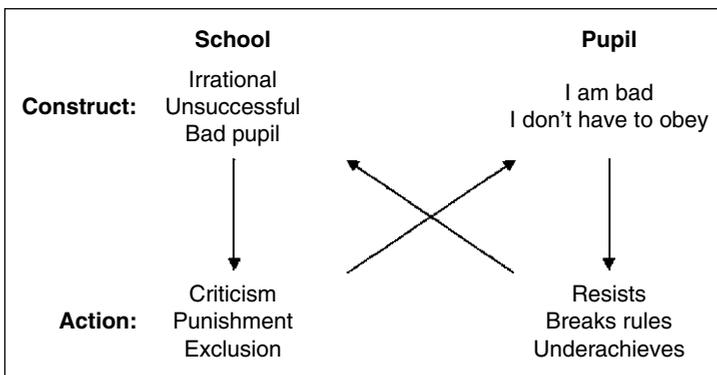


Figure 12.2 Bowtie of Escalating Power and Resistance in an Underachieving Pupil.

Alienation

Kalekin-Fishman (2005) has written extensively on the topic of *alienation*, particularly in her analysis of the alienating conversations in “plain talk.” It remains, however, a notoriously loose construct with a focus on relations between individual and collective, including separation or estrangement from self, other, and from the products and process of one’s own labor. Winter, Patient, and Sundin (2009) have usefully formulated each of Seeman’s six components of alienation in PCP terms, giving suggested measures and clinical examples for each one. These range widely—asylum seekers, the suicidal, serial killers—making it clear that alienation can be seen as a broad issue in clinical and forensic populations. Scheff (2008) tightened up the construct of alienation, contrasting it with *solidarity* on a dimension of social integration. Solidarity is defined as “agreement or disagreement mutually shared by two parties, and that mutuality is shared” (2008, p. 237), with alienation involving failure of interpersonal perception at second (awareness of agreement or disagreement) and third (awareness of this awareness) levels. This construct provides a tight core to the useful but loose construct of alienation that is measurable by PCP methods of examining relational construing. It allows the contrast pole of solidarity to be used in defining a picture of well-functioning group relations in PCP terms.

Foucault’s ideas of surveillance and the panopticon are highly relevant to issues of power and alienation and are never more relevant than in the “age of the smart machine” (Zuboff, 1984), where workers’ every move is monitored in detail at all levels in organizations via information technology. This has been particularly acute in the British National Health Service mental health services, where the confidentiality of clients’ psychotherapy notes is compromised, together with the requirement on therapists to utilize normative diagnostic and evaluative categories and scales, with only time-limited therapeutic interventions being permitted. There has been a significant reduction in the freedom of psychologists and therapists to operate and to respond creatively to the unique needs of clients and their families. The impact on mental health is yet to be researched.

Discussion

The vision that we arrive at here is that all that Kelly said about how individuals operate in their construction of the world can be applied also to societies and cultures, organizations and groups. They can be seen to utilize

bipolar constructs which define their identities, govern their interactions, and shape their policies and practices. There is simply no need to make such a big issue of a distinction between the micro and the macro or the individual and the social. Culture is the copious source of our personal construing, although for PCP we always transform our construing into our own unique and local version as we live in the unique context of our experiences and biography. This therefore is just as true of groups and cultures—unique systems of construing changing and evolving as they play out their existence in relation to other groups and cultures. Indeed, constructivism has become a major player in the field of international relations with the work of Wendt and others, though not acknowledging Kelly's work (Scheer, 2008).

In Kelly's terms, this considerably broadens the *range of convenience* of PCP across the human sciences, allowing it to contribute to sociology, anthropology, and political science and giving it potentially great integrative power in the field. Its logic and methods have a significant contribution to make in the study of organizations and cultures, a tradition begun by Kelly when he visited 37 countries in 1961 and examined their construing and relationships. Those who see Kelly the psychologist as an unlikely source of such a grand project should remember that his training, qualifications, and early research were actually in sociology and specifically the sociology of education, with an acknowledgment of his study and interest in cultural anthropology before he turned his attention to psychology (Fransella, 1995).

The great advantage of PCP is that it is to a remarkable extent relatively *value-free*, providing a minimum of *content* of construing. But is Kelly's central notion of bipolar construing sufficiently culturally open for PCP to perform this role? Holland (1977), in a critique of Lévi-Strauss and Kelly, concluded that "bipolar or binary schemes of analysis are not *necessarily* disabling or mystifying for social analysis; it depends how they are used" (p. 154). Bateson (1942) writes, "this clear tendency towards dual systems ought not, however blind us to the occurrence of other patterns . . . any full discussion of English character ought to allow for ternary, as well as bipolar, patterns" (pp. 95–97). However, it is perfectly possible to subsume under PCP a possibility of *triadic construing*, as I argue elsewhere in this volume (see Chapter 14). Of course, to be convincing as a central bridge between disciplines, we have to remember that a construct is not just a distinction in an individual mind: its two poles constitute positions, created, sustained, and evolved in continual dialogical negotiation and interaction between institutions, groups, and factions, as well as between individuals in relation.

PCP has the advantage of providing an extensive set of methodological tools subsumed under a systematic theoretical framework. The traditional repertory grid, for example, has recently been used to tease out the construing of Jihadi terrorists, demonstrating great variation within the group (Sarangi, Canter, & Youngs, 2013). Many forms of grid have been developed to examine groups. However, if these are not always applicable, as in a study of how a group of indigenous Australian people construed housing imposed on them by the government (Ross, 1996), there are many methods of interviewing, conversational analysis (Kalekin-Fishman, 2005) and qualitative grids (Procter, 2014) on which to draw. The power of PCP in its philosophy, theory, and methodology offers a promising future for research into the meaning systems of all kinds of institutions, organizations, and cultures.

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“Culture’s like an extra layer on top isn’t it?” Sociality and Superordination in Italian and English People

Viv Burr, Trevor Butt, and Massimo Giliberto

Personal construct psychology (PCP) is sometimes misunderstood as an individualistic approach to the person. The emphasis on the individual arose because George Kelly was a clinical psychologist. Those who work in psychiatry will know that a common mistake is to be blinded by classification systems, to see patients simply as an example of a class, perhaps schizophrenic or obsessive-compulsive. So Kelly stressed individuality over commonality; people are different in that they construe differently. Sometimes their constructions are similar, but for the clinician it is best to assume the idiosyncratic nature of construing.

But all theories also have a range of convenience, a broader domain in which they are relevant. Stringer and Bannister (1979) applied PCP to social psychology, focusing on commonality and sociality. The application of PCP to the social world is unsurprising considering its foundations in the pragmatism of Dewey and Mead (Butt, 2008). Kelly extended their pragmatism into clinical psychology, drawing on Mead for his concept of sociality and on Dewey’s concept of inquiry for his model of the person as scientist. Dewey argued that the scientist could not operate independently. Scientists are part of a scientific community essential in validating any theoretical claim:

No scientific inquirer can keep what he finds to himself or turn it to merely private account without losing his scientific standing. Everything discovered

belongs to the community of workers. Every new idea and theory has to be submitted to this community for confirmation and test. There is an expanding community of cooperative effort and truth. (Dewey, 1930/1993, p. 82)

Just as the scientist is embedded in a scientific community, so is the person in their society. Kelly (1955) does not mention society as such. However, in his chapter on the appraisal of experience (volume 2) he begins by saying that all experience must be appreciated in its cultural setting. In a personal communication, Rue Cromwell informed us that Kelly used to separate Kansas into two quite distinct cultures. The west was rural and very conservative, prizing self-reliance and eschewing “big government.” The smaller eastern part was more connected to the culture of the eastern U.S.A., more liberal and college-educated. To understand psychological distress it was essential to appreciate the culture in which it presented.

Culture here refers to the beliefs, actions, rules, and ideas that are transmitted within societies and subcultures. Kelly (1955) recognized the influence of these but was more interested in how individuals within particular subcultures made sense of their positions. An individual moves within a culture much as a fish swims in water—water is invisible and yet essential to its maintenance processes. We do not usually deliberate on all those rules and norms that govern us until we have the experience of being the proverbial fish out of water. This can occur when we inhabit another culture, making explicit all that was implicit.

Kelly was a student at the University of Edinburgh in 1930, which must have been a huge contrast to his life in Kansas. He says “A Scottish friend of the writer’s once twitted him about his American accent, but he was incredulous when it was pointed out that he had an accent of his own” (Kelly, 1955, p. 689). Only when we can stand back and expand our horizons are we able to discern some of the cultural baggage that we carry.

Kelly is clear that, from the constructivist standpoint, culture does not determine the person:

The client is not merely the product of his culture, but it has undoubtedly provided him with much evidence of what is “true” and much of the data which his personal construct system has had to keep in systematic order. (1955, p. 688)

The person is indeed a social construction, but once constructed is a center for choice and agency, albeit within economically and socially defined limits; culture sets the scene for and validates our individual construing. It is a

powerful influence because for the individual it is invisible. In Kelly's terms, there is no explicit contrast to it readily available:

it is practically impossible for a person to describe his culture as a culture. It is like trying to express a construct within a context in which there are no contrasting elements. (1955, p. 697)

It is interesting that when Kelly suggests lines of inquiry into culture, he lists the client's descriptions of others: strangers, ne'er-do-wells, peculiar people, and bad company. Through these figures one might discern possible contrasting poles to those submerged in culture.

The process of sociality allows us to reflect on culture, just as it allows us to reflect upon ourselves. Mead (1910/1982) argued that we develop selfhood through taking the role of the other. Our ability to reflect on and modify our actions is uniquely human, and comes about through construing the constructions of others and by construing our own previous construing. By taking a different perspective on ourselves, we develop reflective and purposeful action. Kelly had clearly reflected on his own culture of rural west Kansas after his Scottish visit. In our research, we explored such reflection upon taking the position of the other in groups of Italian and English people.

Method

We recruited participants who had at least some direct experience of people from the "other" culture, to avoid their simply accessing popular stereotypes. We invited staff and students at our respective institutions, via email, to take part in the research, explaining the inclusion criterion to them. Our participants had visited the other country, or had first-hand experience of its people and therefore opportunities to enter into the kinds of comparisons we outline above.

In Stage 1 we interviewed English and Italian people in focus groups about their perceptions of both their own and the other culture. We asked them questions such as "What comes to mind when you think of someone as 'typically Italian/English?'" and "What do you think Italian/English people imagine when they think of someone as being 'typically English/Italian?'" Then in Stage 2 (carried out a few months later) we provided the same groups with these perceptions in the form of a perceiver-element grid (Procter, 2005) (see Figure 13.1) and interviewed them again about their

<p>1. How did the Italian participants perceive English people? Aplomb; English gentleman Self-control; careful in expression; moderate Rigid and composed in body movements Somewhat repressed Sudden explosive, uncontrolled anger Rebellious Drinking to excess Extremes: "no middle way" Don't express their emotions; rigid and composed Cold; detached Hospitable (with material possessions, but not emotionally) Food as a necessity rather than a social event Having a stressful rhythm of life; regulated and time-oriented Respect for rules and privacy Not patient with foreigners; Anglophone-centric See themselves as culturally and ethnically superior</p>	<p>4. How did the English participants perceive English people? Controlled or repressed Self-contained Uptight, and unsure of themselves Complex Do things "by the book," but also nonconformist and rebellious Work takes precedence over personal and family life; formally structured, pressured working day Scruffy, loud, raucous Rude; badly behaved; drunk; drink to get drunk Disregard local norms of behavior; arrogant Colonial, militaristic, and nationalistic Self-important Culture addicts</p>
<p>2. How did the Italian participants perceive Italian people? Emotionally expressive and exuberant; gesticulate a lot Warm Disorderly Rowdy children; protective and fussing over children Dependence on family unit; "Mummy's boys" Speak loudly; coarse Bargaining and diddling; admiration for artful people Not flexible; not respectful of others or the environment Nepotistic Narrow-minded: do not readily accept others who are "different" Patriarchal/sexist</p>	<p>5. How did the English participants perceive Italian people? Smart, fashionable, well-groomed and chic or "cool" Have an eye for quality Self-assured; good self-presentation skills Women are slim and elegant, or short mothers who wear black and cook pasta! Dark-skinned, dark-haired, and short Prone to emotional outbursts; emotionally open and direct Close, tactile relationships Expressive, lively, vibrant, and energetic Their language is "musical" Gesticulate a lot Disregard for rules, but also follow strict social etiquette Strong family bonds and clear gender roles Child-oriented Meal times as social events</p>
<p>3. How did the Italian participants imagine that the English perceive them? Overflowing, exuberant, and excessive Warm people, likeable and cheerful Passionate and romantic; good lovers Rowdy Disorganized and slapdash Gesticulate too much; speak too much (long-winded) but sound nice Place too much importance on food; gourmet cooks Folkloristic and pay attention to traditions; superstitious Fashionable, elegant and trendy Beautiful/handsome, sensual and seductive; "Latin" lovers Relaxed; pleasure-lovers; enjoy life; good company Pizza, spaghetti, Mafia, and mandolin Not active as citizens; too tolerant politically Clever and artful; boastful and dishonest</p>	<p>6. How did the English participants imagine that the Italians perceive them? Scruffy; lacking style Drunk; the stereotype of the working-class "Brits abroad" Uncultured Loud and aggressive Stiff upper lip (the stereotype of the upper-class person) Shoplifting ("English shopping") Bad cooking Overweight No effort to speak other languages; lazy and arrogant Like our "heritage" culture and the image of the "country gent"</p>

Figure 13.1 Perceiver Element Grid Summarizing Stage 1 Findings.

responses to these. We were therefore effectively inviting our participants to “take the role of the other,” to see themselves through the other’s eyes.

Findings

Our participants clearly had a sense of what “being English” or “being Italian” meant, and to an extent they were in agreement about what these cultural qualities entailed. However, one of our most interesting findings was that perceptions of the other culture often seemed to arise from comparisons along particular dimensions that had become salient to them, because these helped them to make sense of what they saw as the strengths or shortcomings of their own culture. For example, the English participants remarked on the warmth of Italian hospitality and by contrast saw English hospitality as relatively inferior:

when I went to Italy [on business], they would make sure that I was looked after from the minute I got there to the minute I left in every sense, you know that my hotel room was ok, that I’d slept well that night, they would take me out for meals, they would often introduce me to other family members and in the course of an evening or over two or three days, I would maybe even go to their home and have a meal with them in their own home (Peter)

Peter went on to contrast this with how, when Italian colleagues visited England, they were not treated with the same warm hospitality. Davide and Valentina contrasted Italian and English attitudes toward mealtimes:

Davide: . . . they live the experience of the meal like “OK, now I have to stop for half an hour because I can’t go on” . . . For Italians the idea of lunch is almost sacred instead, at least to me.

Valentina: . . . they have absurd rhythms of life, at least in my experience.

For some of these cultural differences both Italian and English participants seemed to agree upon the characteristics of both countries: Italians are warm and hospitable and enjoy a relaxed lifestyle; the English are cooler and live pressured daily lives. But the Italian participants also expressed envy for qualities that the English participants had not identified in their own culture. For example, the Italians perceived the English as meritocratic, tolerant of other ethnic groups, open-minded, organized, effective, and efficient, and these perceptions were clearly prompted by shortcomings they perceived by comparison in their own culture. Likewise, the English

participants held perceptions of Italian culture and lifestyle that did not seem “visible” to the Italians. For example, when learning that the English see Italian children as well-behaved and admirably integrated into adult social life (in contrast to the perceived English state of affairs), the Italians were perplexed: “Also the fact they say that in restaurants children behave well . . . I would like to know what sample they used” (Franco).

It seems that experience with other cultures enables us to stand back from our own perspective and recognize, to some degree, the nature of the culture that we inhabit and take for granted. It highlights for us what is of value to us in our own way of life and what we aspire to in that of others. But we make comparisons starting with issues that are of significance for us, and we tend not to recognize qualities in ourselves that we take for granted, those that are “ground” rather than “figure” for us because they are so deeply ingrained in our way of life. For example, Davide noted that the Italians made numerous (largely positive, perhaps envious) comments about the English in contrast to the relatively fewer (and more negative) comments about their own culture. He goes on to say: “what doesn’t belong to us is seen more positively,” and Franco comments: “when you look at others you wear rose-tinted glasses, while when you look at yourself . . . maybe you emphasize the aspects you are annoyed about.”

However, our research went beyond simply examining the ways in which experience of the “other” can help us reflect on our own culture. It also gave our participants access to the other’s perception of them—something which, arguably, we do not necessarily gain from visiting another culture or interacting with its people. It enabled our participants to “take the role of the other,” to see themselves through the other’s eyes.

When asked how they think the other sees them, participants imagined the other saw them as they saw themselves, but the two sets of perceptions turned out to coincide only partially. For example, whereas the English saw the Italians as “family-oriented,” a positive quality, the Italians saw themselves as too dependent on family, lacking independence, and imagined they were seen as “Mummy’s boys.” The English participants criticized their own national character, describing the English as controlled, repressed, self-contained, uptight, and unsure of themselves. They imagined the Italians would see them as having these qualities, encapsulated by the idea of the “stiff upper lip.” However, the Italians construed these qualities more positively in terms of moderation, careful expression, and composure.

Furthermore, when exposed to the other’s perceptions, participants at first felt challenged by some of these and struggled to accommodate them, suggesting that there was still a relative absence of sociality; to some degree

neither group was able to construe the other's constructions. If sociality is about seeing the world through others' eyes and giving some credence to that perspective, that world includes ourselves and this is surely one of the most difficult aspects of sociality to achieve. In our participants' responses there was a sense that others do not see us as we *really* are (i.e., as we see ourselves). Interestingly, the perceptions that participants challenged often referred to characteristics that they themselves had pointed to in the first round of focus groups. For example, Maria, despite her own previously expressed perception of Italy as sexist and patriarchal, disagreed with the English perception of Italy as having traditional gender roles:

it's the part of gender roles, so defined . . . I don't find that at all, that is, it seems that there are very strong family links, it can be true, but the issue of so clear gender differentiation, I don't find it at all.

The Italians also discussed at length the way that the English groups had spoken enviously of the Italian way of life. While they offered several possible explanations for this, they were reluctant to believe that the English comments expressed a genuine valuing of Italy and Italian people.

In Stage 1 our English participants characterized the English as Anglocentric and intolerant of those who do not speak their language. Yet in Stage 2 they challenged this view when it was echoed by the Italian group:

we accept all sorts of people living here who don't speak English and we go to great lengths actually to accommodate them, to provide things in different languages. So to say that we're intolerant of non-English speakers, I don't feel comfortable with . . . I think we are very tolerant of people who don't speak English very well. (Clare)

These disagreements may partly reflect the common social norm that a person may criticize himself or herself, but it is not acceptable for others to make the same criticism. Nevertheless, there appears to be a reluctance to accommodate the other's perceptions, to construe the constructions of the other. However, as the discussion progressed our participants did find ways of accommodating the other's perceptions. For example, Maria resolved apparent differences regarding "independence" by suggesting that "dependent" and "integrated" may be two different ways of describing essentially the same experience:

instead of talking about independence/dependence, they talk about integration . . . We read it like "we are dependent, they are independent," but

for them this is not a matter of independence, but it's a matter of integration or not in the family unit.

The English participants also explored ways of resolving difference, accounting for and minimizing it. The group returned many times to issues of difference. Each time, they resolved differences by construing the two cultures at a more superordinate (similar) level, for example through the idea that cultural differences are a superficial layer masking an essentially common humanity: "I just think whatever culture people are, people are people and we do all still have the same . . . culture's like an extra layer on top isn't it?" (Diane). Both English and Italian participants also superordinated by suggesting that perceptions of differences between English and Italian character may recede if the focus were, for example, on "European" as opposed to other regions. The intense discussions that arose from inviting participants to consider the other's perceptions of them was arguably the beginning of a process of reflection that may ultimately lead to a reconstrual of self and one's culture.

Discussion

Our participants were in a similar situation to Kelly when he became a student at Edinburgh. They had already had opportunities to compare themselves to the other, but then as our participants they were explicitly asked to make this comparison. Arguably, both of these experiences enabled their own culture to become "visible" to them, to become "figure" rather than "ground." However, we would argue that it was only when we invited them to consider themselves as seen by the other that they had to "take the role of the other"; this is the point at which sociality began to be a real possibility. They failed to see in themselves qualities that were "obvious" to the other, or construed these in quite a different way; they clearly felt challenged by these differences in construal and it was only after considerable discussion and reflection that they were able to find ways of moving toward sociality.

Like Kelly's Scottish friend, when our participants' own culture became visible to them through the eyes of others something changed in the story they told about themselves. Sociality could be a way in which we continuously change our self, both individually and culturally. Miller Mair (1989, p. 2) wrote: "We are, at all times, in the midst of telling and listening, asserting and asking, confirming and disconfirming." Looking at ourselves

through others' eyes, we absorb their story and it becomes part of our narrative; we start to play a role in a social process that includes both of us, and this subtly changes our position, our own story. The novel *One, No One and One Hundred Thousand* by Nobel Prize winner Luigi Pirandello (1926) is based on the protagonist's discovery of the discrepancy between his view of himself and others' view of him. It shows us how the encounter with the other—and with ourselves through their looking at us—could create an epistemological break, changing our experience of self. What was previously invisible, the tacit fabric of our existence, emerges in our consciousness and then ceases to be incontrovertible. Comparison and seeing the world and ourselves through others' eyes seem to be necessary in order to construct, maintain, and ultimately change our identity.

This is the point at which our cultural constructions, our categories, could either “harden” or become looser and more permeable; we can learn something about ourselves through comparison with the other, placing new constructions upon what was unexpected, or we may resist any self-reconstruction, choosing instead constriction and preemption. Constriction minimizes incompatibilities, maintaining the stability of our world and the coherence of our identity, and “preemption permits one to take a ready-made stand without having to consider other aspects of a situation or to exercise judgment” (Kelly, 1955, p. 381). Thus, for instance, we may think that “the English are *nothing but* English” or “Italians are *nothing but* Italians.” This gives cultural identities the status of “real things,” and a real thing is incontestable.

In this case, comparison may lead to opposition, and difference would become alienation. Social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)¹ explains our negative perceptions of other cultures, the defense of our national identity, and the seeds of conflict and competition, but it is less able to account for our findings, where this assumption appears turned upside down. Both groups expressed appreciation for and envy of the other culture; they criticized their own cultural group and they anticipated being negatively perceived by the other group, appearing amazed at not being seen in this way. In addition, our findings show a high level of “accuracy”: in many respects both groups perceived the other as the other perceived itself.

Like SIT, we believe that cultural and national identities emerge from comparison, but we underline relational processes:

People belong to the same cultural group, not merely because they behave alike, nor because they expect the same things of others, but especially because they construe their experience in the same way. (Kelly, 1955, p. 66)

Describing a cultural group, Kelly emphasizes experience and process instead of simple beliefs, events, and concrete facts. Here Kelly uses the notion of commonality to define cultural identity:

To the extent that one person employs a construction of experience employed by another, his psychological processes are similar to those of the other person. (1955, p. 63)

Assuming commonality in the construction of experience as key to what we mean by a cultural group implies that such a group is not an “entity,” defined by birth or blood and existing within inescapable borders. Instead, it is a dynamic system of knowledge, a system of constructs. We continuously become who we are in a social process in which shared construing is central, both for our personal identity and for our cultural identity too. We live among others, in a constant process of construing others and construing ourselves through others’ eyes, and cultural identities exist in a social process arising from acts of comparison and discrimination.

Our participants viewed Italians and English both in terms of contrast and similarity. As Kelly wrote: “Both similarity and contrast are inherent in the same construct” (1955, p. 35). This means that any comparison in a system must be acceptable within the range of convenience of a superordinate construction. We can compare Maori and white New Zealanders only if we consider both New Zealanders, or human beings or living creatures. Without any superordinate construct, any comparison and evaluation appears senseless and impossible. Moreover, the outcomes of these comparisons depend on the level and significance of the superordinate construction. For instance, if we consider another cultural group simply as “living creatures” and not as “human beings,” we might treat them in a very different way, perhaps as inhuman. Therefore, we may choose a construction of cultural identity principally based on inclusion and sociality, or in terms of exclusion.

To say that Italians are *nothing but* Italians or the English are *nothing but* English is probably to deny any superordinate similarity: we are simply two separate and incommensurable identities. Comparisons will tend toward opposition and exclusion. For example, the preemptive construction of the Jews by the Nazis legitimated their murder. Even in this case, in order to permit comparison and discrimination between themselves and the Jews, the Nazis had to recognize, at some level, a superordinate similarity. Nonetheless, it seems that belonging to a superordinate, common construction such as “living creatures” (as mentioned above) was not

sufficient to avoid the Holocaust (the Nazis saw Jews as being “subhuman” and often portrayed them as “vermin”).

Our findings are consistent with the Common Ingroup Identity Model of Gaertner et al. (2000), who state that inter-group bias and conflict are reduced by factors that transform participants’ representations of memberships from two or more groups to one, more inclusive group. Likewise, Van Oudenhoven, Askevis-Leherpeaux, Hannover, Jaarsma, and Dardenne (2002) conclude: “Enhancing contact between nations does not seem to be a great contribution to improving international understanding . . . One obvious aim would be to create a superordinate or common group, such as ‘We are all Europeans’ or ‘We are all democratic nations’” (p. 288).

When our participants highlighted similarities, construing themselves and the other through more superordinate constructs, this inclusiveness suggests an awareness that we are persons—and cultural identities—among others only in a relationship of reciprocal identity validation (Giliberto, 2010). This is the perspective from which it is possible to legitimate the other’s gaze, engaging in a social role with them. In our research, the borders that our participant groups nevertheless established in order to distinguish themselves from others, the skin of their identity, what they excluded, were differences but not oppositions. Paraphrasing Kelly, we can say that both exclusion and inclusion are inherent in the same social identity.

Our participants were involved in a process in which their identities were in flux, emerging not only through their own definitions of themselves and others, but also through the way they construed the other’s narratives about them. The identities they ascribed to themselves and the other suggest that there are a number of interesting contrasts between English and Italian people in how they perceive themselves and each other. Our research was innovative in that our participants had some degree of experience of the “other” culture, and we explored how they construed and responded to the image of themselves as seen through the other’s eyes. Nevertheless, it is important that we also acknowledge that our findings, like all research findings, provide only a partial (in both senses of the word) account. All knowledge is inevitably produced by a particular person or group of persons at a particular time and place, by asking particular questions and by answering them through particular methods. We chose to explore perceptions through the use of comparison and contrast, and this will have left its trace on the research findings. The particular people whose perceptions we chose to seek were those already familiar to some extent with the “other” culture, and so it is possible that people with no such experience (or greater experience) would have told a different story.

It is also important to recognize that all our participants were either employed or studying within higher education. This means that many, though not all, of them were from “middle-class” backgrounds, and we must assume that at least some of their construals will be inflected by their class, as well as by other social factors such as gender and age. These are issues which future research may fruitfully address.

Note

- 1 Even SIT, however, can be seen as a “cultural product,” making sense in a historical and cultural matrix. So, we must remember that SIT appeared just after World War Two, a period dominated by the shadow of conflict.

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Relational Construct Psychology

Harry Procter

I cannot emphasize too strongly the role of anticipation in all of this.

(John Shotter, 2011, p. 445)

The Social Elaboration of Personal Construct Psychology

Personal construct psychology (PCP) has been accused of too much privileging the individual construer and remaining lodged within Western individualism (Gergen, 1994; Stam, 1998). However, these views are based on a partial reading of the PCP literature. In fact there has been an extensive social elaboration of the approach, and the seeds for these developments were already evident in Kelly's original writings. This type of critique has led to an under-acknowledgment of PCP's contribution. Kelly's psychology has a significant part to play in the understanding of and intervention into social situations. Indeed, Shotter (2007) has written that we can find in Kelly many themes which, had they been followed, would have helped social constructionism avoid some of the difficulties into which it has got itself. We can expand the title of our approach to "relational construct psychology" to do justice to its capacity to address the social and relational, whilst preserving Kelly's core notions and spirit, his emphasis on how people themselves make sense of their situations and helping people change their everyday practices in actual living encounters.

Kelly's emphasis on *bipolarity*—that a dialectical contrast with an opposite is necessary to give any idea meaning—lies at the center of his theory and marks it out from most other approaches in modern psychology. It brings under one holistic vision many apparently disparate aspects of experience, including perception, emotion, choice, and action, and it enables us to

transcend the individual and the social divide (Procter, 2009; see also Chapter 12 of this handbook). Kelly (1962) applied the notion of a construct system or “decision matrix” not only to individuals but to countries, subcultures, and social classes. Thus, a public construct such as *left* versus *right* in the political sense is an aspect of discourse and societal construction. But it only exists when it is being used by an individual or a group. Any actual use of the construct in the moment is *personal*, imbued with the unique meaning and connotations of the construing person(s), structured by their traditions, experience, and the anticipated construing of a real or imagined addressee. The site of evolution of social construction can be at the level of aggregates of many persons, as in the continual modification of language, but also at the level of a single person or small group, for example in scientific or artistic creativity. Of course, all innovation occurs within frameworks or paradigms (social construct systems) which strongly “suggest” new steps, thus explaining the phenomenon of simultaneous independent discovery.

The construct is ephemeral and malleably re-created anew in ongoing interaction and reflection. It has often been misconstrued as a characteristic of the individual, like a cognitive entity or personality trait. This would be to fall into the trap of “essentialism” (Stojnov & Butt, 2002) and is what led Kelly to dispense with traditional psychological terms such as personality, the self, schema, or motivation. He did, however, maintain the idea of a relatively enduring construct system which evolves uniquely in the biography of the person and governs and shapes our practices, experience, and construing at any point in time. This allows us to explain the relatively enduring aspects of individuals over time and across situations. This personal construct system does not exist in isolation however. The constructs comprising it have a largely social origin (Procter & Parry, 1978) and it is part of wider relational construct systems associated with the culture, family, groups, and other relationships in which the individual plays a part (see Chapter 12 of this handbook for a fuller discussion). This view allows us to see how the individual and the social are integrated together in a continuum, and transcends the debates in which either the individual or the social is privileged at the expense of the other.

Relational Construct Systems

The idea that construing the world in a certain way constitutes a *position* in a relationship, a conversation, or an interaction with another way of construing has been elaborated in two main ways, which are not mutually

exclusive. In my own work (Procter, 1985), I looked at how people take up positions with and against each other in group or family situations and conceptualized this in terms of a *family construct system*. Families evolve a system of often only a few major *family constructs* which govern the members' interactions and choices. In another trend, people are said to be able to take up different positions in an "internal" set of conversations and interactions with imaginary others. Hermans (1996), echoing Mair's (2014) idea of the *community of selves*, considers two poles of a personal construct as if they were "two characters involved in dialogical relationship." Thus, both social construing, sited in "external" relations in the group, and personal construing and experience "internal" to the individual are identical in form and are both interactional and conversational in nature, in line with Bakhtin's and Vygotsky's view that our development and socialization as persons involves the internalization of voices, interactions, and ideological positions. It allows us to make sense of psychological difficulties such as negative automatic thoughts and auditory hallucinations or "voices" (Benjamin, 1989). But this view is distinguishable from cognitive models where representations or schemata of the world are built up by individuals. The original Kellyan idea of the person as a scientist is a rich metaphor, but is here broadened to a view of individuals and groups as *communities of inquirers*. It means that we have within ourselves a rich resource, enabling us potentially to understand and have loyalty to a wide array of apparently disparate and even disavowed voices and positions on things. The down side of this in the extreme may be dissociation and fragmentation, explaining cases where a libertarian in public life is a tyrant in the family, or the contrasting situation of the Auschwitz commandant Hoess's ability to commit mass murder and yet function in his family as a kind father (Reed et al., 2014).

Ugazio (2013), in a parallel tradition coming out of social constructionism, has developed a similar concept to the family construct which she labels as a *semantic polarity*. She describes four important polarities which are commonly observed in clinical work with families (see Table 14.1).

The positions taken up by family members are governed by *values*, similar to Kelly's superordinate constructs. The social actions of the person toward the other within the polarity are exemplified as *relational movements*. Examples are given of *emotions* typically associated with each position. The family member growing into or habitually occupying a position tends to develop characteristic *personal attributes* and stances congruent with it. In a series of studies, Ugazio and her team are demonstrating how four common psychopathologies are associated with these four different

Table 14.1 Ugazio's Four Semantic Polarities.

	<i>Semantics of Freedom</i>		<i>Semantics of Sacrifice</i>		<i>Semantics of Power</i>		<i>Semantics of Inclusion</i>	
	<i>Far-Near</i>		<i>Good-Bad</i>		<i>Up-Down</i>		<i>In-Out</i>	
Values	Freedom	Dependence	Good	Evil	Achievement	Failure	Inclusion	Exclusion
Relational	Keeping distance	To move closer	Self-sacrifice	To exploit	To win	To lose	To welcome	To reject
Movements	Courage	Fear	Innocence	Guilt	Pride	Shame	Gratitude	Rage
Emotions	Unattached	Bound	Restrained	Spontaneous	Determined	Pliable	Worthy	Unworthy
Personal								
Attributes								
Typical		Phobias	Obsessive-Compulsive		Eating Disorders			Depression
Disorders								

Note. Selected from Ugazio, 2013.

polarities. The implication is that family members suffering from these problems tend to have, somewhere in the current or historical family, relations who have played out a role at the opposite end of the polarity, for example someone with agoraphobia may have a sibling who lives a wild life confronting danger. Of course, Kelly would be less happy dividing up the construing process into the categories of the leftmost column in Table 14.1 (see Procter, 2009) and in clinical practice we need to carefully discover anew what constructs or polarities a family is utilizing and relate these to the presenting complaint rather than assuming associations between them and psychopathologies a priori. Nevertheless, Ugazio's work is intriguing and is likely to have heuristic value in stimulating questions for further research.

From Sociality to Relationality

Kelly's Sociality Corollary (see Appendix) occupies a central position in PCP's understanding of relationships. The idea that playing a role with someone involves continually anticipating the other person's construing and position captures the dynamics of situations from casual encounters through to established relationships. Sociality in Kelly's terms is a key tool in all forms of therapy, coaching, consultation, and arbitration. Its power is evidenced by the appearance of similar ideas in contemporary research such as *theory of mind* and *mentalization*. The corollary underlies the spirit of how Kelly advises us to approach our clients and subjects using the *credulous approach*, seeing the world from their point of view. It is therefore of ethical as well as psychological relevance—not just how we *do* behave but how we *should*. Stojnov (1996) sees the Sociality Corollary as one of the most important aspects of PCP in forming the basis of a constructivist ethics.

However, the Sociality Corollary may be critiqued in that it only really applies to relating to one person or position. Construing two or more people in relation involves not just construing their positions (the Sociality Corollary) but understanding or construing the interactions and relational dynamics occurring between them. In dealing with a group of people, one is confronted by the wide range of *relational* or *interactional phenomena*, all the signals and signs, gestures, expressions and voice tones, the gambits, hierarchies, sharing, understanding and misunderstanding, and the conflicts, humor, and put-downs. Construing these and understanding what they mean in the particular context is an essential part of learning how to respond and to manage one's own reactions in relation to them in an ongoing flow of rapid turn-taking. The sheer amount of information involved

is multiplied many times. The constructs involved in relating to individuals—for example, *warm* versus *cold* or *interested* versus *preoccupied*—are of a different type to those needed for construing relationships with more than one person—for example, *agreeing* versus *disagreeing* or *excluding* versus *including*, which we may term *relational constructs*. To account for this we need an additional corollary, the Relationality Corollary, which states that, “To the extent that a person can construe the relationships between the members of a group, he or she may take part in a group process with them.” This corollary is absolutely central in the socialization and development of human beings as persons.

Levels of Interpersonal Construing

To take this forward, it is useful to define different *levels of interpersonal construing* (Procter, 2014). Table 14.2 gives examples of the three levels.

At the monadic level we may judge a person to be friendly rather than critical. We may construe a stranger in the street to be dangerous and cross over the road, rather than vulnerable, when we might ask if they need help. Dyadically, we might see two people as being polite rather than honest with each other, or two children to be play-fighting and not fighting angrily. With triads, we may construe a pattern of two people making fun of and being disrespectful toward a third person. In the second example A is construed as preventing the bullying rather than ignoring it. In each of these cases, A, B, or C might be the construer himself or herself. If this is the case, core role and identity constructs are likely to be involved. Of course all three persons will be construing triadically to a lesser or greater extent, though this is likely to be hard to articulate verbally. Dyadic construing cannot be reduced to monadic just as we cannot describe the triadic situations

Table 14.2 Examples of the Levels of Interpersonal Construing.

<i>Levels</i>	<i>Examples of Construing</i>
Monadic construing (re A)	Friendly (vs. critical) Dangerous (vs. vulnerable)
Dyadic construing (re A and B)	Polite to each other (vs. honest) Play-fighting (vs. genuine conflict)
Triadic construing (re A, B, and C)	A and B are making fun of C (vs. respecting C) A needs to be present to prevent B bullying C (vs. neglecting B and C)

in dyadic or monadic terms, although construing at more than one level may be occurring simultaneously. A father may be construing a sibling conflict primarily monadically as he homes in on one of them, saying she is being “naughty”, and ignoring the other child. We have a choice to construe situations at one level rather than another, and in therapy we can encourage construing at a different “level of convenience” in order to take the work forward. We might encourage someone construing at the monadic level, “How do you see the relationship between them?” or begin to ask a client construing dyadically to consider one person in more detail, for example looking at the person’s difficult past experiences.

Qualitative Grids

New kinds of methodology called *qualitative grids* can be used to capture interpersonal construing (Procter, 2002, 2014; Procter & Procter, 2008). These come in various forms for tracing changes in construing across time or situations, or for looking at all the construing of self and others in a group. The latter is illustrated in Table 14.3, an example of the perceiver element grid or PEG.

This illustrates a psychiatric crisis drawn from Virginia Woolf’s (1925/1964) novel *Mrs Dalloway*. In this grid, three characters are listed down the left as perceivers and again along the top as elements. The arrow makes clear the direction of construing. Septimus, a young soldier, was traumatized in World War One when his friend Evans was blown up in front of him. He is with his new Italian wife Rezia, but is extremely troubled with traumatic memories, talking to himself and feeling suicidal. Rezia is concerned that he will be seen acting strangely. Their general practitioner, Dr Holmes, has said, “there is nothing wrong with him” and to Septimus, “you are talking nonsense to frighten your wife”. This changes Rezia’s attitude from sympathy to seeing him as cowardly and choosing to be unhappy, and for Septimus the marriage is under threat. The page numbers are provided to indicate the narrative order of the constructions. This particular grid has only asked for monadic construing of self and other, but still a rich picture of the dynamics of the situation, so typical of an emergency psychiatric crisis, emerges. Septimus is furious with Holmes for his interventions and later (p. 102) tries to refuse to see him when he comes to take him to the psychiatric hospital. In clinical and research practice we may add as elements, as additional columns on the right-hand side, the various dyadic and triadic relationships between the characters. We ourselves may construe

Table 14.3 Perceiver Element Grid Depicting a Psychiatric Crisis.

<i>ELEMENTS</i>			
<i>PEG</i> →	<i>Septimus</i>	<i>Rezia</i>	<i>Dr Holmes</i>
Septimus	I will kill myself (p. 18) Indifferent, I could not feel (when Evans died) (p. 96)	She's taken her ring off— marriage is over (p. 75)	Damn fool, I won't see him (p. 102) Once you stumble, human nature is on you (p. 102) You brute, you brute! (p. 104)
Rezia	People must notice, see him . . . suppose they hear him? (pp. 18–19) Cowardly for a man to say he would kill himself . . . selfish . . . for he is not ill (p. 27) Not Septimus any longer (p. 73) Everyone has friends killed in the war. He lets himself think horrible things (p. 74) He could be happy when he chose (p. 74)	Far rather would she that he were dead! (I) could not sit beside him when he stared so and made everything terrible (p. 26) I am alone (p. 28) It's wicked; why should I suffer? . . . No, I can't stand it any longer (p. 73)	He told me to "Make your husband take an interest in things outside himself" (p. 25) What a kind man, what a good man! (p. 100)
Dr. Holmes	Nothing whatever seriously the matter with him, a little out of sorts (p. 25) You're in a funk (p. 102) Talking nonsense to frighten your wife (p. 104)		

PERCEIVERS

Note. From Woolf 1925/1964.

triadically that the marriage is in crisis and exacerbated by Holmes's quickly assumed punctuations and constructions of the situation. These grids prove to be very valuable for summarizing the construing in interpersonal situations and may be used in reflective practice and supervision as well as in the intervention process itself, where appropriate.

Conclusion

The social elaborations of personal construct psychology outlined here are at the forefront of development and are ripe for programs of further research, either using qualitative grids or other forms of qualitative and observational research. We have relatively little idea of how people construe at dyadic and triadic levels in any systematic sense—our culture (and the discipline of psychology) is so oriented to the individual and the relational is simply not elaborated in the discourse—there seems if anything even more reliance currently on personality and neurological models than when PCP first appeared in the 1950s.

The extensions here also have ethical implications—our judgments of people badly need to include a consideration of the social nexus and context within which their construing and behavior are situated, with an understanding of the array of positions within which they are located. The Choice Corollary (see Appendix) is broadened toward a more altruistic vision—that we make choices in order to extend and define our family and cultural construct systems, not merely for personal advantage.

Let us finish with seven points subsumed under the title “relational knowing” in one of Miller Mair's last papers:

- Every person is different
- Every person is composed in relationships with others
- Every person consists in a multiplicity of relationships, a conversational world
- Every relationship is different
- Every act of knowing arises in the midst of many relationships
- Each relationship has different qualities
- These qualities are mixed in different ways in every relationship (Mair, 2011, p. 25)

Note

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The Political Program of Personal Construct Psychology

Dušan Stojnov

Kelly's application of his theory to politics (Bannister, 2003) was accomplished in a rather unexpected way: personal construct psychology (PCP) itself was overtaken by politics, which today pervades everyday living so much that retreat from political issues seems not to be an option any more. In the 1970s, Bannister reminded us that personal construct theory came from a humanist legacy that saw values as intrinsic to psychology, so that practicing morally indifferent and politically innocent science from the standpoint of PCP became mission impossible. Unfortunately, such a standpoint could not be treated as anything but heresy among mainstream approaches to science of that time, when an objective, value-free approach was emphasized as a precondition of the legitimate search for truth.

The paradox arises only when it is realized that the claim that value-laden and political statements should be excluded from science is itself a value-laden political statement. Furthermore, the underlying *raison d'être* of science reveals some unambiguously political aspirations. The noble effort of the natural sciences to discover the true, "undistorted" picture of the world is just one. Another is an even nobler project of trying to change this picture for the better, as social scientists claim to do.

The Political Program of Personal Construct Psychology

Regardless of their theoretical goal or research concerns, all scientific theories can also be construed in the light of their political orientation—no matter how implicit or explicit. As an example of this approach, Bannister

(2003) presented political perspectives of personal construct theory as unequivocally libertarian and egalitarian. My aim here is to carry this work further and present the offerings of PCP using the metaphor of a “political program,” commenting on its main tenets and implications, as well as on the prospects for potential coalitions that PCP might engage in.

Epistemology of action

The crucial point of PCP’s mapping of human epistemology is that it is about *action*. Constructs are not merely picture postcards of reality reflecting the world; they are the human-made tools that enable our anticipation of the world. Construing is an act of making abstractions through the active production of similarities and differences. This is not an attempt to describe the entities of the world as existing independently from our own perceptions of them, but a process of actively constituting the world through our construing. Constructs are not to be equated only with thinking. They are also the product of our semantic activity that enables our further actions: building mental models of the world (i.e., personal construct systems); carrying out empirical projects and updating these models further; and choosing alternative courses of action which are enabled by the bipolar anticipations we ourselves have created. How people think, feel, and act is channeled by their anticipations, based on how they “construe” an event, which is the product of active human creation. Therefore, constructs are not only the guidelines enabling our actions—their creation is action itself. Perception and action are co-implicative and inseparable.

The epistemology of action carries inevitable political consequences. If knowledge is not the reflection of the world as it really is, then humans have to take responsibility for the outcome of their own epistemological enterprise. On offer here we do not have a one and only absolute truth, but one of many possible versions of the world we have created. Instead of trying to reach the final, authorized version of knowledge about reality, we have to accept that new versions will continue to be offered from time to time. The epistemological effect of construing in action thus becomes similar to dairy products in one important respect: they both have an expiry date. So PCP offers people a political hot potato for realizing that the prevailing version of the world is their own construction, open to revision and replacement.

The problem is not only that there is no privileged position from which to look at the world and that in order to make sense of it we must accept the provisional versions that are to hand. Further complications are fueled

by the realization that there is more than one version of the truth available at any one time, construed alternatively by different groups. An inevitable consequence of this is a potential conflict arising from claims that only one particular version is real and therefore better than the others to the point of their exclusion. Various theories make grandiose claims about their prospects, backing these up by offering an impressive anthology of empirical facts and theoretical arguments. The loudest ones achieve a position in the mainstream—they win political elections, so to speak. For its part, although the possibility of reaching the truth in a very distant future is not fully discarded, PCP favors a more inclusive position of tolerating the simultaneous coexistence of different versions of reality and offering a way for people to negotiate between them. This presents another political hot potato.

Offering more than one option implies active choice. It is easy to say that people are responsible for their own epistemological products if they serve them well. It is a bit more complicated when the choice turns out to be problematic. Agency and freedom of choice carry the burden of responsibility. This is a tricky business because there are always a lot of events that lie outside the range of convenience of our construct systems: we do our best, but we can never fully predict all the consequences of our actions. Doing our best does not exclude our personal responsibility: we constantly take a risk of making a mistake or doing something wrong, which inevitably brings guilt into the human condition. To experience guilt in Kelly's terms is therefore to experience the loss of who or what one construes oneself to be, which creates the genuinely difficult and unpleasant task of sustaining life in an inadequate way. Guilt within PCP terms (Kelly, 1955) refers to a kind of social disidentification which may lead to exile from a person's core role. But it also carries some emancipatory potential to review relevant identity issues and update them through revision of the old role and creation of a new one. The political program of PCP thus implies some liberating and desirable messages, not only hot potatoes. People do not have to be the slaves of their destiny but can intervene in the project of creating a better future. Helplessness recedes in the face of proactivity, enabling people to entertain initiatives which keep them constantly busy with their construing. What PCP offers to its "voters" is the freedom to make their own choices and engage in working toward the change they hope for. The bad news is that the emphasis on activity takes away the more comfortable position of sitting and waiting either for nature to filter bad genes through the slow but thorough process of evolution, or for politicians to fulfill their promises and change society into something better. Although PCP strongly favors the possibility of change, it also implies that change does not come easily.

Mere insight that some aspects of life are not satisfying and could be improved is not enough. Change has to be tried out for size, exercised and mastered in a practice which includes anxiety and effort. Having to work hard for desired change is not the only undesirable point here. Being responsible for the chosen option is the other. Some people like this, but some don't.

Thus the main offer in PCP's political program consists of a miscellaneous activity of construing. This means interpreting data; creating theories that are useful and advantageous mistakes (in the Popperian sense that every scientific theory in time turns out to be a fruitful and advantageous mistake), and regarding human ideas as useful fictions. People do this together in the context of community, so that knowledge becomes embedded in social and political processes. This makes humans rather alone in their quest for knowledge, having to give up the idea of entities independent of their own interpretive efforts—such as an independent reality, objectivity, deity, stars to guide their destiny, or whatever. They have to rely on each other.

Epistemology of relation

Although the adjective “personal” is central to PCP, it is misleading to interpret it as a theory of the individual, where the emphasis primarily lies on the human organism as a unit. An individualistic approach is usually concerned with individuals populating the social environment; or social atoms that come together to build society. PCP went for something completely different.

Although Kelly emphasized the idiosyncratic side of human construing, he was very well aware of its social origin. With mind-independent reality, objective knowledge, and absolute truth removed from the PCP menu, any comments on behavior may not be regarded as a description of an inner essence, an emanation from mental fabric, or a common material used for making the human psyche. When we report the psychological attributes of others we are not describing, but constituting them through a construction of similarities and differences between us and them, or them and others. This means that “human nature” is permanently construed and reconstrued by different people in different contexts and with different outcomes.

Locating his definition of personhood rather unexpectedly in a chapter devoted to the repertory grid, Kelly (1955) presented the “person” as the intersection of many subjective dimensions, meaning that “a person, as construed by someone such as ourselves, is a unique combination of dichotomous

categorical interpretations” (p. 300). The person is thus being *constituted as a person* in an interpersonal space of a unique combination of dichotomous categorical interpretations. Furthermore, his definition of personality (even less accessible than his account of a person) implies “our abstraction of the activity of a person and our subsequent generalization of this abstraction to all matters of his relations to other persons, known and unknown” (Kelly, 1962, p. 220). Even the self, commonly treated as a private experience of a hidden, inner world encapsulated under the skin, got a different treatment in PCP, where it was unusually defined as an abstraction—a way in which some events are alike and at the same time different from other events (Kelly, 1955, p. 131).

Claiming that the person is the *intersect of many personal construct dimensions*, as well as that personality is *our abstraction of the activity of other persons*, Kelly made otherness a prerequisite of our existence. In order to be persons, we have to be construed as persons by others; in order to construe us others have to be construed as persons—by others or by us. What we do and what we are is not our exclusive property, but entirely depends on the doing and being of others. A personal construct is a construct through which a person is being defined and *not* only a construct having unique meaning and being used by an individual; and the psychology of personal constructs is the psychology of the constituting of persons through their construing, a theory that explains how the person comes about, a point well taken by Stringer (1979).

Another important issue is the context in which this process takes place. PCP is a theory about *people in relation*, a role theory. Getting to know others as persons requires entering a role relationship—construing the construction process of others—which is a more demanding task than getting to know their personal attributes by using trait inventories or some similar assessment device. Kelly (1955) was well aware of this:

James anticipates what John will do. James also anticipates what John thinks he, James, will do. James further anticipates what John thinks he expects John will do. In addition, James anticipates what John thinks James expects John to predict that James will do. And so on! (p. 94)

PCP thus offers a world of elusive abstractions, the product of our semantic activity, not carried out quietly within our mental interior, but in the vibrancy of human relations. This places PCP unequivocally in the realm of other *relational* theories. Although the first volume devoted exclusively to the utmost importance of social issues in PCP was published relatively late

(Stringer & Bannister, 1979), explorations of PCP as a relational theory are becoming more and more frequent. They either offer a reading of PCP in the context of social constructionism (Stojnov & Butt, 2002); explore the social groundedness of the individual (Butt, 2001); highlight its antifoundationalist side (McWilliams, 2012); offer new relational tools for facilitative practice (Stojnov & Procter, 2010); or propose a new approach of writing under the heading of personal and relational construct psychology (Procter, 2009)—to mention but a few.

Epistemology of decentration

The dominance of epistemological issues in PCP comes as no surprise, bearing in mind that the model of person-as-scientist is firmly rooted among its core assumptions. However, in order to understand others we need to develop a more demanding way of knowing—we have to transcend our own perspective and construe someone else's construing. This implies that people have to try to subsume the perspective of others in order to understand them. Doing so requires the often uncomfortable abandoning of one's own position in favor of imagining the outlook of somebody else—from their own position. The mantra of "taking the perspective of others," offered steadily in recent directives by the majority of helping professions without substantial guidance on how to actually achieve this, in PCP comes furnished with theoretical concepts such as "role," "core role," and "role relationship" (Kelly, 1955), various forms of repertory grids, and an abundance of qualitative methodological techniques and assessment devices. This offer makes people more sensitive to the coexistence of different perspectives, as well as to their need to navigate wisely among them in order to sustain mutual relationships.

An epistemology of decentration may turn out to be the strongest part of PCP's political portfolio. It implies seeing the individual neither as a visible building block of society nor as an entity drowning in the waters of rampant social reductionism, but as an agent, a person who can initiate and make choices from the shelf of social offerings. Instead of deeply pondered concern for the individual self (which may lead to possessive individualism) or excessive concern for impersonal society (threatening to open the door to oppressive systems), the offer here implies a bilateral approach: caring for others, but at the same time also caring for oneself. Such an attitude seems to be quite resonant with work advocating the egalitarian outlook of PCP and presenting it as a theory of deep social concern and significance. Nevertheless, this may lead to a view of PCP as being other than unequivocally libertarian,

as suggested by Bannister (2003), opening up the possibility of it moving toward the communitarian pole of the liberalism–communitarianism debate.

Epistemology of relativism

Offer an act of making abstractions through the active production of similarities and differences instead of discovering outer reality; offer the epistemological attitude of ontological supremacy of relations over an inner essence; offer insight about the lack of a privileged perspective and the need to adopt the perspective of the others in order to understand them—and you get relativism, the fourth offer in the PCP program. This is not so popular in traditional science, often being discarded as an “anything goes” approach. Nothing can be more mistaken than this claim, but it offers the opponents of constructivism a useful marketing strategy which needs to be tackled here. A tough task, I hasten to say, but more rewarding for those who believe that psychology is about understanding people and their idiosyncrasies and not about explaining their behavior.

Sometimes a person has different beliefs about the same topic, for example treating politicians as corrupt in one context, and as honestly trying to do something to improve the world in another set of circumstances. Sometimes different persons have different convictions about politicians, one believing in their moral integrity, and another, in the same circumstances, believing them to be disingenuous. However, if we want to present either of these suppositions as a case of relativism proper we must assume that the topic is the same for the one believer in both circumstances and for the two believers who differ in their convictions, even in the same circumstances. The difference in attitudes of our two believers can be accounted for by the differences in their points of view, and differences in the historical epochs in which they lived, or conceptual systems they employed to formulate their beliefs about politicians. Furthermore, it also may be that people sharing a point of view, in the same era and having the same conceptual system, may still differ as to what one should think about the moral integrity of politicians. Their beliefs may be relative to their interests, and their interests may be so different that they may account for the differences in their beliefs. The harsh judgment of realists, claiming that all this can be resolved in favor of absolutism by distinguishing between what people think is knowledge and what knowledge really is, is opposed by constructivists, with their conviction that this distinction is empty. A claim that we can have positive knowledge which is final, unrevisable, and absolute seems to be misleading. This leaves us with the possibility of subjecting all our

interpretations of the universe to revision or replacement—as suggested by constructive alternativism (Kelly, 1955).

Thus, the epistemology of relativism implicit in the philosophy of PCP becomes aligned with the work of Thomas Kuhn (1962). What people say or claim cannot be compared to *reality*, but it can be evaluated within the frames of reference they are inescapably using in their epistemic quest. Changes of frames of reference (be they paradigms or personal construct systems) change science (both social and personal) by transforming the standards which govern acceptable solutions to problems. The “normal science” emerging from the paradigm is thus incommensurable with that which has been used before. Since the goggles through which scientists perceive the world change when paradigms/personal construct systems change, the world perceived after this change will be different from the world before the change. Not only does this switch alter an inquirer’s explanatory scheme; it also changes their whole perspective. Therefore, to understand what people are saying about the world we do not have to compare what they think they see with what there really is, a strategy offered from the realist camp. Instead, we have to develop an understanding relative to their perspective as an outcome of their constructive activities and try to explore its consequences—as an alternative strategy coming from the PCP menu.

Coalitions

The “coalition metaphor” is used here to support the attempts of the PCP authorship to acknowledge and develop certain aspects of the human condition that are more elaborated and emphasized in other theories, sharing relevant metatheoretical perspectives with PCP; but at the same time to offer PCP’s own insights which may prompt the authors of those theories to develop or elaborate some of their own ideas.

Forming successful coalitions is an extremely delicate matter because it depends on both sides having high commonality in the construction of their mutual interests and the benefits of coalescing. There are potentially many options for supplementing political action by connecting with the established experience of other theories, which may offer something equally valuable for PCP if they anticipate an equally valuable offer in return, in a “you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours” manner. Although not introducing any crucial philosophical innovations, PCP has a good negotiating position here, with established experience of using a certain philosophical position in facilitative practice. However, my strong conviction is that PCP

should not face the future by distancing itself from defeated enemies (such as behaviorism or orthodox psychoanalysis), but by joining forces with kindred spirits—those residing in the “antifoundationalist” camp. Besides those in social constructionism, radical constructivism, systemic theorists, narrative psychology, and critical social psychology, the natural allies who are rarely mentioned as partners for a potential theoretical joint venture reside above all in the anti-essentialist camp. Probably the most prominent of these is Michel Foucault. Similar to Kelly in far more than just his attempt to escape any categorization of his work, Foucault (1970) has demonstrated that the subject matter of psychology does not reside in a covert mental interior, but in a variety of elusive discourses. Discourses, offering different positions coming from different ways of speaking about different entities, do not exist only to describe, but to constitute human subjectivity. The positions offered in discourses are like vacant seats which are distributed to us by others. The task of the others is not to describe our hidden essence, but to match positions offered in discourse with their experience of what people do all of the time. Thus, people are not only the products of discourses, they are also their agentic users—a position much more germane to the spirit of PCP. Although their construing is necessarily mediated by discourses, people do have the possibility of exercising choice—for example, to refuse what they are being encouraged to construe in one particular way and to construe it in a different way. The similarity between the work of Kelly and of Foucault was well spotted in Warren’s (1998) cogent comment on Foucault’s late work:

So, there is an obvious individual, but that individual has in the repertoire of behaviour *several* ways of behaving, *several* reactions, and *several* orientations, positions or significances in respect to even the most pervasive force acting on the individual, that of *power*. This sounds remarkably like the process of construing, and, moreover, recalcitrance and intransigence appear to be remarkable markers of an individual’s power to construe in terms of the fundamental postulate of personal construct psychology and some of its corollaries. (p. 93)

Elaborating Foucault’s work further, Rose (1998) fits it in nicely with the idea of “ontological acceleration.” Kelly (1969) dismissed the idea of nature and society as stable entities and pointed to the increasing pace of self-transformation and a shift toward a view of the person as not content to put up with their circumstances forever in the same way. He unequivocally pointed to the need to cast anticipations in fresh ways, asking new, searching

and ever-changing, questions. Being aware that contemporary societies cannot offer even the stability that will endure for one person's lifetime, Rose reached the similar conclusion of the inevitability of the continuous process of learning and transformation in order to keep up with the pace and intensity of change. Life thus becomes a continuous economic capitalization of the self, and learning becomes a technology for shaping new identities—entrepreneurial, flexible, and innovative—in order to meet the demands of accelerating societal change. Thus, PCP could profit from an important update on social theory and the philosophy of language, at the same time offering the know how to facilitate individual transitions in forthcoming social transitions. Goodbye to the futile effort of trying to find out what human nature really is, and hello to other kindred spirits who are interested in what humans may become.

Although our constitution of human subjectivity needs a certain amount of activity, it is the activity of impersonal discourses and persons other than us. For preserving the awareness of human agency, a matter of crucial importance for PCP, another coalition may be needed. Erving Goffman (1959) has highlighted the importance of managing the impression given to others when people present themselves in their daily lives. As an alternative to the prevailing view that people in their daily conduct manifest an inner essence, he suggested that we subject our behavior to the opinion of others who are observing us as the audience observes actors in a play. Sometimes, it is enough if the observed ones behave spontaneously, thinking that this is a proper way to influence the way in which observers treat them. But sometimes the observed can influence the observer: instead of allowing their conduct to appear a haphazard by-product of their inner self, they can actively work to create the desired impression. Instead of attempting to achieve certain ends in a socially acceptable way, they can attempt to create the impression that they are achieving certain ends by acceptable means. Being a certain kind of person does not only imply the actual possession of certain attributes; it also means adhering to the social norms and projecting the appearance expected of members of certain social groups. In other words, this implies a performance, *not* merely an inner essence.

Although others have an important role in evaluating what sort of person we are by judging our conduct against social norms and standards, and although the meaning of their opinion is mediated by positions coming from discourses of social origin, our agency, activity, and entrepreneurial spirit are still needed. We do have to use elaborate and detailed guidelines in order to know what to do or say, or how to dress in certain contexts and in the presence of certain people—a job fit for the person-as-scientist.

So the task scientists have to undertake in a situation like this is far from that of “photo realists,” trying to paint a picture of something that as far as possible resembles the true original. It is more like a kind of performative science, a notion highlighting the activity of scientists in facilitating change, as in the case of (social) science proper.

The political program of PCP may be viewed not only as a bold statement of its time that is equally relevant today, but also as a demandingly uncompromising step toward the future. How well it will do in elections is something to be decided by the interest and unpredictable whim of the electoral public.

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Transcending War-Ravaged Biographies

David A. Winter

The emphasis of personal construct psychology (PCP) and its methodology on understanding others' views of the world, rather than imposing upon them one's own constructs (apart from PCP's "diagnostic constructs"), fosters its applicability in cultural settings very different from that in which it was originally developed. There have been some previous examples of its use in non-Western contexts (e.g., Orley, 1976; Chapter 12, this volume), and this chapter will describe how it has been applied in one such context, the West African country of Sierra Leone, which is still recovering from the ravages of a brutal, 11-year civil war.

Former Child Soldiers

The war in Sierra Leone was notorious for its use of over 7,000 child soldiers, both boys and girls. Some of these children volunteered for combat, either with the army or the rebels, although arguably with very limited alternative options, but more usually they were forcibly conscripted by the rebel forces. Typically, they were then subjected to an initiation such as having to commit violence against members of their family or local community, ranging from amputations to murder and cannibalism. Before being sent into combat, they were generally plied with drugs, for example "brown brown," a mixture of cocaine and gunpowder. Many also became sex slaves to the rebel commanders, the girl soldiers often subsequently giving birth to "bush babies."

In short, these children had witnessed, and been both victims and perpetrators of, atrocities that would be far beyond the comprehension of most people, let alone those of such tender ages. From a personal construct perspective, such situations of encountering events to which their existing constructs could not be applied would have been expected to evoke profound anxiety. It might also be expected that the barbarism of the acts in which most of them participated would have been likely to dislodge them from their core roles, and thus elicit considerable guilt in the Kellyan sense (see Appendix, this volume).

An opportunity to investigate their self-construing arose in a study of forgiveness. As part of this study, repertory grids were completed by 24 ex-combatants and 10 young people who had not been combatants (Goins, Winter, Sundin, Patient, & Aslan, 2012). Since conditions dictated that only group administration of the grid was possible, elements and constructs were supplied to all of the participants, the latter being largely derived from those frequently used in previous interviews, focus groups, and narratives. As in a previous stage of the research it had not been possible to administer a form of the grid in which the elements are rated on the constructs (as, for example, participants might give all elements the most favorable rating on all constructs), Kelly's (1955) original dichotomous form of grid, in which elements are allocated to one or other pole of each construct, was used.

The results of this study were quite contrary to predictions, in that construing of themselves in the war was no less elaborated (i.e., they could make just as much sense of themselves in the war) in former combatants than in non-combatants. Even more surprising was that the former combatants saw themselves as they were now and in the war more favorably (as more similar to how they should be) than non-combatants. Furthermore, the former combatants, but not the non-combatants, viewed their present selves more favorably than their pre-war selves. Although both groups saw their future selves in a more positive light than their pre-war selves, this difference was greater in the former combatants.

There may be various reasons for the apparently positive self-construing in the former child soldiers in this study. Firstly, they may have been able to disavow responsibility for the atrocities in which they were involved, and consequent dislodgement from their core roles, by seeing themselves as only obeying the orders of their rebel commanders (with whom they may have compared themselves favorably). In so doing, they were essentially following institutionalized roles in Sierra Leone of the "young warrior," and of apprenticeship and fosterage. In addition, they had perhaps felt

empowered by the responsibilities that they had been given during the war, in contrast to the relative impotence of children in traditional Sierra Leone society.

Social processes following the war may also have allowed the former combatants to maintain their self-esteem. The grids of those who lived together in a “displacement camp” suggested that they construed themselves as more similar to other people than did other participants. This perceived commonality in their construing may have facilitated more favorable self-construing. The grids of former combatants also indicated that forgiveness carried more positive implications for them than for non-combatants, and the importance of forgiveness in fostering their reintegration in the community was also apparent in their accounts. For example, as one said, “I am appealing to everyone that know that I have done bad to him let he/she forgive me and I will forgive those that capture me and other people that have done bad to me”¹ (Goins et al., 2012, p. 292). Such accounts are consistent with Leitner and Pfenninger’s (1994) personal construct perspective that “both persons are responsible for the work of forgiveness” (p. 132).

Construing of Mental Health Problems and Their Treatment

Despite the apparent resilience of the former child soldiers, the World Health Organization estimates that as many as 40% of the population of Sierra Leone may suffer from mental health problems at some point, many of these related to the war. Interviews conducted with people experiencing, and those treating, such problems revealed a wide range of constructions concerning their causation and treatment (Winter, Bridi, Urbano Giralt, & Wood, 2011). For example, a staff member in a rehabilitation center based on faith healing made a clear distinction between problems with demonic and non-demonic causation, with a range of subordinate constructs differentiating these two types of problem. The president of the National Union of Traditional Healers used a more elaborate diagnostic system, consisting of six categories: problems caused by frustration, germs in the brain, curses, lack of fulfillment of a pact with the devil, treatment by an incompetent doctor, and drug-taking.

To explore this area further, 30 medical students completed a grid in which the elements were types of mental health problem elicited from them in a classroom discussion, and the constructs were possible causations of, and treatments for, such problems mentioned in this discussion or in the

previous interviews with service users and providers. Their average grid indicated that they differentiated hereditary problems, and those caused by infection, which could be helped by medicine, from problems caused by family or marital difficulties, stress, or poverty, which could benefit from practical help or counseling and psychotherapy. A second dimension of construing contrasted problems caused by spirit possession with those which could be helped by medicine, and those which were dangerous. Although further grids completed after they had attended a course of lectures on psychiatry and clinical psychology showed little overall change in construing, they did indicate a significant reduction in the extent to which mental health problems were construed as being caused by spirit possession. There was a corresponding significant increase in the extent to which mental health problems were viewed as hereditary or caused by marital and family difficulties, curable, and helped by medicine.

In general, the medical students' grids showed clear relationships between the perceived causes of problems and their most appropriate treatments. Thus, problems caused by infection were viewed as appropriately treated by medicine; those caused by marital or family difficulties or stress as appropriately treated by counseling or psychotherapy; those caused by lack of faith or poverty as treatable by faith healing; and those caused by spirit possession as best treated by a juju man (witch doctor). A somewhat similar pattern was found in the grids of 47 community health officers, who differentiated problems caused by infection, which could be helped by medicine, from those caused by frustration or loss, which could be helped by counseling or psychotherapy.

Dante's Inferno: The Harsh Reality of Treatment for Mental Health Problems in Sierra Leone

The seemingly differentiated construing of mental health problems and their treatment by our interview and repertory grid respondents contrasted markedly with the reality of psychiatric treatment in Sierra Leone. On my first visit to the country's only psychiatric hospital, with some colleagues from the British National Health Service, 75% of the hospital's in-patients were kept in chains in a setting where there was little food or water, no electricity, and where virtually the only treatment, no matter what problems the clients presented, consisted of massive doses of major tranquillizers, mostly way past their expiry dates. A visiting journalist had described the hospital as like a scene from Dante's Inferno.

Since the rationale for keeping some in-patients, but not others, in chains seemed less than clear, I explored senior staff members' views of chaining by two personal construct methods: ABC technique (Tschudi & Winter, 2010) and repertory grid technique. In the former, the respondent is asked for the positive and negative implications of each pole of a construct. The construct concerned in this case was "chained–unchained," and Table 16.1 presents the responses of one staff member, Julia. For her, chaining allowed the avoidance of harm and trouble by, for example, preventing in-patients obtaining access to prohibited drugs. However, its disadvantages included deterioration in personal hygiene, since in-patients sat in their own urine, as well as physical problems such as edema. Her responses were fairly typical of those of staff members, apart from one who was unable to think of a single negative implication of keeping in-patients in chains!

The repertory grids completed by staff members included as elements four in-patients they kept in chains and four who were unchained, and the constructs were drawn from those used in the previous studies, together with some relating to the feelings elicited in staff by in-patients, as well as a construct concerning how similar in-patients were to the staff member. Their average grid showed a clear distinction between the chained and unchained in-patients, with the former being construed as dangerous, although amenable to occupational therapy, and the latter as mentally ill and curable. The chained in-patients also accounted for a significantly lower percentage sum of squares in the staff members' grids than those who were unchained, indicating that they were less construable and therefore, in Kellyan terms, more anxiety-provoking. Interestingly, in-patients who staff considered should be in chains were also construed as more similar to themselves in character. Landfield (1954), a former student of Kelly's, put forward the hypothesis that people are threatened by others who exemplify

Table 16.1 Julia's ABC.

a1	chained	a2	unchained
b1	causes edema of feet restricted freedom of movement (urinate where they sit) personal hygiene deteriorates	b2	no edema can use toilet personal hygiene preserved
c2	restrained from moving around won't harm each other don't cause trouble	c1	access to drugs harm each other cause trouble

some aspect of themselves that they have outgrown, but could all too easily revert to. It may be, then, that chaining is a way for staff to deal with the anxiety caused by patients whom they cannot understand (as they cannot, for example, easily be construed as mentally ill) and/or who threaten them by reminding them of some rejected parts of themselves that they would like to think they have left in the past. Placing such in-patients in chains may reassuringly serve to reinforce their “otherness.” That trying to understand them may be a far more threatening option is indicated by a Sierra Leone proverb, “When a mad man speaks, a mad man understands him.” How much better, then, not to show any understanding of a mad man, since this would only lead one’s own sanity to be called into question; and better still to keep the “mad” in chains.

Having rather fruitlessly attempted to change staff practices by formal teaching programs, my colleagues and I eventually each “adopted” a ward at the hospital with a view to facilitating a less custodial approach. Finding myself on the ward which had the largest proportion of chained in-patients in the hospital, I was at first stricken with anxiety, having little clue how to proceed. Clutching at PCP constructs, I remembered George Kelly’s (1955) “first principle” that “if you do not know what is wrong with a person, ask him; he may tell you” (pp. 322–323). I therefore asked each in-patient what change he would like to be introduced on the ward. Since the request of virtually every in-patient was for music, a cassette player was bought. When it was brought on to the ward, and music played, most in-patients spontaneously began to dance, holding their chains when these were unlocked by staff, who then danced with them. It was hoped that this, together with activities introduced on other wards by my colleagues, would have the effect of enhancing staff members’ sociality and perceived commonality with their clients, encouraging them to take clients’ perspectives and to appreciate their common humanity. This was coupled with a case consultation approach focused on increasing staff members’ understanding of particular clients. A typical interaction was along the following lines:

D: Why is he [a teenage boy] in chains?

Staff member: He is usually fine but when we give him the medication he becomes disturbed, and then we have to put him in chains.

D: So why do you give him the medication?

The staff member’s reaction to this question was one of incredulity. Further discussion of this boy’s situation revealed that his depression could be traced to the war, when his father had disappeared and was presumed dead.

It was suggested that helping him to talk about this would be likely to be more helpful than his current regime of major tranquilizers followed by shackling.

My colleagues and I have now visited the hospital six times over as many years, during which the proportion of in-patients kept in chains has reduced to about 20%.

Beyond Amputation

During the civil war, the favorite form of terror used by the rebel forces was amputation. Its victims can be commonly seen in Sierra Leone, sometimes begging on the streets, but also on Freetown's Lumley Beach every Saturday morning, when the Sierra Leone Single-Leg Amputee Football Club holds its practice sessions. In interviews with nine of these amputee footballers, they were asked to tell the stories of their lives, an approach which is consistent with the oral, story-telling tradition in Sierra Leone (Winter, 2015).

Although they were not specifically asked to do so, all of the interviewees began their accounts with a description of the incident in which they lost their limbs, as if this began the stories of their current lives. They struggled to find meaning in what had been done to them, saying of the perpetrators that "they did it because they just feel like doing it" or "for nothing." They also described the resulting constriction of their lives, with the loss not only of their limbs but also of educational, occupational, and romantic opportunities. The future, being very hard to construe, was a source of considerable anxiety: for example, "Well my future I find it difficult because I believe even the able people in the world . . . they find it difficult for them to live, so I—what about me when I lost my leg, so how am I going to get my future plan?" Some interviewees also clearly felt threatened by the possibility of psychological and physical collapse, which they had witnessed in other amputees, who, for example, were "out of their heads now because of the pains." Being dislodged from their own, and others', constructions of their core roles as able-bodied members of the community, it was apparent that several of the interviewees had also experienced considerable guilt and shame. As one interviewee described how he was viewed, "They see with one foot, they not respect me . . . they don't pity a one-foot man."

The prominent role of football in facilitating reconstruction of the interviewees' lives, and in particular in countering their guilt and shame, was very apparent in their narratives. For example, one described how football was a source of "credibility in ourselves because we think that what everybody can

do amputees like us can do that.” Paradoxically, football had also provided many of them with opportunities to dilate their constricted worlds, such as by traveling to play in international tournaments, that would have been very unlikely to be available to them had they not been amputees. As one or two described it, their lives were now better than they had ever been. However, the primary beneficial aspect of playing in the football team appeared to be that it allowed the amputees to appreciate the commonality of their construing: as one put it, “I feel good, yes, because them they are amputate, me I am amputate.” This in turn seemed to facilitate their perceived commonality with wider society: for example, “since we join ourselves together with the football club I believe that I be part of the community again.”

The wider community of which they were part was also one that contained the perpetrators of amputations, perhaps including their own, and other atrocities during the war. However, the interviewees generally expressed no wish to take any action against those who had been responsible for the loss of their limbs, preferring instead to “leave it to God.” As one of them put it, “I just forgive him to God that everything is forgiven. I will not do anything because we will have peace in our country, that’s why I will think of peace.”

Subsequent interviews with 25 amputee footballers in Sierra Leone provided essentially similar stories. These interviewees also completed repertory grids, the results of which clearly showed how playing football allowed them to view themselves as considerably closer to their ideal selves than would otherwise have been the case (Winter, Brown, Goins, & Mason, 2016).

Escaping the War

Some Sierra Leone citizens managed to flee to other countries from the war, often with the loss not only of possessions but also of loved ones. The experiences of six of those who obtained refuge in the United Kingdom were the subject of a study using Experience Cycle Methodology (see Chapter 11, this volume) and repertory grid technique (Winter et al., 2016). Unlike refugees investigated in previous personal construct research, for whom the asylum process appeared to be even more traumatic and alienating than experiences to which they had been subjected in their countries of origin (Sermpezis & Winter, 2010; Winter, Patient, & Sundin, 2009), these individuals all considered their anticipations of finding a safe refuge to have been validated. While they all had a very unfavorable view of how they had been during the war, they now construed themselves in a

much more positive light, and as having a greater capacity to forgive. It is possible that their transition to their host country was eased by it being the former colonial power of Sierra Leone, and the opportunities for sociality that this may have afforded.

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that personal construct psychology and its methodology, albeit with some modifications, have been able to elucidate the experiences of survivors of an African civil war, as well as guiding approaches used with those who find themselves within the mental health system of Sierra Leone. Of particular relevance to these individuals, and their sometimes breathtaking resilience, is one of Kelly's (1955) most quoted passages:

“No one needs to paint himself into a corner; no one need to be completely hemmed in by circumstances; no one needs to be the victim of his biography.” (p. 15)

Note

- 1 Here and elsewhere, all quotes are expressed verbatim, occasionally using a mixture of English and Krio.

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Part IV
Clinical Applications

The Continuing Clinical Relevance of Personal Construct Psychology

A Review

David A. Winter

In the mid-1930s, George Kelly began writing a handbook of clinical procedures for the students of the clinical psychology program that he directed. Over the next 20 years, this handbook evolved into his two-volume magnum opus, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (Kelly, 1955), setting out a radical alternative to the dominant psychologies of the day. Although, as is evident from the contributions in this handbook, his theory now has a very wide range of convenience, or breadth of application, its roots were therefore in the clinical setting, which was its original focus of convenience, or area of maximal applicability. This chapter will review its applications in this sphere, and argue that it is still a radical alternative to other clinical approaches.

“Disorder”

Kelly’s view of optimal functioning was set out in his Experience Cycle (Kelly, 1970), in which the individual, operating like a scientist, formulates hypotheses, or constructions, tests these out, and if necessary revises them. For Kelly (1955), psychological disorder essentially represented a blockage in this process, and was defined by him as “any personal construction which is used repeatedly in spite of consistent invalidation” (p. 831). It has been

argued that the earlier in the Experience Cycle the blockage occurs, the more severe the disorder (Neimeyer, 1985), so that, for example, the inability to frame any coherent constructions about the world would indicate greater severity than the failure to revise construing following its invalidation.

Kelly (1955) argued that to attempt to understand the predicament of a client presenting with a psychological disorder, the clinician should “subsume” (or construe) the client’s construing by using a set of professional, diagnostic constructs. The construct system that he provided for this purpose was “not a nomenclature of diseases” in that the constructs themselves were “neither good nor bad, healthy nor unhealthy, adaptive nor maladaptive” (Kelly, 1955, p. 453). They were therefore not just applicable to the construing of clients in clinical settings but to that of any individual (including, reflexively, the clinician).

Personal construct psychology diagnostic constructs

The diagnostic constructs of personal construct psychology (PCP) may be divided into various categories.

Covert construing Some concern construing that is at a low level of awareness. This includes *preverbal constructs*, that have no consistent verbal symbols; *submerged*, or relatively inaccessible, construct poles; and *suspended* constructions, held in abeyance because their implications are intolerable (Kelly, 1955, p. 474). One of the clinician’s concerns may be to raise the client’s awareness of such aspects of his or her construing.

Structure of construing This includes distinctions between *superordinate* and *subordinate*, and *core* and *peripheral*, constructs. By construing the client’s constructs in this way, the clinician is enabled to avoid rash or premature challenges to his or her superordinate or core constructs.

Strategies of construing The contrasting strategies reflected in the constructs of *constriction* or *dilation* of one’s perceptual field, and *tightening* or *loosening* one’s construing (making, respectively, precise or vague predictions) are essentially ways in which a person may attempt to avoid invalidation of constructions. However, the exclusive use of one of these strategies may be manifested in a disorder.

Control Some disorders may be reflected in failure to complete the *Circumspection–Preemption–Control Cycle* that characterizes effective

decision-making. For example, some clients may circumspect endlessly about the issues involved in a decision, while others may omit the circumspection phase entirely and impulsively leap into preemption, control, and the making of a choice.

“Emotions” The clinician operating from a personal construct perspective will be concerned to assess the client’s awareness of transitions in their construing, and the corresponding “emotions” and associated behaviors that Kelly (1955) considered to be associated with such awareness, namely *fear, threat, anxiety, guilt, aggression, and hostility*. This will enable, for example, the avoidance of therapeutic interventions that provoke intolerable levels of anxiety, threat, or guilt.

Dependency Although dependency was not a principal axis of Kelly’s diagnostic construct system, he did indicate that optimal functioning involves a variety of different types of dependency relationships whereas in psychological disorders the person may be characterized by *undispersed dependency*, the extremes of which would be focusing all their dependencies on one person or indiscriminately depending upon everyone for anything.

Content of construing Most of Kelly’s diagnostic constructs concern the process or structure of construing, but he also indicated that disorders may arise from the content of personal constructs. An example of this would be dilemmas that essentially represent logical inconsistencies in construing (see Chapter 19, this volume).

Psychiatric and transitive approaches to diagnosis

Kelly (1955) was highly critical of the traditional psychiatric approach to diagnosis, which he described as “all too frequently an attempt to cram a whole live struggling client into a nosological category” (p. 775). This is what he termed preemptive construing, in which a person is viewed, for example, as a schizophrenic and nothing but a schizophrenic. Kelly went on to say that “It is not practical to attempt to catalogue all the typical psychological disorders—even if he could, who would have the stomach for writing that kind of cook book?” (p. 836). The answer to his question is, of course, now very apparent: namely, the authors of successive editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, whose stomachs, as most recently illustrated in the fifth edition of this manual (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), appear to have no bounds in medicalizing more and more aspects of human experience.

Rather than pigeonholing the client in a fixed diagnostic category, Kelly's approach was to use his diagnostic constructs to formulate a "transitive diagnosis," highlighting the avenues of movement open to the client. The concept of formulation is generally regarded as deriving from the cognitive-behavioral tradition, and has recently been championed as an alternative to psychiatric diagnosis, but in fact the term was used by Kelly (1955), who once again was ahead of his time (Winter & Procter, 2012). However, his lack of stomach for the task of writing a diagnostic cookbook is reflected in his attempt to produce a taxonomy based on PCP diagnostic constructs, which was set out in chapters on disorders of construction and of transition (Kelly, 1955). These chapters contain various inconsistencies, in contrast to the very systematic writing in the remainder of his two volumes. The term disorder itself also seems far too mechanistic and too descriptive of a state rather than a process for use by personal construct theorists. I have therefore suggested "imbalance" as a possible alternative, since psychological problems generally involve an imbalanced use of the structures and processes described in Kelly's diagnostic constructs, rather than the cyclical interplay of these that characterizes optimal functioning (Winter, 2003). Other developments of the PCP view of disorder include Walker's (2002) description of this as involving "non-validation," or a failure to test out construing adequately; and Leitner, Faidley, and Celentana's (2000) perspective involving developmental and structural arrests, interpersonal styles, and retreat from role relationships.

A case example

To illustrate the use of Kelly's diagnostic constructs to understand a client's predicament, consider the case of Simon, an industrious and creative employee in a large company, who was encouraged on several occasions by his manager to apply for more senior posts. On being interviewed for these positions, he unaccountably found himself lost for words when trying to answer even the most straightforward questions, and was therefore constantly rejected. As a result his fiancée was becoming increasingly exasperated with him, and was considering breaking off their engagement. She was also frustrated that their social life was limited to visits to their local pub and to occasional interactions with his workmates. On rare occasions when she did persuade him to take her to a restaurant or concert, he typically had to cancel the outing because of stomach pains. He sought therapeutic help at her insistence and, when asked at interview about his early life, he described a father who was a very successful, but brutal, banker

and a mother who had only ever worked in relatively menial jobs but was gentle and selfless. Repertory grid assessment revealed a dilemma in which he wished to be successful and caring but construed successful people as uncaring. He also recounted being a shy child, who was rarely included in the activities of his peers, and described how his few attempts as a teenager and young man to find a girlfriend generally eventuated in him being “dumped” after a few meetings. Following these initial discussions with the therapist, he arrived very late for some of their subsequent sessions, and failed to produce the self-characterization that the therapist had asked him to write between sessions.

Personal construct formulation of Simon’s difficulties highlighted his use of hostility, behaving in such a way that he validated his view of himself as an unsuccessful person who was rejected by others. These difficulties were manifested in the therapy setting by his persistent lateness and his “resistance” to the therapist’s “homework” assignments: difficulties which for another therapist might have resulted in the therapy contract being terminated. The guilt that experiencing himself as successful might have provoked in him was reflected in the negative implications that success carried for him. It was also apparent that the trappings of success, such as a more affluent lifestyle, were highly anxiety-provoking for him because he had little conception of what they would involve: they were largely beyond the range of convenience of his construct system. Consequently, he constricted his world to those situations that he was able to construe. He was now confronted with either facing his anxieties or the threat of losing the person on whom he had focused all of his dependencies.

PCP perspectives on particular clinical problems

There have now been attempts to understand a wide range of clinical problems from a personal construct perspective, in most cases supported by research findings.

The structure and process of construing The first substantial body of work in this area began with Bannister’s (1960) demonstration, using repertory grid technique, that clients diagnosed with schizophrenic thought disorder are characterized by loose construing. He later provided research support for his hypothesis that loosening was a response to serial invalidation of construing, and developed a therapeutic intervention to reverse this process based on serial validation. Although not without criticism, particularly for its development of a grid test of schizophrenic thought disorder that was

used to support psychiatric diagnoses, the research of Bannister and his colleagues brought PCP to the attention of many clinicians and led to an extensive program of research on aspects of construing in people diagnosed as schizophrenic.

Bannister's research was concerned with the overall structure and process of construing (at least in the subsystem of psychological constructs applied to people), and this has also been the case in research that has provided some, although inconsistent, evidence of tight construing in people diagnosed with depression or anxiety disorders (Winter, 1992). However, the structure of particular construct subsystems has been the focus of research on other clinical problems. In a classic study, Fransella (1972) demonstrated that constructs relating to stuttering carried more implications in people who stutter than those relating to fluency, and she therefore developed a therapeutic approach focusing on elaborating construing of fluency. Her view of stuttering as these individuals' "way of life," and of therapy needing to focus on the development of an alternative way of life, has been supported by subsequent research (DiLollo, Manning, & Neimeyer, 2005), and can also be applied to other symptoms. For example, addiction can be regarded as central to the core role of the person who is chemically dependent, with corresponding difficulty in the development of alternative roles (Klion, 1993).

In a program of research on post-traumatic stress, Sewell (1997) was concerned with the subsystem of constructs applied to the traumatic event, finding this to be less elaborated in people diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder than in those not so diagnosed despite being exposed to such events. In his view, post-traumatic stress disorder is a state of "constructive bankruptcy," in which the person does not have the constructs to enable him or her to make sense of the traumatic event. However, Sermpetzis and Winter (2009) have provided evidence that the opposite is the case, construing of the traumatic event in people diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder being over- rather than under-elaborated. There have also been research studies of construing in, and the development of personal construct therapeutic approaches for, survivors of particular types of traumatic event, for example childhood sexual abuse (Erbes & Harter, 2002).

The PCP diagnostic construct of constriction is clearly expressed in the avoidance behavior of people such as those diagnosed as suffering from panic disorder with agoraphobia, who can be viewed as drawing in the boundaries of their world to avoid events that they are ill equipped to construe. A series of research studies on people with this diagnosis indicated that the unconstruable events are situations of interpersonal conflict,

since low elaboration of constructs relating to such conflict and associated emotions is associated with high levels of agoraphobic symptoms. As a result, a personal construct group intervention was developed which included a focus on elaborating the construing of interpersonal conflict (Winter, Gournay, Metcalfe, & Rossotti, 2006). The construct of constriction has also been applied by Button (1993) to clients diagnosed with eating disorders, whom he views as constricting their world to, and deriving their primary validation from, the area of weight and eating.

For Kelly (1961), suicide was “the ultimate constriction.” He contrasted *suicide as a dedicated act*, “designed to validate one’s life . . . to extend its essential meaning” (p. 260), with *mere suicide*, which may occur under conditions of realism or indeterminacy. In the former, or *deterministic suicide*, “the course of events is so obvious that there is no point in waiting around for the outcome”; while in the latter, *chaotic suicide*, “everything seems so unpredictable that the only definite thing one can do is abandon the scene altogether” (p. 260). This taxonomy was extended to acts of deliberate self-harm in research that, for example, indicated that a constricted view of the future self is associated with high levels of hopelessness and suicidal ideation, and resulted in the development of an effective personal construct therapeutic approach (Winter, Sireling, et al., 2007).

Self-construing Research focusing on the content of construing has provided evidence of extreme and unfavorable views of the self, which is construed as dissimilar to others, in clients diagnosed with depression and anxiety disorders, and negative self-construing in those presenting with eating disorders (Feixas, Erazo-Caicedo, Harter, & Bach, 2008; Winter, 1992). Gara, Rosenberg, and Mueller (1989), in their research on people diagnosed as schizophrenic, have focused not on the content of self-construing but on its level of elaboration, showing this to be low in such individuals, suggesting a weak sense of identity.

Dilemmas A series of studies, many by Feixas and his colleagues and reviewed in Chapter 19 in this volume, have focused on *implicative dilemmas* in which a negatively evaluated construct pole (often describing a symptom) is associated with a positively evaluated pole. Such dilemmas, which may elucidate an individual’s resistance to change, have generally been found to be more evident in clinical than in non-clinical samples.

Critique A possible criticism of the work described in this section of the chapter is that it simply reframes traditional psychiatric diagnoses in PCP

terms rather than representing a more fundamental paradigm shift. However, it has at least demonstrated that the predicament of people given psychiatric labels can be explained in terms of the same processes of construing as are used by anyone else. It has also demonstrated a credulous approach to such individuals, in which their views are taken at face value as their way of giving meaning to their world, and the clinician attempts to construe their construction processes, or in PCP terms to show sociality. Finally, as we have seen, in several cases it has led to the development of therapeutic approaches for the problems concerned.

Personal Construct Psychotherapy

The therapeutic process

Consistent with the PCP view of psychological problems as rooted in repeated use of particular constructions, personal construct psychotherapy aims for “*the psychological reconstruction of life*” (Kelly, 1955, p. 187, italics in original). It is a process that “should make one feel that he has come alive” (Kelly, 1980, p. 29) by realizing that, rather than being trapped in a particular construction of events, it is always possible to view these events in a different way.

Although personal construct psychotherapy facilitates reconstruction by enabling the client to experiment with, and experience some invalidation of, his or her construing, care is taken to ensure that this is within an overall climate of validation. For example, taking a “credulous attitude” to the client’s view of the world conveys that he or she is treated with respect or “reverence” (see Chapter 18, this volume). Conducting therapy in an “invitational,” rather than a prescriptive, mood also conveys that client and therapist are co-experimenters rather than that the latter has privileged access to the truth. When the therapist does challenge the client’s constructions, this does not usually involve denying their validity but rather encouraging that they be “suspended” while alternative constructions are explored. This may be achieved by “binding” them to a particular point in time or situation when or in which they were more useful (for example, in the case example of Simon, binding his constructions of success to his childhood experiences of his parents); or putting them “on hold” while the client enacts a role agreed with the therapist. Experimentation with new constructions and behavior will generally be carried out in a rather playful way, designed to minimize threat, perhaps involving enactment (brief role-plays), imagery, or

the use of metaphor, such as Mair's (2014) metaphor of the self as a "community." If the client appears to be resistant to therapy, this will not be viewed, as in some other therapeutic approaches, as a manifestation of his or her obstinacy but rather as an indication that the therapist needs to take more heed of avoiding the threat of invalidation of the client's core role.

Variants of personal construct psychotherapy

Personal construct psychotherapy uses a variety of means to facilitate reconstruing, and is technically eclectic in that it borrows techniques from other therapeutic models, but always conceptualizing the choice of these techniques and their mode of action in PCP terms. Thus, the final stage of a formulation in terms of Kelly's diagnostic constructs is selection of the approach that might best lead to change in the aspects of construing concerned. For example, with the client whose problems are deemed to reflect excessively tight construing, relaxation techniques or recounting of dreams might be used to achieve some loosening of constructions, while behavioral self-monitoring techniques might conversely be used as tightening procedures with the client who construes excessively loosely.

One specific therapeutic technique that Kelly (1955) did develop is fixed-role therapy, in which the therapist, usually drawing upon the client's self-characterization (see Chapter 7, this volume), prepares a sketch of a hypothetical character which, if he or she finds it credible, the client is asked to "become" for a short period of time (typically two weeks) both in role plays with the therapist and in real-life situations. The sketch develops a new major theme, usually orthogonal to constructs used in the self-characterization, and the exercise is designed to facilitate experimentation and to provide "one good rousing, construct-shaking experience" (Kelly, 1955, p. 412). Amongst the later variations on this procedure is the use of mini fixed roles designed to address particular problems faced by a client (Epting, 1984) and adaptations for use with couples (Kremsdorf, 1985).

Kelly (1955) also employed group psychotherapy to encourage experimentation, but his particular approach, coupled with a stage model of group development, has now generally been superseded by such personal construct methods as the interpersonal transaction group (Landfield & Rivers, 1975; Neimeyer, 1988a). Here, the group members have brief interactions in dyads on a topic provided by the therapist at each session, rotating the dyads so that each member interacts with every other, before a plenary stage of the group in which the dyadic interactions are discussed.

The procedure aims to facilitate the development of role relationships and rapid self-disclosure on topics selected for their therapeutic relevance in a relatively non-threatening environment. Some interpersonal transaction groups are provided for clients presenting with particular clinical problems, as are other types of personal construct group, such as those developed for people with anger problems (Cummins, 2006).

Post-Kellyan developments in personal construct psychotherapy may conveniently, if somewhat artificially, be construed in terms usually applied to other therapeutic models.

“Cognitive personal construct psychotherapy” Personal construct psychotherapy is often described in textbooks as a cognitive approach, even though Kelly and subsequent personal construct psychotherapists have been at pains to point out the inappropriateness of this, and although significant differences have been demonstrated in the process of personal construct and rationalist cognitive therapies (Winter & Watson, 1999). Arguably, however, it has more in common with some of the “third wave” cognitive-behavioral therapies. What could be described as more “cognitive” personal construct approaches are those which focus on specific aspects of construing, generally relating to its content, which are sometimes framed in cognitive terms, such as the manualized approach developed by Feixas and his colleagues for the resolution of dilemmas (albeit an approach that is also influenced by other, non-cognitive, perspectives: see Chapter 19, this volume).

“Humanistic personal construct psychotherapy” In contrast to this, there is a more humanistic school of personal construct psychotherapy, perhaps originally best exemplified by the work of Epting (1984), and more recently by Leitner’s experiential personal construct psychotherapy (see Chapter 18, this volume), in which there is a particular focus upon the therapeutic relationship.

“Systemic personal construct psychotherapy” One of the most significant elaborations of personal construct psychology is Procter’s family construct psychology and, more recently, relational construct psychology (see Chapter 14, this volume). This allows the possibility of working systemically with a family or social group, which is viewed as having its own construct system in which individual members occupy particular positions.

“Narrative personal construct psychotherapy” Mair’s (1988) elaboration of a story-telling psychology is, of course, consistent with narrative approaches

to therapy, and a narrative turn in personal construct psychotherapy is evident in Bob Neimeyer's more recent work (see Chapter 21, this volume), as well as in Chiari and Nuzzo's narrative hermeneutic approach (see Chapter 20, this volume).

Integration

The various developments in personal construct psychotherapy indicate possibilities of its integration with other therapeutic models, and indeed Neimeyer (1988b) has called for a "theoretically progressive integrationism" of approaches that are compatible at a metatheoretical level. They also highlight the dangers of appropriation of aspects of personal construct theory and psychotherapy as it is subsumed by other approaches, often with minimal or no acknowledgment of Kelly. The biggest predator in this regard is cognitive-behavioral therapy, and indeed, although both he and Albert Ellis have acknowledged debts to Kelly, Beck once said that "if it works, it's CBT." Thus, as we have seen, CBT has snapped up the concept of formulation as well as any personal construct approaches that are seen to be effective, some of which seem to be reinvented in such CBT techniques as the downward arrow and continuum work. Its practitioners have also described their use of fixed-role therapy (e.g., Dryden, 1987), but sometimes in a way that betrays a lack of understanding of some of the basic principles of this approach.

Evidence base

Personal construct psychotherapy has over the years been applied successfully with a very wide range of client groups across the lifespan (Winter, 1992; Winter & Viney, 2005). However, it is not recommended in major treatment guidelines. One reason for this is that, tending to view themselves as revolutionaries, personal construct psychologists have never been very concerned with gaining acceptance, marketing their approach, or playing the game of demonstrating the "evidence base" for personal construct psychotherapy, increasingly required by commissioners of health services.

Since such attitudes ultimately threaten the survival of personal construct psychotherapy, it is fortunate that not all have taken this view, and that consequently, as demonstrated in a few meta-analyses, there is now not inconsiderable evidence that this form of therapy is roughly as effective as other therapeutic approaches, including CBT (Holland, Neimeyer, Currier, & Berman, 2007; Metcalfe, Winter, & Viney, 2007; Viney, Metcalfe, & Winter, 2005; Winter, 2003). Although this evidence is encouraging, it is

of some concern that these studies tend to demonstrate more change during therapy on measures of symptoms than on measures of construing and personal meaning, which should be the focus of personal construct psychotherapy. If the measures used are sufficiently sensitive to detect these changes, this raises the question of whether the therapy is effective not primarily because it facilitates specific types of reconstruing, but because of less easily measurable aspects of the therapeutic relationship or changes in the process, rather than the content or structure, of construing.

One reason why the evidence base for personal construct psychotherapy still often goes unreported in reviews of psychotherapy research and in treatment guidelines is that the studies concerned, consistently with PCP's eschewal of psychiatric diagnosis, tend not to use conventional diagnostic categories as a way of defining their research participants. They therefore cannot be easily fitted into reviews or guidelines which are organized in terms of such categories. Ironically, when this evidence base *has* been reported in reviews of the psychotherapy research literature, it has been included in sections devoted to CBT (Carr, 2009; Cooper, 2008).

Summary and Conclusions

The ever-increasing medicalization of human experience by, for example, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association, and the dominance of the treatment of psychological problems by mechanistic interventions, which pay little heed to the personal meaning of clients' complaints, highlight the continuing relevance of PCP as a radical alternative to dominant clinical approaches.

Personal construct formulation offers such an alternative to psychiatric diagnosis, and has been applied to a very wide range of clinical problems, and supported by research evidence. In many cases this has led to the development of therapeutic approaches. Although much of this work has been with clients in "adult mental health services," it has by no means been limited to this setting but has included work with children (Butler & Green, 1998), older people (Robbins, 2005), people with intellectual disabilities (Davis & Cunningham, 1985) and autism (Procter, 2001), those with physical illnesses (Viney, 1983), and clients in forensic settings (Horley, 2003).

Variants of personal construct psychotherapy differ in terms of subordinate aspects such as degree of focus on techniques rather than the therapeutic relationship, or on the individual rather than his or her social system, but they share various superordinate features aimed at facilitating reconstruction by providing a delicate balance of invalidation and validation.

Although there is an encouraging evidence base for this form of therapy, it has had little impact on treatment guidelines. Personal construct psychotherapists should perhaps show greater sociality, construing the construction processes of those whom they wish to influence and adapting their message accordingly even if this may involve presenting the evidence base for their approach not in their preferred language, but in terms that are more familiar to policymakers and commissioners of services.

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Experiential Personal Construct Psychology and the Integral Universe

Theoretical and Clinical Implications

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While experiential personal construct psychology (EPCP; Leitner, 1988) has been applied to a wide variety of psychological issues, its main focus has been in the area of psychotherapy with seriously damaged people. The EPCP understanding of psychotherapy is grounded in and continues to be elaborated through a focus on the ways people are connected to one another in relationships. However, recently, based on Kelly's (1955) idea of the integral universe, the EPCP exploration of relational interconnection has been extended to include what we are calling the more-than-human world. In this chapter, after first very briefly describing EPCP and the work on the integral universe, we hope to expand the theory even further into the more-than-human world.

EPCP and the Integral Universe

Elaborating Kelly's (1955) Sociality and Choice Corollaries, EPCP asserts that deep interpersonal relationships are absolutely essential to human life yet profoundly terrifying. As such, we all are negotiating between the meaning we get from life when we profoundly connect with others and the need for safety and protection found in retreating from connection. These deep interpersonal connections are called *ROLE relationships*. EPCP conceptualizes symptomatology as communications from us to us about

the ways we have retreated from ROLE relationships (Leitner, Faidley, & Celentana, 2000). Consistent with Kelly's fundamental premise of constructive alternativism, we acknowledge that EPCP is one construction of Kellyan therapy and that many others are possible.

However, in addition to constructive alternativism, Kelly has a fundamental premise that is less well known and explored—the assumption that the universe is integral or interconnected. By integral, Kelly meant that “it functions as a single unit with all its imaginable parts having an exact relation to each other” (1955, p. 6). To illustrate this point, he stated that the movement of his hands typing a manuscript in Columbus, Ohio, was related to the price of yak milk in Tibet. This integral universe is also temporal, that is, “the universe is continually changing with respect to itself” (p. 7). In other words, the universe, like humans, is a process of continuous change, growth, and development.

At this point, Kelly faced a challenge: given that the universe is a continuous process of change, is it alive? After all, life forms can be seen as processes of growth. Kelly resolves this dilemma by stating that, for him, the fundamental nature of life is that it represents (construes) its environment. Thus, to the extent that something merely responds to its environment, it is not alive; to the extent that it construes its environment, it is alive. Construing is, however, a process of meaning-making, whereby a living organism, in interaction with the external world, co-creates the meanings used to navigate the self through life.

Kelly's reasoning implies that, should we find evidence that the universe (co)- creates meanings, we would have to call it alive. However, if the universe merely responds to the actions and forces it is exposed to, it would not be alive. Even then, though, there would be another issue: many people with beating hearts and working synapses may do little other than merely respond to the events of their lives. However, these people have the capability of “coming to life,” to use Havens's (1994) term. Might the universe have this capability also? As we will see, these issues raise profound philosophical, theoretical, and clinical questions, only some of which have been explored to date.

Previous Work on the Integral Universe

Previously, Leitner (2010, 2012) explored some of the implications of Kelly's integral universe assumption. First, Leitner argued that all aspects of us have implications for the greater universe. While Kelly used a concrete

behavioral example (typing and the price of yak milk), he makes it very clear that he means more than that just our external behaviors affect the world in which we live. (Note the statement above where he stated that “all our *imaginable* parts” have a relationship to the whole.) Among these imaginable parts are our very processes of being. In other words, the thoughts we think, the emotions we feel, and the values we hold all affect the greater whole of the universe.

Leitner also used Kelly’s assertions about the integral universe to develop a conception of psychopathology that cuts across various levels of human meaning-making: the interpersonal, the cultural, the greater human, and the other-than-human worlds. Healthy living means that we must sensitively take responsibility for the ways our process of being (“all our imaginable parts”) affects our relations with others, the culture at large, all of humanity on the planet, and the entire universe. In contrast, struggling to experience reverence in each of these areas can be seen as pathological. We call these newer order issues of responsibility and reverence *transpersonal responsibility* and *transpersonal reverence*. Therapy, then, means more than alleviating certain clinical symptoms; it should foster greater citizenship with the world.

These two papers by Leitner, though, have barely scratched the surface of the implications of Kelly’s position on the integral universe for psychology. We will spend the remainder of this chapter exploring some additional implications. Specifically, we will sort through the ways our thoughts and emotions affect the greater universe. We also will expand our constructions of the role of symptoms in our conception of pathology. Finally, we will tackle that most vexing of questions: whether (and how) the universe is alive.

The Role of Inner Experiences

As mentioned earlier, Kelly’s position implicitly holds that inner experiences (“*all* our imaginable parts”) affect the greater universe. So, feelings of love, anger, hatred, and so on are, in some ways, impacting the greater universe. Note that it is not just my actions based upon these feelings that affect the universe. The feelings themselves are an aspect of “all our imaginable parts.” Thus, our feelings about others, even as we type this manuscript, are affecting the greater universe. Kelly’s position, then, can be seen as blurring the lines between what is “in” me (thoughts, feelings, etc.) and what is “outside” of me (the universe); the universe is as much in me, a part of me, as outside of me.

Thus, a Kellyan who understands the implications of the interconnected universe should not be surprised to learn that things like intercessory prayer (where patients are prayed for by others) may be helpful to patients (e.g., see Schlitz, 2005), even when performed from a distance and when the person doing the praying does not know the patient. Note: we are not necessarily saying that some deity intervenes because he or she heard the prayer. Rather, we are suggesting that the compassionate thoughts toward the patient enter the integral universe and can affect the patient's experience. Also, intercessory prayer entering the universe may have a beneficial effect on things other than the intended patient. The universe's complex interconnections are so great that we probably will never know how our individual acts affect the entirety of the world.

Despite that lack of knowledge, there are ways that we must assume some responsibility for how our emotions affect the evolving integral universe. Our anger as well as our love affects the universe. Obviously, this is an awesome responsibility as no one wants to be responsible for putting more negative energy into the universe. However, further complicating this matter is that Kelly makes clear that the universe itself is evolving over time, and this evolution is toward a better world. Thus, it is quite feasible that emotions like anger and hatred are parts of the greater evolution of the universe. As an example, Martin Luther King's anger touched the conscience of a nation in wondrous ways. So, in many ways, we face an existential paradox: we are responsible for what we put out into the universe but have no knowledge of whether (or, more accurately, in what ways) what we send forth will be used for the betterment of the world.

Turning to the clinical arena, a therapist who feels compassionately toward a client will have these feelings enter the universe. In addition, since they enter the universe in the client's presence, they easily can be absorbed as a part of the client's experiential world. As experienced clinicians can attest, clients are remarkably attuned to whether the therapist cares for them (Adame & Leitner, 2009). This non-possessive caring has been linked empirically to client improvement in numerous studies. It may be one important reason for the "Dodo bird" finding in psychotherapy research (e.g., Wampold, 2001) that all therapies work equally well.

Symptomatology in the Universe

Leitner et al. (2000) described the ways that a person's symptoms can be seen as communications from the person to the person about the person's relational life. In other words, all symptoms of psychopathology are messages

to the person about the fact that he or she is too disconnected from others (either because of retreat or enmeshment) and does not have extensive ROLE relationships. We also can see symptoms as simultaneously expressing relational injury to another (thus attempting to connect to an other) while also distancing ourselves from others (and thus protecting ourselves from the relational injuries associated with connection).

For example, the experience of depression is an indicator that one has been relationally injured, a communication from us to us about our relational life. (We are aware that many people will disagree with this assertion and cite cases of “endogenous” depression where it seemed to come out of nowhere. However, our experience has invariably been that, when we look at the life of someone who is supposedly “endogenously depressed,” we see a multitude of sometimes small relational wounds that have accumulated until the person finally decides relationships are too painful.) Further, my showing others my depression shows them that I have been injured (an attempt to connect). However, my lack of energy to invest in others and my tendency to see others as criticizing me when they may not be means that I am distancing myself from others (and protecting myself from further relational injury).

As an alternative, consider George, a young man who completely believed his insides were rotting (Leitner, 2007). He had a relational history where his extremely violent father would lock him in a closet for days at a time. He would be told that he had better not urinate or defecate while in the closet or he would be in “real trouble.” When you understand this history, it is easy to grasp the ways his “delusion” about his insides rotting was a communication to others about the traumas he experienced (an attempt to connect). It also is easy to see how others, without knowing this history, would not be able to understand and connect with him (attempt to protect the self through distance). Finally, by reminding him of the traumas he had not dealt with, the “delusion” also communicated to him that his ROLE relational life was impoverished.

As we also are relationally connected to the larger universe, is it possible that the universe also is sending signals from itself (and us) to itself (and us) about its connections with us? For example, the planet’s climate is changing at an unprecedented pace. Applying our symptom illustration, we can see this change as a communication from the interconnected universe to the universe about the universe. The scientific consensus is in: a major factor in climate change is our using the atmosphere as a garbage dump for carbon emissions. Rather than feeling connected to the air we breathe and seeking to care for it as such, we thoughtlessly pollute it. The “symptom” of climate

change tells us about our relational disconnection from the greater whole. Further, by making us aware of this disconnect (through climate change), the universe invites us to reconnect and form a more respectful relationship with the planet.

As another example, entire fisheries are collapsing worldwide. The scientific consensus has shown that these collapses are occurring because of over-fishing. Again, this collapse can be seen as a communication from the universe to us about the ways we view the oceans as economic opportunities, rather than a part of an entire ecosystem connected with us. If we are disconnected from the oceans, we can fish species to extinction without being bothered by it, at least until it starts to affect us. (The fact that the entire universe is interconnected means it certainly will affect us.) In other words, the collapse of the fisheries is a signal of our disconnection from the greater universe and an invitation to reconnect in a more respectful, reverent way.

The Integral Universe and Psychopathology

Experiential personal construct psychology views psychopathology in terms of the way we negotiate this dilemma between needing to connect with an other for richness and meaning in life versus the need to retreat from ROLE relationships for self-protection. Should people opt too strongly for the safety of disconnection, they pay the price with psychological symptoms. Leitner et al. (2000) propose a three-axis diagnostic system for experiential personal construct psychology. The third axis was an elaboration of Leitner and Pfenninger's (1994) nine aspects of optimal functioning. In this chapter, we will focus on two of those nine aspects: responsibility and reverence.

Leitner and Pfenninger defined responsibility as the willingness to examine one's ways of being as to how they affect others. As interconnected beings, my meanings will affect you even as your meanings affect me. Thus, when a relationship winds up injuring one or both participants, each person needs to examine the ways his or her meanings may have contributed to the other person doing things that were injuring. People may struggle with not taking responsibility in this way. Alternatively, people may struggle with assuming too much responsibility, deciding that the other person's contribution to the injuries inflicted was minimal or nonexistent. Both are ways of limiting ROLE relationships and, thus, contribute to less than optimal functioning (expressed symptomatically).

Leitner and Pfenninger defined reverence as knowing that you are affirming central aspects of the other. As you come to know the vulnerability of the other, you become aware of the wonder of the other in allowing you access to his or her deepest meanings. In addition, you see the ways the other appreciates your wonder and beauty in a ROLE relationship. People also can struggle with both reverence issues (revering and being revered). Some people, because they do not connect deeply enough, never see the ways the other is beautiful. Others cannot acknowledge the fact that they, too, can be seen as beautiful in the eyes of others. Again, both are ways of limiting connection and, thus, from an EPCP view, are psychologically pathological.

Because we now see that we are connected to the larger world, we need to broaden our definition of psychopathology to include problems in relationship to this greater whole. So, for example, let us consider the struggles with responsibility. Many people seem to struggle with acknowledging their impact on the greater world. One nation (U.S.A.) with 5% of the world's population consumes at least 25% of the world's resources. Another nation (China) is rapidly becoming the greatest carbon emitter in the world (followed closely by India). While one can argue these facts are the result of government policy, this does not dismiss the notion of individual or social responsibility. If the citizens of these countries changed their attitudes toward the greater world, they could force policy changes in their government.

In other words, this ecological destruction is occurring because we are treating the integral universe as a *thing* to be *exploited*, not connected to (and, in that way, the *whole* of which we are a *part*) who we *are*. Our position implies, then, this tendency to injure the world is by definition, an injury to *ourselves* and is a form of psychopathology. Because our "individual" psyches are interconnected with the greater universe, there is a way that psychopathology can never be seen as individual. Further, we would argue that this pathological deficit in transpersonal responsibility may be the most prevalent and most serious psychopathology of our time. We say it is the most serious because the potential impact of this pathology could destroy life as we know it on the planet.

On the other hand, people can assume excessive responsibility for the plight of the planet. For example, some people may be so depressed about the extent of environmental degradation that they lack the energy to do anything to help the larger world in which we are all embedded (e.g., Broto, Burningham, Carter, & Elghali, 2010). They get bogged down and mired in a sense of guilt and helplessness without taking responsibility or action. In so doing, the struggles of these people deprive the planet of vital energy

and enthusiasm needed for healing. All of us have the challenge of feeling and responding to the injuries to the greater whole we see.

Turning to reverence, the integral universe position implies that not revering the greater whole is also pathological as it signifies a retreat from ROLE relating with the whole. It also implies that it is pathological not to expose oneself to the wonders of the greater universe. We cannot know that with which we do not have contact. Thus, if I do not allow myself to experience the beauty and the majesty of the larger world, I cannot have a ROLE relationship with it. In so doing, I am denying myself experiential access to an important connection to an important part of me.

On the other hand, a ROLE relationship involves more than just seeing the wonder of the other. In a ROLE relationship, I see aspects of the other that are less than wonderful but can integrate them into an appreciation of the beauty of the entire person. In a similar vein, the greater universe has aspects that might seem horrific to us. For example, a swimmer being attacked by piranhas probably does not experience the wonders of the cycle of life that he or she is participating in. As in an interpersonal ROLE relationship, our challenge is to see the less-than-wonderful within the greater universe and somehow integrate it into an appreciation of the greater whole. To only see the wonders of nature, for example, would imply a limited ROLE relationship and would be pathological.

When we were discussing interpersonal reverence, we described how an aspect of reverence is being able to take in the other's revering of you. So, in a ROLE relationship with the greater universe, are there ways I need to take in the universe's revering of me? In an interpersonal ROLE relationship, the other who is revering me is a living being, not an inanimate universe. If an inanimate object cannot experience, it cannot experience reverence. Thus, before we can deal with this question, we must deal with the last issue for this chapter—is the universe alive?

The Question of the Aliveness of the Universe

General overview

Leitner (2010, 2012) has shown that Kelly believed that the universe is evolving over time and composed of interconnections. Similarly, our sense of self, the essence of our aliveness, also evolves over time and is interconnected. In other words, the universe does meet some minimal criteria for aliveness. As we mentioned earlier, Kelly (1955) had yet another criterion for being alive beyond evolving interconnectedness. According to

Kelly, to be alive, an organism must be able to represent what is other to it, not merely respond to this otherness. In other words, living things construe.

However, this criterion is problematic when applied to the universe as a whole, as what can be “other” to something that includes everything? One answer to this question is that the universe could construe its parts, not unlike we can construe our arms, legs, and so on. If so, we should be alert to signs that the universe is construing, just as we are. Should we see such signs, we would have evidence that the universe is alive. Somewhat problematically, though, if we do not see such signs, we could not conclude that the universe is not alive. After all, there is no reason to believe that the bacteria in our colons see evidence of our construing process. The universe might be so far beyond our individual lives that we could never see the signs of its construing, even if they were all around us.

When we are talking at the level of the entire universe, it may very well be that the construct of alive–dead has no meaning. As Kelly has made clear, constructions must have contrasts. In other words, at the level of all that is, there can be nothing that is not. This thought should not be surprising to Kellyans as he argued that all constructs had a range as well as a focus of application (convenience). In other words, because all constructs have a range of application, there must be ways in which the construct of alive versus dead is irrelevant. Perhaps, then, at the level of the universe as a whole, it makes no sense to speak in terms of alive versus dead.

Alive versus dead specifically

When we look at the greater world, we see many instances where parts of the universe once were alive but now are dead. One obvious example is that all people have died or will die, and their processes will cease to be (at least in their current forms). More fundamentally, there are now spots in our oceans where there are no life forms and no chemical processes occurring. We can speak of these spots as dead while neighboring areas are alive. However, one of the interesting aspects about the greater whole is that it seems to be innately self-healing. As one example, the natural world recovered from the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (for example, the trees and plants came back). This tendency to self-heal certainly is consistent with a universe that construes. There are other documented instances of the universe undoing ecological damage to maintain its current equilibrium, also consistent with a universe that construes. See Lovelock (2009) for a more thorough discussion of this phenomenon.

Next, we would like to return to Kelly's (1955) original quote about the integral universe: "it functions as a single unit with all its *imaginable parts* having an exact relation to each other" (p. 6, emphasis added). Kelly, as a mathematically sophisticated person, emphasized how each word in his treatise was chosen with care. In this statement, then, he is suggesting that the parts that are affecting one another include more than just "real" parts; they include every part we could imagine. In this regard, Gaia theorists already are imagining the universe as a living organism (Lovelock, 2009). In other words, the idea of the universe being alive already is affecting the evolution of the universe.

There is one final matter to consider before returning to the issue of whether the universe can revere us. Kelly made it very clear that the ultimate criterion for judging our construing was the usefulness of the construction. In this regard, construing the universe as an inanimate thing has led us to the position we are in today—drastic climate change, once-in-a-century storms occurring with regularity, farmland being eroded, and the greatest mass extinction of living species since the dinosaurs roamed the planet. For example, scientists currently are debating whether human-caused climate change will disrupt the Gulf Stream and send Europe into a new ice age with human life being unsustainable on the continent.

By way of contrast, we can construe the universe, at least in the ways it is connected to us, as much a part of us as we are to it, and therefore alive. As such, as a living part of us, we must find ways to treat it with respect and care. In this way, nurturing the planet is the equivalent of nurturing ourselves. If we construe the universe as alive, we then will be more careful in terms of the things we do to our ecosystem as we do not wish to damage a part of us. We will at least hesitate before we blow up mountain tops for a little bit of coal. As we act upon our construing the universe as alive, we may even see more evidence of its aliveness.

Revering again

Finally, let us return briefly to that knotty question of the universe revering us. We are returning to this question from the assumption that the universe is alive as we find the construction of it as inanimate to have been so problematic that it threatens the planet. In so doing, we can see signs of our being revered by the universe. For example, most people have had experiences where something happens that is exactly what they need at a given moment. While one could argue that these events are coincidental, the interconnected nature of the universe implies that things happen as a result

of the interlocking parts of the greater whole. So, in some way, this greater whole gave us exactly what we needed. If we are operating from the construction of aliveness, then, the universe engaged in an action that shows reverence toward us.

Another implication of the construction of the greater whole revering us has to do with self-reverence. If all that is views us as special and worth caring for, we must then revere ourselves. Who are we to say we are not worth revering when all that is finds us worthy? We are only a small part in all that is, so obviously the huge majority of the universe says we are worthy of caring. Thus, we have an obligation to treat ourselves with tenderness and caring as we go about the messy business of living. Self-reverence demands that we nurture ourselves as well as other people and the entire planet.

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Dilemma Resolution

Guillem Feixas

One of my early influences in psychotherapy was existential. In the context of the determinism that characterized both behaviorism and psychoanalysis, the existential approach to therapy was fresh and illuminating. Human beings could be seen from that point of view as beings who made choices in the context of their circumstances. Those choices were not hazardous but followed a sequence that was integrated in the person's existential project. As fascinating as this approach was for me, I realized it was too philosophical to be adhered to for most psychologists in both clinical practice and research; and I found personal construct theory (PCT) just at that point, with its strong emphasis on the person's uniqueness and choice. As I dug into the history of its creator, George A. Kelly, I realized that his journey, the one that ended in his 1955 magnum opus, was not fueled by philosophy but by true clinical experience. I found, and still find, it quite unbelievable that a clinical psychologist developed an understanding of human beings and their (our) functioning so deeply rooted in human choice and so far away from essentialism and classification. PCT, already in Kelly's original work but going much further with the contributions of those who felt inspired by his work, provides a general framework to develop clinical practice and research which not only puts choice at the center of the scene but also provides clinicians and researchers with a lot of choice. For example, none of the procedures created by Kelly or his followers is mandatory for a construct approach to psychological assessment and/or intervention. Thus, clinicians can select among any of those procedures but also among techniques originated in other traditions. They can even risk asking the client what he or she thinks is the best way to approach his or her problem.

However, one of the consequences of having the possibility of choice in our lives is that it comes along with potential dilemmas. The possibility of having a dilemma in a fully deterministic theoretical framework is greatly reduced. But once you consider choice as a central aspect of human beings, dilemmas are likely to appear in both their everyday situations and their construct systems.

Construct Systems Are Not Logical

Our construct systems reflect the distinctions we made in our previous lived and interpersonal experience (e.g., Procter, 2007)—not the experiences themselves, but whatever we captured from them (Kelly, 1955/1991a, 1991b). Those distinctions, whether they can be verbalized or not, are our personal constructs, which are organized in a hierarchical system. For example in the personal construct system of Anna (one of our clients), being “protective” (vs. “negligent”) implies being “demanding” (vs. “tolerant”). The way Anna construed people in her family, and later in other contexts, linked those two constructs in her system so that now when she construes someone as “protective” she assumes that he or she will also be “demanding” (and vice versa).

A construct system is composed of a network of personal constructs with lines of implication among them, but PCT’s Organization Corollary asserts that not all nodes of that net are at the same hierarchical level. Kelly’s distinction between peripheral and core constructs is one of the more striking and farsighted contributions of PCT. Core constructs, at the top of the hierarchy, define who we are—our identity—and also who we can become, not in a void but in contrast or similarly to significant others. In the example, “protective” was one of Anna’s core constructs (like her brother but unlike other family members). We try to protect core constructs from invalidation because if that happened a large portion of our system would consequently become invalidated so that we would have little structure with which to make sense of events—and of ourselves! Although she desired to be more “tolerant,” Anna did not want to become “negligent”: that would be an attack on her sense of personal coherence. She would resist that change as much as she could. It is preferable to suffer invalidation at lower, more peripheral sections of the system rather than in our core constructs. Even when peripheral invalidation involves suffering and symptoms, PCT’s Choice Corollary suggests that our system will prefer to protect our core constructs in order to retain the majority of its predictive

capacity. From the combination of these two corollaries, Organization and Choice, we can infer a basic human need for continuity and personal coherence in spite of the fact that our construct system is continuously changing with ongoing experience (Experience Corollary).

The functioning of construct systems outlined here can lead, however, to some conflictual situations. Anna wants to change from being “demanding” and would like to become more “tolerant” with others, and especially with herself, but she finds it difficult to make that change in her life. Her need for change in that aspect of her way of being conflicts with her need for continuity in one of her core constructs (“protective”). That creates a dilemma in her system because of the implications of the construct “protective-negligent” for the construct “demanding-tolerant.” It is interesting to note that people may or may not be aware of the conflicts existing in their construct systems. Therefore, it is quite unusual that these dilemmas appear in their description of the problem, except in situations such as drug dependence or restricted eating in which that conflict is apparent in their initial presentation of the problem.

The Dilemma of Therapy

As psychotherapists, we are seen by society and by our potential clients as aligned with change. In our profession, many feel that it is completely natural to push clients for change whether they express the need for change or not. In the latter case, clients are usually seen as unmotivated and the focus of the intervention is on convincing them of the necessity of change. When clients express their wish for change, their “anti-symptom position” (in coherence therapy terms, see Ecker, Ticic, & Hulley, 2012), then all the resources of most therapists are directed toward promoting change using counteracting strategies (again in coherence therapy terms), those aimed at preventing or eliminating symptoms. Psychoeducational and exposure techniques are direct, clear examples of that. However, in many cases these counteractive efforts do not attain their goal and clients either do not achieve change or, if they do, change is easily reversed. In these situations, it is quite common for therapists to feel invalidated in their role as change agents. Then, emotions of frustration and anger are not infrequent. Labeling the client as “resistant” is quite effective in getting some relief for therapists (protecting their core constructs from invalidation) but it does not help clients much.

The need for continuity and coherence in our sense of identity has not received enough consideration in psychology, and even less in the field of

psychotherapy. This is not surprising given the fact that the professional identity of psychotherapists usually includes the ability to promote beneficial change for their clients. But here, if we take into account PCT, lies one of the main dilemmas of psychotherapy. As psychotherapists we want to help clients to achieve change, but clients have a strong and legitimate need for continuity in their sense of identity. Concentrating all our energy as therapists into pushing clients for change is often ineffective. Rather, PCT suggests that therapists should show as much reverence to clients' efforts to protect their core constructs from invalidation as they do to their efforts to change. Thus, reinforcing change when it occurs in our clients or highlighting their positive aspects might be, according to PCT, of some use (validation is certainly convenient), but it might only take into account half of the picture. Rather, our main goal, in cases in which these two forces are in conflict, should be that of reconciling them. That is, in order to resolve our dilemma as psychotherapists (we want to promote change but, at the same time, respect the client's identity), we propose harmonizing the need for change with the need for continuity as the more appropriate stance for psychotherapists working with clients whose construct systems are in conflict, those with implicative dilemmas. Therefore, a therapy approach inspired by PCT would not be focused on promoting change but on promoting a kind of change that is compatible with the person's identity. For that to be possible, some changes in core construing might also be required in some cases: not because of the therapist's pressure for change, but because of a therapeutic stance that recognizes the courage needed for such changes and the legitimacy of the client's need for coherence.

Therapy for Dilemmas

Most therapies begin with the goal of eliminating some symptoms or distress and, thus, therapists try to understand the determinants of the problem after proper assessment. Then, as mentioned, counteractive efforts are directed to promoting problem resolution and therapists take a stance in favor of change. But PCT suggests that we consider the symptoms and problematic attitudes of clients as resulting from "choices" (usually not conscious ones) in the context of their construct systems while, at the same time, their choice for change, which is being expressed by requesting help from a therapist, also stems from the same systems. Therefore, our proposal is to focus therapy not on symptom resolution but on dilemma resolution. That is, we have to join with each "part" of the client's construct system,

the one that goes for change and the one that pursues continuity, to help the client recognize the existence and legitimacy of both, and focus therapy work on making these two goals somehow compatible.

A therapy for dilemmas has some interesting implications if we look at it in contrast to a counteractive therapy for problem or symptom resolution. When a client comes to see a therapist and presents a symptom it is expected that the latter will propose some initiatives toward its resolution. So the main responsibility of the therapy process lies in some implicit, and sometimes explicit, way on the therapist's side, on his or her resources or techniques for change. In general, this is one of the most difficult aspects of therapy because most therapists are aware that, ultimately, change can only be carried out by clients. No matter how truthful or intelligent therapists' reasons for change are, nor how effective and reasonable their techniques, the decisive point in therapy is how the therapists' initiatives are incorporated by clients into their lives. However, if therapy focuses on the clients' dilemmas instead, clients immediately realize that this is their business. Clients might expect therapists to resolve their symptoms but not their personal dilemmas. Once we change the focus of therapy from symptoms to dilemmas, the expectations placed on therapists change, and also their role. They are no longer seen as people who should have a solution to their clients' problems but rather, hopefully, as companions to their clients in their struggle to resolve their dilemmas.

For therapists, a focus on dilemmas entails a different stance. We are not those who know the right solution to the clients' problems but rather we acknowledge that clients face a difficult challenge for which, to be honest, in many cases we do not have an optimal solution. Milena was a 53-year-old woman who had been diagnosed with major depressive disorder and was seen with her husband. After a few conjoint sessions, it was apparent that she was regretting having emigrated five years ago from South America, but her husband was very happy with that decision. He was successful, and one of their children had also come along with his wife and his newborn baby, Milena's grandchild. The dilemma in her life, leaving her husband and her child and grandchild in Barcelona vs. going back to her beloved country to join her two other children, reflected also many contradictory personal meanings and values. Do we, as therapists, have a solution for that? In dilemma therapy work, we do not assume that we have a solution to our clients' problems, and that is apparent also to the clients. Rather, we are convinced that reconciling the two sides of the dilemma and finding a course of action that respects both sides is the best way to go. How that reconciliation manifests in practical, everyday terms is something we do not

know, but is something that can emerge out of the collaboration between the client as expert in his or her own life and the therapist as expert in the therapy process (Feixas, 1995).

Identifying Dilemmas

We encounter clients' dilemmas during the therapy process in many different ways. Some clients express their reluctance to change right from the beginning (as mentioned, this is very common in drug dependence), while others express their wish for change but when taking steps in that direction they become blocked. Others go back and forth, they make some progress but then symptoms reappear, sometimes with unforeseen intensity (often leading the therapist to despair). In addition to these clinical clues, PCT also offers a method for studying personal construct systems, the repertory grid technique (RGT), which permits identification of implicative dilemmas (see, e.g., Feixas, Saúl, & Ávila-Espada, 2009).

To identify an implicative dilemma in a grid, first we need to detect congruent constructs (self now and ideal self are very close), those indicating coherence. There is no need to change on these constructs ("protective" vs. "negligent", in the case of Anna). Second, we locate discrepant constructs (self now and ideal self are at opposite poles), those for which the person expresses a wish to change (from being "demanding" to becoming "tolerant" for Anna). Then we check for all the strong correlations between these two types of constructs whenever the pole for which change is desired correlates with the pole of the congruent construct on which change is not desired.

Several studies conducted in the context of the Multicentre Dilemma Project (www.usal.es/tcp) provided evidence that implicative dilemmas were present in about half of a sample of psychotherapy clients (Feixas et al., 2009), and this proportion was found to be higher in two different samples of depressive patients (Feixas, Montesano, et al., 2014a, 2014b; 60% and 68% respectively), in one of bulimic patients (Feixas, Montebruno, Dada, Del Castillo, & Compañ, 2010; 72%), and in one of patients with fibromyalgia (Compañ et al., 2011; 77%). However, implicative dilemmas were also found in control groups, although at rates that were definitively lower (ranging from 19% to 47%). In all comparisons differences were statistically significant with a medium effect size.

Taken together these results suggest that though implicative dilemmas are more prevalent in some clinical samples, they are not negligible in

non-clinical ones, suggesting that their presence might be a transdiagnostic condition of some construct systems which might be associated with psychological distress. In any case, our main point is that in trying to help a client who requests help, if an implicative dilemma is found, then focusing on that dilemma should substantially facilitate the therapy process.

Changing Dilemmas

Therapy for dilemmas can be manualized, and we have done so for a controlled efficacy study for depression (Feixas, Bados, et al., 2013), but here I want to picture the general approach of such a therapy. In fact, the more central considerations have already been outlined above, and those regard the therapist's attitudes. The more difficult part in the practical training of dilemma therapists is restraining them from pushing clients for change (giving "good" advice, prescribing "well-intended" activities, giving "solutions" to problems, etc.).

In addition to facilitative attitudes, therapists seem to need techniques and procedures. PCT has been quite powerful in inspiring those as well, and many of them can be adapted for working with dilemmas: laddering procedures for exploring the implications of the constructs involved in the dilemma; controlled elaboration of situations involving dilemmas; generation of alternatives to the dilemma; and fixed-role enactment of the solved dilemma, to mention a few (see Feixas & Saúl, 2005).

The ABC technique does not need any adaptation for dilemma work because it was originally devised for that goal. This procedure has proven extremely useful in working with many clients. However, since it has been described in a very elegant way elsewhere (Tschudi & Winter, 2012), here I will present the magic wand technique, which has proven to be quite a useful instrument in working experientially along those lines.

The magic wand was introduced to Anna by asking her to imagine the therapist was holding a wand (the therapist waved a pen or pencil in a gesture suggesting a magic trick) that had the magical power to convert her into a "tolerant" person: "Imagine leaving the session today being a tolerant person. Close your eyes and feel the sensations of that change. How would your life be? How would you behave from now on? How would you feel when being with your partner? When talking to your mother? And when talking to your father?" After several seconds she began to utter that it was wonderful to achieve that change so easily, but in going deeper into that "new self" she did not look so happy even when describing the practical

advantages of being tolerant. The therapist noticed that, and asked her whether all the sensations she was experiencing were positive or whether there were also sensations of other kinds. She responded:

Anna: “Well, it is very strange. I think it’s better now but I don’t really feel better. It’s very strange.”

Therapist: “Why don’t you have a closer look at those not-so-positive sensations?”

Anna: “On the one hand, there is this strange sensation of not being me. But when imagining being with others, my partner for example, then some worries emerge. I wonder whether by being so tolerant I am missing some of his experiences; besides, he might feel I don’t care much about what he does and feels, somehow leaving him to his own fate.”

The therapist then asked Anna to contrast that sensation with her present sensation as a “demanding” spouse. She then spoke more fluidly, saying that she might be a bit of a nuisance for him but at least she was sure he had her in his mind most of the time and that reassured her that he noticed she was really close to him. The therapist commented on the importance being close had for her and asked Anna to reflect on that:

Anna: “It is not only that I need to feel close to him because of my emotional needs but also that I feel I can protect him more from the many hazards that we encounter in the course of life. This way I am more aware of his needs.”

Therapist: “It looks like even when becoming more tolerant seems to be advantageous in many ways, abandoning your demanding attitude has also some disadvantages.”

Anna: “Yes . . . Actually, this change would involve more issues than I had expected.”

Therapist: “It looks like, so far, you felt closer to your partner by being demanding than by becoming tolerant.”

Anna: “Oh yes! But couldn’t I be more tolerant while keeping my closeness to him?”

This is a wonderful moment in the therapy process. Anna clearly takes the lead in the process by suggesting a possible solution to the dilemma. By looking at the diagram of Anna’s dilemma (Figure 19.1), a professional with some training in PCT and knowledgeable of implicative dilemmas could easily see the solution to the dilemma: loosening the lines of implication of the congruent construct on the discrepant one so that being

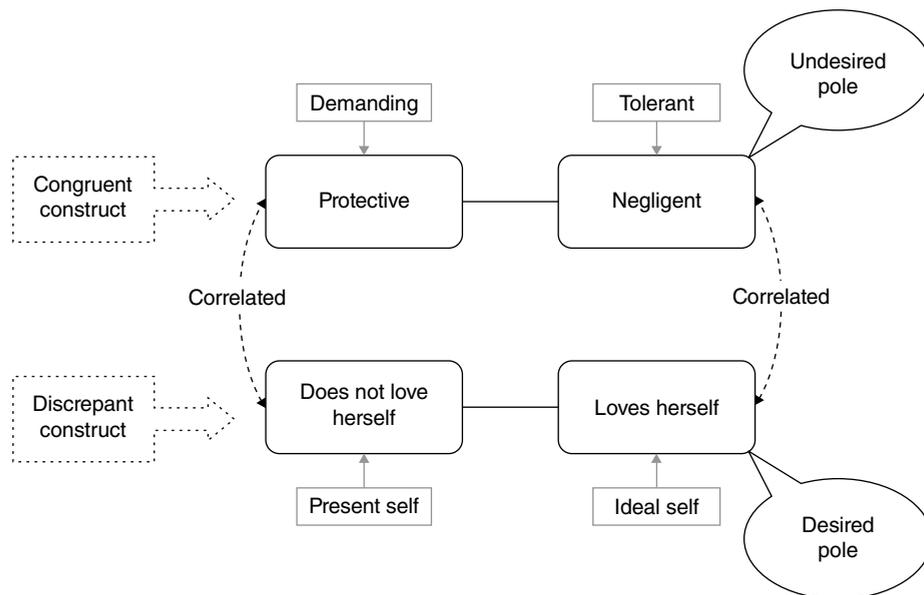


Figure 19.1 A Diagrammatic Representation of Anna's Implicative Dilemma.

tolerant would not imply being negligent, making being protective compatible with being tolerant. However, if the therapist had explained this “clever” solution to the client right at the beginning, the chances are that this intervention would have had a limited effect. As emphasized by proponents of coherence therapy (Ecker et al., 2012), it is essential for therapy work to involve clients in the experiential discovery of their internal conflicts. It would not have been a good idea for the therapist at this moment to snatch the leading role in therapy from the client and signal to her the way to proceed by prescribing actions, ways of thinking, or attitudes. Instead, once the client takes a step forward in creating a new course of action, it is of paramount importance for the therapist to stay in a role that permits the client to move forward in that direction.

Therapist: “Oh! . . . That is an interesting idea that you had: to find a way to be less demanding but still close to others, is that what you mean?”

Anna: “I guess so.”

Therapist: “And how do you imagine that could be possible? How would you do it during this next week?”

We can see here, at this point, the general outline of this dilemma work. The therapist becomes an assistant to the client in her efforts at constructing

a way to approach herself and others characterized by being more tolerant but, at the same time, remaining protective. Maybe that shift will need some redefinition of these two constructs, or of even more constructs. Anna will carry out “tolerant” actions and attitudes but paying close attention to any potential negligence they could involve. As in fixed-role therapy, we will check the reactions of significant others to Anna’s change of perspective. Further sessions will have to include explorations of the dilemma in the context of other significant relationships (mother, father, co-workers, etc.). Does the issue of closeness appear in connection to becoming more tolerant? If so, does it have the same significance in the context of each relationship?

The general idea I have tried to portray here about working with implicative dilemmas is that even when RGT identifies one or more dilemmas for a client, we should not just reveal the dilemma to the client in a didactic manner, but rather promote experiences in therapy leading up to the emergence of the challenges to identity and personal coherence that the desired change would entail. Once those challenges emerge, we should do our best to leave the client in the position of making the choices involved in pursuing a course of action which is the most appropriate from this new perspective. My concern as a therapist is not with the content and direction of those decisions (as long as they lie within ethical limits) but rather with whether they are made in the course of a lived process in which the construct system becomes more integrated, with more dilemmas solved, and, thus, with a higher degree of existential freedom.

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A Narrative Hermeneutic Approach to Personal Construct Psychotherapy

Gabriele Chiari

The narrative hermeneutic approach to personal construct psychotherapy—briefly hermeneutic constructivist psychotherapy (HCP)—rests on the theoretical tenets of personal construct theory (PCT), more specifically on its narrative and hermeneutic reading. For this reason, HCP shows affinities with other psychotherapies which emphasize the interpretative and linguistic nature of human understanding: particularly, the therapy inspired by the assumptions of social constructionism, and even some elaborations of psychoanalysis. Though contrary to an integration of PCT with other approaches, I consider essential for the future of PCT an elaboration which avails itself of the contributions offered by theories with which it is compatible at an epistemological level.

For many years my elaboration has compared PCT with the theory of autopoiesis. Though a biological theory of knowledge, the latter embraces a hermeneutic constructivist assumption and exhibits many similarities with phenomenology. More recently, I have been exploring the possibility of putting the psychotherapeutic process and the relative use of the techniques described by Kelly into the frame of the hermeneutic dialogue as proposed by Gadamer.

The reference to the narrative approach, such as that proposed by Bruner in psychology and by Ricoeur in hermeneutic phenomenology, could reveal itself to be fruitful both in carrying on the therapeutic conversation and in allowing the outline of a certain number of narrative

developmental paths, whose consistency with a constructivist assumption is yet to be explored.

I do not mean to present here a formalized approach, but to make a proposal open to dialogue and discussion.

The Philosophical Background

Epistemological and hermeneutic constructivism

PCT and personal construct psychotherapy represent the first expressions of psychological constructivism in personality psychology, clinical psychology, and psychotherapy. The proliferation of approaches labeled as constructivist during recent decades, however, demands closer consideration.

Actually, different forms of psychological constructivism have been described, following the well-known distinction between trivial and radical constructivism suggested by von Glasersfeld. Radical constructivism, defined as a theory of knowledge in which knowledge does not reflect an objective reality but an ordering and organization of a world constituted by our experience, has in turn been regarded as a form of epistemological constructivism, and contrasted with a hermeneutic constructivism (Chiari & Nuzzo, 1996, 2010).

Epistemological constructivism acknowledges the existence of a world independent from the observer, but regarded as unknowable and susceptible to being constructed in many different, plausible ways. Ultimately, it recognizes two realities: the extra-linguistic, and the experiential reality constructed by the person, thus espousing a subject-object dualism—we *and* the world.

Hermeneutic constructivism transcends dualism by considering our enmeshment in a world we cannot observe and describe from the outside—we are *in* the world. A consideration of the complementarity of subject and object of knowledge is the ontological assumption of phenomenology and hermeneutics.

Both epistemological and hermeneutic constructivism acknowledge the historicity of knowledge, due to the recursive, self-referential process of change. However, hermeneutic constructivism argues about the linguistic character of human reality and the shared understandings we come to have with each other through dialogue. Moreover, whereas epistemological constructivism highlights the relativity of knowledge, hermeneutic constructivism encourages the questioning of all knowledge.

Constructivism, phenomenology, hermeneutics

The affinities between phenomenology, hermeneutics, and constructivism have been highlighted elsewhere (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2010). The following sketch outlines some key points for a summary understanding of the matter at issue.

Nietzsche's "perspectivism" opened the way to the rejection of objective metaphysics and absolute truth: there are only interpretations, not facts, and the world has no one meaning behind it, but countless meanings. However, our understanding of the world might keep us in captivity, leading us to take for granted our bodies, culture, language—in a word our knowledge. Husserl's phenomenological reduction, through the procedure of *epoché* ("bracketing"), is aimed at freeing us from the captivity of an unquestioned acceptance of the everyday world.

Heidegger argued that all understanding necessarily occurs within the medium of language—the "house of being"—which is prior to human speech: when a person is "thrown" into the world, his or her existence is characterized from the beginning by a certain pre-comprehension of the world, but it is only after naming that he or she can have access to *Dasein* (existence) and *Being-in-the-World*. Gadamer expanded on the ideas of Heidegger, stating that being that can be understood is language, since the world is linguistically constituted. His philosophical hermeneutics developed into the narrative model of personal identity and understanding proposed by Ricoeur.

Phenomenological and hermeneutic signs in PCT

PCT is more suitable to be interpreted as an expression of epistemological constructivism. Kelly repeatedly rejected a comparison with phenomenology, even though he supposedly had a partial knowledge of the European phenomenologists. However, an elaboration of PCT in terms of a hermeneutic constructivism appears defensible (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2004, 2010), given the similarities between the above outlined key topics of phenomenology and hermeneutics and Kelly's ideas. PCT finds its philosophical counterpart in the phenomenological and hermeneutic tradition when emphasizing the interpretative, relational, and (at least in part) linguistic nature of understanding.

To begin with, Kelly is primarily interested in the way the world appears to people. Consequently, he is committed to an understanding rather than an explanation of phenomena and, furthermore, to an understanding open to reinterpretation, considering the focus of his theory on psychotherapy.

The philosophical assumption of *constructive alternativism*—“All of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement” (Kelly, 1955, p. 15)—seems to echo Nietzsche, and Kelly’s invitation to transcend the obvious is reminiscent of Husserl: “man, to the extent that he is able to construe his circumstances, can find for himself freedom from their domination. It implies also that man can enslave himself with his own ideas and then win his freedom again by reconstruing his life” (p. 21).

The central role assigned to the process of interpretation and reinterpretation is made even more explicit in the illustration of the theoretical bases of PCT: “By construing we mean ‘placing an interpretation’: a person places an interpretation upon what is construed. He erects a structure, within the framework of which the substance takes shape or assumes meaning” (p. 50).

Such structure, the *personal construct*, implies simultaneously both similarity and contrast. Though a singularity in the field of psychology, the notion of a dialectics between opposites in the unity of interpretation has ancient roots. Kelly himself refers to Hegel’s thesis-antithesis and to the pre-Socratic Anaximander (Kelly, 1969a, p. 169), to whom I could add Heraclitus. Still, a more suitable comparison comes from structuralist linguistics, notably from De Saussure’s concept of *binary opposition*, assumed as the means by which the sign derives its value or meaning in terms of its similarity to or difference from other signs.

Notwithstanding these and other affinities with phenomenology, Kelly’s metaphor of the person as a scientist and the consequent emphasis on experimentation and verification, and the popularity of the repertory grid, have all favored the more widespread utilization of PCT in terms of analytic, computational, statistical mapping of structures, and a technical application to psychotherapy. However, in reading Kelly’s 1955 work one feels as if it hides a blend of earlier ideas and newly emerging outlooks. In the “other Kelly,” the self-characterization is a narrative way of exploring personal roles as an alternative to the repertory grid, and make-believe (enactment, role-playing, fixed-role therapy) provides a different road to personal change. As Mair (1989) wrote, “very little attention has been paid to the much less familiar *narrative* or *story-telling* approach to psychology that Kelly also employs and . . . reaches toward advocating” (p. 4), and which became clearer in Kelly’s later writings. Here, the person is represented not as a scientist, but as “an incorrigible interpreter, one who must interpret at all levels of awareness in order to live, even in order to be credited with being alive” (Kelly, 1959, p. 18). Therefore, the aim of psychotherapy—a “supreme ontological venture” for the client (p. 38)—is “reinterpretation.”

Kelly himself appears aware of the double possibility of describing the nature of personal understanding by comparing the experimental scientist and the novelist (Kelly, 1964/1969b).

An Outline of Hermeneutic Constructivist Psychotherapy

The main differences between Kelly's original and the current proposal concern: (1) an elaboration of some features of PCT as a result of (a) a comparison with the theory of autopoiesis, and (b) an understanding of disorder as nonvalidation choice; (2) a hermeneutic approach to personal understanding which implies (a) the way the psychotherapeutic process is carried on, and (b) the viability of a narrative-developmental understanding of the person.

Organization and structure of self

In Chapter 6 of this handbook I highlighted the unsuspected similarities between Kelly's psychological theory of personal constructs and Maturana's biological theory of autopoiesis (Maturana & Varela, 1987).

An important notion in Maturana's theory is the distinction between organization and structure relative to composite unities, those which the observer decomposes into components through further operations of distinction. All living beings are viewed as composite unities which realize the organization of living (the autopoietic organization) through different structures, and knowledge is constitutive of this organization in human beings.

Applied to Kelly's notion of *core role*, this distinction allows one to conceive the "self" as having an organization (which allows people to recognize in themselves a specific kind of person, a personal identity) and a structure (the actual components and relations that realize the organization). A structural change can result in the conservation or disintegration of the organization. While a clinically relevant disorder sees the organization of self endangered, a reconstructive psychotherapy is aimed at fostering structural changes that allow its restoration or conservation.

On this basis, I suggested revisiting the professional constructs described by Kelly by distinguishing the processes relating to intimations of endangerment/disintegration of the organization of self, that is, threat, fear, guilt, and anxiety, from those relating to its conservation/restoration, that is, constriction/dilation, tightening/loosening, level of cognitive awareness, permeability/impermeability, aggressiveness, and hostility.

Suspended lives, frozen worlds: the choice not to change

Psychotherapy should be restricted to cases in which the therapist is able to recognize a disorder, defined by Kelly as “any personal construction which is used repeatedly in spite of consistent invalidation” (1955, p. 831). This view has undergone distinct but similar elaborations in the last few years.

Walker (2002) proposed contrasting validation/invalidation with *non-validation* when referring to instances of noncompletion of the experiential process. In short, people choose not to verify their anticipations in order not to jeopardize core areas of their understanding. Winter (2003) defined a disorder as a failure to complete the experience cycle, due to the person’s tendency to use a particular strategy almost exclusively—for instance, loosening or tightening or dilation/constriction—in order to cope with or avoid invalidation.

Chiari and Nuzzo (2004) suggested that a disorder is characterized by the passage from recursive to repetitive processes—from “spiraled experience” (Kelly 1959, p. 21) to circular iteration. More recently they (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2010) observed that, being organizationally closed, people necessarily subordinate any change (that is, *becoming*) to the conservation of their identity—that is, *being*. When aware of the possibility of losing the organization of self they cease to change: a suspension of movement defined as *not-becoming*, and representing the best elaborative choice for the person.

Psychotherapeutic process as hermeneutic conversation

Personal construct psychotherapy is aimed at favoring a reinterpretation of the client’s experience—and the consequent reactivation of movement—through conversation, enactment, and experimentation. Though accurately described in its distinct components, the process of reconstruction appears on the whole not to be clearly organized or easily intelligible in Kelly’s work, particularly as far as conversation is concerned.

A reconsideration of the function Kelly assigned to conversation via a comparison with Gadamer’s illustration of the hermeneutic dialogue could clarify, and at the same time bring out the concealed hermeneutic background of, personal construct psychotherapy. I shall leave the very complex question of the relations between language, thought, experience, perception, and reality to professional philosophers, and limit myself to suggesting how Kelly and Gadamer can complement each other. However, two preliminary remarks are necessary.

Constructs, language, and world

Whereas Gadamer maintains that our understanding of the world is linguistically constituted, Kelly argued about a separation between language and constructs. Words are seen as verbal labels used as symbols of constructs, and not all constructs are supposed to be symbolized by words. That is to say that Kelly sees interpretation as construing, and construing as preceding language.

Actually, Gadamer acknowledges a prelinguistic experience of the world (e.g., the language of gesture, facial expression, and movement) but “even these forms of self-representation must constantly be taken up in the interior dialogue of the soul with itself” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 551). Gadamer goes on, writing that “these phenomena indicate that behind all the relativities of language and convention there is a common trait which is no longer language but which looks to an ever-possible verbalisation.” One of the tasks of the therapist, according to Kelly, consists in helping the client to verbalize preverbal or nonverbal constructs. In the light of this, the distance between Kelly and Gadamer as to language appears shorter. Anyhow, later Kelly showed a greater interest in language in itself (see in particular Kelly, 1964/1969b).

True, inauthentic, and psychotherapeutic conversations

Gadamer distinguishes *true (authentic)* from *inauthentic conversation*. In the former there is the search for an agreement on some subject through the opening of each person to the other’s opinions accepted as valid, and each understands not the particular individual, but what he says. “Where a person is concerned with the other as individuality . . . this is not really a situation in which two people are trying to come to an understanding.” Examples of such inauthentic conversations are “a therapeutic conversation or the interrogation of a man accused of a crime” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 387).

This equation of therapeutic conversation with criminal interrogation reveals Gadamer’s view of psychotherapy as something aimed at influencing, blaming, or changing the other. This is not at all the case in constructivist psychotherapies. Here, what Gadamer calls “individuality” could itself become the object of true conversation. However, there is a difference in that a therapeutic conversation is aimed at a therapeutic end, and, as such, it presupposes a theory of disorder and a theory of treatment on the part of one of the participants in the conversation.

Such distinction of roles does not necessarily entail that the whole conversation is led by the psychotherapist as an expert. The psychotherapist restrains dialogue within the boundary—defined by the professional construction—of a therapeutically oriented conversation. Within these bounds the conversation can indeed be true.

HCP sees the psychotherapeutic process as roughly marked by three, partly overlapping, phases: the arrangement for a therapeutic conversation, the search for further meaning, and the search for alternative narratives.

A preliminary condition: the willingness to converse

Both Kelly and Gadamer regard conversation as resting on the common willingness of the participants to lend themselves to the emergence of something else. The client's willingness to participate in a psychotherapeutic conversation, however, is usually compromised by the disorder itself. Clients are looking for a solution, and are threatened by a personal change, to such an extent that they choose to stop making experience.

Personal construct psychotherapy exploits many means in order to help clients open up to a dialogue aimed at an understanding and reinterpretation of their experience; first of all, the *credulous approach* (the client is always right), and the *acceptance* of the client (the willingness to see the world through the client's eyes). The therapist sees psychotherapy

not as a way of getting his client to see things the way he himself does, but as a research exploration in which both of them engage as a team. What he has to offer by way of reinterpretations, then, are . . . experimental hypotheses. (Kelly 1959, p. 50)

Similarly, the first condition of the art of conversation according to Gadamer is ensuring that “one does not try to argue the other person down but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence it is an art of testing” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 361).

Also, the therapist's attention to the client's initial conceptualization of the therapy (his or her *prejudices* in Gadamer's terminology), as well as the recourse to the techniques of reassurance and support, help in reducing the threat and in favoring the client's willingness to participate in the therapeutic dialogue. HCP considers such techniques anything but “palliative.”

The search for further meaning

Dialogue, according to Gadamer, of necessity has the structure of question and answer. Similarly, the psychotherapeutic process, according to Kelly, consists mainly in techniques definable as “conversational acts” (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2010). They are contributions to the conversation that the therapist—on the basis of an understanding of the client’s narrative structure of experience—anticipates could encourage certain processes.

The therapeutic conversation unravels, having as an initial subject matter the complaint presented by the client, then moving with continuity to the person presenting the complaint, and going further to reveal the client’s core role narrative. The whole journey can be carried on by returning to the current subject matter again and again, each time with an increased understanding, and moving dialectically between the parts and the whole according to Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s description of the hermeneutic circle.

The search for alternative narratives

But the psychotherapeutic conversation is aimed at a shared understanding which is expected to turn into a reinterpretation. The professional construction of the therapist’s understanding of the client represents a continuous road map on the journey, insofar as the intent is not only to raise the client’s level of cognitive awareness about his or her narrative organizations of self, but also to pave the way to a reinterpretation. The dialectics of question and answer cannot have any closure, any more than the hermeneutic circle can. Thus, the therapeutic conversation can keep pursuing the countless implications of the questions discussed until an alternative story can substitute the older one.

In Gadamer’s words, “to question means to lay open, to place in the open. . . . Questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 361). Language should be a productive limit that makes possible the continual creation of new words and worlds. The same openness to possibilities differing from what appears as perfectly obvious can be favored, according to the late Kelly (1969a), by means of the language of hypothesis and the use of the “invitational mood” (“suppose we regard . . . as if it were . . .”, p. 149): an “instrument” particularly useful to free clients from their semantic enslavement and the trap of indicative verbs.

Developmental trajectories and core narrative roles

Hermeneutic conversation with clients according to HCP allows the gathering of clinical observations supposedly applicable to most of the people participating in psychotherapy.

First of all, it allows the discovery that, whatever the complaint initially presented by the client, in the long run the disorder can be professionally constructed in terms either of threat or of threat of guilt (the anticipation of the loss of core role). Should the therapist not arrive at this construction, one may suspect a deficiency in the understanding of the client, or the absence of a proper disorder.

In a previous paper (Chiari et al., 1994) the possibility of differentiating developmental trajectories initiated by the prevailing transitions of aggressiveness, threat, or guilt experienced by children in their early dependency relationship with parents was hypothesized and experimentally investigated. These paths should not be viewed in a strict deterministic way, but as the possible outcome of a commonality in construing; nor should they be viewed as “normal” or “pathological” in themselves. At most, the dependency paths initiated by threat and guilt may be more likely to result in disorders in the adolescent and the adult.

The dependency path initiated by aggressiveness was seen as having been fostered by a parental attitude characterized by acceptance (the readiness to understand and take into account their child’s point of view), and regarded as favoring a greater dispersion of dependency and emergence of role constructs.

In the dependency path initiated by threat, children’s opportunities to disperse their dependencies were supposedly limited by an interaction with parents implying restriction of their social explorations, on pain of a withdrawal from their relationship. Hence, relationships with people outside the family are likely to involve threat, by the anticipation of the loss of the relationship with the few people to whom they allocate all their dependencies.

A different obstacle to the dispersion of dependency was supposed to be linked to children’s serial invalidations experienced in the attempts at construing a personal role in their relationship with their parents. The resulting transition of guilt goes together with loose constructions, constriction of those aspects of self supposedly not meeting their parents’ demands, and self-dependence.

Though the paths of ontogenic development become more and more divergent from each other as time goes on, variation in an organizationally

closed system cannot but be a recursive process. Thus, it should be possible to find aspects in an adult's narratives ontogenically traceable to the type of early dependency relationship that channeled its development. The narratives relating to the early relational experiences of threat and guilt have been outlined elsewhere (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2010). The following represents a further elaboration deriving from a preliminary attempt to blend the Kellyan notion of guilt with the hermeneutics of self and recognition suggested by Ricoeur, once more to stress the fertility of a hermeneutic reading of PCT.

Ricoeur (2004/2005) regards personal identity as narrative, and the recognition of one's own identity as necessarily coming through a social recognition, given the constitutively relational and intersubjective structure of the person. This process is supposed to start within the family in the mother-child dialectic, where the development of identity is linked to the mutuality of intersubjective recognition, that is to the willingness to recognize each other as dependent on each other, but at the same time as fully individualized.

Kelly deals with the topic of recognition in terms of *core role*, "one's deepest understanding of being maintained as a social being" (1955, p. 502), and gives some examples of its family construction. He sustains the relational nature of core role—"we are dependent for life itself upon an understanding of the thoughts of certain other people"—but seems to disregard the importance of intersubjectivity, focusing his attention more on the loss of recognition, that is, "the loss of status within the core role constructions" (1955, p. 503), defined as *guilt*.

My suggestion is that people (at least some people) presenting a disorder (as described above) had experienced a lack of mutuality in their relationship with their parents, with prejudice to the completion of the process of recognition. Two *forms of uncompleted recognition* are outlined below.

People who have experienced early relationships characterized by threat see the possibility of preserving a recognition, though uncompleted, as dependent on the conservation of a proximity to the other and the resulting sacrifice of individuality, meant as a separate existence. A basic tension between freedom and constraint dominates their social lives and characterizes the disorder: they are threatened both by separateness—which implies freedom but at the same time loneliness and bewilderment—and close bonds—which would imply self-recognition but at the same time restriction. Consequently, the preferred relational choice consists in distant but certain relationships. Core narrative, at a low level of cognitive awareness, is about a construct dimension of *separatedness*, with the meaning of "the feeling of being separated from someone."

The preservation of a recognition, though uncompleted, in people who have experienced early relationships initiated by guilt is dependent on their meeting others' expectations. This requires the sacrifice of self-affirmation, meant as the recognition and assertion of the existence and value of one's individual self. A basic tension between self-expression and constriction dominates their social lives and characterizes the disorder: they are threatened both by a recognition from others—which implies exposing themselves to invalidation—and a rejection—which would imply definitive loneliness and the despair of being oneself. As a consequence, the preferred relational choice consists in detached but reliable relationships. Core narrative is about a construct dimension of *acceptableness* (with the meaning of “being acceptable, or suitable to be favorably received”). Depending on the specific interpretation applied to the early relational experience, acceptableness can take the form of *lovableness* (with the meaning of “being such as to deserve affection or love”), *competence* (“possessing particular skill, qualification, or capacity”), or *trustworthiness* (“being such as to deserve trust or confidence”).

In both forms of uncompleted recognition, symptoms appear in cases of an impending imbalance between the threatened alternatives, and have the function of recovering an equilibrium.

The above clinical framework is proposed as an elaboration of personal construct psychotherapy according to a narrative hermeneutic approach. Its consideration can reveal its usefulness in the carrying on of the therapeutic conversation, in the making of the psychotherapeutic relationship, and in the search for alternative narratives.

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Reconstructing Meaning in Bereavement

Robert A. Neimeyer

If there is meaning in life at all, then there must be meaning in suffering.
(Viktor E. Frankl, 2006)

There is not one big cosmic meaning for all, there is only the meaning we each give to our life, an individual meaning, an individual plot, like an individual novel, a book for each person.

(Anais Nin, 1969)

When his 36-year-old son, Mark, and 7-year-old grandson, Billy, were lost in the same late autumn boating accident, Greg and his wife joined an exhaustive search to rescue them, and as days passed and hope dimmed, to recover their bodies. Tragically, though the pleasure boat in which they had been sailing was found capsized within hours, there was no sign of either family member, except Billy's baseball cap, which eventually washed up on a distant shore of the large lake. Indeed, it was not until winter had come and gone, and the ice melted, that the remains of his loved ones were recovered and identified by dental records. A big man, and unaccustomed to a display of emotion, Greg was unable to control his tears as he spoke of visiting the morgue to touch all that remained of Mark and Billy one final time.

Although he was a religious man, Greg found little comfort in his faith, as his prayers for the safe delivery of his son and grandson went unanswered, and he could find no divine justification for the tragedy of their loss. Likewise, deprived of a future shared with them as he and his wife moved into retirement, he questioned the significance of his own life now, despite his success as a businessman. In sum, personally, relationally, and spiritually, Greg faced a crisis of meaning in the wake of his loss, as well as a deep sense of emptiness and anguish that seemed impossible to express.

What ultimately carried Greg through the storm of his grief was an original and impassioned project, which began as a faint hope that others could be spared a tragedy like that suffered by his family, and developed into a form of social action that had substantial effects. Talking through the practical steps of his plan in our therapy, Greg launched an effort to put in place eye-catching signage at the access points to the lake, warning specifically of dangerous weather conditions, and showing the smiling images of Mark and Billy with their fishing gear, proudly displaying their catch, and briefly telling the tragic story of their demise. Near each warning sign was another, announcing the message, “Kids don’t float,” and offering the loan of several sizes of life vests at no cost. Coordinating these efforts with the park authorities, Greg was successful in not only changing the culture of safety for one major public park, but also in educating the public more generally on the principles of boating safety. “It’s not what I wanted to do with my retirement,” he told me in our final session, “but it’s what matters to me now.” I was left with a sense of deep respect for this quiet, passionate man, whose life meaning was not lost, even if profoundly changed, by his bereavement.

To a far greater extent than other animals, we as human beings are distinguished by living not only in a present, physical world, but also in a world populated by long-term memories, long-range anticipations, reflections, goals, interpretations, hopes, regrets, beliefs, metaphors—in a word, *meanings* (Neimeyer, 2009). Indeed, it is this capacity to construct and inhabit a symbolic world that permits us to embroider experience with language, to speak and be heard, to relate, revise, and resist stories of the events of our day or the entirety of our lives. In “acts of meaning,” as Jerome Bruner (1990) once phrased it, we seek an order, a foundation, a plan, a significance in human existence, and particularly our own.

And yet, at times the stubborn reality of the present moment asserts itself, sometimes brutally, stressing or shredding the delicate tissue of meaning on which our all-too-vulnerable assumptive worlds depend. Never is this clearer than when these fragile expectations, understandings, and illusions meet with incompatible yet incontrovertible occurrences—the diagnosis of our own serious illness, betrayal by an intimate partner, news of a love’s sudden death. At such moments we can feel cast into a world that is alien, unimaginable, uninhabitable, one that radically shakes or severs those taken-for-granted “realities” in which we are rooted, and on which we rely for a sense of secure purpose and connection. My intent in writing this brief chapter is to invite attention to this potential *crisis of meaning* in the context of bereavement, as well as to offer some principles for assisting with its reconstruction.

Loss and the Quest for Meaning

Just as Viktor Frankl (2006) emphasized the role of meaning in human life, so too do many psychologists. In particular, both classical and contemporary constructivists (Kelly, 1955; Neimeyer, 2000, 2009) focus on the processes by which people punctuate the seamless flow of life events, organizing them into meaningful episodes, and discerning in them recurrent themes that both give them personal significance and lead them to seek validation in their relationships with others. Viewed in narrative terms, we ultimately construct a life story that is distinctively our own, though we necessarily draw on the social discourses of our place and time. The result is a *self-narrative* (Neimeyer, 2004a), defined as “an overarching cognitive-affective-behavioral structure that organizes the ‘micro-narratives’ of everyday life into a ‘macro-narrative’ that consolidates our self-understanding, establishes our characteristic range of emotions and goals, and guides our performance on the stage of the social world” (pp. 53–54). From this perspective, identity can be seen as a narrative achievement, as our sense of self is established through the stories that we tell, the stories that others tell about us, and the stories we enact in their presence. Importantly, it is this very self-narrative that is profoundly shaken by seismic life events such as the death of a loved one, instigating the processes of reaffirmation, repair, or replacement of the basic plot and theme of one’s life story (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; Neimeyer, 2006).

In the aftermath of life-altering loss, many of the bereaved—like Greg—are precipitated into a *search for meaning* at levels that range from the practical (*How* did my loved one die?) through the relational (*Who* am I, now that I am no longer a spouse?) to the spiritual or existential (*Why* did God allow this to happen?). How—and whether—we engage these questions and resolve or simply stop asking them shapes how we accommodate the loss itself and who we become in light of it. In Greg’s case, anguished and insistent questioning impelled him forward in the search, ultimately transforming his sense of life purpose, and galvanizing his efforts to spare other families similar losses and struggles in their own lives. What commonly results is a revised self-narrative that finds some practical, philosophic, or spiritual significance in the *event story* of the loved one’s death, as the survivor contemplates its larger meaning for his or her ongoing life. The list below offers some of the typical questions that survivors engage—sometimes with the help of grief therapists—as they pursue this passionate work of meaning-making.

Sample of implicit questions entailed in processing
the “event story” of the death

- How do I make sense of what has happened, and what is the meaning of my life in its wake?
- What do my bodily and emotional feelings tell me about what I now need?
- What is my role or my responsibility in what has come to pass?
- What part, if any, did human intention, inattention, or wrongdoing have in the dying?
- How do my spiritual or philosophic beliefs help me accommodate this transition, and how are they changed by it in consequence?
- How does this loss fit with my sense of justice, predictability, and compassion in the universe?
- With what cherished beliefs is this loss compatible? Incompatible?
- Who am I in light of this loss, now and in the future? How does this experience shape or reshape the larger story of my life?
- Who in my life can grasp and accept what this loss means to me?
- Whose sense of the meaning of this loss is most and least like my own, and in the latter case, how can we bridge our differences?

The second major narrative strand by which we knit together the torn fabric of our lives involves re-accessing and reconstructing the “back story” of our relationship with the deceased. Especially when the person lost was a trusted witness to our past (such as a parent or grandparent), an intimate partner in our present (as with a soulmate or sibling), or a projected companion in or extension of our future (such as a child or grandchild), the death can rend the web of bonds and meanings that sustains our most fundamental sense of being-with-others. The list below offers some representative questions that survivors address when they strive to access and accommodate the continuing bond with the loved one in light of the death.

Sample of implicit questions entailed in accessing the “back story”
of the relationship to the deceased

- How can I reconstruct a sustaining connection to my loved one that survives his or her physical death?
- Where and how do I hold my grief for my loved one in my body or my emotions, and how might this evolve into an inner bond of a healing kind?

- What memories of our relationship bring pain, guilt, or sadness, and require some form of redress or reprieve now? How might this forgiveness be sought or given?
- What memories of our relationship bring joy, security, or pride, and invite celebration and commemoration now? How can I review and relish these memories more often?
- What were my loved one's moments of greatness in life, and what do they say about his or her signature strengths or cherished qualities?
- What lessons about living or loving have I learned in the course of our shared lives? In the course of my bereavement?
- What would my loved one see in me that would give her or him confidence in my ability to survive this difficult period?
- What advice would my loved one have for me now, and how can I draw on his or her voice and wisdom in the future?
- Who in my life is most and least threatened by my ongoing bond with my loved one, and how can we make a safe space for this in our shared world?
- Who can help me keep my loved one's stories alive?

A growing body of research on meaning reconstruction in the wake of loss supports the broad outline of this model, and is beginning to add clinically useful detail to our understanding of how the bereaved negotiate the unwelcome change, both for better *and* worse, and how we as skilled helpers might best support their search for significance. It is worth bearing in mind at the outset, however, that loss does not inevitably decimate survivors' self-narratives and mandate a revision or reappraisal of life meanings, as many will find consolation in systems of secular and spiritual beliefs and practices that have served them well in the past. For example, in the case of late-life widowhood, evidence suggests that only a minority of survivors struggle to find meaning in their loss across an extended period (Bonanno, Wortman, & Nesse, 2004). However, in this same prospective longitudinal study, those who reported a more intense search for meaning in the loss at six and 18 months after the death evidenced a more painful and prolonged grief reaction across *four years* of bereavement (Coleman & Neimeyer, 2010). Indeed, research on complicated, prolonged grief documents that a struggle with meaninglessness is a cardinal marker of debilitating bereavement reactions across many populations (Prigerson et al., 2009). In a large cohort of bereaved young adults suffering a variety of losses, for example, inability to "make sense" of the death was associated with preoccupying separation distress across the first two years of adaptation (Holland, Currier, & Neimeyer, 2006).

When losses are more objectively traumatic, data suggest that a search for sense or significance in the loss is more common, characterizing the majority of those bereaved by the sudden death of a family member, or parents who lose a child (Davis, Wortman, Lehman, & Silver, 2000). Evidence demonstrates that a crisis of meaning is especially acute for those bereaved by suicide, homicide, or fatal accident, who report a far more intense and prolonged struggle to make sense of the loss than do those whose loved ones died natural deaths (Holland & Neimeyer, 2010). Moreover, the role of sense-making—a key form of meaning-making—is so prominent in accounting for the complicated grief symptomatology experienced by the former group that it functions as a nearly perfect mediator of the impact of violent death, accounting for virtually all of the difference between those bereaved by the traumatic as opposed to natural death of their loved ones (Currier, Holland, & Neimeyer, 2006).

Research on bereaved parents illuminates the powerful role of meaning-making in predicting bereavement outcome. Studying a large group of mothers and fathers whose children had died anywhere from a few months to many years earlier, Keesee and her colleagues found that the passage of time, the gender of the parent, and even whether the child died a natural or violent death accounted for little of their subsequent adaptation, whether assessed in terms of normative grief symptoms (e.g., sadness and missing the child) or complicated grief (e.g., an ongoing inability to care about other people and long-term disruption of functioning in work and family contexts). In contrast, their inability to make sense of the loss proved to be a potent predictor of concurrent complicated grief symptoms, accounting for *15 times more* of these parents' distress than any of the abovementioned objective factors (Keesee, Currier, & Neimeyer, 2008). A further analysis of qualitative responses to questions about the kinds of meanings made by these parents also proved enlightening. Fully 45% of the parents confessed that they were unable to make sense of their child's death even an average of six years later, and over 20% could identify no unsought benefits (e.g., greater personal strength or wisdom about the fragility of life) to mitigate the great pain of the tragedy. Overall, parents discussed 32 distinct approaches to finding meaning in their child's death, 14 of which involved sense-making and 18 of which involved unsought benefits or a "silver lining" in the loss, each representing a means of finding meaning in a tragic experience. The most common sense-making themes involved religious beliefs (such as the conviction that the child's death was part of a divine plan or a belief in reunion in an afterlife), and the most common benefit-finding themes entailed an increase in

the desire to help and compassion for others' suffering. Parents who invoked specific sense-making themes, including attributing the death to God's will or belief that the child was no longer suffering, as well as those who reported benefits such as reordered life priorities, experienced fewer maladaptive grief symptoms (Lichtenthal, Currier, Neimeyer, & Keesee, 2010). The positive role of a religious framework notwithstanding (Currier, Malott, Martinez, Sandy, & Neimeyer, 2012), we have also observed the consistent relationship between debilitating grief and religious struggle (Lichtenthal, Burke, & Neimeyer, 2011; Neimeyer & Burke, 2011), which in its strong form can be understood as a crisis of sustaining spiritual meaning in the wake of a loved one's death. Accordingly we have turned our efforts to both qualitative (Burke, Neimeyer, Young, Piazza Bonin, & Davis, 2014) and quantitative (Burke & Neimeyer, 2014) research that permits specific assessment of what we are terming *complicated spiritual grief* in the wake of loss. Early results of this investigation suggest that specific sense-making themes are associated with spiritual and psychological struggle in the bereaved, while others predict an enhanced appreciation of life (Lichtenthal, Neimeyer, Currier, Roberts, & Jordan, 2013).

Finally, it is worth underscoring that—as some of the above findings suggest—bereavement adaptation entails more than simply surmounting painful symptoms of grief and depression, insofar as significant numbers of people report resilience or even personal growth after loss, outcomes that are no less important to assess and facilitate (Neimeyer, Hogan, & Laurie, 2008). Here, too, it also seems likely that meaning-making contributes to adaptive outcomes, as longitudinal research on widowhood demonstrates that sense-making in the first six months of loss forecasts higher levels of positive affect and well-being a full four years after the death of a spouse (Coleman & Neimeyer, 2010). Fostering reconstruction of a world of meaning would therefore seem to be a therapeutic priority for many bereaved clients, one that could engender a sense of hope and self-efficacy in their changed lives. Interestingly, such growth has been shown to coincide with grief, at least when the painful symptoms of loss are significant enough to prompt reflection and change, but not so intense as to prove overwhelming (Currier, Holland & Neimeyer, 2012). Our continued construction and validation of measures of sense-making in loss promises to refine the empirical and clinical dimensions of meaning reconstruction in bereavement as this research moves forward (Gillies, Neimeyer, & Milman, 2014; Holland, Currier, Coleman, & Neimeyer, 2010; Holland, Currier, and Neimeyer, 2014).

Strategies for Creating Meaning

The foregoing discussion of our research program provides support for the proposition that a struggle with meaning at any of several levels is implicated in a difficult adjustment to loss, and that the ability to make sense of the experience in secular or spiritual terms is associated with more favorable outcomes. But how might such meaning reconstruction be facilitated in support group or psychotherapy contexts? Research on bereavement professionals indicates that they routinely draw on a host of strategies to advance this goal, beginning with fostering a sense of *presence* to the needs of the grieving client, progressing to a delicate attention to the *process* of therapy, and finding ultimate expression in a great variety of specific therapeutic *procedures* (Currier, Holland, & Neimeyer, 2008). Presence, in the view of these practitioners, entails chiefly cultivating a safe and supportive relationship, one characterized by deep and empathic listening. Process goals involve psychoeducation about loss, promoting the client's telling of his or her story, exploration of spiritual and existential concerns, processing of emotions, and utilization of existing strengths and resources. And finally, concrete therapeutic procedures include a wide range of narrative, ritual, expressive, and pastoral methods for helping clients make sense of the loss and their changed lives, which are beginning to receive support as evidence-based treatments in randomized controlled trials (Lichtenthal & Cruess, 2010; Wagner, Knaevelsrud, & Maercker, 2006). Accordingly, a good deal of attention has been paid in a meaning-reconstruction framework to explaining and exemplifying these methods, in such diverse media as books (Neimeyer, 2001, 2009), chapters (Neimeyer, van Dyke, & Pennebaker, 2009), journal articles (Neimeyer, Burke, Mackay, & Stringer, 2010), and training videos (Neimeyer, 2004b, 2008), as well as self-help resources for bereaved clients (Neimeyer, 2002). Two especially comprehensive handbooks of clinical methods offer step-by-step instruction in several dozen specific techniques of grief therapy (Neimeyer, 2012) and expressive arts modalities for working with the bereaved, drawing on the visual arts, creative writing, music, dance and movement, and theatre and performance, all under the aegis of practices for creating meaning (Thompson & Neimeyer, 2014).

In summary, a constructivist focus on the role of meaning-making in bereavement has received increasing attention in both the research and clinical literatures, as evidence continues to document the important role of reaffirming or reorganizing a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss. I hope that this introduction to this work encourages readers to attend

to the significance of bereavement as well as its attendant symptomatology, and sheds further light on the effort of many of the bereaved to reconstruct their life narratives in the wake of loss.

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Part V

Organizational Applications

Personal Construct Theory, Research, and Practice in the Field of Business and Management

Nelarine Cornelius

This book started out 20 years ago as a handbook of clinical procedures . . . Even with the omission of originally projected chapters dealing with *social organizations*, education and *the current status of relevant research*, the bulk of the manuscript assumed formidable proportions. (Kelly, 1955, p. xi, emphasis added)

The fields of business and management have traditionally been heavy users of the methods of personal construct psychology (PCP), especially the repertory grid, but less of the theory *per se*. This is not to say that there has been limited interest in constructivism generally. Indeed, it is an area of growing importance of knowledge of research philosophy, methodology, and methods.

There are examples of texts which remain firm features of the extant literature. Bannister and Fransella's (1986) *Inquiring Man: The Theory of Personal Constructs*, George Kelly's *A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (1963), and Butt and Burr's *Invitation to Personal Construct Psychology* (2008) appear in the reference lists of those interested in the interpretivist paradigm. More recently, Devi Jankowicz's (2003) book, *The Easy Guide to Repertory Grids* remains a popular and accessible choice, and the fact that it has been written by a management researcher appeals to business and management scholars. However, few business and management scholars are likely to have read volumes 1 and 2 of Kelly's

1955 work. The majority of edited PCP books contain limited contributions from the business and management field.

Nonetheless, PCP's presence endures in business and management studies: indeed, it could be argued that PCP theory, application, and methods are especially well suited to addressing new and emerging areas of inquiry.

In this chapter I will undertake the following:

- 1 a brief review of business and management applications of PCP;
- 2 consideration of the potential of PCP to address issues that are seen as intractable or newly emerging. I will propose that there is a place for PCP in terms of application in some of these difficult areas, giving specific examples, i.e., *research methodology and methods*, *leadership*, *global management*, and *equality, diversity, and social justice*.

Use and Applications of PCP in Business and Management

The diversity of applications of PCP in business and management is captured in Table 22.1.

It could be argued that, historically, the focus has been on the use of the repertory grid as a research-based consultancy tool, in training, development, and organizational change (see for example, Brophy, 2005; Cornelius, 2005; Frances, 1995, 2008; Porter, 2005), and in academic research. The peak interest in PCP research generally in this field was in the 1980s through to the 1990s, though some subjects have remained strong into the twenty-first century. Of particular note are human–computer interaction, information management, and knowledge management (e.g., Balvances, Caputi, & Oades, 2000; Boose, 1984; Gaines & Shaw, 1993; Novak & Cañas, 2007; Scheer, 2007); human resource management (HRM) and careers (Armstrong & Eden, 1979; Buckenham, 1998; Clapp & Cornelius, 2003; Dentry-Travis, 2013; Fournier & Payne, 1994; Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; Greyling, Belcher, & McKnight, 2013; Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Parr & Neimeyer, 1994); management and organizational learning and change (for example, Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001; Cornelius, 2000, 2002, 2005; Cornelius & Clapp, 2004; Gray, 2007; Kenny, 1988; Hamad & Lee, 2013; Thomas & Harri-Augstein, 1985; Thomas & Schlutsmeier, 2004; Warren, 2014; Young, 2004) and organizational studies and organization theory (Collingson, 2003; Cornelius, 2002;

Table 22.1 Business and Management Research Publications.

<i>Business and Management Field</i>	<i>Articles (author and date of publication)</i>	<i>Research Topic</i>
Human-computer interaction/ Information and management/ Knowledge management	Balvances, Caputi, & Oades, 2000	<i>Superpatterns and corporate decision-making</i>
	Boose, 1984; Gaines & Shaw, 1993	<i>Transfer of human expertise</i>
	Novak & Cañas, 2007	<i>Concept mapping—human-computer interaction</i>
	Scheer, 2007	<i>Logics of the Internet</i>
	Armstrong & Eden, 1979	<i>Occupational roles</i>
	Buckingham, 1998	<i>Socialization in nursing</i>
	Clapp & Corneliuss, 2003	<i>Equality action in organizations</i>
	Dentry-Travis, 2013	<i>Soldiers' constructions of role sets</i>
	Fournier & Payne, 1994	<i>Transition from university to work</i>
	Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004	<i>Meaning-making and mentoring in hairdressing</i>
Human Resource Management/ Careers	Greyling, Belcher, & McKnight, 2013	<i>Employability</i>
	Hill, 2012	<i>Career dynamics</i>
	Lankau & Scandura, 2002	<i>Personal learning and mentoring relationships</i>
	Parr & Neimeyer, 1994	<i>Gender and career</i>
	Howard, 1991	<i>Cross-cultural studies</i>
	Jankowicz, 1994, 2003	<i>Western management thinking in East Europe</i>
	Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001	<i>Intersection of emotion and learning</i>
	Cornelius, 2000	<i>Use of PCP in the study of organizations</i>
	Cornelius & Clapp, 2004	<i>Equality action in organizations</i>
	Cornelius, 2002, 2005	<i>Evaluating organizational change</i>
Management and organizational learning and change	Gray, 2007	<i>Organizational change and learning</i>
	Frances, 1995	<i>Organizational change</i>
	Kenny, 1988	<i>Leader-member exchange</i>

(Continued)

Table 22.1 (Continued)

<i>Business and Management Field</i>	<i>Articles (author and date of publication)</i>	<i>Research Topic</i>
	Hamad & Lee, 2013	<i>Self-organization and systems theory—transitional experience and study abroad</i>
Marketing	Thomas & Schlutsmeyer, 2004 Thomas & Harri-Augstein, 1985 Young, 2004 Gengler, Howard, & Zolner, 1995 Marsden & Littler, 2000 Plank & Green, 1996 Collingson, 2003 Cornelius, 2002 Hill, 2012 Lewis, 2000 Katz, 1984 Raskin, 2001 Shotter, 2007	<i>Aesthetic knowledge</i> <i>Self-organized learning</i> <i>Study of organizational culture</i> <i>Adaptive selling techniques</i> <i>Consumer product constructs</i> <i>Personal selling and performance</i> <i>Identities, selves, and work</i> <i>Organizational transitions</i> <i>Organizational leadership</i> <i>Concept of paradox</i> <i>PCP and the emotions</i> <i>Modernism, postmodernism and PCP</i> <i>Social ecology and social justice</i>
Organizational studies/ Organizational theory	Adams-Webber et al., 1987 Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012 Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992 Taylor, 1990 Symon & Cassell, 2012 Arnold and Randall, 2010 Furnham, 2005 Brophy, 2007 (<i>general management</i>) Jenkins, 1999 (<i>tourism studies</i>) Jankowicz, 2001 (<i>intellectual capital</i>) Woods, 2006 (<i>entrepreneurship</i>)	<i>Experiential and praxis focused inquiry</i> <i>Human reflexion and reflexivity</i> <i>The dialogical self</i> <i>Hermeneutics, statistics and the repertory grid</i> <i>Interpretivist research methods</i> <i>PCP and personality theory</i> <i>Idiographic personality theory</i> <i>Experience in business</i> <i>Tourism destination images</i> <i>Know-how and knowledge management</i> <i>Exploring entrepreneurial behavior</i>
Research methodology		
Work and organizational psychology		
Miscellaneous		

Frances, 1995; Katz, 1984; Kenny, 1988; Lewis, 2000; McWilliams, 2008; Mills, 2005; Raskin, 2001; Shotter, 2007). In addition to these applications work has been done in the area of international management (e.g., Howard, 1991; Jankowicz, 1994, 1999, 2003), marketing (Gengler, Howard, & Zolner, 1995; Marsden & Littler, 2000; Plank & Green, 1996), research methodology and methods (e.g., Adams-Webber et al., 1987; Burgoyne & Reynolds, 1997; Collis & Hussey, 2009; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012; Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992; Jankowicz, 2003; Symon & Cassell, 2012; Taylor, 1990), work and organizational psychology (e.g., Arnold & Randall, 2010; Furnham, 2005) and a variety of other areas which have been touched on briefly, e.g., general management (Brophy, 2007); tourism studies (Jenkins, 1999); intellectual capital (Jankowicz, 2001); and entrepreneurship (Woods, 2006).

Though there is a clear and enduring interest in PCP-based business and management research, the common rhetoric within the PCP community, that the power of a good theory would enable PCP to supersede many of the other less robust and well-articulated methods and theoretical ideas, has not translated effectively into a central role for PCP in this field. The rise in the use of psychometrics as the basis for psychology-based consultancy, the sociological turn in business and management research as a mechanism for meaning-making, and the rise of critical theory, the latter of which is very much a sociological position which sets its face against psychological approaches (often, wrongly, regarded as individualistic thinking which stereotypically characterized much psychology research), made it increasingly difficult for PCP to gain a foothold in business schools.

However, there are strong, positive signs that PCP *can* raise its profile and impact, through careful and strategic positioning. Not only is there an opportunity to ride the wave of an increasing interest in rigorous research methodology and methods underpinned by strong ontology and epistemology, but there is a resurgent interest in mapping and soft modeling in management, in order to explore and represent socio-psychological space in less familiar contexts. Therefore, there are opportunities for a new and exciting phase in the development of business and management applications of PCP for researchers and practitioners, but there will also be a need to identify which areas are the most promising. In order to undertake this task, having outlined the paths that PCP in the business and management field has navigated in the past and the aspects that endure, I finally consider the areas which appear to be most promising for the future development of PCP-based research.

New Opportunities for Applying PCP to Business and Management Research and Practice

Research methodology and methods

There has been a strong development of interest in the study and teaching of business research methods, underpinned by strong ontology and epistemologies. This has become so important that most doctoral training around the world in research-intensive universities will ensure that all final-year work such as dissertations, and certainly doctoral studies, will be underpinned by the most rigorous methodology. This has long been the tradition in North America, albeit that the focus there has been on quantitative research. In Europe and Australasia, the approach is broader, with both qualitative and quantitative, and increasingly mixed-methods, research. This methodological turn is likely to provide an important new avenue for the embedding of personal construct psychology and personal construct methods.

In addition, there are areas of business and management where a more mainstream research methods portfolio commonly used across academics has not enabled us to engage fully with areas of rising importance. These include what we might broadly term sense-making in shifting sociopolitical times, especially “South to South” trade—between in particular the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and MINTs (Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Thailand), among others—which is weakly understood. PCP would appear to be especially strongly placed to facilitate these emerging research agendas, using an array of methods, and providing numerous research and consultancy opportunities for those who are familiar with the PCP approach.

There is also a resurgence of the importance of forgotten histories, illustrated at the organizational level in an established interest in organizational and community storytelling, international management, and, in particular, cross-cultural aspects. More broadly there is the growth of a historical turn in business and management studies, consolidated in the growth of historical methods in the field: specifically personal and organizational histories, and the evolution and development of management practices.

There are many accounts of how to explore using PCP-based ideas, and a number appear in this handbook, as well as those cited earlier in this chapter. Kelly’s original work on the Commonality and Sociality Corollaries, self-characterization, and dimensions of transition provide the most immediate and obvious links to these emerging research agendas. Miller

Mair's (1989) writings on poetics and other artistic modes of expression as ways of credulous inquiry also highlight important approaches to reflexive research, especially by those from the Global North who are researching the less familiar Global South. Importantly, not only do these established methods in PCP provide a strong justification for its inclusion in the core curriculum of business research methods, but PCP's flexibility regarding the establishment of new methods, developed according to contextual needs, affords an added bonus to the scholar with an experimental bent.

Leadership in changing times

Kelly (1991) defined a leader as "*someone who is construed to be a leader by a followership*" (pp. 70–71). This apparently short definition has hidden depth: the avoidance of partial (rather than Kelly's admirably parsimonious) definitions of what comprises leadership has created for PCP the potential to develop a more nuanced view of what leadership is, grounded in the exploration of leadership and followership transaction and shared construing. Kelly locates leadership within the Sociality Corollary, so shared structure and sharing in social process is central; at odds with the leader-focused trait- and role-based models that dominate in the extant business and management literature. Hill's (2012) PCP-based study on toxicity at work also places the emphasis on the leader and not the follower further under the spotlight, not only in terms of neglect of follower experience but also in respect of the need to think more reflexively about dysfunctional leadership.

The most enduring dominant discourses of leadership center on trait theory, personality, and transactional and transformational behavior, with a growing interest in ethical leadership, gender and leadership, and international leadership. In the United Kingdom, there is an annual competition by the *Sunday Times* newspaper for the best organizations to work for in the U.K. The overall winners are rarely those which have simply managed to collect a range of best-practice kite marks and quality indices for people management. Typically, winners are smaller to medium-size companies, or larger companies that have a clear and explicit ethical position on employee management and engagement with the employee voice and perspective, or who are strong in the evaluation of leader effectiveness and impact. However, it is the latter that we know little about; this has implications not only for academic conceptualization of leadership studies, but also management education and training for leadership development.

Further, it is clear that the historical routes and presuppositions of leadership run deep. In a global context, what we know about leadership still

largely emanates from an individualistic, Anglo-Saxon cultural context. Relatively little is known about leadership in collective societies, or indeed, across a plethora of emerging, often postcolonial, economies.

Moreover, even in the developed world, societal changes in terms of social and economic values, migration change, and, more broadly, rapidly rising educational levels, challenge emerging views of what leadership comprises for followers in particular. The United Nation's latest figures suggest that not just in the developed world but across the world as a whole, 80% of the world's population is now functionally literate: a lead indicator for economic development. Shifting follower expectations of leaders is likely to be a rich vein of inquiry, for which PCP's credulous approach is well positioned.

Global changes: new construing?

I was invited to attend a roundtable discussion on business and management relationships between Africa and China at a U.K. university. In the room were scholars largely of Chinese and African origin, with one or two who were U.K. born and bred. What struck me most were two things: the appetite for the generation of concepts and constructs that did not have their roots in Western thought and, secondly, the desire to generate a new language of explanation that was also non-Western (but also not dominated by Chinese thinking). This was in contrast to the more usual application of Western models in non-Western settings, or partial attempts to make sense of Eastern or African logics and norms.

This vignette highlights the changing fortunes of nation-states: the economic crises and patchy recovery among the developed nations; the rising fortunes of emerging economies; and the dilemmas facing fragile economies with potential for growth and development. The prevailing business and management models, largely Anglo-American, that dominated the twentieth century will continue to have enormous currency in the twenty-first century as they underpin business school education that has grown rapidly around the globe. Indeed, it could be argued that these models, mediated through business schools and management education more generally, have been important and influential forms of know-how transfer for commercial activity globally. However, there is an increasing sense of the limits of these models for engaging with indigenous business and management practices and new international global practices, or indeed, hybridized practices that develop as emerging economies find their feet and pick and choose which parts of global or local discourses and practices they will adopt or reject.

Scheer's (2003) edited volume *Crossing Borders—Going Places: Personal Constructions of Otherness*, perhaps more so than other more recent tomes in PCP and its applications, captured the importance of pushing the boundaries of academic thinking in ways that resonate strongly with the evolving, contemporary demands of business and management research and practice. The topics explored by Scheer, including the negotiation of meaning (Jankowicz & Dobosz-Bourne, 2003), and war at the heart of Europe (Stojnov, 2003), resonate strongly with the dynamics of emerging economies, and especially those researching business and management policy and practice in these countries. These nations have been construed historically as “other,” on the margins of economic and political interest to business and management research in developed economies.

The rise of the BRICS, MINTs, and others is indicative of a changing economic and political order, new territory and the need for new thinking. Kelly's paper “Europe's Matrix of Decision,” and in particular his views on “seeking access to an alien dimension of life” (1962, p. 89), draw on his journey in Europe prior to the building of the Berlin Wall and resonate with the challenges facing researchers today. Kelly reflects on the importance of exploring national differences in construing in relation to common ideas (e.g., oppression versus freedom). What he also highlights is the importance of methods; specifically, how the researcher listens and questions; and the need to reflect the dynamic nature of the political landscape and how, in turn, this might influence the matrices of decisions an individual chooses to, or may feel obliged to, explore. This credulous approach—or one that requires “never discarding information given by the client because it does not conform to what appears to be the facts! . . . that is to say that his words and his symbolic behaviour possess an intrinsic truth which (the clinician) should not ignore” (Kelly, 1991, p. 241)—is honed for the challenge of making sense of the lives of those outside of the familiar, dominant discourse of many Western nations.

Equality, diversity, and social justice

As citizens in societies around the world become more aware of their rights and entitlements, ideas about equality, diversity, and social justice are evolving. What it is for traditionally disadvantaged groups to be treated with dignity and respect is now a matter explored in business schools around the world (e.g., Cornelius, 2002; Kirton & Greene, 2010; Ozbilgin & Tatli, 2008) and the increasing migration flows and resultant multiculturalism in societies are also allied sources of interest (e.g., Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Berry & Sabatier, 2010; Koopmans, 2013; Metz & Kulic, 2008).

Organizations are now subject to greater scrutiny in terms of the ethicality of their actions: a rise in corporate governance and corporate social responsibility research is testimony to this. Many of these approaches build upon classical theories, albeit with a modern interpretation, with virtue ethics, utilitarianism, and philosophies of justice built on the ideas of Kant and Rawls underpinning them (often implicitly rather than explicitly). However, a common dualism within business and management equality and social justice research, between consequentialist and non-consequentialist thinking, is coming under scrutiny and, crucially, the absence of non-Western ethical thought from accounts of ethical reasoning is being brought into question. Understanding these issues from the starting point of practical reason, or reason “in practice,” has created an interest beyond theoretical philosophical reasoning. Empirical interest in practical philosophy is growing in business ethics generally and comparative business ethics in particular, as a way of testing the robustness and practical limitations of traditional thought. Once again, exploration of individual and shared construing, using PCP methods, would seem to be appropriate. Excellent chapters are to be found in Kalekin-Fishman and Walker’s (1996) edited book, *The Construction of Group Realities*, including work on ethnicity and race and power and powerlessness and, of course, Kelly (1958) himself has explored oppression and freedom.

Final Comments

Increasingly, constructivist research in business and management (and especially constructivist epistemology) is now explored largely through alternatives to PCP; for example, constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2013), social constructionism (Lock & Strong, 2010) and social constructivism (Lincoln & Guba, 2011). The strong interest in psychotherapy, and more specifically, the emphasis on formal recognition by learned societies around the world, though clearly important for consolidating PCP within the clinical world, is of limited importance for the business and management field. Further, formal training in PCP for business and management practitioners has often followed a psychotherapy-type route and structure, of limited interest and appeal to many business and management researchers and practitioners outside of the core PCP community, with many of the approaches difficult to apply in a non-clinical setting.

However, PCP remains important in work and organizational psychology as part of the body of knowledge with which scholars should be familiar.

PCP also persists, largely through the method of the repertory grid, in mainstream business and management research. Changes in what needs to be understood from a more globalized (and less Anglo-Saxon or Western) perspective and the rising interest in research methods may just be the impetus needed for a resurgent interest in PCP while loosening its psychotherapeutic roots.

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Consulting in Organizations

Mary Frances

Personal construct consulting in organizations requires the translation of George Kelly's two-volume work on *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (Kelly, 1955) out of the clinical context of 1950s middle America into the organizational context of the twenty-first-century global workplace, while simultaneously fast-forwarding the language through 60 years of changing attitudes and sensibilities. While that is a considerable undertaking, it is not as difficult as it sounds. Specific examples from the text may raise our eyebrows from time to time, but the core theory is one of the most valuable and comprehensive guides to the complexities of organizational practice.

This chapter sets out some of Kelly's starting points for the helping professional—in his case a psychotherapist or clinician, in mine a consultant. All my references to his work are drawn from his core two-volume text. In direct quotes I have simply substituted “consultant” and “consulting” for “therapist” and “therapy.” Personal construct psychology (PCP) is not, fundamentally, about therapy and was not derived from clinical assumptions. Kelly chose the clinical setting as the world where he could immerse himself most comprehensively in the construing of others, but his work is about all of us, all of the time.

Where to Begin?

When I first read Kelly, two ideas immediately stood out: firstly that organizations are not entities—“abandoned monuments”—but are ongoing events on a huge scale; and secondly that no one need be completely hemmed in by circumstances or become “a victim of their biography” since

there are always alternative ways to construe our situation and what happens in the world around us.

At the time, I was working in a very large organization with a group of consultants who did indeed construe organizations as entities. Locating themselves as “objective outsiders,” they believed that organizations could be studied, analyzed, and subsequently engineered for change, and over 30 years later I would still see this as the dominant approach. Groups we consulted with were indeed feeling hemmed in by the circumstances of their working lives, and alternatives were in short supply in settings where the most usual response to the threats and anxieties of change was a tightening of practices and procedures. The consulting team were continually frustrated by resistance, seeing this as a major obstacle to overcome in any project, and my own experiments with process consulting had not made much impact, largely because I lacked a robust theoretical framework to underpin such methods.

In this context, PCP was radical, refreshing, and above all useful. Here at last was a theory that assumed intelligent movement and suggested many practical ways to work with it. It challenged the consulting role to the core:

- What difference would it make to see the organization as an ongoing web of interaction, in motion even as we were trying to examine it?
- How would our practice change if we understood each person as an inquiring scientist, and their behavior as a series of interesting experiments derived from the questions they were trying to answer?
- As obstacles and difficulties arose, what varied meanings were people making of events, and what might happen if we foregrounded their diverse ways of seeing?
- And how differently might we intervene if we saw resistance to change as sensible and meaningful, as useful data to be understood and worked with rather than a problem to overcome?

Here was a theory about the struggles of human change, expressed not as dogmatic rules which would lead us to straightforward answers, but as questions, as provocations, as a checklist of things to be curious about and to work on together, located within the clients’ world of meanings rather than in textbook templates of how things should be.

As an approach, PCP is strong on core theory and philosophical foundations while being relatively open and non-prescriptive about method, freeing us to create and shape a practice in line with its core assumptions. It does have some unique and valuable methods but they are not the essence. A PCP consultant is therefore less likely than many to arrive in an

organization armed with a preferred vision, a manualized toolkit, or a bank of solutions based on organizational ideals, and more likely to focus on how the members of this particular group are currently going about their business, where they are heading, what they are anticipating, and why all this is important to them.

So, if we are not arriving with a product—with predetermined solutions or ideals—where might a PCP consultant begin? At the start of his second volume, having outlined his philosophy and theory at very considerable length in the preceding book, Kelly begins his exploration of practice. We might expect to be given some definition of terms and of our role and purpose. We might hope for formulae to apply as we move out into the world of practice intervention. That is not what we get. Translated into our terms, what we are offered, most helpfully, are three key questions:

- What does consulting mean to the client?
- What is the client’s initial conceptualization of the consultant?
- How does the consultant construe their role?

It would be hard to overestimate the significance of this as a starting point.

What does Consulting Mean to the Client?

Kelly points out that the client’s initial request will reveal much about what they believe can be accomplished, and by exclusion what cannot, and this will be our starting point. He offers an interesting range of possibilities to consider in terms of how clients construe the consulting process (1955, pp. 566–575), for example:

- as “an end in itself:” a routine box to be ticked during any significant change, or a generally accepted good thing that will reap some reward;
- as “confirmation” of difficulties: to endorse the client’s own constructions through providing objective data, perhaps showing that problems are insurmountable or that other systems need to change;
- as achieving a “fixed state of mind:” finding explanations and solutions, and acquiring rules and doctrines to hold on to in an unstable world;
- as “a means of altering circumstances:” to re-engineer systems or restructure the environment without clients needing to change themselves;
- as “drastic movement within the present system:” to transform to the contrast pole of how things are now, without challenging the actual constructs currently in play;

as “clarification of issues:” with the consultant as listener, reflector, or sounding-board, to reduce confusion and help focus on concerns and priorities;

as an “environment for imminent change”: where things are already on the move and the client is looking for a holding function, and for ways to support, manage, and learn from what is happening;

or as a “state of passivity:” in cases when asking for help is “so demoralising that the client is partly or wholly incapacitated by it,” seeing the need for assistance as destructive of their professional integrity.

We are encouraged to consider what might be inferred from how clients talk about having problems or difficulties, and to explore what the contrast might be in their terms. And we are reminded that contemporaneous requests may have similarities since “complaints appear to grow on the vines of contemporary discourse.”

At the end of his list, Kelly makes the point that, while some client anticipations may present special problems, they are not problems in themselves. Clients are simply what they are, “and if they had a perfect outlook on everything we would be out of a job.” If we are to help them, we need to understand their own constructions of change and the process they believe they are embarking on. “It is neither necessary nor possible for the client to have a wholly adequate notion” of what the process will entail, but by understanding more of the client’s initial construing we can “discover what it is we are accepting as a point of departure” for our work together.

The attempt to subsume our clients’ constructions does not imply that we adopt their ways of seeing, or that we necessarily approve of or agree with them. It is simply that we understand their constructions as the raw material we are working with. We join the client’s world; we do not invite them as temporary visitors to our own. Seen from their perspective, we expect our clients’ construing to make coherent sense, however problematic they may be finding things at the point of calling us in. Our task is to begin to understand specifically what kind of sense they are making, to identify what is core to them, to discover both the potential for movement that might currently exist and the possibility for innovation in new directions.

What I most appreciate about being offered this selection of questions and options is the way we are continually prompted to explore, to pay attention, to find out, and not to know. Questions are invaluable, they keep us awake.

What Is the Client's Initial Conceptualization of the Consultant?

This second question is reiterated in two further ways: "In what role is the client now casting me?" and "What are the variations in this conceptualization of me?" As Kelly suggests, these are not always easy questions to answer.

He provides us again with a range of alternatives to consider (Kelly, 1955, pp. 575–581), including the possibilities of the consultant being construed as "parent," "protector," "absolver of guilt," "authority figure," "prestige figure," "possession," "stabiliser," "temporary respite," "threat," "ideal companion," and as "stooge" or "foil." There is much food for thought here, and we are encouraged to be alert to all these possibilities and to the practice implications of the variety of roles we may be invited to adopt.

A further way in which the client may construe the consultant is as a "representative of reality" or validator. Consulting is a kind of relational laboratory in which experiments in reconstruction can be tried out in manageable scale, and where the consultant and client might jointly determine the predictive efficiency of plans and proposals. Kelly suggests that "it takes a pretty negativistic [consultant] to fail to be helpful when approached in this manner" (1955, p. 581), yet he acknowledges that some of us will indeed fail, usually by insisting on our own knowledge and authority rather than engaging in a genuinely cooperative experimental relationship.

And that feels like the heart of the issue. We are there to work with our clients on their change, attentive to what is emerging and curious about what might happen next. We are engaged in the field of possible futures, and our work will be experimental in the same way as our clients'. Kelly described the ideal professional-to-client relationship as something like that of a PhD supervisor-to-student, and although he was thinking of one-to-one work in choosing that simile it serves well for our purposes. The doctoral student will by definition be breaking new ground with original research, and while the supervisor may have great expertise in related fields and in the processes of research and learning, they have not traveled the path the student is taking. Consultants similarly may have much experience of organizational life and considerable depth of understanding of change and transition but we are not experts on any particular client's organization—they are.

Another feature of this cooperative experimental relationship is that it will unfold in time. Possibilities develop through exploratory interactions

and there will be limits to the amount of structured planning that will be possible in advance. This can be a stark contrast to much mainstream consulting practice which favors structural solutions and adopts standardized project-planning methodologies. A genuinely interactive development process will involve periods of uncertainty and troubling complexity, and these states are not easy to handle in the majority of organizations where decisive confidence is highly prized. The art of a PCP consultant will be to generate a good enough framework for the client to feel confident enough to commit to the process while leaving maximum space for ideas, plans, and solutions to emerge as we work together. Our relatively loose openness to possibility will need to be just tight enough for our clients' needs.

Understanding how clients are construing our role during the course of our intervention will have the added advantage of enabling us to locate people, within the organization and beyond, who might play similar roles in the future, lessening dependency on consultants over time. From the moment we join this organization-in-motion we are setting the stage for a continuous process of development, with an eye for potential which might open up long after our formal contact ends.

How Does the Consultant Construe Their Role?

According to Kelly, the job of anyone working with PCP is to assist in the continuous shifting of construct systems. Continuous, since PCP understands human systems as processes of change in themselves, and sees the maintenance of health and wellbeing as being dependent on paths of ready movement being continually open and available. Our construction of our role will therefore be based in how we work with change, and rather than the dynamic-sounding change agent of organizational development literature, we are cast as something less center-stage: an assistant to our clients. In Kelly's exploration of how we might conceptualize this role of change facilitation, we are again given many useful angles to consider.

The process of change

Firstly, we are encouraged to see change in terms of activity and performance and not as located in concepts, plans, or tools. The philosophy and theory of PCP are the foundation for the consultant's work rather the content of it.

While some theoretical models may be useful to share with our clients, our focus will largely be on promoting activity. The guiding metaphor is that of person-as-scientist, with experimentation as our mode of inquiring into what might be possible and our way of learning about what might work.

Kelly reminds us of the potential power of small changes. These may not be life-changing, but when any pattern is disrupted, new possibilities will ensue. To promote experimentation, he mentions the value of:

- *highlighting threat*, by demonstrating ways in which the organization's capacity to anticipate has become compromised, and drawing attention to the risks involved;
- *highlighting invalidation*, by noting replicated patterns which would suggest that both anticipations and actions are failing to achieve desired outcomes;
- *generating scenarios*, precipitating people into the kinds of situations where it will become more apparent that habitual ways of construing are not effective.

The more common practice of provoking experiments through exhortation to change is given a rather elegant working-over by Kelly. He notes that the client can do no more than attempt change within the confines of their existing construct systems and we may therefore be very surprised by the results. Their apparent failure to convert our carefully developed material into appropriate action must be understood as a failure of our own: we have not found or developed an adequate psychological framework for the client within which our ideas can be handled meaningfully.

Significant change will involve the elaboration and/or revision of constructs and construing processes. We will be attending to the organization as a whole (its ongoing purpose and priorities, and the pattern of explicit and implicit codes and behaviors that characterize its everyday life), its subsystems (the microcultures of groups, teams, or sections with their own priorities and specific practices), and the personal construct systems of individuals. We will be exploring meaning-making at each level, considering the fit between them, and assessing the tendencies and potential for movement in terms of both the organization's own aspirations and challenges and the context of their broader operating environment.

PCP's Fundamental Postulate proposes that, psychologically, we live in anticipation. Individuals, teams, and networks scan their environment, gathering data, making sense of it in their own various ways, and moving forward according to the sense they make. The ongoing life

of the organization, in terms of both its superordinate trajectory and its everyday behaviors, is the experimental outcome of the anticipatory processes of its members. The consultant offers a “subsuming” construct system, a structure of theoretical understandings and professional practices within which to explore and experiment.

A conversational approach

Kelly’s language of elaborating and revising construct systems may sound technical, but in practice much work is progressed through initiating and managing conversations. PCP is a relational practice which understands change as located in the ongoing activities and conversational life of organizations-in-process. We will be observing conversations, joining them, facilitating them, relocating them, disturbing them, provoking them. We may often act as interpreters, validating diverse contributions and reflecting or reframing them to enable people to hear each other without the overlay of habit. We will be considering the relative coherence between strategic plans, core values, and behavioral activity, and will highlight discrepancies not as problems to resolve necessarily but as important tensions, “live” issues worth paying attention to and becoming curious about.

We will develop a keen ear for the necessary polarities of organizational life as they arise in conversation and argument. These may include constructs such as security vs. risk; people vs. profit; strategy vs. operations; planning vs. reacting; change vs. stability; central vs. local; control vs. freedom; public vs. private; hierarchy vs. participation; and short-term vs. long-term. We will want to find out what these things mean specifically, why they are important, and how they are enacted. Rather than opposing positions to be taken, we would construe these contrasts as representing the lively dynamics of organizational decision-making, dimensions of movement requiring fluid and deft maneuver between the poles.

Our core tools then will be credulous listening, attention to contrasts, questioning up to values and beliefs, questioning down to examples and descriptors, trying ideas on for size, and engaging with all feedback as useful data. In combination, these basic components of PCP are the toolkit for the critical conversational practice that is at the heart of consulting. They are rooted in the primacy of working creatively and respectfully with others and accepting the internal validity and coherence of their differing points of view, while seeking and valuing alternative constructions and managing uncertainty and paradox.

Theory in practice

Kelly's Fundamental Postulate leads to a number of theoretical corollaries which also guide our understanding:

- each person will be choosing ways forward that make the most viable sense given their current take on the situation (*choice*);
- there will be similarities of construction (*commonality*) and differences (*individuality*) across teams, functions, and levels as well as between individuals;
- the effectiveness of relationships will be determined by the extent to which people are prepared to understand each other's meaning-making (*sociality*);
- collectively, there may be a tendency toward variation and permeability, or toward fixed and closed meanings (*modulation*);
- there will be varying degrees of accommodation or tension between the professional values and objectives of different functional groups, and between sub-groups and teams who generate oppositional meanings (*fragmentation*);
- the constructs currently in play may have wide or restricted application to changing circumstances, and the constructions of particular groups may or may not be viable for other colleagues (*range*);
- the development of viable collective systems of construing will depend on people's ability to learn from events and to share their findings (*experience*).

We will be paying attention to processes of validation and invalidation: How are success and failure construed? What measures are being used and why have they been chosen? What is required, encouraged, and approved of, and what is forbidden, discouraged, or excluded? and How does a person or team become successful and admired, and how do they become marginalized?

Approaching transitions

Organizations are propelled into change by many forces, including shifting markets, global competition, economic fluctuations, demographic changes, social demands, professional developments, technological advances, and national and international policy and legislation. Their own responses are amplified and accelerated by vivid and noisy reactions to many of these events in the wider media and in public discourse. The challenges of change are

easily underestimated. It can be a life-or-death struggle for survival—for the lives and livelihoods of many people, for the legacy of years, decades, sometimes centuries of endeavor, for professional reputations and for personal futures. There is a lot at stake.

Kelly's transitional constructs have potential to normalize responses to change by translating anxiety, threat, hostility, and guilt out of discourses of negativity, failure, and resistance, locating them in the quotidian as anticipatable features of human systems on the move.

In organizations, we might focus on:

- *anxiety and unfamiliarity*: by encouraging active research of the unknown, making plans of appropriate scale and pace, and locating resources from past experience or from wider networks;
- *the threat of loss*: by acknowledging the difficulties people are experiencing (without necessarily needing to resolve them), highlighting areas of stability and continuity, and exploring whether changed circumstances might be reconnected with core values, or how current satisfactions and core meanings might be maintained through other means;
- *the tendency to continue with existing scripts rather than cooperate with newly imposed ones* (an aspect of Kellyan hostility): by exploring and appreciating people's concerns in terms of their core meanings and values, promoting timescales that respect human change processes, and considering how people might be facilitated in making shifts without losing face or being seen to fail;
- *the experience of core role dislodgement in new situations* (Kellyan guilt): by ensuring an infrastructure of support for people as they experiment with changing roles or behaviors, and by anticipating a transitional period during which preemptive judgments are avoided.

PCP's unusual and specific redefinitions of these experiences offer us alternative and highly accessible ways of understanding what people might be going through, why that might be difficult, and how they might keep moving forward.

How to Construe the Outcomes of Our Work?

The consultant's anticipations of satisfaction and success are also explored by Kelly (1955). He suggests that our direct reward lies in the development of our skills, and it is this process of continuous learning

that attracts and holds many of us in the field. We might also achieve success vicariously through the accomplishments of our clients as we see them exercise their “initiative, originality and independence,” an outcome derived from locating ourselves in the service of their potential and a commitment to avoiding standardized or ready-made solutions.

He highlights the frustration we may feel when clients opt for solutions which we would not have chosen for them, and in organizations such outcomes can be performed on a huge scale. He describes the situation provocatively as having “staked our personal system against our client’s, and lost” (p. 607). The consulting role, however, consists in a set of subsuming professional constructs with the elasticity to embrace a wide variety of client outcomes, and their achievements are to be construed as validations of our role in their service and not as validations of our own personal construing. Kelly (1955, p. 608) describes this approach as “liberalism without paternalism, not only tolerant of the varying points of view represented in clients, but willing to be devoted to the defence and facilitation of widely differing patterns [of organization].”

As a prelude to his exploration of the PCP practitioner’s role, Kelly (1955) described “the basic job” as being “illuminated in terms of our philosophical position, structured in terms of our theory, and pursued along the systematic lines of our diagnostic constructs” (p. 559). The meta-structure of PCP itself could be seen as a model for the success criteria required both of effective consultants and of thriving organizations: a coherent philosophy or worldview; a robust set of fundamental principles to work by; an adequately elaborated and internally coherent theory of process; and an open door to creative practice in line with these components.

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Humanizing Healthcare

A Personal Construct Psychology-Based Intervention

Sean Brophy

Problems of quality, safety, and experience of healthcare exist in healthcare systems worldwide (Dixon-Woods et al., 2013). The degradation of the experiences of patients, indicated in England by the National Health Service Mid-Staffordshire report by Francis (2010), coexists along with seemingly uncontrollable inflation in the costs of healthcare and declining morale among healthcare workers. These trends are accompanied, in the view of this author, with a progressive dehumanization of the healthcare experience of patients, as discussed by Youngson (2012), and Brophy (2013). There is a moral crisis in healthcare organizations that suggests a conflict of values, or a withdrawal from appropriate values, requiring a values-driven response.

This chapter addresses two questions: Why does dehumanization occur? And what can be done about that at the level of a particular healthcare organization, with an emphasis on the use of personal construct psychology (PCP) as an organizational development method?

Why does dehumanization occur in a health service? We are witnessing an explosion of demand for healthcare. People in the developed world are living longer but suffering from chronic diseases like diabetes, cancer, cardiac disease, various neurological diseases, anxiety, and depression. They are being treated by medications and surgical interventions that prolong life but require recurring access to health services. Finite health services are being overwhelmed by infinite demand. In a sense a single human life in the Western world has turned into an asset bubble pushing the cost of healthcare higher and higher each year.

On the supply side, healthcare practices at all levels, insurers, and governments have tried to manage the economic costs of this surge in demand by containing operating costs and through innovation in delivery systems (Christensen, Grossman, & Hwang, 2009). However, there is a profound difference between market-based services where the service is rendered *to or with* a service user called a customer, and a healthcare service that is rendered *for and on* a person called a patient. Brophy (2013, p. 3) describes the special context in which this exchange takes place as a “relational hierarchy” or “personal organization” where exchange between those involved is based on a system of “shared values.”

The decision to engage with any health-service provider is determined largely by needs derived from dis-ease or distress. The sick person has a limited ability to construe and evaluate the service required coupled with a need to have complete trust in the human service provider. These two conditions do not exist in combination when one is engaged with providers of market-based services. Faith or trust in the healthcare provider is critical to the decision to engage, and this trust is upheld when the sick person is confident that the provider will share their human values, their theory for living in a community of human beings. The progressive degradation of health services across the globe has been accompanied by an erosion of those shared values between some service providers and those sick persons in their care, and between themselves as communities of carers.

So, what can be done about dehumanization in healthcare? Any intervention to address these issues in any particular institution has to have regard for the massive pressures on staff that lead them to make their current choices and support them in their efforts to re-humanize their services for the benefit of the sick persons in their care, for their colleagues in their caring communities, and especially for themselves as the most important stakeholders in their own lives.

A PCP-Based Intervention to Embed Shared Values in a Healthcare Organization

The use of PCP to support an intervention with wide application to embed shared values in organizations is discussed in Brophy (2008). I take the view that everybody has virtue or goodness in them, such as the value of integrity, or compassion, but a particular person may be limited in their application of such virtue to just themselves. Further, virtue cannot be taught; rather, it can be experienced as a more helpful way to

make sense of one's world and to be able to anticipate staying alive and being happy in one's life.

The application of PCP to embed shared values is similar to what would occur in clinical settings where a client is supported in their construing of their life circumstances and their reconstruing is facilitated by guided experimentation with new, more effective theories. Values are the deepest discussable construct in a person's construing system. They represent the person's theory of how to live, to secure their choices on two superordinate constructs: "survival" versus "death" as a biological organism, and "growth or flourishing" versus "stagnation" or the "death of one's spirit" as an existential human being. By implication these values govern or are superordinate to all the person's constructs relating to their choices of behavior. Kelly (1959) calls values our "bets on the future." Values can be developed slowly in response to new situations in life or, more rapidly, they can be reawakened to make better sense of altered circumstances, such as a change in work context. Organizations are collectives of individuals construing and reconstruing their common circumstances. As with individuals, values are the deepest discussable part of an organization's culture. The PCP-based organization development process to develop or reawaken particular values requires a coherent methodology that elicits confidence in the members and secures their commitment at least to be credulous of possibilities and be patient with the slow pace of outcomes as they emerge.

A PCP-based organization development process focused on corporate values is described in Brophy (2008, p. 5) as having three phases:

- Phase One:* Values elicitation
- Phase Two:* Values communication and education
- Phase Three:* Values embedding into the social architecture of the organization at the level of individuals, teams, and the whole organization.

The timeframe for interventions of this magnitude and complexity varies with the age and size of the organization from a few months to several years. It is not uncommon for organizations to get to Phase Two and to stall at Phase Three because of inertia in their political structure. Another reason for stalling is that the sponsoring executives retire or move on, and their replacements do not have the same interest or enthusiasm for the process. Some organizations may already have completed Phase One themselves and are stalled because of their own naive understanding of the adjustment required to make values, espoused on paper like slogans, become lived in the committed practices of their staff.

The narrative below describes an intervention where Phase One was considered by the client to have been completed and assistance was required of this author and his business partner, as two PCP facilitators, with Phases Two and Three.

The client organization was a group of hospitals owned and operated by a Catholic order of nursing sisters, focused on providing acute hospital care to the insured population on a not-for-profit basis. The sisters had a clear mission and vision for their apostolate, coupled with a set of values they had been promoting informally for about 15 years. These values were integrity, quality, innovation, stewardship, respect, justice, and compassion. The sisters believed that the living of these values by their staff had created a positive differentiation from other hospitals in their served markets, especially in the patients' experiences.

Nonetheless, the sisters were aware of two dynamics that could erode the commitment to their mission, vision, and values. The first was the gradual reduction of the numbers of their own members in the active management of the hospitals, and their consequent reliance on lay managers who may not share their sense of mission. The second dynamic was the economic imperatives driving the global healthcare industry that could not be avoided and that could serve to affect negatively the commitment of staff members to the sisters' values.

Given that there was no crisis in the hospital group, and staff members were, more or less, living the values, the facilitators adopted a slow, methodical, PCP-based approach to the intervention design and conduct. The rationale used was not to engage with staff as if they needed to be awakened and educated. Rather, it was to honor their successes and to engage with them on the basis of re-education or re-formation where it was appropriate in the new circumstances of fewer sisters and industry disruption, so they could leave a legacy of sustainable, good practices when they retired.

Phase One: Values elicitation

The sisters deemed the seven values listed above to be still appropriate. So the initial intervention was focused on the senior executive team that included a group of laypersons, the group chief executive officer, five hospital managers, the chief financial officer, and one of the sisters with responsibility for embedding their mission. A series of workshops was conducted over a period of one year. The content was focused on a clarification of the participants' understanding of the mission and vision for the hospital group. This was followed by a presentation from a PCP perspective on the functionality of values as constructs that enabled

individuals to construe specific contexts in the same way as personal scientists might do in their professional roles. The facilitators invited them anonymously to identify a personal value for living, to dichotomize it to create a personal construct, to ladder it to reveal a higher-order construct, and to pyramid it to reveal a more concrete example of the value in use (see the Appendix to this volume for descriptions of these techniques). The discussion that followed elicited their feelings of finding themselves on one side or other of their constructs or of encountering others in similar situations. Kelly's constructs of transition were used to aid their descriptions of their feelings, say, of anxiety, fear, and threat, or of aggression or hostility (see Appendix). At this point, the group understood the functionality of their own values for their survival as biological organisms and their growth or flourishing as human beings, literally their life and their happiness. We then turned to consider the functionality of their espoused organizational values for the survival of their business and their growth as a community of healthcare professionals.

The process involved short presentations on each value by the facilitators, followed by a plenary discussion to clarify the group's understanding. The participants were assisted to convert the seven values into seven dichotomous constructs that would represent alternative value choices available to staff in their hospitals. The seven values became seven constructs, as indicated in Table 24.1.

Each of the values constructs was laddered in the discussions to clarify its connectedness to superordinate constructs, such as "survival" versus "non-survival" of their hospitals as businesses, and "growth" versus "stagnation" of their hospital organizations as communities of healthcare professionals. Further, each participant was invited to draw connections between the values and the goals of their own roles. The seven constructs were used to populate a values repertory grid, which was rated anonymously by each participant on a single element—"How I see my organization now." The pattern of the composite individual ratings on each value construct was shared and discussed by the group to establish (a) that the values could be used to construe the organization, and (b) their combined perceptions of how committed or otherwise their organization appeared to be to living the values.

The facilitators turned to establishing the relative importance of the values and how they could be lived in practice. They requested each participant to complete a Hinkle's "resistance-to-change grid" (see Chapter 7, this volume) and pooled their scores to reveal a broad consensus on the implicit hierarchy of the values. Finally, the participants were assisted to pyramid each preferred construct to yield a larger series of bipolar constructs or behavioral indicators of those values as they could be lived or not lived in practice.

Table 24.1 Organization Values Expressed as Bipolar Constructs.

<i>Organization Value</i>	<i>Preferred Construct Pole</i>	<i>Contrast Pole</i>
Integrity	Honest	Words and actions inconsistent
Quality	Meet and exceed standards of good service	Tolerate mediocrity
Innovation	Seek to improve in meeting people's needs	Preserve status quo, resist change
Stewardship	Use resources responsibly	Passive about husbanding resources
Respect	Treat all persons with respect for their dignity as human beings	Indifferent, unconnected, focus on self
Justice	Support and promote the rights of individuals	Only self-interested
Compassion	Show empathy with the life situations of others, especially the poor	Detached from others, retreat into ourselves, not open to others

By this stage the members of the senior team were sufficiently literate around the values and mindful of their responsibilities as leaders to sponsor a carefully modulated program of embedding the mission through the values. The next phase of values communication was commenced as a pilot exercise on one hospital site.

Phase Two: Values communication and education

This phase was conducted with two populations, each of about 20 managers of nurses and other functions, in two three-hour workshops with each group, at an interval of about one month. The same format used with the executives was employed, except that the constructs based on the seven values and the behavioral indicators were now supplied and checked for relevance in the discussion and adjusted accordingly. Also, the participants were invited to nominate the capability they most wished to develop to enable them to function effectively as leaders in embedding the mission through the seven values. They selected the capability of conducting

leadership conversations, especially with staff members, who may have been unaware of particular values, or were violating them, wittingly or otherwise. During the interval between the two workshops, participants were invited to conduct a PCP-based clarification of their own values, to rate their hospital on the executives' values repertory grid, and to establish their hierarchy of the values through Hinkle's resistance-to-change grid.

At the second workshop they were presented with their own composite data contrasted with those of their executive colleagues on both the repertory and resistance-to-change grids. They could see immediately where consensus existed or not on how well the organization members were living the values and the relative importance of the various values. Where a gap in perceptions was revealed between the managers and executives we sought to have that explained by the managers to facilitate feedback to the executive group.

The needs of managers to have a capability for leadership conversations were addressed by teaching the conceptual framework for nonviolent or compassionate communication applied in a healthcare context by Sears (2009). The facilitators created model conversational protocols for compassionate communication with staff in each of 14 contexts where the seven values were either being lived well or lived badly. Each protocol was tested in practice in a role-playing exercise to allow the participants to use or modify the language to suit their own mode of discourse. Stress was laid on the reality that it was not possible to treat staff as a means and expect them to treat their patients as ends. Finally the advice of the participants was sought to inform the design and conduct of future iterations of this phase of the values-embedding process.

The entire process to date was then reviewed by the local management team in the hospital chosen as the test site, and with the executive team for the entire health care group. The vast majority of participants rated the intervention on a bespoke repertory grid as being very helpful, and suggested that a modified design could render it more efficient in terms of use of scarce time and staff availability. Specifically, the advice was to separate the values discernment and education elements from the experiential process of re-engaging with the mission and values as leaders.

So the intention in extending the intervention to the management teams across the system of hospitals in this group will be to create a "Values Discernment Booklet" that will capture the discernment and education elements of values at the personal and organizational level. This booklet will include exercises to clarify their understanding of the functionality of their own and the organization's values, their perceptions of how well they are

lived on their own site, the relative importance they attribute to them, and the development of their capabilities as leaders to conduct compassionate conversations with their staff regarding values being lived and not lived.

The booklet will include a short essay on each of the seven values—the one primary value of integrity, the three business values of quality, innovation, and stewardship, and the three personal values of respect, justice, and compassion. We describe below an example of how the value of compassion will be treated in this booklet to show how the humanization of the care of sick persons can feature as an authentic expression of professionalism in healthcare.

Values Discernment Booklet Content

The value of compassion

Compassion is the supreme human virtue, the mark of a highly evolved human being. It flows from an acknowledgment of some assumptions about human beings.

Human beings are the most highly evolved species in creation. The eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant asserts that human beings are ends in themselves, not means to any end. A relationship with a human being as an end is characterized by the philosopher Martin Buber (Kramer, 2003) as “I” and “You,” subject to subject, as persons connected at a deep level of being as interdependent parts of a larger creation, where the other is seen as a part of oneself, one’s very being. The alternative form of relationship with a human being as a means (e.g., to a pay-check or a career) is characterized by “I” and “It”, subject to object, where the other is regarded, say in a healthcare context, as “a patient,” “a syndrome,” “a bed-number,” “a case,” or “a body.”

A person is more than a human (adjective) being (noun); he or she is a human (noun) being (verb). A person, as “a human” who “is being,” has dignity and inalienable rights, such as those set out in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. Robert Spaemann, another German philosopher, speaks of human dignity when he makes the distinction between a person as “someone” rather than “something.” He reasons that human dignity is inviolable to the extent that other people cannot take it away from you. Only you can forfeit your own dignity. All that other people can do is to affront your dignity by failing to respect it, in which case they do not succeed in stripping you of your dignity. Compassion is the natural

response of one “human” who is “being” to the suffering of another; the expression of love of one person for another. A healthcare professional who declines to show compassion to another suffering human being does not rob that person of their dignity; rather, they forfeit their own dignity and become less human themselves.

Aristotle construed love in three ways: as pleasure, as utility, and “for the sake of the other,” or, in Greek, *agape*, the will for the other to flourish. Martin Buber (Kramer, 2003) construes love as *agape* as real living, where a meeting takes place between “I” and “You” in each other’s presence with appropriate dialogue, in contrast to a mis-meeting between “I” and “It.” *Agape* is therefore not to be confused with feelings of romance or affection, or the mutuality of friendship. Love as *agape* requires no feelings, reward, or return. It is love that arises out of an empathetic recognition of and connection to, or unity with, the unique, intrinsic dignity, goodness, and mystery of the other person. The compassionate person shows an awareness of the intrinsic value, worth, or goodness of the other, and this, in its turn, stimulates a desire to protect and enhance this intrinsically good, mysterious other.

The objective of compassion in a healthcare context is to be present to a sick person in a way that helps them to find the resources of hope and resilience within themselves: (a) to be agents of their own healing; (b) to choose not to suffer if it is avoidable; and (c) to choose to suffer well if it is unavoidable.

The person acting out of compassion does not give “inauthentic help” to the sick person as an object by trying to “fix” them as if they are a problem to be solved. Rather, they provide “authentic or good help” to the sick person, as a subject like themselves, through serving their needs in a truly human way. The person caring with compassion has no attachment to outcomes they cannot control, but rather they focus on being 100% present to the sick person either in silence or in dialogue, ministering with empathy and expertise in a non-attached way.

A healthcare professional begins to show compassion by the manner in which they say “Hello” in an authentic human way, as indicated by Eric Berne, a social psychiatrist and a leading author on the psychology of human relationships. This is the secret of all the wisdom traditions in human history and culture, both theistic and non-theistic. The sound of one person saying “Hello” to another is the sound of the Golden Rule in whatever tradition it is stated: “Do unto others as you would be done to yourself.” To say “Hello” in an authentic human way is to see the other person, to be aware of his or her intrinsic value, worth, or goodness, to be present to him

or her, and be ready for them to be present to you, e.g., the smiles of a mother and infant greeting each other.

Table 24.2 provides a non-exhaustive suite of behavioral indicators of compassion inherent in “I”–“You” relationships in a healthcare context, contrasted with their counterparts of utility inherent in “I”–“It” relationships. These behaviors are indicators of one person saying “Hello” in an authentic human way and following up with speech and action consistent with that “Hello.”

At an appropriate interval those managers who had engaged with the materials in the Values Discernment Education Booklet would have a facilitated workshop to share the outcomes of their individual understandings and discernment, followed by an experiential process designed to bring to the surface of their collective consciousness their commitment to their vocational purpose as healthcare professionals and their particular roles as leaders. The format for this workshop would be along the lines of the protocols of “Appreciative Inquiry” as described in May et al. (2011), but facilitated using the concepts and language of PCP.

Conclusion

The intervention described above is likely to have efficacy in the special circumstances of the client organization, i.e., the small scale of operation in approximately 150-bed hospitals where the founding culture is still quite strong. In that situation it is quite possible to sustain “islands of excellence” represented by small values-driven hospitals, in a “sea of mediocrity” sometimes represented by a large-scale health service. Similar interventions by the author as a PCP facilitator are considered to have been effective as measured by client satisfaction in a variety of contexts, e.g., a bank, a state development agency, an energy company, a school, an industry supply company, a speech and language department of an acute general hospital, and nurse managers in the neurology unit of another acute general hospital. A values intervention can create momentum in the right direction as distinct from precision about a particular outcome. But it is no panacea for the problems of a large-scale health service for two compelling reasons.

Firstly, it addresses a symptom of a problem; the inhumane behavior of some healthcare staff. It is worthwhile for that reason alone in any containable situation, such as a small-scale hospital, or a healthcare department or unit. However, this intervention cannot address the “mother of the problem,” if the economic imperatives that drive a healthcare sector mean

Table 24.2 Guidelines for Living the Value of Compassion in a Healthcare Setting: Behaviors to be Encouraged and Behaviors to be Disavowed.

<i>Behaviors consistent with an “I”–“You” relationship, with the sick person being treated as a subject, a human being who is an “end” in himself or herself</i>	<i>Behaviors consistent with an “I”–“It” relationship, with the sick person being treated as an object, a thing that is a “means” to one’s own ends e.g. to a paycheck or a career</i>
Encouraging colleagues to see compassion as their natural human response to suffering	Being fearful of reaching out to sick persons or colleagues who are suffering
Showing concern for suffering through giving undivided attention	Focusing on oneself, regarding others with apathy
Choosing to be patient, tolerant and empathic, in assessing people and situations	Choosing to be judgemental, arrogant, aloof, sarcastic, inhumane or bullying
Being present in silence, or in dialogue, available to listen to suffering, allowing people to articulate feelings and needs	Failing to listen; rather judging, advising, fixing, being “an expert” on the life of another
Being diligent in meeting practical needs, e.g., for food and water, toileting, sleep and pain control	Showing no interest in the sick person’s suffering
Consciously engaging with sick persons, to reduce fear and anxiety, and increase hope	Patronizing sick persons with platitudes. Not listening and being too busy to engage
Communicating with sick persons at their level of comprehension	Arrogant, talking down to them, speaking incomprehensible “jargon”
Treating the families of patients well, recognizing their needs and interests	Arrogance toward families of patients, treating them as a nuisance
Being able to tolerate, by way of non-attachment, the distress of clinical outcomes for the sick person, that one cannot guarantee or control, and which may be unavoidable	Being too detached from the sick person in the cause of clinical objectivity and protection of oneself, in a way that could be construed by the sick person as cold, uncaring, or indifferent
Being mindful of and attentive to one’s need to show compassion to oneself	Being too attached to outcomes for sick persons that could result in “burn out” of oneself

that it has morphed into a business enterprise, from its inception as a “moral enterprise” originated in hospices established by philanthropists and committed doctors and nurses centuries ago. The literature in business history identifies the dynamics of enterprise as increases in the scope and scale of operations, coupled with the growth of managerial capitalism. However, increasing scale can be accompanied by the distancing of senior executives from the moral implications of their decisions at the point where service is rendered, either to a customer, say in a bank, or a patient in a hospital, by an employee who may not therefore have the freedom to act morally and responsibly. Youngson (2012) demonstrates that inhumane behavior toward sick people in a hospital is not a valid response by stressed healthcare workers to economic pressures within their organization, and can be avoided by staff being assisted by values clarification and good leadership. Healthcare workers who take inspiration from Youngson’s ideas can recover their job satisfaction and renew their commitment to the ideals of relieving suffering that brought them into healthcare in the first place.

Secondly, this intervention cannot address the explosion of demand, whereby more people are continuing to live longer but not well enough without continuing healthcare. The best health service is the one that is not needed because people in a given polity have taken enough responsibility for their own health via better lifestyle and nutritional choices to be able to avoid some of the diseases of affluence such as diabetes and cardiac failure. The disruptive innovation described by Christensen et al. (2009) carries within it the seeds of such a revolution, where in future acute general hospitals will concentrate on the irreducible level of illness still requiring intuitive medicine, leaving people to educate themselves to manage their own routine healthcare needs in community settings, where the shared values of the community prevail once more as the medium of exchange between healthcare providers and patients.

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Organizational Paradoxes

When Opposites Cease To Be Opposites

Robert P. Wright

I have been using Kelly's (1955) repertory grid technique (RGT) with managers in organizational settings for over a decade now. My curiosity has always been about how managers find meaning in the things they do in organizational life. This interest led me originally to investigate employee performance appraisal systems and later to branch away from the area of human resources into dealing with boards of directors in their everyday strategizing. These include such phenomena as how senior executives see, interpret, and make sense of their strategizing experiences, director cognitions of board work, effective directorship, and how critical business issues (strategic issues) are interpreted; and, more recently, the usefulness of the strategy tools and techniques we teach in business schools.

As I engaged more with the method (RGT)—finding new ways of thinking about it and applying it in managerial and organizational situations—I began to find deeper appreciation of this powerful clinical approach through a wider understanding of my own scholarship in Kelly's theory of personal constructs. This became even more evident as I entered a whole new area of research that investigated *organizational paradoxes*. This chapter brings together the insights I have gained from looking at the intersection of this new and emerging body of management research and Kelly's psychology of personal constructs.

When Success Leads to Failure

Danny Miller's (1992) book about the "Icarus Paradox" describes a famous Greek mythological figure called Icarus, who with his father was imprisoned on a remote Greek island surrounded by treacherous waters, never to be freed. One day, his father made both of them a pair of wings made of feathers and beeswax so that they could fly away from their predicament. Before the father set off, he warned his son not to fly too high and close to the sun for fear that the wax wings would melt. The father then set off and was successful in the escape, soon landing safely on another island, a free man. Icarus, however, was so thrilled with his new found ability to fly that he continued to soar into the sky, climbing higher and higher to take in the breathtaking view. No sooner had he achieved this than his wings started to melt and he plunged to his death. The moral of the story (as with most organizations) is that what once helped you succeed can also make you fail!

We see the same drama repeated over and over again in organizations. As organizations become more and more successful, they are drawn to leverage on what they do best; focusing much time and attention on the core capabilities that won them success (Miller, 1993). Methods of thinking and acting become highly routinized, cultures become monolithic, and the company becomes more preoccupied with looking inwards and relegating weak signals and weak ties at the periphery. Paradoxically, such one-sided, inward-looking behavior is dangerous and detrimental to the organization's survival, and before long it finds itself blinded by its own success, oblivious to the emerging changes happening outside. The question that must be posed is "How is it possible for successful companies to miss the warning signals?"

Organizational Paradoxes and How Our Habitual Responses Limit Our Thinking

At the heart of this problem is how managers and organizations develop a "trained incapacity" to perceive multiple events at the same time. As such, in order to reduce the complexity of the situation, they polarize their views of the world into simplified opposites and make a choice between these tensions, competing demands, dilemmas, trade-offs, and contradictions in order to opt for a "temporary" resolution of the inherent paradoxes of their lived experiences. Such an approach never deals with the paradoxes, but

merely brushes them aside until the next time (for the vicious cycle to repeat itself).

Yet not all organizations are victims of these habitual defensive responses. Research has shown that organizations that sustain their momentum and thrive are “ambidextrous”—able to do two opposing things simultaneously (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010). For example, *exploiting* an organization’s existing resources and making incremental improvements require very different thinking, resources, and attention than does the strategy of *exploring* new markets, innovations, and generating new knowledge for competitive advantage. Organizations that are sustainable look at these opposing forces not as contradictory but complementary and interdependent. Being paradoxical means that such organizations deal with (and manage) the seemingly mutually exclusive entities in ways that transcend the tensions that bind and blind us.

As our world becomes more complex, ambiguous, equivocal, confusing, and interconnected, more and more issues will collide and compete for resources and managerial attention, creating yet new tensions in an age of paradox.

Paradoxes by definition embrace clashing ideas; no choice is made. Both poles of the opposition are accepted and present at the same time and persist over time (Smith & Lewis, 2011). In fact, psychologists have long advocated the cognitive nature of paradox and that paradoxes are cognitively and socially constructed. The *seemingly* opposing tensions appear contradictory, yet they are interrelated.

Many examples of paradoxes exist in organizational life. Perhaps the best categorization of paradoxes can be found in the works of Quinn and Cameron (1988) and, more recently, Lewis (2000), Luscher and Lewis (2008), and Smith and Lewis (2011), who through extensive review of the paradox literature and grounded empirical (and action-based) research summarize them as basically falling into *Paradoxes of Belonging*, *Paradoxes of Learning*, *Paradoxes of Organizing* and *Paradoxes of Performing* (and given the importance of strategy in organizations today, we can also consider *Paradoxes of Strategizing*). Poole and Van de Ven (1989) advocated that we can better deal with these contradictions by (a) coming to terms with them/accepting them as they are and living with them, (b) splitting them in time and space to better understand them, and (c) transcending them by looking at them from a different angle/perspective—and thereby reconstructing/reframing our original perceptions of them.

The Power of Constructive Alternativism for Managers Facing Paradoxes

Given that managers have this “trained incapacity” to habitually simplify their complicated worlds, Kelly’s core philosophical notion of *constructive alternativism* has great utility for the study and practice of organizational paradoxes.

Let me demonstrate this utility by sharing what happened when I had lunch with a chief executive officer (CEO) of a listed company (a company listed on a stock exchange). His company has been listed for less than a decade. When he took over the \$20 million business, the company had a history of poor service and run-down, neglected premises, which drew many complaints and demands from multiple stakeholders. By the end of the first five years, the business had a turnover of \$5 billion! Yet with all the success, he worried that his senior management team was always complaining about their past and that it was an unchangeable history. “You can’t change the past so we look to the future,” they would say to him. He seemed worried about such thinking and shared with me that they were right: “The past is the past and we can only learn from it.” Then I said, “No, wait a minute; but you can change the past!” He looked at me with resentment as if he was thinking “What can you tell me that I don’t already know?” I suggested that “if we *re-examine* our past more deeply; to *re-interpret* what we thought we originally saw, and to begin to *re-define*, *re-frame*, and *re-construct* our past, we will see things we didn’t originally see . . .” This statement clearly took the CEO unexpectedly and you could tell from his eyes there was an “aha moment.” He wanted to finish his lunch quickly right after that and couldn’t wait to go back to his team to share this simple yet powerful insight gained from *looking for alternative constructions*.

I believe Kelly’s thinking here has profound implications for managers today in helping them take their thinking and acting to a whole new level. Indeed, when we see things differently, we see different things. And this is a powerful insight to behold when managers are faced with the *seemingly* limited options that they present for themselves. The type of trade-offs, when put in front of them, leads to lop-sided decision-making that dwarfs their true ability to construct and reconstruct, interpret and reinterpret, define and redefine and to think and think again, to open up “alternatives” not yet construed.

The beauty about Kelly’s theory is that the opposite of “A” is not (necessarily or simply) “B,” but rather many possible “Non-As”. Such a conception defies normal linear logic and opens up a wider peripheral vision

of what we already know, don't know, and need to know. This way of thinking also has the power to open up more than one explanation to any given phenomenon of interest.

However, this generation of alternative constructions may itself sometimes result in conflicting, contradictory subsystems of constructs (Fragmentation Corollary), thereby further complicating one's understanding of one's experiences (Feixas, Saúl, & Avila-Espada, 2009). But this is to be expected and even encouraged: we live in a world that is always changing, and so too our construct systems will be in a constant state of flux, with some constructs being validated, others invalidated, and yet new ones (e)merging. Complicating our own meaning-making in this respect is a good thing and should be seen as such, for the world is indeed complicated (Bartunek, Gordon, & Weathersby, 1983).

Kelly's Theory and the Idea of Complicated *either/or* in his Notion of the "Construct"

Central to Kelly's theory is the "construct" (Chapter 1, this volume; Procter, 2009). A person anticipates events by construing their replications grounded in lived experiences. Constructs are dichotomous in nature, meaning there is an inherent "bipolarity" to construing. Hence, each construct has two poles and a person will always choose that pole that best anticipates the greater extension and definition of his or her construct system. This type of binary logic or *dualism*, grounded in Western thinking, is important in our understanding of organizational paradoxes and how managers experience and make sense of their everyday tensions, dilemmas, and trade-offs. Yet it is important to note that the *either/or* options available to the construer are not necessarily simplified opposites, as each person makes sense of their world in their own unique way.

There is a great deal of insight in seeing what constructions people make for themselves in their everyday practical coping. Even more revealing is the choice made between two options (*either* you prefer this side *or* the other side), which can tell us a lot about a person and how they make sense of their complicated world. Similarly, as in the type of competing demands and tensions managers face, it is important to know which tensions attract their attention the most (and why) and, when given the choice, which side they would habitually choose (and why) as a perceived way out of their predicament in moving forward in their lives.

Indeed, there is more to this seemingly simple *either/or* choice that Kelly sets up in his theorizing about our everyday practical coping of *being* and *becoming*. This deceptive device, in getting us to think about our everyday experiences dichotomously, provides a platform for higher-order thinking. Beneath the seemingly simplistic *either/or* is a more profound *and/both* that is the real core of the construct and serves as a different type of logic that allows managers to reframe/reconstruct their way out of paralysis and fear.

Kelly Also Valued *and/both* Thinking—Duality

The Kellyan triadic method of eliciting constructs illustrates this well: “In what way are any two of these things similar, but different from *the other*, in terms of . . . [?]” This unconventional way of asking us to think more deeply about our experiences opens our way of perceiving the world. Such comparing of similarity and difference is processed in the same psychological act, not two separate acts. This in and of itself opens the door for reflection and discovery.

To Kelly, a word such as “good” has no meaning whatsoever unless it is compared with another word (say, “bad”). Now the word “good” is able to generate a meaning *in relation* to the word “bad.” However, change the opposing pole to “evil” and you get a very different meaning to the word “good” (Jankowicz, 2003)! As Kelly points out, we make sense of our world in a socially constructed world, and a lot of our construing is in relation with “the other.” Kelly, through his elicitation technique, gets us to enter a continual process of *simultaneous* comparisons between similarities and differences / comparing and contrasting / converging and diverging / looking at sameness and “otherness,” and thus our sense-making experiences a broadening of our alternatives. All along, what Kelly is doing is to get us to make “connections” (join the dots) between sameness and otherness and in the process bring new and profound insights to our constant search for meaning in the human condition.

In organizations and management, we often see the *otherness* in a dilemma as something that is “different” from the norm (sameness/something we are more familiar with/something we can relate to). The “otherness” is therefore often (mis)interpreted (misunderstood) as something too hard to deal with and so we relegate it/them to the status of being unrelated or an outlier and discard it/them in preference for the familiar. Yet if we train ourselves to be more open to “the other,” we may well find a way out of our predicaments. Imagine . . .

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1936), the famous writer, once said that “a test of a first rate intelligence is to hold two opposing ideas at the same time and still have the ability to function” (p. 41). Albert Rothenberg (1979), from the School of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, studied 54 geniuses in history and discovered a common theme in how they think. When we merge ideas (sometimes ideas that don’t seem to have any relevance to each other) something interesting emerges! Just as we learned in primary school that when we merge two very different colors together we produce a third, completely different, color. These are counterintuitive insights generated through what he termed *Janusian thinking* (or paradoxical thinking).

In these examples, we see that in going from *either/or* thinking to a higher level of *and/both* thinking, opportunities and alternatives begin to appear. “Opposites cease to be opposites,” and rather than being mutually exclusive and independent of each other, the two sides of the polarity become interdependent, coexisting simultaneously—evolving off each other as in the powerful philosophical notion of “complementarities.” One needs the other in order not just to survive, but to flourish. Rather than considering constructs as opposites, they are considered as complementarities. This all reflects back to Kelly’s ingenious notion that constructs are dichotomous, yet this bipolarity is but a prerequisite to a much more profound understanding of the need to look at both: the sameness and “otherness” simultaneously, interdependently, coexisting in harmony as in the Eastern Taoist symbol of Yin/Yang.

Pilot Run to Capture Executives’ Janusian Thinking Using the Repertory Grid

Building on these insights, I wanted to see, more psychologically, how executives made sense of the tensions, trade-offs, dilemmas, and competing demands they faced during their strategic work. Much has been written in the extant literature on the methods that can be used to better understand paradoxes (Lewis, 2000), yet no studies to date have rigorously and systematically been able to tap into managerial cognitions of organizational paradoxes. After many failed attempts of my own to achieve this, I managed to creatively design a grid to best capture this elusive Janusian thinking using a slightly modified approach to the traditional grid (as exemplified by Hodgkinson [2005] in his large- scale longitudinal study of the U.K. real-estate industry in the late 1990s). The grid was emailed to the executive in Excel format and accompanied by brief instructions along with a request

for the completed grid to be returned via email for convenience and confidentiality.

Building on different business applications of the repertory grid technique (Stewart & Stewart, 1981; Wright, 2008; Wright, Paroutis, & Blettner, 2013) using role title elements, the executive was asked to identify successful and unsuccessful strategic initiatives:

- E1: Name a SUCCESSFUL company strategic initiative that you were involved in
- E2: Name another SUCCESSFUL company strategy initiative that you were involved in
- E3: Name an UNSUCCESSFUL company strategic initiative that you were involved in
- E4: Name another UNSUCCESSFUL company strategic initiative that you were involved in
- E5: Name another SUCCESSFUL company strategic initiative that you were involved in
- E6: *Visualizing the way I prefer to deal with organizational tensions*
(*This element was supplied to gauge how executives leverage off the seemingly opposing tensions.*)
- E7: Name another SUCCESSFUL company strategic initiative that you were involved in
- E8: Name another UNSUCCESSFUL company strategic initiative that you were involved in
- E9: Name another UNSUCCESSFUL company strategic initiative that you were involved in

To ensure consistency and in preparation for more large-scale comparison between manager/industry group responses (see Hodgkinson, 2005), 20 bipolar dimensions of paradoxical tensions were “supplied” rather than being elicited from the executive. These tensions were generated from: (a) an extant review of the paradox literature listing the most frequently cited paradoxical tensions using the categorization set up by Lewis and colleagues (Lewis, 2000; Luscher & Lewis, 2008; Smith & Lewis, 2011), and (b) by further validating these organizational contradictions by asking 12 senior executives from a range of organizations about the type of tensions they faced in their daily strategic work. An additional construct was provided at the bottom of the grid form to cross-check if the strategic initiative elements identified by the respondent corresponded with their respective role titles. A sample of a completed grid from an executive director is shown in Figure 25.1.

Your CURRENT experience dealing with organizational tensions, dilemmas, trade-offs, and competing demands in strategic work. NOT WHAT SHOULD BE!												
1 Towards left pole											Towards right pole 5	
		E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9		
1	Choose interpretations that support current thinking	4	5	2	4	5	3	2	2	4	Challenge current thinking	
2	Encouraged differentiation	5	1	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	Encouraged integration	
3	In view of short-term goals	3	5	4	2	3	3	3	1	3	In view of long-term goals	
4	Value individual differences	4	1	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	Value collective whole	
5	Encouraged quick execution	5	4	3	2	3	3	4	1	4	Encouraged wide search	
6	Encouraged stability	2	5	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	Encouraged change	
7	Reinforced flexibility and interdependency	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	Reinforced expertise/efficiency	
8	Controlled for costs	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	3	2	Enhanced quality	
9	Concerned for people	4	4	4	1	3	3	4	5	4	Concerned for results	
10	Encouraged unlearning	5	5	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	Encouraged learning	
11	Encouraged divergent thinking	4	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	Encouraged convergent thinking	
12	Simplify understanding	2	4	4	2	3	3	3	2	2	Look for more complex understanding	
13	Go for differentiation	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	4	4	Go for cost leadership	
14	Ensured monitoring and control	2	4	3	2	4	3	4	1	2	Ensured flexibility	
15	Enhanced quality	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	4	3	Controlled for costs	
16	Need discipline	4	4	3	1	3	3	4	2	2	Need empowerment	
17	Encouraged efficiency	5	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	Encouraged effectiveness	
18	Build on organization's past successes	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	Created futures that may differ from organization's past	
19	Encouraged decentralization	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	Encouraged centralization	
20	Search for greater efficiency and improvements of current	5	4	4	2	4	3	4	2	2	Search for variations and experimentation to foster new	
21	Successful strategic initiative	1	1	4	4	1	1	1	4	4	Unsuccessful strategic initiative	
Rating of 3 can also mean both left and right poles were used												

Figure 25.1 Capturing Paradoxical Thinking Using the Repertory Grid: Supplied Bipolar Constructs (Organizational Tensions) and Elicited Role Title Elements of Successful and Unsuccessful Strategic Company Initiatives. *Source:* Wright (2008).

The executive was asked to use the 1–5 rating scale provided on the grid form, where ratings of 1 or 2 mean that the element is described more by the construct pole on the left-hand side of the grid and ratings of 4 or 5 mean the element is described more by the construct pole on the right-hand side of the grid; a rating of 3 means that the element is described using both poles at the same time. The director's completed grid was then input into the RepGrid 5 program (Centre for Person Computer Studies, 2009) to generate construct correlations, construct loadings, and cluster analysis for further analysis. Figure 25.2(a), with the supplied construct poles, and Figure 25.2(b), without construct lines, show maps based on two principal components using the executive's own ratings, spread in psychological space.

Map (a) clearly shows the way this executive is thinking about how she deals with the tensions, dilemmas, and competing demands she faces when involved with the various strategic initiatives. What is particularly revealing is that these construct lines are not tightly clustered together but, rather, very widely spread. A closer look at the percentage of variance accounted for the first factor (PVAFF) shows it only captured 44.16%, with the remaining seven principal components making up the rest. This provides a good indication of the executive's cognitive complexity. We can also tell this by the number of "3s" she has given in her grid. Map (b) is also very revealing in that the strategic initiatives rated with 3 are located toward the center of the map and those elements farthest away from the middle of the map had fewer 3 ratings (meaning an either/or thinking was taking place for those specific strategic initiatives). This can also be cross-checked with the actual completed grid form and a simple analysis of the number of non-3 ratings given to each strategic initiative. These preliminary results are promising for the advancement of the field of organizational paradoxes both for practicing managers and for theory-building using repertory grid technique.

The Need for Both *Dualisms* and *Dualities* in Our Search for Meaning

When faced with competing tensions in our lives, it is important to make choices. Choices refine us and yet they can also confine us; make us and break us. The fact remains that they remain fundamental in the determination of the human condition. Without them we would not change and grow. Yet, counterintuitively, choices are not necessarily the final act of

(a)

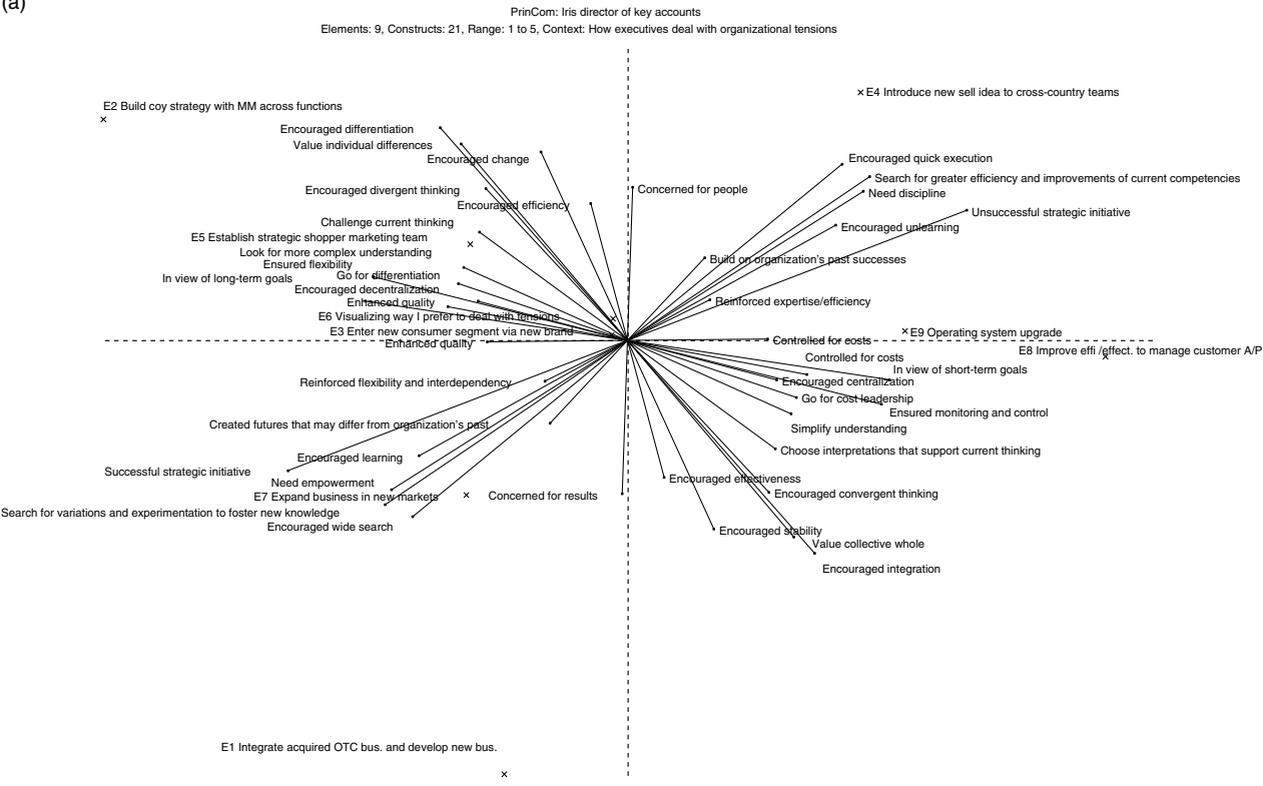


Figure 25.2 Mapping Tensions and Dualities During Strategic Work: A Senior Executive's Bipolarity of Construing in Psychological Space.

(b)

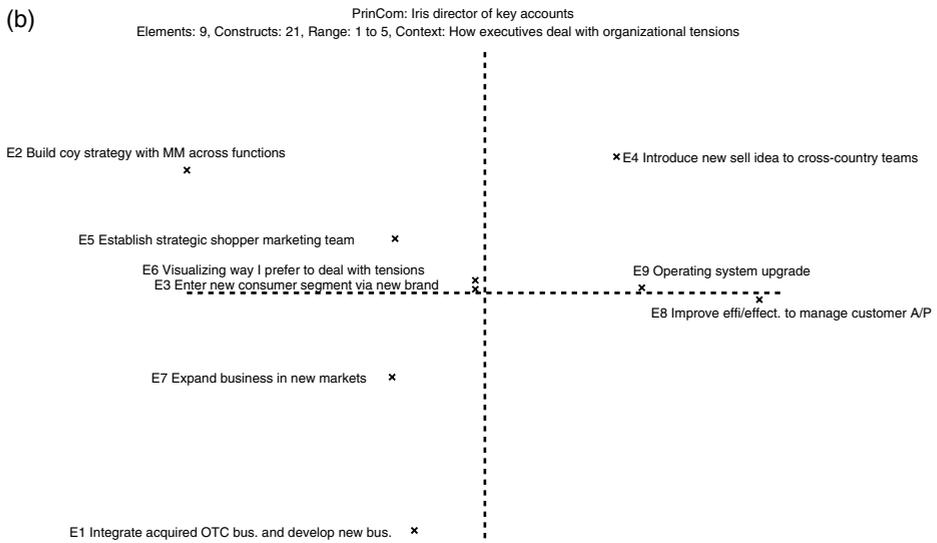


Figure 25.2 (Continued)

being but of becoming. We need to place meaning within and between the alternatives we present ourselves with; and it is only through the awareness of the alternative(s) that we begin to see possibilities of entwinement, coexistence, and interdependence (where no choice is needed).

Final Thoughts on Kelly and Organizational Paradoxes

Managers often erect defense mechanisms that oversimplify the complexity of the seemingly contradictory tensions with simple either/or options. This implies that they do not give much thought to broadening their alternatives. Training managers to think more deeply about how they think they think about organizational paradoxes using the grid technique grounded in the psychology of personal constructs holds the promise of developing more “complicated understandings” that go beyond normal logic and open access to other forms of reasoning.

Similar to the Taoist symbol of Yin and Yang, Kelly’s thinking invites us to see the sameness and differences between the poles of our own construing, while simultaneously transcending our understandings of each having a role to play in the making of the other. Yes, there is conflict between the poles, yet there is also unity in opposites.

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Personal Construct Coaching

Jelena Pavlović and Dušan Stojnov

Over the past couple of decades coaching has grown into an important business and educational practice. The word “coaching” stems from the name of a Hungarian village, Kocsi, where the first coach was constructed in the Middle Ages (Skeat, 2005). Some of the definitions of coaching stress exactly this vehicle metaphor: the coach as a person who “helps me to think through how to get from where I am to where I need or want to be” (Pask & Joy, 2007, p. 11). Other definitions refer to coaching as “a personal development process that includes the enhancement of self-awareness and the capacity to learn and build on that learning” (Vaughan Smith, 2007, p. 31), and a transactional and reconstructive process in which the person adds to her or his own repertoire of actions (Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997). One of the more prominent definitions describes coaching as “the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another” (Downey, 1999, p. 15). These three key aspects are also included in many other definitions of coaching (Gray, 2006; Ives, 2008; Neenan, 2008; Parsloe & Wray, 2000; Whitmore, 1996).

It may come as somewhat surprising that theoretical underpinnings of coaching have mainly been accommodations of various psychotherapeutic perspectives (Gray, 2006). One can observe two-way interactions between the professions of coaching and psychotherapy. On the one hand, the emerging coaching profession used psychotherapy theories to build a solid theoretical understanding of human psychology and change processes. On the other hand, the coaching profession has inspired various psychotherapeutic approaches to adapt their procedures and expand their services into coaching. As a result, “brands” of the main psychotherapeutic approaches have recently emerged as new coaching “brands.” A review of the literature

points to such developments as *cognitive behavior coaching* (Neenan, 2008), *positive coaching* (Biswas-Diener, 2009), and *gestalt coaching* (Gray, 2006).

In this chapter we present an approach to coaching based on the principles of personal construct psychology (PCP). We point out that personal construct therapy (PCT) was based on coaching principles even before the term “coaching” gained wider attention. Therefore, a move from PCT to personal construct coaching (PCC) is not only a return to the original principles of the theory, but also an opportunity for new developments in personal construct psychology. In the first part of the chapter we point to the rise of the new learning society as a rationale for expanding PCT into PCC. A framework of PCC is presented in the second part of the chapter. An overview of the process of PCC is given through the description of the main stages. Furthermore, similarities and differences between PCT and PCC are discussed. In conclusion, we elaborate on some of the possible future developments of PCC.

Learn/Change or Perish: Coaching as a Technology of the Learning Society

Several decades ago George Kelly (1969) anticipated some of the theorizing on contemporary society by drawing our attention to the idea of “ontological acceleration.” What Kelly pointed to was the increasing pace of self-transformation and a shift toward a view of the person as not content to cope with their circumstances forever in the same way. He dismissed the idea of nature and society as stable entities. Instead, he pointed to an ever-increasing pace, and the need to look to the future in fresh ways, asking new and searching questions.

The idea of ontological acceleration may be related to more recent theorizing on the loss of the stable state (Schön, 1973), fast capitalism (Usher & Edwards, 2007), and the learning society (European Commission, 2000). Schön (1973) suggested that in contemporary societies we cannot afford stability and that we cannot expect stable states that will endure for our own lifetimes. He warned us about the inevitability of the continuous process of transformation of our society and all of its institutions. The idea of fast capitalism further points to speed as one of the main determinants of the new work order and to constantly increasing hyper-competitiveness in the global market (Usher & Edwards, 2007). Reflecting Kelly’s ideas on the crucial role of anticipation in the psychology of the person, Usher and Edwards (2007) describe contemporary society as in need of fast anticipatory action, quick

responses, and speedy ways of managing and doing things. More recently, policymakers have pointed to the idea of the learning society, which demands that its citizens continuously update their personal and professional selves (European Commission, 2000). Starting with the idea of ontological acceleration, both social theory and policy discourses agree that the idea of social stability is no longer viable. Whatever we call this new type of society, it seems to be changing all the time with increasing speed.

This new type of society demands a view of learning as a lifelong process in order for knowledge workers to keep up with the pace and intensity of change (Usher & Edwards, 2007). Learning also becomes an economic resource, not only on the individual level, but also for society. Rose (1999) takes this idea further, pointing to life becoming a continuous economic capitalization of the self. On a broader level, learning also becomes a technology for shaping a new kind of self—to become entrepreneurial, flexible, agentic, and innovative, in order to meet the demands of fast capitalist societies. This new view of learning is opposed to some earlier discourses, in which it was equated with obedience, demanding passivity and the “infantilization” of learners. Learning previously belonged to the ethical, rather than economic, order. Finally, in the past, learning was outside the domain of construction of personal meaning—it was dominantly signified as the acquisition and internalization of generalized, decontextualized, and disciplinary knowledge.

In a changed society, with a changed view of learning, new technologies of the self are needed. Underlying the new technologies of the learning society is the *unification of theories of learning and theories of change*. In new technologies of the self, learning and changing are integrated to create an indivisible pair: *learn/change*. Different frameworks, such as reflective practice, experiential learning, double-loop learning, and coaching are examples of how these new technologies may be understood.

One of the new technologies that integrate processes of learning and changing is coaching. In the coaching process, reference is made to change in the context of learning rather than in the context of psychotherapy. As opposed to psychotherapy, coaching does not use a metaphor of healing and the client is not seen as wounded, damaged, in pain, or as needing a restorative process. Moreover, coaching is diagnosis-free: clients are seen as healthy, resourceful, and capable of moving themselves forward into the future (Vaughan Smith, 2007). The coach is primarily a co-worker, rather than a “helper” assisting someone who is disabled or ill. Together they are curious about what the future could hold, how they can engage more with life, or how they can be even more effective in achieving their chosen goals and ambitions. There is a spirit of adventure.

From Personal Construct Therapy to Personal Construct Coaching

The main principles of PCT reveal many similarities with the principles of coaching psychology. In PCT persons are seen as scientists formulating hypotheses which govern their future behavior. This view is built into PCT as its principle of *future orientation*. In line with this view, events based on hypothesizing from the past cannot be influenced, but those in the future can. These personal hypotheses are formed by *people in relation*; they are not the product of an inner psychological essence. Moreover, our constructions are not psychological givens—instead, our personal theories are upgraded and elaborated throughout life. One further important principle of PCT is its *respectfulness*: persons as scientists are not objects of knowledge, research, or cure but co-researchers who collaborate in creating their own wellbeing. As such, the personal meanings people create should not be ignored—they should be shared and appreciated *in a dialogue*. Finally, the pragmatic roots (Butt, 2000) of PCT are integrated into the principle of action orientation. The approach aims to help people optimize their processes and to offer them a fruitful context for a change in a desired direction.

These similarities between PCT and coaching are not so surprising if we consider the philosophical background of PCP. It was grounded in Dewey's (1910/1997) idea of learning through reflection and experimentation, which is also a large source of inspiration for the modern approaches that unite learning and changing (e.g., reflective practice). However, PCP also expanded on Dewey's ideas by acknowledging complexity and the psychological difficulties of experimentation. So PCP has perhaps been a precursor of coaching and something of an "orphan" in the clinical context where its main principles—no stigmatizing or diagnostic categories and no curing or repairing—were not always easy to implement. In this sense, it seems that PCP may have become part of the zeitgeist 50 years after its introduction.

A Framework for Personal Construct Coaching

We may look at PCC through the main metaphors underlying it. The client is seen as a personal scientist and storyteller who creates meaning for his or her life and work experiences. The coach is there to offer "methodological support" in designing better experiments and to act as a professional conversationalist facilitating the creation of new stories. The coaching relationship is therefore a joint research project with the aim to create new

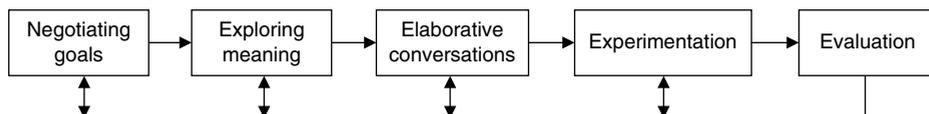


Figure 26.1 Stages in Personal Construct Coaching.

stories we live and work by. The PCC process may be “packed” into a set of five stages, which are not necessarily linear, but more often circular (see Figure 26.1).

Negotiating goals

At the beginning of the coaching process, goals have to be negotiated. In PCC, we do that by exploring clients’ preferred and non-preferred perspectives and social realities. A particular value of PCC is exploring not only what people want to achieve, but also what they want to leave behind. If a person says that he or she wants to create a better balance between their personal and professional life, we may explore what is the opposite of that. When we understand both their preferred and non-preferred realities, we can proceed to the next stage. For this, PCC offers an impressive repertoire of conversational methodology, qualitative means of exploration, narrative techniques, and the repertory grid.

Exploring meaning in personal and organizational stories

Another specific approach in PCC is to put goals into a wider perspective. We are keen to understand the implications of change: what does it mean for the person or organization to move in the proposed direction, and what consequences—desired and undesired—might we anticipate? For example, we may discover that “creating a better balance between personal and professional life” may involve benefits, but also profound anxieties about future performance at work. There may be a dilemma of whether working less would be appropriate and acceptable in a particular working environment, as well as questions about how to develop a personal life that may have been neglected for years.

Facilitating elaborative conversations

One of the important assumptions underlying PCC is that people change through conversations. PCC offers highly elaborated tools for

leading a person through this process, known as *controlled elaboration* (Kelly, 1955; Stojnov & Pavlović, 2010). This involves exploring future projects in the wider perspective of a client's approach to life and work. For example, we may propose writing a fictional view of the self as a person who has achieved a balance between work and private life. Through "as if" conversations and enactments we may further elaborate this new version of the self and its impact on important others in our ecological niche. While some may be delighted with our changing self, others may be disappointed, or even angry. This phase of work also encompasses the exploration of anxieties which inevitably accompany the learning process.

Experimentation

After exploring the implications of personal change, the next phase is experimentation. We do not simply identify a desired change and prescribe specific actions to achieve it. On the contrary, PCC invites a person to experiment with this new version of the self. Initial experimentation will occur in the relative safety of the coaching room. Following a process of encouragement and validation, a person is invited to widen the scope of their experimentation. A particularly useful tool in this stage is the *fixed role*, designed by Kelly. This technique invites a person to "try on for size" a different version of the self. This will not usually be an ideal self—just different enough to allow new experiences. For example, through this powerful procedure we may encourage a person to act as someone who prioritizes well in personal and professional life, who takes an active attitude toward his or her goals, and who knows when something has to be left behind. A person may try the experiment of taking a 30-minute break from work for the first time for years. Although this may seem a normal everyday practice for the majority, it may confront the person with overwhelming anxiety and guilt: What would others think? Will his or her colleagues think he or she has changed in some unpredictable manner? Will the boss think he or she is lazy? Will the staff think that he or she is not reliable any more?

Experimentation is not only a cognitive effort. When someone makes a change, they need to let go of something before they achieve something else, like an artist on a trapeze—which is definitely not an easy task! Like a ship leaving the safe harbor, we invite our clients to sail out to the unpredictable vicissitudes of life on the ocean. Despite all his or her disturbing questions, our client will have to go through an act of daring to face those

envisioned anxieties, fears, even threats, to be disposed to guilt, but also to learn about the potentialities of a new self capable of much more than he or she originally thought possible. In other words, experimentation has solid emotive consequences. In PCC, experiences of anxiety, threat, and hostility are perceived as normal and the person is encouraged to maintain an inquiring stance toward his or her own emotional responses. Finally, resistance in PCC is something to be explored and understood rather than overcome. The coach has the task of understanding not only what are the possible directions for change, but also what are the personal meanings of particular obstacles and barriers, as well as what important trade-offs a person is confronting.

Evaluation

Evaluation in PCC is not simply an administrative task of finding the right box to tick on the evaluation form. Instead, it opens up a complex and demanding process of reflection and reflexivity. If a person says that he or she has moved from 2 to 5 on an imaginary scale of “work–life balance” we may open up a new dialogue on how this new self suits him or her; whether it is comfortable; in what situations and contexts it is not comfortable; whether there is a price to be paid for the transition; and what change it brings to the anticipated future. Reflection on the process may also take the form of re-administering a grid, summarizing the project, and verbalizing the effects of the coaching process.

Personal Construct Coaching and Personal Construct Therapy: Construing Similarities and Differences

We have argued that PCC was actually a coaching psychology even before the term gained wider attention, and that a step toward PCC would not actually be a step forward, but rather a step back to first principles. A further question refers to the differences between PCC and PCT. PCC and PCT are two overlapping practices which share some basic principles, but which differ to a significant extent. While coaching mainly has a learning focus, therapy has a more clinical focus, especially when it is practiced in institutional arrangements. Coaching uses the organizational discourse of performance management and productivity, while therapy may be saturated with clinical diagnostic discourses such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of

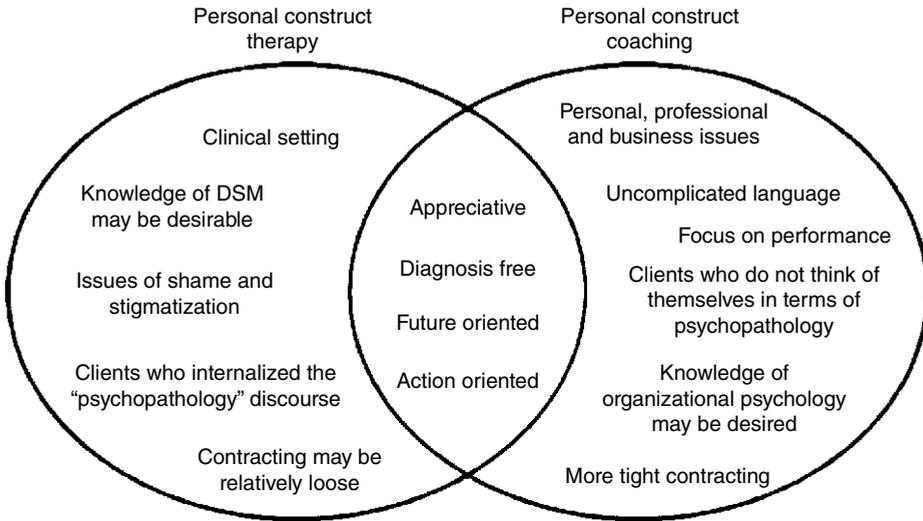


Figure 26.2 Similarities and Differences between PCT and PCC.

Mental Disorders (DSM). Relying on DSM may reproduce pathologization, as opposed to PCC, which normalizes transitions as developmental crossroads. Therefore, issues of shame and stigma are minimized in PCC. In terms of context and organizational issues, PCC may have more tightly packed contracts (number of sessions, goals, time frames, etc.) in comparison to therapy.

Figure 26.2 points to different routes, different target groups, and different purposes of PCT and PCC. Additionally, they have a different type of “branding.” While therapy belongs to the humanitarian discourse, PCC may be more suited to the business discourse. In the former, helping disordered people is viewed as a human obligation to help members of the community in a state of psychological distress that exceeds their coping abilities; in the latter, coach and client enter a trading contract in which desire for a better quality of performance is chosen. While PCT, metaphorically speaking, has placed clients in a scientific laboratory, personal construct coaching has allowed them to enter a psychological gym: it offers an opportunity to improve one’s performance to reach a desired level of skill and competence.

However, when all these differences are summed up, it may turn out that contextual and organizational conditions actually outweigh the methodological differences. This point is effectively illustrated by Vaughan Smith’s (2007) road metaphor in which coaching and psychotherapy are seen as

different routes, at different times of life, for different people and purposes, each of which can be difficult, challenging, and deeply meaningful.

In Conclusion: Construing the Future of Personal Construct Coaching

Now that we have outlined a framework for PCC and its similarities to and differences from therapy, we may reflect on its future. The development of PCC may be construed as a form of *diversification of the personal construct psychology portfolio*. In future, personal construct therapists may become more willing to explore and develop the field of coaching because the increasing tempo of the learning society is creating a demand for new types of professional service. While therapy served its purpose in the twentieth century, the learning society of the twenty-first century may demand shorter, more efficient, and more performance-oriented forms of development. In expanding their services to new areas of coaching, therapists may discover a more positive approach and a protection from burnout. PCC may not only be a form of diversification, but also a potential “star” in the PCP portfolio. Coaching may prove to supply an end to its “orphan” status and a “home” for PCP with a high growth potential.

Another important question is whether being a therapist and being a coach will become mutually exclusive roles, or whether some sort of synthesized practice will emerge. If synthesized practice proves useful, it is interesting to speculate on the ways to describe such practice. Finally, in line with recent theorizing on the disciplinary effects of the social sciences, we raise the question of whether PCC may turn out to be a new form of “responsibilization” and self-care (Lemke, 2001; Peters, 2005; Usher & Edwards, 2007). As in other coaching discourses, in PCC the organizationally desirable is semiotically coded with the personally desirable, such as self-fulfillment through performing excellently and being recognized as having done so. In this final question we anticipate decoding power in future developments of PCC.

No doubt the future will provide answers to some of these questions. Not considering PCC as an option may be a missed market opportunity to extend the PCP portfolio, to invest in coaching as a new product that is in line with the new market needs, and add brand value to PCP. Finally, it would also be missing an opportunity to look to the future with a fresh variety of searching questions, to experiment and test the hypothesis we have already proposed: is PCC actually PCP at its best?

Note

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Part VI
Educational Applications

From Periphery to Core

Personal Construct Psychology's Permeation of Education

Maureen Pope and Pam Denicolo

Establishing the Context

Fransella (1995, pp. 29–31) introduced a George Kelly poem entitled “Nursery rhymes for older tots: to all you kettles, from all us pots,” which included the lines:

Critics, teachers, kettles, pots,
Boobies, bullies and bigots,
Whilst flushing freedoms down the drain,
Cry, “*Education* is to blame!”

Presaging Pink Floyd’s “Another Brick in the Wall,” Kelly expressed frustration with what he called “orthodox teachers,” who were themselves taught not to question what is taught, from a milieu in which the educator’s job was one of direct instruction of information and the transmission of the culturally given. Oh, how education has changed!

In this chapter we first consider the essence of constructivist epistemology as it relates to education and then how, over the last 30 years, personal construct psychologists have forged productive links with other constructivist traditions to enhance their educational research and practice. We then provide examples of research across a range of domains, from science and mathematics to language, the arts, and professional education, to convey the constructivist thrust of current education, with one reference link

to each significant author to facilitate access to the plethora of publications on these topics.

There is a “productive alliance” between constructivism and education (Olson, 1982, p.70). If practices were to change, Olson contended, teachers needed to examine their fundamental beliefs. Although challenging these constructs could be threatening, confronting them would provide teachers with potentially empowering experiences. Seen in the 1970s and 1980s as novel, constructivist approaches now prevail in pre- and in-service professional development.

Teachers now recognize that learners construct knowledge that makes sense to them. Constructivist teachers engage in a dialogue with their students to ascertain prior knowledge and provide experiences whereby alternative perspectives can be explored. Teacher educators/trainers seek to encourage student and practicing teachers to reflect on their personal practical knowledge. Finding ways to help learners articulate their construing is a challenge both for teachers in the classroom and those involved in training those teachers.

No doubt Kelly would appreciate the extent to which his ideas, together with those of other constructivists, have permeated current thinking in education and helped to transform teaching and learning.

The Influence of Core Assumptions

There are some core assumptions that underpin constructivist research and the constructivist practice of teachers, including that of all those whose work is referred to in this chapter, no matter how they label their research or practice.

Constructivism asserts that knowledge of the world is mediated and relative to the observer as opposed to viewing truth as objective reality. There is a rejection of naive ontological realism in favor of varying degrees of relativism. The philosopher of science Lakatos espoused similar epistemological commitments when he discussed those whom he referred to as revolutionary activists who work on critically demolishing the prisons of established conceptual frameworks.

This echoes Kelly’s philosophy of constructive alternativism. Rather than collecting “nuggets of truth,” which he labeled accumulative fragmentalism, he suggested we place interpretations on the world since we cannot conceive of reality directly.

Kelly also reminded us that, if we are courageous in experimenting with alternative conceptions to shape our futures, we need not be victims

of our biographies. His metaphor of person-as-scientist, his focus on relevance and responsibility, his emphasis on personal meaning and the valuing of alternative perspectives resonate with contemporary constructivist approaches in education.

Olson (1984) had noted that Kelly's work could be seen as a way of eliciting teachers' personal (professional) knowledge, making the tacit explicit so as to subject it to critical examination. Both he and Kelly acknowledged that this can be difficult and requires careful listening. This is important in professional development and educational research, resulting in an increase in the use of biography as a means of understanding how teachers feel, think, and act. The use of autobiography is a powerful method for illuminating potential influences from the past, allowing teachers' voices to be heard as they free themselves from unhelpful constructs.

Many constructivist researchers in education have sought to implement approaches and methods as well as the theoretical ideas inherent in personal construct psychology (PCP). Several of these researchers are affiliates of the International Study Association of Teachers and Teaching (ISATT), of which we are founder members. Such researchers embrace a range of constructivist positions, but many have been influential in drawing attention to how PCP might assist in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Within this perspective researchers now use and invent a wide range of research techniques and methods, many of which have themselves evolved over time from being unusual and radical to becoming commonplace and mainstream, in attempts to solve the problem of capturing and understanding the complex ideas that permeate classrooms of all kinds.

Clark (1986, p. 9), in drawing attention to a paradigm shift that engulfed educational research in the late 1970s and early 1980s, wrote:

The teacher of 1985 is a constructivist who continually builds, elaborates, and tests his or her personal theory of the world . . . we have begun to move away from the cybernetically elegant, internally consistent but mechanical metaphors that guided our earlier work.

Other ISATT researchers drew on Kelly's suggestion regarding how to conduct meaningful holistic research, stressing the importance of not reducing the complex reality of education to a few manageable variables but of grasping the construing of the teachers who determine what happens in practice. These researchers, while continuing to explore the ramifications of Kelly's work, have also, in true PCP fashion, explored alternative constructivist perspectives consistent with its core assumptions. These have included, inter

alia, radical constructivism, social constructionism, phenomenology, and narrative inquiry. Whilst emphasis is still focused on the personal aspects of teachers' professional knowledge and the meaning-making of students, societal issues are now included.

It is important that we keep these core assumptions in mind when advocating the use of personal construct theory (PCT) and its methods in education and in research. In our long experience working in education as teachers, examiners, and consultants we have struggled with a sense of disappointment when we have observed misuse of the repertory grid. We regret the use of supplied elements and constructs without probing of personal cognitions in large-scale studies when the purported aim was to reveal *personal sense-making*. This has arisen perhaps when sponsors deem large-scale, nomothetic studies appropriate and/or when the researcher lacked understanding of the foundations of the tool. Devoid of its epistemological and philosophical base the grid becomes a barren instrument. None of those studies reported herein fall into that trap! Yet neither should we become inflexible in our approach and methods.

Exploring Other Cognate Traditions and Methods

In Pope and Denicolo (2001) and Denicolo and Pope (2001) we provided a comprehensive discussion on how other personal construct psychologists have contributed to the transformative development of ideas in education. In presenting our own and our students' research we highlighted the importance of such cross-fertilization, outlining the commonalities and shared notions within different constructivist educational research traditions.

We advocated the use of multi-method approaches to enhance research within a constructivist framework. We have elsewhere demonstrated the wide variety of elicitation methods that can be used to throw light on the unique, complex perceived world of the person, while exhorting personal construct researchers to see the value of looking beyond the repertory grid to embrace that wide range of alternative techniques. It is encouraging to see that in educational research this challenge has been met, reinforcing Kelly's point that we are only restricted in developing our construing by the limits of our imagination.

Similarly, while not denying Kelly's powerful influence on our practice, we have argued that it may hamper progress if we stick dogmatically to PCT alone and do not explore other theories and research methods that

would help in our educational inquiries. Indeed, we are keeping to the spirit of his theory by seeking elaborations. Personal construct educators now explore links with radical constructivism, and recognize aspects of social constructivism and social constructionism which emphasize such issues as social interaction and the influence of language in the construction of reality.

Watts and Vaz (1997) in their research on science teaching drew on similarities between Kelly's theory and that of Freire, who saw education as a means of helping people to become active participants in shaping their social and cultural environment. Watts and Vaz (1997, p. 334) claimed that embracing both Freire and Kelly was helpful in their research because both "proposed forward-looking theories, the former at the level of culture and the latter at the psychological level of the individual."

Butt (2005) has written extensively on links between PCP and pragmatism. He highlighted the fact that Kelly recognized the importance and influence of Dewey's pragmatist theory. Freire, Dewey, and Kelly all challenged the dominant paradigms of teaching and learning of their time, emphasizing the role of personal meaning in effective education.

Stojnov, Džinović, and Pavlović (2008), in their study of underachievement at school, made a convincing case for drawing on assumptions made by both Kelly and Foucault. Given that a number of pupils might wish to choose underachievement as a way of functioning at school to match their personal constructions, then, in practice, there should be an effort to understand their personal logic rather than simply classifying pupils as good or bad achievers. Pavlović (2011, p. 396), one of the participants in work linking Kelly and Foucault, has since made an argument for including social constructionism within such research. She maintains that PCP and social constructionism are not incompatible because, in combination, each perspective can enhance the other. Raskin (2002) analyzed what he referred to as "constructivisms" to emphasize the pluralist nature of thinking about constructivism.

Raskin (2002, p. 9), like us, argued that "PCP can only be enriched by greater contact with other constructivist approaches." Apelgren (2010) has compared common fundamental values between Husserl and Kelly, respectively the fathers of phenomenology and PCP. She argues that the two traditions can complement each other as a basis for constructivist educational research. The ideas from Freire, Dewey, von Glasersfeld, Foucault, social constructionism, phenomenology, and PCP provide a rich mosaic of perspectives from which constructivist educational researchers gain inspiration.

In our research and practice we are fundamentally interested in the lived experience of participants. We have used a variety of constructivist techniques which allow rich in-depth exploration, encouraging participants to use their own words to indicate issues that are personally important to them. Mair (1989) has described how the original metaphor of Man-the-Scientist used by personal constructivists was giving way to that of Person-as-Storyteller within narrative psychology and constructivist inquiry. The potency of stories is stressed by Beattie (1995, p. 146) in relation to teachers' professional knowledge and development:

In the telling and retelling of our stories we change, we learn, we grow, giving up the stories of ourselves that we hold when we can replace them with richer and more significant versions more suited to our current environment and to the environments and to the future we foresee.

This is a clear constructivist message for teaching, learning and professional development.

The Exemplar Case of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (“STEM”) Education

One area in which we have a long-standing interest is science education. Science educators have unsurprisingly found an affinity with much of Kelly's theory:

the thinking of the scientist and the thinking of the human subject should be considered to be governed by the same general laws. If the aim of science is usefully construed as prediction, why not try operating on the assumption that the aim of all human effort is prediction (Kelly, 1955, p. 605)

Science educators recognize the importance of becoming aware of their students' predictions or alternative frameworks (Driver, 1983). The person-as-meaning-maker is a dominant theme. From the early 1980s there has existed an “invisible college” of researchers and educators who recognize the importance of engaging with the personal theorizing of the young person-as-scientist and advocate that science educators should pay attention to the personal meanings of their students. That college included the late Rosalind Driver's Leeds Group and our Surrey Personal Construction of Knowledge Research Group (PCKG) (described in Pope and Gilbert,

1985). These have had a strong influence on the direction of subsequent research in science and mathematics education worldwide.

In considering the implications of constructivism for teaching of mathematics Confrey (1990, p. 109) said:

When teaching concepts . . . the teacher must form an adequate model of the students' way of viewing an idea and s/he then must assist the student in restructuring those views to be more adequate from the students' and from the teacher's perspective. Teaching and learning becomes a process of negotiation.

Constructivist learning environments require settings whereby students discuss their ideas openly and frame their own inquiries and research agendas. Roth's (1994) multi-method research, which included reflective narratives, followed students engaged in laboratory sessions aimed at allowing students to generate personally relevant research questions. Roth has subsequently advocated first-person experiential learning in all areas of education. Claxton (1990 and his subsequent writings) also argued that recognition be given to students' existing knowledge (their "mini-theories") because this is the basis upon which they construct their experience of formal science lessons. Franke and Bogner (2013) examined how integrating children's alternative conceptions into science lessons influenced achievement. Their research involved 291 secondary pupils taking part in gene technology lessons under two different instructional methods. The group taught using a constructivist approach, where elicitation of alternative models was encouraged, scored better on cognitive tests, and showed positive emotions, and more interest in learning.

The importance of recognizing the worldview of science students led to prolific research, with implications for pre- and in-service teacher education. Early research included eliciting student personal models of concepts such as energy (Gilbert & Pope), force and movement (Gilbert & Zylbersztajn), concepts in physics (Watts & Pope) and metaphors used in the teaching and learning of chemistry (Denicolo). These studies are elaborated in Gilbert (2005).

Shapiro (1994) linked the historical developments of constructivism to the rise of the alternative framework movement. She has since argued that the learning person at the center of constructivist classrooms applied to *both* student and teacher: learners and teachers together construe their learning environment.

Such research studies have been a powerful force in developing teachers' science conceptions. Many teachers exhibit similar alternative conceptions of

science concepts to those of their students, both differing from the received scientific viewpoint. Bezzi (1999) provided a case study of a university geology lecturer and five students which demonstrated this, arguing that teachers and students need to become aware of their epistemology. These techniques may aid teaching and enhance public understanding of science.

Duit and Treagust (2003) claimed that constructivism has inspired work on conceptual change and led to considerable improvements in teaching and learning. Duit maintains an extensive online bibliography with thousands of examples of research into student and teacher conceptions and science education. It is located at the Leibniz Institute for Science Education at Kiel, Germany. Duit and his colleagues maintain that science education research should now focus on understanding and improving teachers' practice through teacher education.

Fischler (1999, p. 181), having identified teaching principles devised from multi-method interaction with students, used these as elements in repertory grids to investigate changes in student teachers' thinking, suggesting that the process helps both students and teachers to explore their conceptions.

Henze, Van Driel, and Verloop (2007) were concerned to make visible the formerly hidden world of teaching. Teachers in the Netherlands were undergoing science education reform, being required to teach a new course "Public Understanding of Science" (PUSc). Henze et al. used repeated applications of a repertory grid to identify changes in the teachers' personal knowledge as they made sense of the new reforms, arguing that teachers' knowledge is not simply a gradual process of picking up techniques, activities, and materials. Several influential books have been written highlighting the importance of constructivism as practiced by teachers in science classrooms and in teacher education, including those of Gilbert (2005) and Brooks (2011). Although science is the focus of these works, the messages contained within them apply across the curriculum.

Teachers as Learners

Teachers' beliefs have a huge impact on teaching and learning; Pope and Scott's (2003) research highlighted the role of teachers' views of knowledge in classroom practice. They suggested that teacher educators and staff developers need to focus on the teachers' epistemology and how this is linked to other personal constructs in their professional repertoire. We have found that teachers' beliefs are deep-rooted and resistant to change, and have highlighted the range of research methodologies, including repertory

grids and concept mapping, used by researchers to elicit teachers' beliefs and knowledge, make their implicit beliefs explicit, and encourage their reflection on practice. We recognize, nevertheless, that accepting responsibility for one's thinking and actions can be challenging, especially in stressful situations, as much for teachers as for anyone.

Dangel and Guyton (2004) provided an emerging picture of constructivist teacher education. They reviewed 40 constructivist teacher education programs in the U.S.A. and identified common elements, for example the use of reflection, collaborative learning, relevant field placements, authentic assessment using professional portfolios, person-centered instruction, and action research. They found that implementation of constructivist principles was not without problems—especially when it took place in traditional university settings.

Lengnink and Prediger (2003, p. 39) maintain that it is a “main task for teacher education to develop teachers' personal constructs.” Their work in Germany was based on pioneering constructivist work in mathematics education in Australia. Combining repertory grids with formal concept analysis allowed Lengnink and Prediger (2003, p. 45) to investigate the development of the student teachers' constructs and to “understand how they think and talk about mathematical tasks in their own language.” Both of these studies emphasize the importance of teacher thinking and the development of practical knowledge.

In many areas of education there is now a plethora of Web-based tools to support learners' understanding of concepts, though teachers may well be resistant to, or fearful of, implementing these within their teaching. Kurz (2011) used the repertory grid method to help teachers analyze what they saw as key features in Web-based algebraic tools that might assist or limit their student learning. Kurz argued that understanding which tools to use in which circumstances is something that should be facilitated in teacher education and suggested that the framework used in the research was a step in the process.

It is important that teacher educators who wish to promote constructivist learning within classrooms use such methods on pre-service courses to demonstrate their value. Researching learners' and teachers' alternative conceptions of specific aspects of the curriculum is now common. There is less attention given to notions such as the values, ideals, and ethical stance that teachers use in their daily classroom practice. Sunley and Locke (2010, p. 409) argued that:

Professional commitment from teachers requires more than contractual compliance as personal and professional values are integral to teaching practice . . .

Little is known about how they understand or interpret their own values or realise the shared values that lie at the heart of a school community.

They provided an extensive review of literature since 2000 on the values held by secondary school professionals. They concluded (p. 409) that there is still a need for more empirical data, but that the studies they reviewed “stress the need for dialogue and reflection so that ‘implicit’ values that teachers hold become explicit.”

Teachers’ values and ethical stance may well run counter to the prevailing culture of their schools. They may have to cope, for example, with continuing reforms imposed by governments, inappropriate allocation of resources, and parental pressure. Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011) concluded that more clarification is needed of teachers’ ethical knowledge and values because illuminating these could provide teachers with an enhanced sense of professionalism. She studied the ethical dilemmas of 50 teachers using critical incident method. People are often resistant to talking about dilemmas, and teachers often wish to hide their dilemmas for fear that their professionalism be called into question. This study demonstrated that many dilemmas related to the teachers’ autonomous practice being constrained by a sense of powerlessness.

Recognizing teaching as a moral endeavor, van Kan, Ponte, and Verloop (2010) employed repertory grid method to investigate teachers’ implicit moral values. They noted:

Our ongoing project on the moral significance of teachers’ everyday practices has adopted the “life world” perspective. Its aim is to explore teachers’ interpretations of the inherent moral significance of their everyday classroom interactions. (p. 1553)

They gave a very detailed account of the methodological implications of adopting a “life world” perspective, the limits of the “standard grid,” and the steps they took to develop a “phenomenological elaboration.” They cited our view (Pope & Denicolo, 2001, p. 67) that “since there is no such creature as ‘the grid’ it is necessary to make certain methodological decisions vis-à-vis the format of a grid for any particular project.”

In devising their method van Kan et al. (2010) ensured that their participants were involved in the selection of elements through a process reflection on videotaped lessons when they identified “bumpy moments,” assuming these would represent the mini-dilemmas that may have moral significance for their actions. These moments became the basis of story

boards, using authentic portions of actual full transcripts, which were used as elements. The researchers recognized the complexity of the task and that simple bipolar elicitation of constructs would not suffice. Instead they adopted a procedure that utilized sentence completion methods and laddering (see the Appendix to this volume). They subsequently used the method productively to explore 37 teachers' professional judgments. By paying attention to, and reflecting on, their values teachers develop a vocabulary through which to express their professional autonomy as opposed to reacting to imposed judgmental frameworks.

PCP approaches have supported emphasis on reflective practice, and the teacher-as-researcher movement is now prevalent in a wide range of educational domains, as we describe next.

Constructivist Research and Practice in the Wider Realm of Education

Roberts's (1999) research highlighted language learners' perceptions of the curriculum and student teachers' changing constructions of what constitutes good teaching. Apelgren (2001) has written extensively on PCP and language education, using a storytelling metaphor with Swedish teachers to help them think about language teaching. She asked them to think about their career as if it were a winding river in which each bend represented an experience that influenced their direction. By drawing these "rivers of experience" and writing a few words to capture critical incidents, teachers were able to discuss how they construed teaching, highlighting the qualitatively different ways in which they construed language teaching. Apelgren (2010) demonstrated her keen interest in methodological issues, and in her later research with language teachers she discussed PCP and its implications particularly in relation to how foreign-language teachers construed learning and assessment.

Cabaroglu and Denicolo (2008) demonstrated the value of "snake interviews" as a powerful technique with which to explore the development of student language teachers' beliefs about teaching. Such multifaceted research based on constructivist thinking has supported a paradigm shift in language pedagogy. Learners are encouraged to become more active in the classroom and take more responsibility for their learning, reducing direct teacher involvement in the learning process (Ingvarsdóttir, 2011).

Although it is not surprising that, within research into language teaching, narratives have been elicited from participants, storytelling research is now

a major thrust in much other constructivist educational research. Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is the study of “How humans make meaning of experience by telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 24).

Here we have strong echoes of Kelly’s ideas. However, the language used differs, Clandinin in her many publications talking about images, whereas Kelly’s theoretical concept was the personal construct. Kelly’s self-characterization technique (see Appendix) might be seen as a precursor to narrative inquiry methods. Clandinin and Connelly were among the pioneers in the promotion of narrative research in education.

Aldenmyr (2013) used teachers’ self-narration to illuminate how Swedish teachers met the challenge of implementing life competence education (LCE). Her analysis showed examples of teachers responding to the professional challenge of LCE with defensiveness and resistance. Her research is an example of how narrative inquiry can “unveil the role of emotions in change” (Avalos, 2011, p. 11). The free-flowing nature of storytelling can overcome the often stilted nature of repertory grid work, but reporting narratives in research is not unproblematic since authentication of tales through discussion is also important.

Teachers’ and students’ “voices” are portrayed in an authentic manner in Burnard’s (2012) research. Her focus was on creativity, particularly in music education. She used a technique which she called “Rivers of Musical Experience,” similar to Apelgren (2010), as a reflective tool to “represent, construct and reconstruct significant milestones or significant events in our creative learning journeys.” In this work with learners and teachers, Burnard sought to facilitate critical reflection on practice and promote creative classroom environments where “both teachers and students can take risks, engage in imaginative activity and do things differently” (2012, p. 167).

Assessing creativity can be problematic. Bjorklund (2008) used repertory grids to elicit the tacit criteria teachers use when assessing creative work in arts and crafts lessons. He noted that most subjects have an element of creative work, so illuminating teachers’ implicit beliefs about creativity and its assessment is important. Using a different constructivist method to elicit tacit thinking, Dyer (2010, p. 5) described her experiences and those of her students when engaged in an after-school dance project in the U.S.A. Using teacher narratives “as a form of critical inquiry,” she described the way they “weave the voices of the author and their students to tell the story of their connected journey to empowerment.”

We have found that working with teachers to elicit their personal narratives is an effective form of continuing professional development (CPD) (see our previous publications) while Oberg (1987, p. 55) maintained that:

The justification of educational research is the extent to which it helps transform practice in schools. One approach to the improvement of practice is for professionals to reflect critically on their own professional actions and beliefs.

She advocated using personal construct theory as a basis for research and practice within CPD, along with action research approaches. Much of the research cited in this chapter offers a basis for CPD within school settings. Here we give examples of constructivist CPD research within professional education and higher and further education (H & FE).

People in managerial roles face many tensions that have been productively researched within constructivist frameworks: Tjok-a-Tam (1994) explored the potential of learning in action in further education, while Bradley-Cole (2014), Long (2013), and Osterlind and Denicolo (2006) each provided detailed reviews of the creative use of a range of personal construct techniques, including innovative ways to analyze subsequent data, within the realm of management development. Similarly, Denicolo (2013) described details of action research using a range of constructivist techniques in the latest of her many investigations focused on doctoral research (see, for example, Denicolo, 2007). Iantaffi (1999) produced an award-winning thesis about disabled women in HE using a range of techniques, including the “rivers” previously mentioned, each tool producing elaboration of or support for the data from the others.

Auguring the current focus in H & FE on “employability” and careers, Harwood used such tools to develop synergy between the perspectives of teachers, learners, and employers, while Mignot developed original constructivist tools to enable critical research into the whole concept of career. In the sphere of health, Mazhindu, working within nurse education, researched three different branches of nursing—general, mental health, and learning disability nursing—using PCP techniques; his work led to recommendations for curriculum development in nurse education (examples of Harwood’s, Mignot’s, and Mazhindu’s work can be found in Denicolo & Pope, 2001).

Similarly Melrose and Shapiro (1999), in their case study of mental health nurses’ changing perceptions during clinical training within their

degree program, identified several themes, including the nursing students' anxiety about being able to help mentally ill patients. Perceptions and construct change in the transition from graduate student nurse to nurse practitioner (community and pediatric) was the focus of Howkins's and Ewens and Dearmun's research (again, summaries of their work can be found in Denicolo & Pope, 2001). The need to promote effective inter-professional learning and practice within health and social care environments was addressed from various perspectives by using a range of constructivist techniques by, for example, Ross, King, and Firth (2005). Similarly Hollows (2001) identified critical issues in the training and development of social workers to build their judgment-making skills in the complex area of child protection, where errors have profound and public consequences, while Brocklehurst (2010) advocated PCP as a vital framework for CPD for dental practitioners if they are to embrace new techniques and ideas.

Constructivist and related techniques have been used in research to enhance learning at all levels, ranging from those who are very able (Lee-Corbin & Denicolo, 1998) to those with severe learning difficulties (Apraiz, 2001). It has addressed educational challenges such as: helping youngsters cope with dilemmas (Miller, 1994); helping older people and their carers deal with risk (Snowling, 2003); and how to effectively implement restorative justice in classrooms (Hopkins, 2011).

Summation and Contrition

Research over the decades has shown that the process by which teachers construct professional knowledge is common—at least the *how*, although the *what* may be culture-bound. There is now a wealth of research based on PCP and constructivist epistemology, and this has brought us closer to understanding the essence of good practice in education across many domains (Pope, 2007). At the same time, constructivist research keeps opening up new paths to pursue in the everlasting search for elaboration and excellence.

Finally, a confession: in trying to provide the essence of constructivist developments in education over the last 30 or so years, we have necessarily been selective, all the time regretting those interesting and impactful studies that we have had to leave out because of chapter length restrictions. However, if readers explore those included here, they certainly will discover more of the treasure trove in their references.

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Learning and Education

Martin Fromm

The title of this chapter contains two terms which do not play a prominent role in personal construct psychology (PCP). “Learning” and “education” hardly occur in the subject index of pertinent publications. This does not mean that PCP has nothing to say about the questions that are usually treated under these terms. However, it is done under other headings and, above all, from a particular perspective. This will be expounded in the following pages.

Learning

Kelly, the founder of PCP, avoided the term “learning.” In the more than 1,200 pages of his main work, there are no more than 10 references to it. According to Kelly, the psychology of his time treated “learning” as an interruption of a state of inactivity. Kelly called theories with this understanding “push-and-pull theories”; theories that essentially model people as static, and expect changes only when people are forced by outer (environmental) or inner (instinctual) pressure. In this sense “learning” as a change in the thought, experience, and behavior of a person is reactive. Kelly’s suggestion to try another model of the person for a change, the human being as scientist, is based on the opposite assumption—that people are always actively dealing with their experiences and allocating meaning to them. In this concept “learning” is not a special or rare process, but the normal state of affairs: “learning is not a special class of psychological processes; it is synonymous with any and all psychological processes” (Kelly 1955/1991, p. 53).

Kelly's concept was developed in opposition to prominent theories of his time in two important respects. The first is that change is regarded as the norm. Learning, like construing, is an ongoing flow of countless decisions between events of all kinds. Thus, for Kelly, the construing person is "a form of motion" (1955/1991, p. 33), continuously changing/learning all the time. With these foundations, talking about psychological processes always means talking about learning processes, too. The Fundamental Postulate and corollaries of PCP that describe how people develop their personal view of the world can also be used to describe and explain learning processes.

The second aspect is the activity of the person. As Kelly put it, people do not need to be pushed or pulled to learn. People, in this view, are not forced to deal with the ongoing events and experiences in their lives: they just cannot help doing so. As mentioned above, the model of the person that Kelly proposes to characterize this readiness to explore the world is the person-as-scientist. In agreement with this model, Kelly describes the person's confrontation with his or her environment as consecutive experimental actions: "behavior is an experiment" (Kelly, 1970a).

The context in which PCP was developed makes comprehensible the reasons why Kelly especially emphasizes the contrasts that distinguish his concepts concerning change and the curiosity of "the researcher" from others. This may give the impression that people are regarded as boundlessly curious and constantly willing to look at their convictions and habits critically, to check and to alter them if necessary. But that is not the case, and it is not Kelly's view either. When discussing change, it is, first, important to distinguish between the micro-level and the macro-level: at the micro-level, people constantly process new information and adapt themselves to it. This happens mostly autonomously and subconsciously. These constructs usually do not lead to remarkable changes in observable behavior, but to a steady change process at the micro-level. In this sense, the person can be seen as a form of motion, but at the same time as a relatively stable entity as a whole, as a dynamic equilibrium, if seen from outside. The ongoing change and exchange with reality and one's own personality, however, does not necessarily imply the person's willingness to change. Kelly did not think of the person as a happy "falsificationist," someone who is fond of falsifying his or her assumptions and living a life as a notorious adventurer. Kelly's concept was developed in the context of psychological counseling. In this context, he was constantly faced with failed and missed changes. So he was faced with enabling change in the first place instead. Kelly's suggestion that we treat people as curious and active researchers is not based on the

impressions one usually gets in everyday life: it is a fundamental decision to view people in the light of their possibilities, and not their limitations.

In this context, Kelly also makes it very clear that there can be subjectively good reasons for the person not to change, because change not only opens up new perspectives and opportunities but, simultaneously, may pose a threat to the accustomed safety of routines (Denicolo & Pope, 1990). So it is not surprising that Kelly dealt with this potentially dangerous side of personal change. Fixed-role therapy, for example, is essentially aimed at clearing the path to possible personal developments for the client in a less threatening setting. With the resistance-to-change grid and the implication grid, Kelly's PhD student Hinkle (1965) developed two further important diagnostic methods that essentially deal with the subjective hindrances to change. And more recently, Tschudi (1977) introduced the ABC technique that is specifically designed to understand why changes do not take place; this technique has recently been elaborated (Tschudi & Winter, 2012).

The particular understanding of learning/construction processes that is characteristic of PCP is laid down in the Fundamental Postulate and so-called corollaries which supplement the Fundamental Postulate. The following basic assumptions are of special interest here.

The Individuality Corollary states: "Persons differ from each other in their construction of events" (Kelly 1955/1991, p. 38). Again Kelly, arguing against other theories of his time, stresses the distinctive features of PCP, here the individuality of people; other theories, such as behavioristic concepts, emphasize the uniformity of people instead. But there is a counterpart to the Individuality Corollary in the Sociality Corollary, which makes the necessity of communicative negotiations of individual constructs clear. However, the assumption of the Individuality Corollary is that, while a person obviously has to follow conventional ways of construing experience to a certain degree in order to communicate and interact with other people, his or her construct system as a whole will be composed and organized in a personal way. As a result, predicting the outcomes of these learning/construction processes becomes highly uncertain.

The predictability of learning outcomes is called into question even more by the assumption of the Fragmentation Corollary: "A person may successively employ a variety of construction subsystems which are inferentially incompatible with each other" (Kelly, 1955/1991, p. 58). According to this assumption, neither relationships between constructs nor changes in constructs follow a logic which is objectively binding. Those which are actually made follow "subjective logic" within the framework of the individual's construct system, which has developed as a result of his or her biography. In doing so,

constructs, or construct systems, may well arise which, from a subjective point of view, seem entirely reasonable to one person, but seem confused and contradictory to others on the basis of *their* construct systems.

Again it is necessary to guard against a possible misunderstanding. Fragmentation is not to be confused with chaos. Kelly assumes a hierarchically organized construct system. But the criteria which are being used to organize the system will differ for different people (individuality) and several subsystems may be used alternatively to construe an experience because, as Kelly (1955/1991) put it, "events upon which facts are based hold no institutional loyalties" (p. 8). The assumption that fragmentation is normal and healthy (at least to a certain degree) is in sharp contrast to other personality theories which regard consistency as ideal. The most important point here is that, as a result, Kelly's assumptions about the personal construction of experiences lead to rather conservative expectations about the predictability of learning results.

However, educational reasoning is typically focused on predictability, on what teachers want their pupils to learn and be and on the strategies to get them there. Holt (1969) characterized school as a system that runs on "right answers" and encourages *producers*, pupils who give the teachers what they want, and discourages *thinkers* (p. 38). That focus is not surprising, because that is what schools are for: to establish traditions and pass on accumulated knowledge and routines to the next generation so that the wheel does not have to be invented again and again. But at the same time, the reluctance to acknowledge that unintended learning outcomes are, first of all, normal, and, second, may even be valuable and important for the individual, is quite obvious. Personal meaning-making is mostly either ignored or treated as deviance: a motivational, disciplinary, or learning problem. The preoccupation with planned outcomes becomes especially evident when, in the end, it comes down to testing and evaluating learning processes. Typically, learning is treated as a sequence of presentation, storage, and retrieval. Successful learning is characterized by a high correspondence between input of information and output, with some loss due to partial failure of proper recall after a certain period. And thus the efficiency of teaching, and the quality of learning, are evaluated by comparing input and output. Tests and exams usually concentrate on this comparison, the expected constructs and the expected way to use them. And this evaluation strategy is not only used with drill and practice concepts, but also with concepts which claim to be interested in the meaning-making activities of the pupils. When, in the end, results are to be evaluated, the tendency toward (international) standardization in education, and the need for comparability of workloads, achievement levels, etc., have a reverse influence on

the teaching process that should “produce” the outcomes which can be readily tested in a standardized way.

But expected outcomes which are regarded as indicators of successful learning do not give a full picture of the relevant construction processes. Expected outcomes are of minor interest in PCP. From a PCP perspective, it is also necessary to deal with what pupils have learned in addition to, or even instead of, what the teacher has taught. The focus of learning as personal construing is on making meaning. It is not just on *what* the students are supposed to learn (topics, items, and so forth) but on *how* they learn it, how they make sense of information in a *personal* way. It then seems naive to expect that, at the end of a lesson, all pupils will have construed the items to be learned in the way, and only in the way, that has been proposed by the teacher, because if pupils’ learning is seen as personal construing, the final results of the learning/construing process will depend on many individual features of the construction systems the pupils have developed. It is much more likely that pupils will construe learning items in ways other than those the teacher expects. And it can also be expected that they will do this in different ways according to their individual construing history.

But if the individual strategies used by people in the making of meaning are taken into account, the relation of input and output is not just input minus a certain loss. Individual constructions can change the input considerably when information is connected or broken down in several ways, put into different contexts, and so on. While on the one hand, there is the possibility of underestimating the personal relevance of learning if a simple input-output model is used, the opposite can also be true if test results are prematurely regarded as indicators of a relevant personal processing of the information.

The consequence is that an evaluation of learning processes must provide information not only about what students are supposed to learn, but also about what students may have learned in addition to, or even instead of, it. It has to be more open and methodologically sensitive to individual constructions than traditional methods of evaluation usually are. In PCP, the focus of contributions is on the *process* of construing—not on the *products*: it tries to understand the process of individual construing, individual hindrances, and pathways for personal development, and to assist people in their change processes. This focus on processes is characteristic of empirical studies (Denicolo & Pope, 1990; Fromm, 1993; Thomas & Harri-Augstein, 1985) and the development of tools to analyze (Hinkle, 1965; Tschudi & Winter, 2012) and support individual learning processes (Ravenette, 1999; Salmon, 2003).

Education

Kelly's assumptions about the personal construction of experiences (individuality, fragmentation, etc.) leave not much room for the expectation that these personal meaning-making processes could be planned and controlled successfully by another person. So if the aim is not just to get the right answers for the next test, attempts at education seem to be rather hopeless.

With this in mind, it must be quite a surprise to find out that in the last five years an impressive number of publications have been dealing with so called "constructivist learning environments": what is expected of them, how they can be set up, and what their effects are. To begin with, it should be clear that these publications are not based on PCP, but on other constructivist concepts (von Glasersfeld, 1995)—to be more precise (see below), they claim to be of constructivist origin. But in this case, the specific differences between the concepts can be ignored because these constructivist concepts, like PCP, are theories of knowing and not educational theories (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Kirschner, 2009). Their focus is on the description of what we can know about reality and how this knowledge is developed. The evaluation of learning, or the normative decision about what should be learned, is something quite different and does not follow directly from the theory of knowledge. To jump from the description of what *is* the case to conclusions about what *ought to be* the case would be a typical naturalistic fallacy (Hume, 1739).

However, if one tries to understand how the constructivist theory of knowledge is connected to educational concepts in the publications which claim to offer constructivist learning environments, it is not even clear what "constructivism" means. The only thing that all publications seem to agree on is that it has something to do with construction. But closer inspection reveals that sometimes this is meant as building or producing something (e.g., completing an assignment); sometimes it is meant as the opposite of destructive, and constructivist learning is then regarded as learning to argue and behave decently in social contexts; and still another variant is just a vague reference to people's meaning-making activity. Typically, no further attempt is made to elaborate the specific constructivist position on which the educational concept is supposed to be based. The result is not surprising: a multitude of suggestions about how to set up "constructivist learning environments" without a connection to any concept of constructivism that goes beyond rather hazy impressions. Actually, these suggestions seem to be recycled from other contexts, where problem-based, experiential, self-controlled, social, or democratic learning has been discussed. So "constructivist learning environments" mostly turns out to be an umbrella term for

diverse educational enterprises which are meant to make the world a nicer and better place—preferably without too much direct intervention.

While the arbitrary labeling of educational methods as constructivist remains unsatisfying and the strict deduction of educational strategies from the personal constructivist theory of knowing and learning is not possible, one can at least name a few requirements that education founded on this theory should meet. The first is to acknowledge the preconditions on the learners' side. When teachers try to initiate learning processes with students, they have to deal with people who are already engaged in attributing meaning to their experiences. Therefore, the learning items the teacher presents to his or her pupils have to compete with the events the pupils are already dealing with, as well as the ongoing flow of additional events they meet every day. Pupils already possess strategies to deal with new experiences and make them meaningful. As a result, they deal with the teacher's learning items within the framework of the personal construct systems they have already developed. This construct system is different for each individual. Furthermore, it is always possible to place the same (learning) item in numerous contexts and construe it in many different ways. The differences between teachers and pupils may involve the construing of items as separate units, the terms used to phrase such a unit, or the contexts of construction to which these units belong. Just one example which illustrates the different meanings homework can have is as follows: in a project which offered tutorials for immigrant pupils from Turkey, the teachers decided not to assign homework because the pupils already had to spend extra time at school and had to help at home afterwards. This was meant as a thoughtful gesture. But the pupils reacted with embarrassment because, in their view, a teacher who was interested in their development and success would assign demanding tasks for them. So they construed the teachers' behavior as offensive.

These points stress the limitations of "making people learn" or even conceptualizing their meaning-making, and, at the same time, the necessity of understanding the student's special personal construction if his or her learning activities are to be supported or corrected. Otherwise, education rests on blind navigation.

Kelly—taking up the idea of the person-as-scientist—describes the role of the teacher in this way:

To be a fully accredited participant in the experimental enterprise, she must gain some sense of what is being seen through the child's eyes. That is to say, she must do what personal construct theory technically terms, "enact a role."
(Kelly, 1970b, p. 262)

To understand this correctly, it is important to note that “role” has a special meaning in PCP: a role relationship is an empathic relationship which is characterized by the fact that one person tries to construe the personal constructs of another. The relevant point here is that it is not enough just to acknowledge the constructs of the other person; one must try to translate them into corresponding constructs in one’s own construct system. Only then can the teacher be a help, “as best she can, to design and implement each child’s own undertakings, as well as to assist in interpreting the outcomes and in devising more cogent behavioural inquiries” (Kelly, 1970b, p. 262).

But how can personal construct educators help, design, implement, and assist? Not by giving answers about how to construe and giving other people advice on how to live their lives. The only help possible is a formal approach based on PCP: making a person’s construing more transparent and devising settings which allow the person to test alternatives for personal viability. This testing is not just a planless trying out of options but—following Kelly’s model of the person—a structured experiment, so that experience can “proceed in an orderly fashion” (Kelly, 1970b, p. 262). Fransella (1995) draws attention to an early remark in which Kelly talks about the influence that Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), Kant’s successor at the University of Königsberg, had on his thinking. Herbart’s (1898) pioneering work in the development of a scientifically grounded educational theory made extensive use of psychological theories about the way ideas (*Vorstellungen*) are developed through the association of old and new experiences. Herbart’s model of the processing of experiences was based on the alternation of multifaceted experiencing (*Vertiefung*) and structuring (*Besinnung*), which is quite similar to Kelly’s model of the C–P–C Cycle (1955/1991, p. 379) or to the Creativity Cycle (p. 388), in which phases of “loose” construing alternate with others of “tight” construing. To assist people in structured experiencing and construing, PCP is not confined to special “constructivist” methods. Any method that allows one to respect the personal world of the other person in the way described above, and can help that person to try out alternative ways of construing and behaving in a structured and non-threatening way, can be considered. So, for example, methods taken from the behaviorist learning context (Ravenette, 1999) may be valuable in designing behavioral experiments.

The main educational contribution of personal construct psychology is, in short, to sensitize people to personal constructions, to devise tools which help to understand and co-construct these constructions, and to devise challenging experiments which can assist a person in finding out how he or she wants to be and live.

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Creativity with Students

Vladimir Džinović

Learning/Creativity

We can already talk about a tradition of constructivists dealing with creativity from the perspective of their own experience as writers, poets, and musicians. The pioneer of this tradition is certainly Kelly, himself the author of several poems, expressing in them well-known beliefs in a very personal way (Fransella, 2006). However, this chapter is written by a constructivist author who deviates from this tradition since he has no personal experience in artistic work, unless adolescent experiments with writing short stories can be considered eligible. Hence, when researching the creation of their own art and that of others, personal construct psychology (PCP) authors link creativity with the Creativity Cycle (Kelly, 1955), the controlled elaboration of the author's construct system (Bannister, 2006), suspended constructs and the Sociality Corollary (King, 2008), non-validation (Stevens, 2006; Walker, Oades, Caputi, Stevens, & Crittenden 2000), and the creation of new ways to be in the world and tolerate the multiple and conflicting self (Stevens, 2006). What all constructivists would agree on is that behind creativity stands the unique process of construing, which is involved in art in two ways: as the process of the creation of a piece of art and as attributing meaning to the works of others (Scheer & Burr, 2008).

What could be concluded on the basis of the work of PCP authors is that creativity in PCP is preempted as an 'event' characteristic of artistic expression. The perspective in which I am interested here sees creativity as inseparable from any other process of construing. In my view, each person, and not only those who express themselves in an artistic way, is creative when he or she attempts to reconstruct what he or she cannot deny, or when he

or she attempts to find a way out of a problematic situation or to improve his or her own functioning. This is creativity with a small “c,” which becomes apparent in everyday activities (Sternberg & Lubart, 1996).

This chapter sets out to establish the close connection between such determined creativity and learning, as a process which is also inseparable from construing. I want to show that learning is a creative act, because it demands the ability to open up new perspectives, pose new questions, and create new forms of living. Learning is orientation toward the future, toward what is yet to be anticipated and yet to become and what is distinctive of the creative mind.

Kelly in some way anticipated the modern paradigm of learning even though he considered the term “learning” redundant in psychology, arguing that in PCP learning does not represent a special kind of psychological process that qualitatively differs from construing. In the Experience Corollary, Kelly (1955) introduced his understanding of learning as a process of change in construing which follows the constantly changing world around us. This change is experiential to the extent that it is based on perceiving the illusory nature of knowledge and on our ability to go beyond the limits of such knowledge. In his Experience Cycle, Kelly (1977) describes the act of transcending the obvious as being the essence of knowing. In his description of the cycle of the individual’s experiential knowing, Kelly insisted on personal involvement within a certain field of knowledge as a precondition for construing new meanings. Once a person recognizes a subject as being relevant, he or she starts to realize its complexity and ambiguity, as well as the limits of his or her previous constructions of that subject. From this follow the phases of construing new assumptions about the subject of knowing, testing their sustainability and revising them on the basis of experiential evidence.

The most influential authors of modern theories of learning, as if they came out from Kelly’s overcoat, agree that learning is a process of conceptualizing knowledge, which is based on practical and experiential acting. Learning is identified with questioning and changing one’s personal beliefs. Pope and Denicolo (2001) describe educational practice based on such a conception of learning as transformative. In that way learning is recognized as similar to the process of the reconstruction of personal meanings which is characteristic of the constructivist facilitation of change.

The most famous model in the modern paradigm of learning is certainly Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle, which, like Kelly’s Experience Cycle, represents an elaboration of Dewey’s (1916/1944) experiential

learning process. Kolb's cycle starts from the insight that existing beliefs and knowledge do not enable one to resolve a concrete problem. The cycle further presupposes observation and analysis of new experiences, which need to be conceived in new ways through the creation of new concepts and their testing in practice. The similarities with Kelly's cycle are clear: both cycles assume that the acquisition of new knowledge is the process of confronting the limitations of previous personal constructions, which in turn leads to the development of new ones, and their formation and testing in order to become stable, transferable and communicable meanings.

However, there is one significant difference. Kelly's Experience Cycle emphasizes the anticipatory nature of knowing. Creating new knowledge means "looking ahead," directing one's actions toward events which are not yet visible on the horizon but in whose emergence a person dares to believe. This visionary view often requires the ability to anticipate future events in new ways, which does not rely on verified, well-established meanings. In the elaboration of his perception of experience, Kelly insists on the following:

Only by adding reconstruing to the sequence of psychological processes can the full cycle of human experience be completed and man freed from his Sisyphian labours. The cycle of human experience remains incomplete unless it terminates in fresh hopes never before envisioned. (Kelly, 1977, p. 9)

New knowledge, therefore, cannot be based on "recycling" what we already know, but requires the creation of something new, which never existed in our previous experience. This refers to imagination which enables us to transcend the safety of the familiar and to explore undreamed-of new ways of conceiving human experience. That is exactly what artists do, in their attempt to bring forth new worlds out of the confusion and vagueness in which they find themselves when they leave behind calcified forms of meaning, and to offer them to the rest of somnolent humanity.

Therefore, the key message is that learning is a bold, visionary reconstruction. This is precisely where Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle encounters a problem, because it overemphasizes the significance of reflexivity to learning. That is, this cycle relies on the standpoint that learning is a reflexive practice. Reflexivity, as the activity of "mirroring" or "directing one's view" back toward one's own activities (Dallos & Stedmon, 2009), is placed at the center of the learning process. Enthusiasm for reflexivity starts with the influential book *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), in which Schön points out that what is of essential importance for the practitioner's learning is the development

of the ability to reflect on and question the knowledge which is implicitly present in his or her practice. Schön starts from the point that practitioners encounter events on a daily basis which are complex, undetermined, unstable, and unique, events characterized by lack of order and conflicts of values and interests. In order for the practitioner to acquire the relevant knowledge for the practical context, Schön offers the reflection “in” and “on” practice model, which implies the observation of the norms, strategies, and theories which are implicitly present in practitioners’ judgment and behaviour. New understanding is based on previous understanding, or to be more precise, on looking back on the previous meanings which the practitioner gained from the situations which he or she encountered. Hence, we encounter the idea of the continuity of old and new knowledge, the idea of the new knowledge rooted in the old, which I consider a problematic assumption.

It is far from the case that learning is a “cold,” logical, and rational activity based on the archeology of personal beliefs, as was so strongly suggested by approaches based on the idea of reflexive practice. To learn means to face the ambiguities and obscurities of the world, the senses that can barely be put into words or familiar forms. Learning is followed by the indication of new ideas which appear only in puzzling concreteness and weird detail, by the excitements and disappointments, pride and shame, hope and desperation, misapprehensions and fear of the inconceivable. Moreover, the creation of knowledge seems to entail a “little madness,” which is reflected in the need to abandon the quiet port of the semantically tangible and set off on a journey toward fear, chaos, and the loss of what is understandable (Foucault, 2013). It is in this journey toward madness that Foucault recognizes the historical triumph of anticipation:

the liveliness of pictures, the vehemence of passion, that great withdrawal of the spirit into itself, which are indeed part of madness, are the most dangerous, because they are the sharpest tools of intellect. There is no strong mind which does not have to venture into madness in order to reach the end of its opus . . . Madness is a difficult, but important moment in the hard work of the intellect. (Foucault, 2013, p. 51)

On the edge of anticipation, familiar things become strange and threatening, and we need to overcome our initial move toward their rejection and contempt in order to allow their alienation to transform itself into a new epistemological interior, which we feel as our essential identity. Only in bravely crossing the abyss which opens up between what was discovered

and what is yet to be grasped by new meaning lies the potential of reconstruction. Therefore, we can conclude that each reconstruction carries a spark of madness, creative madness which always reinvents the world as imagination, as an illusion in which we firmly believe.

“Setting off toward semantic transcendence,” “wandering through unexplored territory on the edge of meaning,” and “giving oneself up to temporary madness for the sake of the triumph of human intellect” are all metaphors which reflect the processes characteristic of Kelly’s (1955) Creativity Cycle. Kelly defines it as one of the most important cycles in the construction of personal meanings. In the loosening phase, a person questions existing, well-known, and established constructions about the world, and thus frees his or her creative potential to conceive what surrounds him or her in a new way. During the loosening phase the picture of the world becomes temporarily unclear, insufficiently determined, and “blurred,” and the world becomes open to many new ways of construing. However, this “blurring” of old contours and the mess of scarcely perceived new shapes remains only that—elusive and vague idiosyncrasy—if the phase of their tightening is missing. In the second phase of creativity, a person makes the effort to determine clearer borders and to attribute more permanent and determined meanings to those new insights as well as to test them through experiments. It becomes immediately clear that there are no successful reconstructions without the full cycle of creativity.

In conversations with leading Australian science fiction authors, Stevens (2006) came to the conclusion that their writing is characterized by a lack of clear anticipation of direction. Namely, all of the authors interviewed emphasized that they do not know in advance how the plot of a novel or story will develop, that they do not have strict plans or goals established at the very beginning but, through writing numerous drafts, they research the possibility for the creation of narratives. In this elaborative wandering, what is of crucial importance is the writer’s ability to postpone the validation (and/or invalidation) of his or her construction, to tolerate the wilderness of imagination, anxiety, and uncertainty of his or her own identity and to remain wide open to everything the world might say. Postponing validation is called non-validation by Walker et al. (2000), and its purpose is to prevent a premature exit from loosening and the loss of the creative potential which this loosening entails.

In an earlier publication, Džinović and Živković (2009) pointed out the importance of preventing the premature ending of the Creativity Cycle, by introducing the idea of the phase between loosening and tightening. As we already know, the creation of new anticipation moves from the concrete to

the abstract (Kelly, 1955). That means that during experiential learning, new constructions firstly appear in fragments, at the level of elements, and are only later formed into completed constructs. In research in which we took the Creativity Cycle as a model for facilitating teachers' professional learning, we recognized the importance of the "critical" phase between loosening and tightening, in which elements of new thought from the loosening phase stabilize and become communicable and transferable, ready to be elaborated into complete entities and innovative practice in the tightening phase.

It is interesting that Stevens (2006, p. 52) describes non-validation as "a contemplative holding off from completing the Experience Cycle." Extended periods of time spent in the loosening zone are linked to a deliberate delay in completing the process of gaining experience, and therefore it becomes clear that successful "meditative anticipation" is a precondition for new experience. On the basis of this link we may conclude that the Experience and Creativity Cycles are part of one unique cycle, i.e., that each cycle of experience contains a cycle of creativity. We can thus see a chain of connection linking anticipation, gaining experience, the Creativity Cycle, and reconstruction, forming a unique learning/creativity process.

Facilitating Learning/Creativity

In the rest of this chapter I shall consider the issue of how to stimulate learning/creativity in education. Learning is a socially situated and socially constructed imaginative reconstruction. In the modern paradigm of learning nobody any longer questions its positioning in rhetorical-responsive social practice (Shotter, 1993). What is crucial for stimulating learning as such a practice is providing the conditions for productive negotiations about meaning in the dialogue which, to a large extent, is reminiscent of ancient rhetorical skill. Long overshadowed by its great counterpart, metaphysics, as the skill of Sophists and all others who mystify the road to truth, rhetoric in modern times has again gained importance because of its anti-essentialistic approach (Billig, 1987). The use of rhetoric implies the exchange of arguments, which stand against each other, implying that there is no one transcendental truth free from the possibility of challenge or reconsideration. When things are approached rhetorically, their forms become unclear and controversial; they become ambiguous, incomplete in the burst of counter-argument, exactly what they become in imagination and visionary anticipation. This means that innovation is born of the "liberated" ideological

tension, disclosed ambiguity, and unbridled field of semantic possibilities which each temporarily stabilized and established social action carries within itself. Therefore, learning as creative and socially constructed anticipation can most easily be stimulated when we include learners in the dialogue, which frees them from the pressure of obviousness and single solutions, as long as we prompt them to see what they learn as something in constant movement, discontinuous and open to constant reconstruction.

In research into the effects of stimulating creative solutions in cooperative learning, I wanted to explore, in a group of students of constructivist therapy and counseling, how the loosening process influences the innovativeness of the product of their joint learning (Džinović, 2012). The group of five students was given 90 minutes to prepare a short presentation about one of the educational subjects from the psychology of personal constructs, for which they had a laptop and appropriate literature. The activity which preceded the creation of the presentation included free association on a set of 10 abstract paintings. This free association on painted images without any clear form offered a way of facilitating the loosening which was supposed to take the group into the unstable world of ambiguity and creative thinking. The research design also included a control group, which differed from the experimental one only in that it did not have an introductory activity to facilitate loose construing. The expectation was for the group with this special stimulation to use that as a creative stepping stone and, through group cooperation, create a more innovative presentation. However, the group without the introductory activity produced a presentation with more creative elements. Furthermore, the control group was generally more successful than the group with the introductory activity because its members cooperated more efficiently, had a better division of roles within the team, and produced a presentation with more information. In the discussion after the joint activity, we came to the conclusion that the members of the group with the introductory loosening stimulation felt greater pressure from the deadline compared with the members of the other group, which leads to the conclusion that the loose construing in this case was more of an obstacle to the efficient completion of the task than the “creative pool” from which they could draw innovative solutions.

The findings from this research indicate the uncertain outcomes of imaginative learning: the risk that old constructions never set off from the solid coast toward the unknown, or that once we have lost our bearings, semantics remain forever in a limbo in which everything loses meaning. It is the risk of failing to complete the Creativity Cycle about which Kelly (1955)

so vividly talks, comparing successful reconstruction with the narrow, dangerous passage between the mythical Scylla and Charybdis. The success of learning/creativity depends on the uncertain contact between two worlds. The first demands dis-order, recklessness, passion, and Dionysianism, has no awareness of time or of its cost, and does not tolerate moderators, facilitators, or editors. The second is the world of pleasant rituals, clear thoughts and feelings, the world which processes its time delicately and exhibits it in the museums of civilization. This is why I suppose the participants in the group with stimulated loosening were paralyzed by the consciousness of time because it is reasonable to expect that they would always be burdened with deadlines and the need to economize on time in conditions of real cooperative learning. In other words, time served as “anticipated invalidation” which prevented the delay in the validation process which Stevens (2006) wrote about. Bearing that in mind, we can once again look back at ways of stimulating creativity/learning. We have already said that the creation of a rhetorical situation, in which the learner is given the chance to perceive the subject of learning from the perspective of others’ arguments, is a good way to achieve that. However, it is not enough just to encourage someone to dive into the turbid, variable meanings of human conversation. What is needed is to provide something precious which can be taken from such a situation. In other words, it is necessary to enable the learner to steer his boat of meaning between the hard rock and the whirlpool, between the sterility of the same constructions and the equal sterility of incomplete new constructions.

In constructivist therapy and counseling education we try to achieve that by enabling students, in group activities, to construct their own versions of the psychology of personal constructs and idiosyncratic interpretations of constructivist ideas. Also, we are very much involved in stimulating dialogue between different constructivist approaches and shaping students’ experiences in the process of negotiation of meanings. We use various techniques, such as constructing narratives and using metaphors, as suitable means for transferring the initial fragments of new meanings into communicable forms. Finally, we are familiar with the use of physical movement and play as educational methods which facilitate the loosening but also the “catching” of new meanings which can later be verbalized and shaped.

It is not easy to ensure that each student feels the passion of construing Kelly’s theory, and we do not manage to enable every student to become an artist of constructivism. We do not succeed, as educators, in tolerating all paths—which may not seem to us to be leading anywhere—or in accepting every ambiguity into which students “drag” us, or each brave vision of

the future of constructivist theory and practice which our really exceptional students create. However, we believe that in one thing we are very successful: in the message that studying the psychology of personal constructs is an inspirational activity, where it is allowed to play, to research new spaces for one's own existence, and to nurture our small mutual constructivist phantasmagorias.

Note

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Reconstructing Lifelong Learning

Michael Kompf¹ and Nicola Simmons

Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death.

(Albert Einstein, as cited in Brazeau, 2010, p. 18)

That this volume exists is testament to the lifelong learning that the editors and contributors can claim. We have each written about ideas and practices that draw on all we have learned from the moment of their creation to our expression of them in writing. We have continuously and continually sought further understanding pursued with an amalgam of learning style or preference, intelligent and critical literacy, creativity, and usefulness. While what we contribute draws substantially on personal construct psychology (PCP) as conceptualized by George Kelly (1955), any meaning-making derived from PCP we offer is based on our personal perspectives, each according to his or her own experiences and circumstances.

LifeMapping™, developed by one of us (Kompf) in the 1980s (see, e.g., Kompf, 1995), draws on Kelly's Personal Construct Theory to provide a means of reconstructing past life events toward future anticipations. By taking a psychological rather than temporal perspective of the life path, LifeMapping supports recollection, reflexivity, and reconstruction in making explicit the inner self. In doing so, it positions the person as researcher in ongoing anticipatory reflection.

The Role of Time

Life has to be seen in the perspective of time if it is to make any sense at all.

(Kelly, 1955, p. 7)

The study of time as a factor in human development was an early thought thread in considering the alternative perspectives that sequence, tempo, and duration bring to the overall concept of time. Two conceptions of time that provide variations for how events might be arranged and used as perceptual and conceptual anchors, and which are useful in understanding human development and meaning-making, are chronological (or clock) time and psychological time.

Clock time organizes and arranges events in ways that help chronicle context through fixing the “when” of occurrences—which in turn provides a backdrop against which individuals usually construe self by age- and domain-specific developmental expectancies. Conceptions of time as held by some societies (e.g., Hopi Indians) have no distinct sense of past, present, or future that is evident in cultural and spiritual practices. Agrarian cultures traditionally relied on seasonal time, which might be loosely connected to calendar time.

In the mind, time can be subjective or based in psychological constructs that are often more sensitive to the “what” of an event than the “when” of its occurrence. The “what” of events contains not only the occurrence but the associations or constructions that are evoked. Meaning-time may suspend chronological time as similar aspects of events become the dominant organizer. For example, if an individual is asked to recall successful experiences, those experiences and their component perceptual companions become the focus rather than when they occurred; this is not to say that the “when” of those experiences is not just below the surface for the convenience and familiarity that temporal organizers provide. Time is a useful, double-edged construct in that it can draw out temporal locators as well as meaning locators.

Whether objective (i.e., clock) or subjective (i.e., psychological), time can be broadly depicted as a continuum of past, present, and future. Time past consists of all events up to the instantaneous “now” moments of the present in anticipation of future events. Carstensen (2006) explores the importance of future time:

The subjective sense of future time plays an essential role in human motivation. Gradually, time left becomes a better predictor than chronological age for a range of cognitive, emotional, and motivational variables. Socioemotional selectivity theory maintains that constraints on time horizons shift motivational priorities in such a way that the regulation of emotional states becomes more important than other types of goals. This motivational shift occurs with age but also appears in other contexts (for example, geographical relocations, illnesses, and war) that limit subjective future time. (p. 1913)

While future time or time left provides an orientation for the anticipation of events, the acuity of preparation is dependent on how meanings made from experience are framed and reframed. As Kelly (1955) noted, the process is one of anticipatory reflection, in which “a person’s processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events” (p. 46). Constructs develop in a cyclical manner, experience leading to patterns of beliefs, which in turn frame future experience. As Kelly describes it, “man² seeks to improve his constructs by increasing his repertory, by altering them to provide better fits, and by subsuming them with superordinate constructs or systems” (p. 9).

Time, timing, and construct significance affect the user-friendliness of event memories in terms of how they are organized and available. Constructs that are more important and meaningful are those that are familiar, useful, and used more frequently. As Kelly (1955) also noted, construct systems may be simple or complex in their organization and use. As an illustration of this possibility, one individual may find decision-taking clear and direct, where another might entertain permutations of all possibilities. Construct systems have constellation-like connections that lead between and among related constructions. The greater the number of interconnected constructions, the greater the complexity of construct organization and alternative meanings can be derived.

Humans, alone or in groups, seek stability, security, and predictability, and ironically seem often to rebel against them once these have been realized. Violation of stability, security, and predictability introduces chaotic elements into construct systems in ways that can be compared to Piaget’s (1971) idea of disequilibrium, Kelly’s (1955) construct invalidation, or Kuhn’s (1962) paradigm shift. The tempo and duration of adaptation and reorganization of constructs, schemata, or paradigms while charted through clock time may not reach full impact until meaningful reflection in the domain of psychological time has occurred.

Contemporary use of the concepts of chronological time, linear structures for retention and representation, and disequilibrium models for action as ways of understanding human development are limited and fail to take advantage of advances in understanding and root metaphors from other sciences (see Kompf, 1993). Alterations are needed in guiding methods and metaphors that might capture a more useful essence of how meanings are made and changed. Chronological time, mechanistic structures, and balance-based models of human conceptions ignore the ineffable but vital nature of psychological time, the holographic nature of mind and memory, and the links among chaos, order, complexity, and human experience.

We may often wonder about the reasons and forces which shape our personality and character. Each one of us has a specific kind of nature which takes that particular form because of the effect of two major factors. The first is the genetic make-up which we inherit from our parents, and the second influence comes from the various experiences we have in our interaction with our surrounding environment. This includes all the things we see and hear from the time of birth and all the interactions we have with other people as we grow up. (Heredity and Environment, 2008)

In this way, according to Kelly (1955), people test their constructs against life events and re-hypothesize in anticipation of future events, or as he notes, “a person’s construction system varies as he successively construes the replication of events” (p. 72). There is thus a Janus-like framework to PCP, both a looking backward and a looking forward.

The Passage of Time: Experience and Reflection

Man might be better understood if he were viewed in the perspectives of the centuries rather than in the flicker of passing moments.

(Kelly, 1955, p. 3)

It seems that actuarial estimates and epidemiological patterns are about the only semi-solid predictors of individual development and what experiences one might reasonably expect to meet on life’s paths. Patterns, like theories, function best through refutation and grow in complexity through the flow of random events that perturb individual and social anticipations based on expectations of pattern replication.

In common parlance, this sentiment was expressed on an automobile bumper sticker that read “Shit Happens” (often censored to “It Happens”). Whether “Shit” or “It,” perturbing experiences introduce elements of chaos into whatever level of order has been established by an individual over how they anticipate, meet, and react to the flow of life events. The moment of *present* in which events occur straddles anticipation and reflection as they feed each other, linking past and future (see Figure 30.1).

Anticipation is an amalgam of expectations formed by meanings made from experience. Experience, and the sense made from its analysis, has a Darwinian undercurrent implying that construct survival depends on adaptability shaped by what has been learned from those experiences. A concomitant ability to distinguish between events that are imperative and want immediate attention versus events that are merely important is also needed. Those who learn best

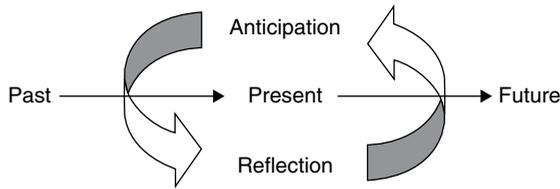


Figure 30.1 Anticipation, Reflection, and the Flow of Time.

from experience in ways that increase the likelihood of successful anticipations are most likely to survive or thrive. Those with pre-competent capacities for learning from experience or reflection are more likely to face Santayana's (1905) caution: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (p. 284). Constructs, schemata, and paradigms all consist of implicit continua that encompass the potential for cognitive and conceptual position and/or movement from one pole of meaning to its extreme contrast. As Kelly (1955) notes, movement indicates permeability in which accommodation and assimilation of experience facilitate paradigmatic shift.

Individuals situationally find themselves on a continuum which at one end embraces the fullness of resources and insight provided by reflective prowess, such as might be conceptually comparable to Maslow's (1968) actualizing state or Kohlberg's (1958) highest level of moral development. At the extreme contrast pole would be full absence of reflection. If the construct pole were "making most beneficial meaning of experience," its full contrast might be something akin to the "memento" syndrome labeled by the media, in which an individual named Clive Wearing developed a profound case of total amnesia as a result of an illness. He became completely unable to form lasting new memories—his memory only lasts between 7 and 30 seconds. He spends every day "waking up" every 20 seconds and "restarting" his consciousness once the time span of his short-term memory elapses (Sacks, 2007).

Assuming that most individuals find themselves on a continuum of meaning-making somewhere between fullness and absence, opportunity and volition, and "it happens," each plays a role in stimulating the activity of event constructions. New iterations of meanings and applications of those meanings are derived from existing constructions by applying them to new situations. Such is practically evident in, for example, the retraining of workers based on identification and utilization of transferable skills. Situational encounters and events give rise to searches for precedents in construct systems, schemata, or paradigmatic principles in order to reduce anxiety or falling victim to what Kelly (1955) referred to as being "caught with his constructs down" (p. 14).

Accessing the Inner Self

A person chooses for himself that alternative . . . through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system.

(Kelly, 1955, p. 64)

How “self” is understood has long been victimized by social expectations and the limited grasp of such disciplines as psychology, sociology, and education through the residual “ought-to-be” syndrome scripted from modernist paradigms. From Freudian determinism through the expansive liberation of humanistic practices, the lure of more and better, whether applied to quality of life or level of psychological comfort and adaptability, or embracing higher purposes of existence, seems to catch individuals off guard when attempts are made to negotiate between and among the forces of (in)stability, (in)security, and (un)predictability. If, as Kelly (1955) claimed, reality is what individuals perceive it to be, strained connections between and among competing realities clarify and define who one is, is not, and might be.

Inner lives represent territory into which researchers’ access is determined by questions posed and interests served. Other matters that may occur or continue to occur at a pre-articulate level of story or the storying process are left as residue or reaction from the reflective adventure. As has been argued elsewhere (Kompf & Bond, 1995), this is because the story in the person never ends with the research report or diary entry. The meanings of individual stories have a plasticity of boundaries that, similar to subatomic particles, disappear, or change when sought.

These fuzzy edges of human needs, wants, desires, and change patterns are difficult to capture in ways that are sensitive to psychological experiences and conditions and the meaning-making structures attached to them. By drawing on constructivist principles from Kelly’s (1955) work, one of us (Kompf) devised a bottom-up way to articulate a personal theory of development by using significant life events examined in three ways: “What happened?”, “What does it mean now?,” and “What will it mean in the future?” Each examination had an impact rating attached to it as a measure of importance. Individuals who complete the process realize many of Kelly’s teachings: that only they can make decisions about the significance of events; that they control and can change the meaning of life events; that patterns of event formation and occurrence are evident over time; and that structured review and reflection provide biographical scaffolding for further use.

LifeMapping™: A Self-Centered Study of Inner Life

Each man contemplates in his own personal way the stream of events upon which he finds himself so swiftly borne.

(Kelly, 1955, p. 3)

LifeMapping™ involves having participants identify 10 critical events from their educational or personal life and writing about them in three different ways: the event as it occurred, what it means at present, and what it will likely mean in the future. Impact ratings (from –10 for negative events to +10 for positive events) are used to help illustrate change in meaning and intensity over time (past, present, and future) and perceptual space. This approach is grounded in Kelly's (1955) view of the person as scientist and relies heavily on his sentiment that individuals should not be victimized by their biographies. Re-viewing experiences, both triumphant and tragic, by considering them on a past–present–future continuum creates a form of psychological motion that activates meaning structures and the connections between and among related experiences, emotions, and feelings.

While there are many crossovers with Kelly's ideas and use of constructs, the basic idea remains. In the case of LifeMapping™ a –10 to +10 scale designates both polarity (– or +) and potency of the event. Age and experience are variables that affect the quantity and nature of significant life events. A higher chronological age is logically related to more numerous experiences. A micro-focused LifeMapping™-type of activity can involve identifying significant events in a course of study, short training program, or weekend activity, and drawing attention to daily moments in contrast to events that occur over a lifetime. The greater the number of experiences from which an individual can draw, the more discriminating the selection process is likely to be (Kelly, 1955). Event selection is an idiosyncratic selection process that involves editing private and public selves depending on the forum in which the activity takes place.

As a teaching activity, LifeMapping™ usually begins by having participants first use the process with another individual before undertaking their own personal explorations. Most choose an older relative, usually a parent. While insights and what might be called a deepened bonding process often occur, the residual emotions and perceptions of carrying out the activity are the subject of an extended reflective process for those undertaking the exercise. A common observation is that this is an uncommon opportunity that would not likely occur without need, direction, structure, and purpose. A sense of control over meaning and meaning-making is often described, which is accompanied by a feeling of “having been given permission” to examine

experiences in new ways. Students are advised to avoid writing about topics that might prove to be disturbing on deep reflection, unless LifeMapping™ is carried out in a supervised and psychologically supportive context.

The contexts in which LifeMapping™ can be used are as infinite as the experiences an individual may encounter over a lifetime. Several outcomes of this process have resulted in continued work with this technique. The focus has included couples counseling (partners independently identify relationship aspects to establish a basis for further conversations about similarities and differences); post-traumatic stress (catharsis and context development externalize events and can mitigate some of the deleterious effects); career induction (based on anticipated paths); career renewal (identifying learning and incidents of personal and professional growth); and career disengagement (assists closure through wisdom distillation).

Micro or macro foci can be taken. From a micro perspective, event genesis is caught in the moment. Because of its presence in the *now* it wants attention and deployment of necessary or appropriate psychological resources. Anxieties in *now* moments can be thought of in a *gestalt*-like fashion where *now* events represent figures against the ground of past and anticipated events, rendering the moment imperative against the backdrop of merely important events. The ground, or the events that surround the *now* moment, represents the sum of available constructs, schemata, or paradigms that pertain to the matter at hand. The larger or macro view considers the *now* moment in the context of countless other *now* moments, as might be related through similarity or sequence.

Iterations of meaning evolve through use, reflection, and reconstruction. If such dynamics are viewed as variables introduced to a construct system, then any construct use changes the construct being used into one which may be similar but has been revised, extended, or discarded. Sources and dynamics of change may occur in a variety of ways unique to the individual undergoing an experience. Visibility of meaning patterns and interconnections, whether nested in some deeper layer of reflected experience or at the surface, creates perspective allowing alternative interpretations of events.

While LifeMapping™ is often represented in a linear form with events and their corresponding values shown on a timeline, its focus is on episodic events and the constructs arising from them. Individuals, perhaps with the help of another, have the opportunity to explore the ways in which those constructs have either remained stable or changed over time. Construct validation indicates that a level of successful anticipations has occurred based on the use of those constructs either in their original developmental context or in forms that have undergone situational revision.

In this way, LifeMapping™ places each person as the researcher of his or her own data; he or she can then interrogate personal constructs as Kelly's "person as scientist."

Representations of the Inner Self

The map is not the territory.

(Alfred Korzybski, 1973, p. 38)

Fictionalization of the self can be a central feature of the autobiographical process. If reality is what one perceives it to be, as Kelly argues, then representations of reality, fictional or otherwise, are or become real for the perceiver or writer. The LifeMapping™ process appears to tap into and cross over the categories into which experiences might fall, such as the intellectual, emotional, physical, or spiritual domains. Recounting an experience can be likened to storytelling.

If, as Don Bannister (1966) argued in his discussion of the principle of reflexivity, knowledge gained through research need not be publicly displayed, practitioners and participants involved in the study of people's lives and careers need to give careful consideration to the purpose and reporting of what they find in ways that respect the ethical umbrella such endeavors require. For the most part, individuals do not venture into autobiographical forays unless prompted by the urging of aging, ego, legacy, or the simple recording of daily events such as used to be associated with diaries or personal journals. Wrestling accounts of life in the name of research or teaching methods can, at worst, lead to a fictionalizing of self that seeks "the good story." (Re)storying the self can thus be both positive and negative regarding making explicit the inner self.

Moving about in one's memory requires what Kelly might have referred to as a "person-as-navigator" stance where maps devised as aids require sensitivity to moving landmarks and shifting terrain. The novelty presented by everyday life means that each morning the psychological landscape we survey has differing features dependent on the events with which we are presented. Using yesterday's stories or constructs is useful for anticipating circumstances that lie in wait but has an embedded lack of fit that can only be detected through the discernment and dexterity that familiarity with inner processes brings about. Appealing representations of meaningful events may become iconic and static and assume a permanent status—perhaps akin to Kelly's (1955) idea of hardening of the categories.

Meanings and methods change either through our own psychological devices or through the intervention of external realities. Alfred Korzybski's (1973) warning that "the map is not the territory" (p. 38) may be taken as a cautionary admonition against blind investment in images in and of themselves rather than paying attention to the meaning structures that gave rise to the representation in the first place. Since the advent of information and communications technology, society has been largely awash in not only concretized images but also the growing capacity to generate intricate, complex, and idiosyncratic aspects of self. The use of avatars in some computer environments is an example. While nutritionists wave the banner of "You are what you eat," developmental constructivists, and Kelly in particular, might wave the banner of "You are what you represent yourself to be."

Anticipatory Reflection for a [Post]Modern World

No one needs to paint himself into a corner; no one needs to be completely hemmed in by circumstances; no one needs to be a victim of his biography.
(Kelly, 1955, p. 15)

The mixes and mysteries of genes and generations have led to complex societies in which few straight lines can be drawn to connect personal or family stories. The making of personal meaning requires a diverse palette such as is available and conceivable through the niceties of postmodernist thought. This chaos of the postmodern and beyond seems to require increasing permeability of constructs. These open-ended or *propositional* constructs allow for greater flexibility in construing events and anticipating the future. Of course, as Kelly noted, too much permeability renders us unable to make sense of our world: having too many propositional constructs may present as many challenges as having no constructs at all.

LifeMapping™, drawing as it does on Kelly's notion of the person-as-scientist, provides a means of accessing the inner self and revisiting one's interpretation of life events toward construing one's future. Kelly (1955) viewed the universe "as an ongoing affair," noting that meaning-making is more than "simply a matter of arranging its inert elements" (p. 154). Questions like "Who am I?" and "What is my purpose?", usually relegated to the study of philosophy, have thus become beacons en route to inner understanding.

Notes

- 1 Sadly, Michael Kompf passed away in August 2013. He had intended to contribute to this volume but did not have time to complete a manuscript. This chapter has been constructed from his other unpublished manuscripts, years of conversations, and the hope that justice has been done to his ideas and intentions. It has been an honor to complete this chapter on his behalf: to him goes the credit for all the ideas and most of the words; to me (Simmons) any blame for errors and omissions. While Michael began his notes for this chapter with Einstein's words that "intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death," it is hoped that the impact of his intellectual growth and his creation of LifeMapping™ will help to shape the constructs and meaning-making of others for years to come.
- 2 The authors intend Kelly's (1955) use of "man" to include all persons.

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School Is Our Common World

A Constructivist-Phenomenological Study of the Construing of Roma Pupils and Their Teacher

Barbara Strobachová and Miroslav Filip

The Roma Community in Czech Society

Roma people are the largest minority in the Czech Republic. Various surveys estimate their number to range between 150,000 and 300,000 people (Hadj Moussová, 2009). Their coexistence with the “white” majority has been problematic and full of conflicts for centuries. During the communist period until the 1980s they had a relatively low social status. However, their economic and social situation was in general relatively stable (e.g., regarding their employment and housing). It is a paradox that after political upheavals leading to the removal of the authoritarian communist regime, the situation of Czech Roma people became much worse. Due to segregation and a reduction in resources (e.g., in terms of finance and education), together with an increase in discrimination and racism, Roma people have often failed to adapt to life in a competitive capitalist society, and are typically affected by poverty and unemployment, with little chance of changing their situation. New ghettos occupied by socially disadvantaged people (especially by Roma people) grew up rapidly. In 2006 there were about 310 ghettos occupied by 60,000 to 80,000 people (Gabal Analysis & Consulting, 2006). Living in ghettos is accompanied by violence, drug abuse, usury, prostitution, and so on.

The Roma Community and Educational Disadvantage

Education is the key field where Roma people might be helped to gradually improve their life conditions and to harmonize differences and conflicts with the majority. Unfortunately, many years have been wasted as a result of an unsystematic education policy toward minorities. Traditionally, Roma children have too often been segregated into “special” schools originally established for children with lower cognitive abilities. These schools provide only poor stimuli for cognitive and social development. This policy has only begun to change recently. However, in most cases, Roma children still do not attend primary school with their white peers. Instead, they mostly attend catchment schools near the ghettos, where they are in the majority over white children.

Although there are projects to facilitate the successful education of Roma children, these still fail in primary schools. According to a survey from 2007 (Gabal Analysis & Consulting, 2007), only 3 out of 10 Roma schoolboys and 5 out of 10 Roma schoolgirls finished primary school in the class in which they began. The others failed and were transferred to a lower class or to a special school.

Why do Roma children not succeed in school? There are various hypotheses. Some take a biological view and claim that Roma children have lower abilities. Other theories oppose this view by emphasizing cultural factors (e.g., poor knowledge of the majority language or different cultural values) or social factors (e.g., prejudice and economic disadvantage—see Hadj Moussová, 2009). Although there is continuing discussion of these problems, there is still no consensus among professionals and experts. There is even less agreement about the educational model appropriate for Roma children (e.g., should they be integrated within standard state schools, or should they attend alternative classes with a special curriculum tailored to their needs?). Consequently, although there are a few schools that have developed and provide relatively effective models for the education of Roma children, there is no consistent and meaningful state policy.

A Constructivist-Phenomenological Understanding of the Problem of the School Failure of Roma Children

The focus of this chapter is to contribute to this debate by employing a constructivist-phenomenological perspective. Generally, the challenge of the constructivist approach would be to step outside the chronically circular

debates that consider irresolvable dilemmas (e.g., nature vs. nurture) and to try to view the problem from a different perspective. Whereas the aforementioned theories consider *what* Roma children are like (e.g., in comparison to the majority, do they have the same or lower cognitive abilities?) and *what* is important regarding their failing at school (e.g., which teachers' prejudices against Roma children aggravate children's failure at school?), the constructivist view considers the problem from the perspective of Roma children, who are the central agents here. For example, we may ask: What is their construing of school? What does school mean to them? And, more generally: Can an examination of these questions help us to understand why Roma children fail at school? Is it possible to derive any practical recommendations for the education of Roma children from this examination?

Construing school, sharing a life-world

In our study we combine personal construct analysis with another approach rooted in Husserlian phenomenology. Although there are some important differences between these approaches, we will emphasize their commonalities and employ them simultaneously to investigate the same questions. These commonalities are derived from a common concern for a "phenomenological view." This means focusing on the subjective meaning of experienced phenomena (see Butt, 2003 for a detailed discussion).

In addition, we emphasize an analogy between personal constructivism and phenomenology that is not referred to sufficiently often (with the exception of Armezzani & Chiari, 2014). Both approaches are concerned with the problem of *intersubjectivity*. How is it possible that the world is *our* common world? How is it possible that we can communicate with each other, co-construe and share meanings? How does this fit the idea of an individual person, individual construing, and idiosyncratic meanings?

Within the psychology of personal constructs, the Commonality and Sociality Corollaries (Kelly, 1955) are relevant to the problem of intersubjectivity. The latter corollary has been elaborated recently in the relational view of personal constructs (e.g., Stojnov & Procter, 2010). This sees personal constructs as being formed and tested within social interactions, as not being locked inside the minds of individuals but, rather, between them. The idea of relational construing bridges the dichotomy of "individual" versus "shared," as constructs are individual but at the same time their meaningfulness can emerge only by putting them to the test within role-playing with other people (as defined by the Sociality Corollary, see the Appendix to this volume).

Phenomenology has elaborated the issue of intersubjectivity by introducing the concept of a shared *life-world*. The world is not totally fragmented into particular idiosyncratic perspectives. The idea of a shared life-world is the assumption of a common “horizon,” ensuring the possibility of joint experiencing of the world as something coherent (Sages, 2003). Without a common understanding of school by children, teachers, parents, and all other stakeholders (What is school about?, Why do children attend school?, What is the meaning of education?), school cannot be a place of joint educational activities. Of course, everyone will have an individualized view of these issues, but there must be some common underlying horizon that keeps these views together—a shared life-world.

In conclusion, from the constructivist perspective, school can be considered as a common world where processes of complex relational construing between pupils, teachers, and other involved people take place. Phenomenology would say that school can be considered as a common world in terms of a shared life-world that is experienced together by all the involved people. We will utilize these notions further in our study.

Context of the research, sample, and method

In our research we cooperated with a primary school in a small town in a relatively poor region. The proportion of Roma pupils in this school was more than 80%. As many of the pupils were socially disadvantaged, the school provided them with special help. The staff comprised teachers, their assistants, a special needs educator, and a social educator. A contact person from the school recommended that we interview children from the sixth year as they were old enough to express relatively complex opinions about their school. We interviewed 7 Roma children (all the Roma pupils out of the 12 pupils attending this class): 5 boys and 2 girls, 11 and 12 years old. Besides these interviews with children we also interviewed a teacher (a special educator, female, aged 43) as a representative of the staff who knew all the child participants well.

The strategy of our research was consistent with the credulous approach (Kelly, 1955). Our aim was to let children express freely their feelings and opinions about their school. We conducted semi-structured interviews with children initiated by the instruction “Tell me something about your school.” We focused on the children’s personal views of their school and facilitated their expression by means of additional questions: What happens in the school? What is good or bad there? What about you and the school? What kind of school would you like to have? The interview with the teacher was

conducted in a similar manner. We analyzed transcripts of interviews using constructivist and phenomenological techniques.

Constructivist analysis: method, results, and discussion

For the personal construct analysis we used the perceiver-element grid (PEG; Procter, 2005) in order to map the role constructs employed by the children and teacher in the context of their school. Conducting the analysis, we first put all the statements provided by the children into one pool. After reading them carefully we selected those statements that said something about the children themselves and about their teachers. We selected anything that satisfied this criterion without prior evaluation of their meaning or importance. Then we considered these statements again and formulated the bipolar construct “themes” that seemed to lie behind them. The same procedure was carried out with the statements provided by the teacher.

The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 31.1. This shows role constructs and also illustrative examples of statements from which they were derived. From the constructivist viewpoint, the depicted role constructs show how the children and the teacher understand each other. This understanding is the basis of joint activities and the educational process within the context of school. The following discussion will focus on how well the role constructs serve this understanding.

Children as perceivers

The first construct, Roma vs. white, is quite salient (3 out of 7 children used it repeatedly). Just the occurrence of this construct is significant. It is hard to imagine that Czech non-Roma pupils would spontaneously use a construct referring to their ethnicity. But Roma pupils do this. It seems that this construct does not work well, as the implications of both its poles are problematic. On the one hand, being Roma is not prized (“there are too many of us,” “teachers are afraid that we can do something to them”—see Table 31.1). On the other hand, being white, and sharing values of the “white” world (e.g., education) imply disconnection from Roma roots.

This construct was derived from interviews with a small sample. However, according to our experience and other sources (e.g., Háj Moussová, 2009) it is usual for Roma people who are in touch with institutions such as schools to identify themselves with “white” values (e.g., a white teacher “would create order with us”) and express a low opinion about Roma people. This in turn yields a real problem with identity. How should Roma

Table 31.1 Perceiver-Element Grid with Children's and Teacher's Role Constructs.

<i>Elements</i>	
<i>CHILDREN</i>	<i>TEACHER</i>
<p><i>Roma vs. white</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there are many Gypsies and not many whites - there are too many Roma children - there should also be white pupils in this school because it is not good when there are too many of us <p><i>good friends vs. terrible persons</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I like the friends I have at school - the schoolmates, they're really mad; terrible <p><i>good marks vs. failing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - we go to school to be well-educated, to have a good school; to have good marks, to be clever - and since I came here (from another school) I have been failing - we are a little bit behindhand <p><i>fighting/shouting vs. behaving</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it's not possible to learn here because kids shout all the time - they behave crazy, I also behave crazy sometimes 	<p><i>good vs. bad</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they can explain it well so we can learn it - the teachers are good, the director is kind - there are better teachers in comparison with other schools, they are kind and fair - they are not able to deal with children, to discuss with them - the teachers cannot teach very well <p><i>afraid of us vs. create order</i></p> <p>with us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - then the white teachers are afraid that we can do something to them - an ideal school would be that they (teachers) would create order with us <p><i>Roma vs. white</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - then also white teachers are afraid that we can do something to them
<i>Perceivers</i>	<i>CHILDREN</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - yes, we were fighting with each other - I wish some Roma children behaved well 	
TEACHER	<p><i>Roma vs. white</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - white children know that they learn to know something, for their future - Roma children cannot see far <p><i>no motivation vs. want to learn</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roma children usually have no motivation - there are other children who want to learn <p><i>stagnation vs. acceleration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they don't know they could do better - mostly they accelerate here and they are like Alice in Wonderland as someone has time for them, explain it to them <p><i>attend to enjoy social relationships vs. attend school to learn</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - those who don't want to learn attend school to meet their friends - some of them want to learn and to succeed 	<p><i>do wrong vs. succeed gradually</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sometimes I have a feeling that we do it wrong and that it is not realizable - but I think that we succeed in small steps <p><i>teacher role vs. family role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - we are trying to provide children with the best conditions for education - we supply a family to a great extent

children understand themselves? As “bad” Roma, or as “Gadžo” (the Romany pejorative term for a white man)?

There are practical questions about how to deal with this in the school context. Would it be possible to facilitate a reconstruction of the Roma vs. white construct within the school’s educational program—to help them to elaborate and integrate the meaning of their Roma identity and of “white” values (especially education)? What characteristics would a true Roma who is educated have? Another alternative might be to try to replace or subsume this construct, at least in the context of the school (e.g., with a construct “member of our class,” “player of school soccer team,” etc.). How could the school facilitate such reconstruing practically?

It may also be surprising that Roma children reflect on their problems with learning (“we are a little bit behindhand”) and with behaving (“we were fighting with each other”). They know what they should do (“to have good marks”). As they rarely achieve good marks and fall at the negative pole of the construct “good marks vs. failing,” the question arises of whether it would be worth changing the evaluation system, at least in the first grade, to a more individualized system that is not so strict and which motivates children positively (e.g., by depicting their strengths).

Lastly, children obviously acknowledge the problem that the school is not a safe place (even for the teachers), which essentially spoils their experience of it. Again, they associate bad and even violent behavior with themselves (“we were fighting,” “teachers are afraid that we could do something to them”). We think that it should be an absolute priority of the school to ensure a safe environment for the children, otherwise change and progress in other fields, such as developing sociality, will be impossible.

How do children understand teachers? Teachers are white, can teach well or poorly, be kind and fair, and can also be afraid of children (see Table 31.1). This seems to be a relatively limited understanding of teachers. Considering these constructs, there is a lack of construing around “Why do our teachers do their job?”, “Why are they with us at school?”, “How do they like it?”, and so on. We know from our experiences that children can construe these aspects creatively in their own way. A richer repertoire of such role constructs would positively influence the way that the children jointly construe their school with their teacher.

Teacher as perceiver

The first and central construct that the teacher expressed at the beginning of the interview was Roma vs. white. This is the only construct directly shared with the children. The teacher’s other constructs show analogical

patterns. Roma children have no view of the future and attend the school to enjoy social relationships. The “white” pole is associated with opposite qualities. However, in contrast with what the teacher says, Roma children construe the role and the value of education (see the construct “good marks vs. failing”).

Even though this quite stereotyped construing of Roma schoolchildren can work well, the key practical questions are: Can these dichotomies be reconstrued? Can opposite poles be integrated? For instance, is it necessary to see just two opposite views of children (attend to enjoy social relationships vs. attend school to learn—see Table 31.1) that exclude each other? Can education be conducted in such a way that children would simultaneously enjoy social relationships and learn many things?

With regard to the teacher’s construing of the children, we could not find any evidence of the construing of children’s understanding of violent behavior, problems with schoolmates or of safety at school, and, particularly, of Roma children’s ambiguous identifying with the “Roma” pole and with the “white” world. This is in contrast to the fact that the teacher was very kind, empathic, experienced, and helpful. It is probable that a discussion of the results of the PEG could open up a new perspective on the children she teaches.

Phenomenological analysis: method, results, and discussion

In addition, we employed phenomenological analysis of interview protocols with three children (Helena, Petr, and Roman) who provided relatively rich and elaborated material in their interviews. The aim of the phenomenological analysis was to explore more deeply the individual meanings that the children have about their school. We followed the steps of meaning constitution analysis (MCA; Sages, 2003). MCA is a method that rigorously implements Husserl’s philosophical analysis of meaning constitution.

MCA is applied to an original text. Consider a fragment from the interview with Helena:

“It’s not possible to learn here because kids shout all the time and I came from another school and it was completely different there. And since I came here I have been failing.”

When reading this comment, everyone has an understanding of what it is about. However, from the phenomenological point of view, this kind of understanding is unreflective and cursory, substantially influenced by the individuality of the reader (e.g., by prior knowledge of similar stories). This

Table 31.2 Example of the Analysis of Modalities Applied to Helena's Statement.

<i>Meaning Unit</i>	<i>Modalities and Their Categories*</i>
<i>it's not possible to learn here</i>	A: negative, B: negative, T: present, I: none, S: impersonal, W: none
<i>kids shout all the time</i>	A: negative, B: positive, T: present, I: they, S: none, W: none
<i>I came from another school</i>	A: none, B: positive, T: past, I: none, S: I, W: none
<i>it was completely different there</i>	A: neutral, B: none, T: past, I: none, S: impersonal, W: none

* A – affect; B – belief; T – time; I – interaction; S – subject; W – will

hinders us from seeing precisely how the meaning of school is constituted from the point of view of the speaker. In phenomenological terminology this understanding must be put aside through the process of *epoché*, in which our interpretations are subjected to “bracketing.”

Within MCA, *epoché* is applied in several steps. First, the original text is broken up into “meaning units.” An example of this step as applied to Helena's statement is displayed in Table 31.2. During the subsequent steps a detailed analysis of meaning units is carried out. We describe only one step—the analysis of *modalities*. Modalities show individually unique ways within which our understanding of the world is constituted. For instance, temporality is a dimension inseparable from the way in which we make sense of the world. Within MCA the modality “time” is assessed by each meaning unit, where *categories* of present, past, future, and “always recurrent” happening can be determined (see Table 31.2; for a detailed description of other modalities see Sages, 2003, p. 68).

MCA summarizes the analysis of modalities within formulations of life-worlds. Below are examples of the formulation of life-worlds by all three children. We depict specific modalities in the case of Helena.

Helena *came* (T) from the other school and she does not *feel happy* (A) at her current school. She has a *feeling* (B) that the *environment does not allow her* (I) to learn well, her marks have become worse. The world of her school involves *intense relationships* (I) for her. These are, however, *negative* (A). She is *insecure* and *disappointed* (A), *scared about others' behavior* (I) at school. She often *turns to her mother* (I) and respects her opinion about school. Actually, what Helena *thinks* (B) cannot be distinguished from what her

mother thinks. She recognizes *positive aspects* (A) of the current school, good equipment and kindness of teachers. However, if she could *choose* (W) she would return to her *previous school* where she *experienced* (T) *peace* and *certainty* (A), and this is what she misses at her current school. But she *must* (B) stand it because of her mother's *wish* (I) for her to stay there. Her view of the *future* (T) is affected by this *uncertainty* (B).

Petr is the most engaged in his school of all the three children. He evaluates things spontaneously, saying that they are good or bad. He can clearly see his shortcomings, but he is self-confident. He takes into account the issue of "being Roma"—to be Roma implies only unpleasant consequences, for instance, poor knowledge of English, or that teachers are afraid of you. So he concludes that there should not be too many Roma pupils at his school. In contrast to Helena and Roman, for Petr the school is not so much about relationships. It is the courses and the equipment of the school that are important. Petr values his school highly and identifies himself with teachers as professionals who can educate him, which is important. His parents play a negative role for him in relationship to education—he does not want to make the same mistake that they did. He speaks about his future and the necessity of education.

Roman has an advantage as his father is a paragon providing positive motivation. His father is employed. If Roman succeeds at the school, his father will give him a job. At school Roman especially prizes his friends and good relationships. Roman feels comfortable; he enjoys being in his community at school. The other things at school are OK, too. He is engaged in his school. "Being Romany" has no problematic consequences for him. Learning is not fun but it is required and necessary.

These formulations of children's life-worlds based on the analysis of modalities inquire into the purely individual level of their meaning constitution of school. They provide a picture of children's individual positions within the intersubjective context of a shared "school life-world." In phenomenology, an analysis of intersubjectivity heading toward a formulation of a shared life-world must be always preceded by the careful consideration of the individual level (Sages, 2003). MCA provides tools for comparisons of individual ways of meaning constitution and for the exploration of intersubjectivity (e.g., as a comparison of percentages of specific modalities between respondents). However, the key principle is not to lose sight of the respondent's individual levels of meaning constitution (Sages, 2003).

Conclusions

We do not apply the constructivist-phenomenological approach to the problem of Roma children's failure at school to deny the value of biological, cultural, and social approaches and debates. Nevertheless, we suggest that it can be fruitful to go beyond these struggles by considering the problem from the point of view of the people involved. A systematic analysis of their role construing or meaning constitution raises novel, concrete questions and provides practical suggestions. These may be formulated regardless of the solution to the abovementioned questions about Roma children's cognitive skills, the impact of their culture on their education, and so on.

We can see a compatibility between the two approaches we have employed. Whereas personal construct analysis can provide a dynamic model consisting of dimensions along which the participants may move, the phenomenological approach can analyze individuals' positions more finely; it can help us to understand precisely where they are.

The advantage of the constructivist view is its dimensional thinking. For instance, it has been widely suggested in the literature that Roma children are focused on social relationships and not on learning (e.g., Hadj Moussová, 2009). This may be a valid observation, but its meaning can be understood only in the context of its opposite pole. Indeed, according to our analyses some children enjoy their social relationships, whereas some others experience them in an opposite way. Using the PEG analysis we identified variations of the issue of good relationships and enjoyment on the one hand, and of unpleasant schoolmates as an obstacle to succeeding at school on the other (good friends vs. terrible persons—see Table 31.1). This does not mean that every child expressed both poles explicitly. Some of them did, but others expressed just one pole. For example, Helena viewed schoolmates as terrible persons without explicitly discussing the opposite view. However, we can still claim that she participates in the relational construing of the bipolar construct. It may happen that Helena stops seeing her schoolmates as terrible persons, and the idea will be invalidated and make no sense to her any more. Consequently, she will probably move to the opposite pole and view the others as good friends. This may happen despite the fact that she was unable to construe her schoolmates in this way before. Her social environment mediates the alternative construing to her.

We applied MCA as a complementary analysis. Its results do not always fit with the results of the PEG. For example, the elaboration of the meaning of "being Roma" was found in MCA to be something individual that is not shared ("being Roma" was a part of Petr's and Roman's life-worlds, but

not of Helena's life-world). On the contrary, according to the constructivist analysis the meaning of "being Roma" was considered as the opposite to "being white" within the bipolar construct that was presumably shared by all the children. This could be due to the fact that we analyzed all the children's statements as a whole and did not distinguish between their individual construing. On the other hand, the individual focus of MCA enables us to look at individual ways of meaning constitution more deeply.

There are important aspects of meaning constitution that are captured in MCA but not in the personal construct analysis we conducted. For instance, for a proper understanding of an individual's view of the school the temporal dimension should not be neglected. In Helena's case it is noticeable that she compares her view of the current school with a school she attended in the past and simultaneously considers her future in the current school. From the phenomenological point of view, this temporal structuring of the meanings of school is psychologically significant and unique.

In conclusion, despite the depicted differences between the two approaches, their simultaneous employment for the analysis of individual meaning-making processes and of the constitution of intersubjectivity appears to be a fruitful strategy. It can be useful when thinking about a concrete situation such as a small group of educationally disadvantaged children and their teacher, and in looking at how the school as their common world is construed.

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Part VII
New Horizons

A Vision of the Future of Personal Construct Psychology

Peter Cummins

In accepting the invitation to write this chapter I was seduced by the challenge of conceptualizing my thoughts after nearly 40 years of being involved with personal construct psychology (PCP). As I began to write I realized the complexity of what was being asked. I can only produce a personal view, heavily influenced by my own professional career and its location. I am very aware that people from other parts of the world might produce a very different vision.

What follows is a “personal vision of the future of personal construct theory.” This immediately lets me off the hook of producing a comprehensive review of the state of PCP across the world. I was also influenced by the thought that PCP, by its very nature, is a psychology of the future. Kelly’s Fundamental Postulate can be extended to: “Peter’s involvement in personal construct psychology is channelized by the way in which he anticipates the development of PCP.”

So the writing of this chapter becomes a personal exploration of my own construing of PCP, and my personal anticipation of the future of PCP. It is an exploration which is heavily influenced by my own history of involvement in PCP, as a practitioner. As I will suggest later on, people’s involvement in PCP can be divided into three main groups:

- 1 academics
- 2 practitioners
- 3 trainees, interested people, participants in PCP processes.

In some ways this is an arbitrary distinction; for example, many would argue that they are both academics and practitioners. While clearly this can be true, I want to argue that there is a difference between pure practitioners and academics who are also practitioners. There is a simple test here: is research publication essential to your role? In my view, most academics/practitioners would say yes, and most practitioners would say no.

PCP and the Academic Past

If you don't have anything else to go on, it (the past) is the best bet available—if you have to bet . . . and sometimes we have to bet . . . it is the nature of life to have to rely on heuristics and shortcuts, when algorithmic solutions are less available. (SkepticSkull, July 12, 2013, Internet comment)

In 1985 Neimeyer carried out a Delphi poll. This involved asking 130 members of the Clearing House for Personal Construct Theory for their views on the future development of personal construct psychology over the next 25 years. These members were from 15 different countries. Neimeyer summarizes the results:

While panelists from different geographical regions displayed considerable consensus on some items (e.g., all groups rated the probability of future work using computer elicited grids as extremely likely, while strongly resisting changes in Kellian theory) dissensus based on nationality was common for many items. (1985, p. 42)

British, Irish, and Australian respondents thought PCP had more of a future in social psychology than did North Americans, who in turn were more optimistic about the future of cognitive complexity research. In particular, British respondents thought that PCP would extend to couples therapy and child therapy. They also anticipated the least integration with other cognitive approaches. While panel members thought that most research would be done in the area of psychotherapy, they also thought that areas for growth included social psychology, clinical assessment, education, and vocational and developmental psychology. The overall future of PCP in 1985 was seen as being more computer grid research, extension into work with children, families, and groups, and much ambivalence about integration with other approaches. In a prescient comment Neimeyer goes on to say that “we can hope that these extensions will offer something fresh and original to those

working in applied settings . . . as interest in such fields as education, business and vocational psychology grows" (1985, p. 43).

Neimeyer repeated this Delphi poll of "leading contributors to the tradition" in 1996. He surveyed 55 people, who were "55% American, 31% British, 21% European and 6% Australasian." He asked his panel about its forecast of "likely developments in personal construct therapy in the next decade." The most likely changes predicted were that the theory would continue to evolve in a more social direction, that repertory grids and related methods for mapping personal construct systems would boost the popularity of the theory, that there would be an increase in the use of narrative methods, that there would be more research in psychotherapy process and outcome, and finally that:

the professional practice of personal construct therapists would continue to become more eclectic, moving away from established Kellian procedures like fixed role therapy to embrace integration with a variety of other constructivist, family systemic, cognitive and psychodynamic perspectives. (1996, p. 160)

Although the breadth of PCP is acknowledged in both these polls, the overall results are focused on personal construct psychotherapy. This conflation of personal construct psychology with personal construct therapy is a common theme in the literature.

In his 1985 book Neimeyer looks at how PCP developed using a particular theory of intellectual development (Mullins, 1973). The table of contents of this book is a really clear summary of the state of PCP in 1985. After an introductory chapter there are three main chapters on the development of PCP, one on the U.S.A., one on the U.K., and the third on "PCT outside the United States and Britain." He identified

nearly 120 major figures in PCT working in the U.S.A. and the U.K. By comparison the number of significant contributors in other countries is quite small, totaling less than two dozen. (1985, p. 67)

Having described the main centers of PCP, in the U.S.A. and the U.K., he goes on to describe how three major research and training centers have developed during the last decade. These were in Canada, Holland, and Israel. Neimeyer acknowledges that "the life of the Israeli center seems to have ended with that of its leader" (p. 70). However, he is much more optimistic about the Canadian group when he says that "Brock [University] appears destined to become still more important as a base for the theory

group's development in the years ahead" (p. 69). Neimeyer is equally optimistic about the Dutch group: "Utrecht seems likely to consolidate its position as a prominent international and training center, . . . reinforced by links with other Dutch Construct theorists" (p. 72).

It now appears that the two centers identified in Canada and Holland have ceased to function. In the 2003 *International Handbook of Personal Construct Psychology* (Fransella, 2003) (which appeared 18 years after the publication of Neimeyer's book) there was one Canadian contributor and none from Holland. In the most recent International Congress publication (Gilberto, Dell'Aversano, & Velicogna, 2012) there are no Canadian or Dutch contributors.

Neimeyer's conclusion in 1985 was that PCT in Britain had attained "a place for itself in the literature, curriculum and political power structure of British Psychology" (p. 103). By contrast, he noted that the American theory group was less cohesive. In a note to this chapter Neimeyer describes the advertisement for Landfield and Leitner's (1980) book by the publisher (Wiley), which said "see the implications of this controversial theory" (p. 140). So, 25 years after the publication of *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*, it remained a controversial theory. A different way of expressing the same thought is that of Fransella (1988, p. 33), who said that "in my view, personal construct theory is indeed still a radical theory in 1985."

Winter (2007) produced a review of the first 50 years of PCP. He summarized "Developments in the application of the theory (which) have primarily been in the clinical, educational, and organisational settings but are by no means limited to these settings" (p. 4). His conclusions were that:

the theory is holding up very well except in one area, its ultimate expendability. I suspect though that Fay [Fransella] might say that this is likely to occur by it eventually being subsumed by constructivism, and I consider that this is an area that merits further exploration . . . other profitable future directions are further research investigation of aspects of Kelly's theory, such as his notion of choice; the development of methods of assessment of construct processes; further elaboration of the personal construct psychology view of disorder; and development of the evidence base for the range of applications of personal construct psychology. (2007, p. 5)

Both Winter (2007) and Neimeyer (1985, 1996, 1997) focus exclusively on the academic writing and development of PCP. They do not appear to consider the existence of PCP in other more applied settings. Yet there is

a whole world of PCP outside academia. That world has not often been acknowledged. This lack of acknowledgment often leads to peculiar situations, such as a speaker at an international PCP conference describing a dying world of PCP to an audience of young and enthusiastic students of PCP. What the speaker actually meant was that there were currently not as many PCP academics as there had been in the past. Apart from academic PCP there are also two other important groups within the PCP community. This three-group community can be described using the symbol of the shamrock, much used by Charles Handy, who described what he called the shamrock organization “with three kinds of workforce, having a main body and connected lobes that together form a whole” ([Wikipedia.org/shamrock organization](http://Wikipedia.org/shamrock%20organization)). In the case of PCP the three groups are:

- 1 academics
- 2 practitioners
- 3 trainees, interested people, participants in PCP processes.

On the same website, Handy points out that each of these three groups has “different levels of commitment to the organization.” Group 1 has been the main focus of almost everything written about the development of PCP.

When Neimeyer was writing his 1985 book, he identified nine sites in Britain, eight of which were universities (the other being Bexley Hospital, where Don Bannister developed a Medical Research Council-funded team), two sites in Australia, both universities, one university each in Canada, Hong Kong, Israel, and the Netherlands, and 11 university sites in the U.S.A. In 1989 Feixas described a strong Spanish group. This included:

several consolidated groups located at Valencia, Madrid, and Barcelona. Each group comprises several faculty members who are working together to produce a coordinated research effort . . . From this analysis we can conclude that PCP has a promising outlook in Spain. (1989, p. 433)

There was also a strong German group. While I am clear that the Barcelona group is still strong, the majority of these sites do not appear to exist any longer (if we use publications as a measure of existence!). It would be easy, therefore, to conclude that PCP was a diminishing theory. I think this would be to ignore the other groups within PCP.

PCP Outside Academia

The practitioners

In Europe now there are strong Serbian and Italian groups, which are based in clinical training programs. There are strong practitioner groups in the U.K. and Ireland, whose membership includes a significant number of practitioners in organizational and educational settings. The majority of these practitioners do not appear in the published literature. Many of them trained at the Centre for Personal Construct Psychology, founded by Fay Fransella. As Scheer (2013) observed:

Today, many practitioners who trained at the Centre are self-employed, working outside academic institutions as consultants with companies, institutions, and the like. Thus non-psychologists were included in the range of those applying the theory. (p. 33)

Trainees and interested people

In Italy and Serbia alone there are over 150 trainees in three schools of constructivism, and probably an equivalent number in Barcelona. There are also a small number of students in the U.K. and Ireland.

It is harder to measure the number of interested people. One possible measure is Internet-based PCP groups, e.g., the Personal Construct Psychology Practitioners Group on LinkedIn had 436 members in December 2013, while the PCP mailbase (an Internet-based discussion list) has 270 participants.

Out of Academia

What is striking is the move of PCP, especially in Europe, from an academic research-driven context to a much more practitioner-driven arena. The only previous acknowledgment of this move that I am aware of is by Fransella (2000):

I see an increasing split between the personal construct needs of those in Academe—some of whom are practitioners as well—and those who are predominantly or only practitioners—very many of whom are not psychologists—such as speech therapists, social workers, and managers in organisations. (p. 445)

	Academic	Non-academic
Publish		
Don't publish		

Figure 32.1 Groupings of Personal Construct Psychologists.

This split is particularly accentuated by the question of publication. I realize that this can be well elaborated through a diagram such as the one in Figure 32.1. I can already hear the objection from those whom I am calling “academics” that they are proper scientist practitioners who live in both the world of academia and the world of real-life professional practice. My response to this is that in the real world, while most academics may be practitioners, most practitioners are not academics. It is commonly said that for clinical psychologists 90% of all published research is produced by 10% of the profession. I suspect that this is even more true in the area of PCP. Most practitioners do NOT publish. There are two constructs involved here:

Academic—Non-Academic
and
Publish—Don't Publish

By putting these at right angles we can map out four quadrants. The great majority of Neimeyer’s and Winter’s work is derived from the top left and top right quadrants: academic and publish, and non-academic and publish.

Quadrant 1. Academic and publish

For obvious reasons the majority of contributors to PCP are in Quadrant 1. In the *International Handbook of Personal Construct Psychology* (Fransella, 2003), I estimate that there are three times as many chapters produced by

academics as there are chapters produced by people whose main focus of work is in non-academic settings. I was interested to note that in a subsequent publication, *The Essential Practitioner's Handbook of Personal Construct Psychology* (Fransella, 2005) (which is a selection of chapters from the handbook), the ratio has reduced to twice as many chapters produced by academics as by practitioners.

Quadrant 2. Non-academic and publish

There is a strong tradition within PCP of such publications. Some of the leading contributors in the U.K., e.g., Bannister, Mair, Smail, Ravenette, Procter, and Butler, worked in applied educational and clinical settings. This was also true for Fransella in the second part of her career, once she retired from the Royal Free School of Medicine.

Quadrant 3. Academic and don't publish

This is a declining quadrant. To survive in most parts of academia you MUST publish.

Quadrant 4. Non-academic and don't publish

This includes the majority of PCP practitioners. The sad reality is that there are no professional rewards at present for practitioners who publish. Although research is often included in professional job descriptions, in practice there is often heavy pressure to spend little or no time on research.

Practitioners' working lives are dominated by the pressures of delivering services. This is true in both the public services and private practice. For example, the British Personal Construct Psychology Association (PCPA) recently held a one-day workshop for experienced PCP practitioners (from both the public services and private practice) who were interested in a new national register of approved supervisors. Of the 15 people who registered for this day less than half had produced any PCP publications. For many PCP practitioners their main focus is on organizational, educational, and clinical work, training, and supervision.

young adopters of a theory are often more attracted to PCP because it combines theoretical radicalism and practical usefulness in therapy, education, organizational consulting, and so on—provided they have adequate access to it. (Scheer, 2013, p. 34)

I tried counting up every person I directly know to be involved in PCP in the U.K. and came up with the same result: less than half had published. This situation is one of great vulnerability for these practitioners. As Neimeyer pointed out in 1997:

Indeed, with the intensified demands for accountability and demonstrations of treatment efficacy in the broader society (at least in the United States), constructivists who fail to address issues of therapy outcome risk irrelevancy not only to the psychotherapy research establishment, but also to the larger social system upon which they are ultimately reliant. (p. 66)

As I have previously mentioned, the distinction that I am making between academic practitioners and practitioners is clearly sometimes a difficult one. However, it is one that is very clear to most practitioners, who do not have any formal involvement, post-training, with any academic institution. This is a divide which many have tried to cross over, for example, Leitner and Dunnet (1993), whose book:

is intended to provide the reader with an overview of personal construct psychotherapy by encouraging practicing clinicians to write about how personal construct psychology informs them in the therapeutic setting. (1993, p. ix)

While this book is clearly clinically focused, and written by “practicing clinicians,” out of a total of 21 contributors 15 have academic addresses, and six non-academic! Even more interestingly, the six contributors with non-academic addresses are all from within the U.K.

Using publication data therefore does not represent the state of PCP, particularly in Europe. As I have suggested above, less than half of active PCP practitioners have committed anything to print, apart from occasionally in conference proceedings. If we were to continue to use publication data as our focus we would fail to consider the majority of practitioner-led PCP activity in Europe (and possibly elsewhere) today. This would also give a distorted view of possible futures. “Access to PCP ideas is really an issue that needs to be addressed” (Scheer, 2013, p. 34).

The Formal Organization of PCP

The lack of formal organization is something that has greatly influenced the development of PCP. This is an issue that has been highlighted again and again over the years by Robert Neimeyer. It has also been problematic,

even when training courses have been organized, to organize ongoing teaching and supervision. Where training was available it was restricted to those who could make the financial and personal commitment (which often involved a considerable degree of travel or even relocation). The Internet totally changes this. We are now in a situation where “Information is now free—so has very little value. The value we provide is how we apply what we know and make it interesting and relevant to others” (Standing, 2013, p. 828).

PCP has been slow to grasp the opportunities the Internet provides. In 1997 Neimeyer pointed out that there were real possibilities being opened up by the Internet:

For example, Internet-based services, such as the Personal Construct Theory Homepage on the World Wide Web are beginning to offer access to sophisticated interactive research protocols using repertory grids to assess individual and group construct systems. Such programs, offered at no charge, permit users to collaborate on multisite studies (e.g., on therapist and client conceptualization of change events in therapy), incorporating video-clip prompts, interactive elicitation of constructs, and immediate visual feedback of results to participants. (Neimeyer, 1997, p. 69)

The development of the Internet would now allow more than research protocols or multi-site studies. As the technology changes it is creating an opportunity for PCP that has not existed previously. Good examples of this are the Internet PCP Encyclopedia edited by Scheer and Walker (PCP-net.org/encyclopedia) and the free online journal *Personal Construct Theory and Practice*, edited by Scheer and Butt (PCP-net.org/journal). In 2013 Scheer, in an article about the legacy of Fay Fransella, said:

Fransella was aware of the potential of the internet, and I think this is the road to take to accomplish the goals she pursued. Some of the entries in the Internet Encyclopedia have more than 300 “hits” per month, which demonstrates the outreach of the medium (Scheer & Walker, 2003 ff). The (free) online journal Personal Construct Theory & Practice now has nearly 800 subscribers in more than 40 countries (Scheer & Butt, 2004), and with the help of the internet, “unfinished businesses” can become “works in progress”—works that are potentially never finished. (2013, p. 34)

There are Internet therapy, teaching, supervision, and research opportunities now available to people interested in PCP.

Therapy

In many ways this is the most straightforward development to make happen. The geographical distribution of PCP therapists has often meant that it is not practically possible to find a local PCP therapist. As Internet therapy becomes more accepted it will be straightforward to participate in therapy with a PCP practitioner. I recently had the experience of a client moving abroad before we were finished. We have continued to work using an Internet-based link. In some ways this is resolving the problem faced by Kelly, who in his early days of clinical practice found that the distances he was traveling did not allow for regular face-to-face therapy.

Teaching

MOOCS (massive open online courses) are a possible way forward for the development of the theory, though as it is unlikely that PCP will ever attract a mass market we might have to settle for “miniature” rather than massive!

A recent BBC report (Coughlan, 2013) describes how MOOCS are evolving. In particular it identifies the problems posed by them: “how thousands of students on a course could ever be satisfactorily taught, assessed and accredited.” The staggering statistic contained in this BBC report is that “At Harvard, more people have signed up for MOOCS in a single year than have attended the university in its entire 377 year history.”

Here is a possible future for PCP. A large-scale MOOC could be organized at an international level, using all available resources. This would allow a wide range of people to become acquainted with PCP. That would help to resolve the small-scale availability of PCP practitioners, which has been a major problem in developing the network of PCP practitioners. The importance of actually seeing PCP in practice has already been emphasized as the best way of recruiting the third section of the shamrock described earlier—the “trainees, interested people, participants in PCP processes.”

At the beginning of the last PCP foundation course I ran in Coventry, I asked the participants why they were attending the course. All the course participants were either graduates in pre-training posts, actually in training, or relatively recently qualified in educational or clinical psychology. I was particularly interested in their reasons as they represent a generation which

has grown up entirely within a therapeutic world which is dominated by cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). The responses I got included:

“Hone skills in PCP.”

“Eclectic approach.”

“More therapeutic.”

“Fit to purpose . . . find out what suits the client.”

“One approach does not fit all.” (in reference to CBT)

“I know psychologists who practice PCP and speak highly of its use and effectiveness, so I want to learn more about it.”

“Offers a model alternative to CBT that is more person-centered and flexible.”

“My supervisor is a strong advocate of the approach.”

“I like it because a much more subjective approach is taken.”

“Seeking a more thoughtful approach to working creatively with children and young people.”

The central common dimension was that they had seen PCP in action through the work of PCP practitioners. None of them referred to the professional literature. As Scheer pointed out in 2013:

The number of people potentially exposed to PCP through the printed word is limited, given the number of copies printed of scholarly books and journals. For example, the “paid distribution” of the *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* was officially 153 in 2010 (the total distribution was 215). (p. 34)

I also asked participants how many had come across PCP as undergraduates. The answer was only 1 out of 12, suggesting that PCP has almost disappeared from the undergraduate curriculum in the U.K. (the one who had was from an Irish university). Neimeyer’s (1985) observation that PCT in Britain had attained “a place for itself in the literature, curriculum and political power structure of British Psychology” has clearly proved over-optimistic.

The initial experience of PCP could be provided by a MOOC. The question this then raises is: What you do next? What does Harvard do with more people “than have attended the university in its entire 377 year history”? Many of these people are hungry for more.

The answer being developed is SPOCS. SPOCS are small private online courses where access is much more restricted, and numbers on each course will be in the tens rather than thousands. They are also delivered on the Internet, and may or may not be free.

Harvard isn't abandoning MOOCs, but rather like Russian dolls sitting inside each other, a single course might now be delivered to a large open MOOC audience, to a much smaller number of SPOC students and then down to an even smaller number enrolled at the bricks-and-mortar campus. (Coughlan, 2013)

So a PCP MOOC could prompt the formation of SPOCS, which in turn could lead to "an even smaller number enrolled at the bricks-and-mortar campus" (Coughlan, 2013).

In the U.K., the Personal Construct Psychology Association is already running a SPOC. This is a two-year diploma which has two contact days a year, with the remainder being provided through the Internet. The course involves a total of 16 two-hour tutorials per year and 10 two-hour supervision sessions, all provided online. It is aimed at anyone who wants to deepen their knowledge and experience of PCP. The first participants are located hundreds of miles from each other, as are the tutor and the supervisor.

The intention is that this course provides the theoretical basis for those interested in proceeding to a second two-year course in personal construct psychotherapy. In the language used above this course would have to be more of a "bricks and mortar" course, as psychotherapy training cannot be totally online (the registration body for psychotherapy in the U.K., the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy, specifies that "not more than 50% of training shall be delivered online"). The organization of MOOCs would require cooperation across the PCP community. Here the lack of organization identified by Robert Neimeyer is one of the biggest obstacles to future development. In 1997 Neimeyer pointed out: "I believe that constructivists need to consider the development of a minimum sufficient organization to achieve their desired ends" (1997, p. 69). While such organizations exist within specific countries, currently there is no international structure.

Supervision

Just as with therapy, Internet-based supervision is becoming more and more accepted. Using Skype or other similar services, supervision is possible across the world. As one Internet provider of supervision observes: "I have talked with countless trainees who live in areas where a supervisor is not readily available at their location or within a reasonable driving time to meet with a supervisor once a week." This is precisely the same situation

as for many PCP trainees. The website goes on to observe: “My hope is that by providing live, online supervision, this need will be met. There are currently no limits placed on supervision of MFTs that I am aware of other than the specification that it must be ‘face to face’” (<http://www.familymatterscounseling.com/OnlineClinicalSupervision.en.html>). Whether the specification of face to face was intended to include Web cameras is an interesting question!

Research

In 2005 Watson and Winter described a piece of applied research carried out in a British National Health Service setting. This research was carried out by Watson as a PhD thesis (Watson, 1998). In their paper they note that “many existing research trials are based on efficacy trials with dubious relevance to clinical practice with clients who are typically referred to service settings” (Watson & Winter, 2005, p. 336).

Winter (2000) addressed the issue of clinical relevance with his development of a databank of routine outcome data from personal construct psychotherapists in the U.K. The idea was that such a database could be “compared with that from similar data banks on other approaches” (p. 378). Green and Latchford (2012) suggest that such a database can be developed by the use of practice-based evidence. They point out that “on the ground, there is still a considerable gulf between psychotherapy research and clinical practice” (p. 203). They offer a practical introduction to the practice-based evidence approach. They describe how such an approach can be coordinated by a practice-based network. This approach is entirely compatible with PCP and offers a coherent way forward to allow PCP practitioners to participate in and contribute to PCP research. It would also provide the answer to Neimeyer’s observation, previously quoted, that “constructivists who fail to address issues of therapy outcome risk irrelevancy” (1997, p. 66).

Conclusion

PCP came from the applied base of American clinical psychology, and in the U.S.A. it appears to have continued to be predominantly a clinical theory. In the U.K. and Europe, Fransella’s development of the Centre for Personal Construct Psychology facilitated the growth of PCP in other areas, including

education, organizations, coaching, speech science, sport, and residential work, in both hospital and hostel settings. The majority of practitioners in such settings do not publish. They do, however, use the Internet, both as a source of information and as a way of communicating. This is particularly true of the generation who are now training in the various European schools, who have grown up with the Internet as a given. The future development of PCP is bound up with development of Internet sources as described in this chapter. It is also dependent on people's actual experience of PCP in action, and their personal experience of PCP. This experience can be initially provided by Internet-based resources. These resources are no substitute for actual practical experience, but they can play an important role in the future development of PCP.

By adopting the strategies described above, Neimeyer's challenges can be met:

Ultimately, if clinical constructivism is to realize its potential, it must:
 meet the challenges posed by its abstract presentation and occasional metatheoretical incoherence; *which could be done by MOOCS and SPOCS*
 articulate defensible but unrestrictive guidelines for practice; *which could come from practice-based networks*
 confront the realities of power and influence, even in the therapeutic relationship; *again, practice-based evidence incorporating the viewpoint of the client addresses this*
 and elaborate programs of research that identify change processes characteristic of effective therapy. (1997, p. 70; words in italics added).

The future of PCP is one of individual practitioners who are drawn to PCP by its mix of intellectual integrity and its capacity to be applied in their real world. This is the cutting edge of PCP, where people show how something that involves their lived experience is clarified, extended, and developed by the contribution of the theory. PCP is a deeply subversive theory which will never become part of the mainstream, as it appeals to people who subscribe to the Groucho Marx school—of not joining any club which would have them as a member. A good example of the appeal of PCP to practitioners can be seen in Butler (2009), which demonstrates how personal involvement, theory, and clinical work can be integrated in PCP.

As Mair pointed out in 1977 (in a paper reprinted in 2014), “Perhaps for some Kelly has opened too many doors, which let in the cold draught of untamed reality and offered too many paths which lead in to the unknown” (2014, p. 100).

This is the challenge which attracts people to PCP. It is a challenge which will continue to resonate with a particular group of people. The unanswered, as yet, question, is how big this group could become, given the potential Internet resources described in this chapter.

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Construing Homicide

David A. Winter

George Kelly's (1955) "credulous approach" enjoins the personal construct psychologist to take the attitude that "From a phenomenological point of view the client—like the proverbial customer—is always right" (p. 322). This approach essentially involves sociality, taking the other person's views seriously by attempting to see the world through his or her eyes. It is exemplified by Kelly's approach to diagnosis, in which the client is construed not in terms of psychiatric diagnostic labels which essentially dismiss his or her experiences as symptoms of mental illness, and alien to our own, but in terms of a set of diagnostic constructs which are "neither good nor bad, healthy nor unhealthy, adaptive nor maladaptive" (Kelly, 1955, p. 453). To construe one's client's processes in the same terms as one's own, albeit as perhaps rather more extreme or less flexible, may cause one some mild discomfort with most clients. However, what if one's client had committed a criminal act of a type that had inflicted considerable suffering on another person? Would it not be stretching credulity to its limits to combine revulsion at their acts with an attempt to understand the construing processes underlying the courses of action that the individual had taken? Although this may be so, there have now been numerous examples of the application of a personal construct approach with offenders (Horley, 2003; Houston, 1998). Elsewhere, I have explored how pathways to acts of extreme violence, including murder, may be delineated in terms of Kelly's diagnostic constructs (Winter, 2003, 2007), and this approach will now be illustrated by considering examples of different types of homicide.

One-Off Killing

Where do we start, how about birth, ok. I was born in . . . on . . . I don't remember the birth, perhaps I was too young or maybe I had my eyes closed, I don't know.

I went to a nursery . . . then went on to . . . Primary school before going on to . . . Comprehensive school where . . . my studies were interrupted by an unforeseen event.

I killed my father. I don't really know why, my memory of the event . . . doesn't appear full. I was a little screwed up afterwards and probably still am today. (Winter, 2003, pp. 38–39)

This is an extract from a self-characterization (Kelly, 1955) written by Paul (ignoring the instructions to write it in the third person), who was referred for treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. Although such a diagnosis is usually more associated with the victims of violence than its perpetrators, in fact a significant number of the latter do suffer from post-traumatic stress. This is particularly likely in “reactive” offenders, those who have experienced a loss of control, or in the terms of personal construct theory, a foreshortening of the Circumspection–Preemption–Control Cycle (see Appendix to this volume), acting impulsively without considering all of the issues involved. Such an individual may struggle to construe what he or she has done, and therefore be faced with considerable anxiety, or may feel markedly dislodged from their core role, and experience profound guilt, the more so if their victim has been killed.

This was the case with Paul, who said that he had “encapsulated” the “big event” of his father's death and put it “on a shelf” for many years. We used the ABC model (Tschudi & Winter, 2012) to explore the positive and negative implications of taking it down from the shelf, and Paul eventually decided that he wished to take the risk of doing so. Repertory grid technique highlighted his difficulties in making sense of the big event, indicating that his construing of it was very poorly elaborated. Over the following weeks we gradually explored what he had done, eventually aided by inspection of the file of his court case, and a repeat grid showed that his construing of it had become considerably more elaborated. We also worked on issues of guilt and trust, and eventually Paul was able to make major changes in his life, including embarking on a new career and getting married.

A particular pattern that has been demonstrated by Howells (1983) in the repertory grids of one-off violent offenders is a “positivity bias” in

which people, including the victim, are construed in a uniformly favorable light. When such construing is invalidated, perhaps by a major relationship difficulty, the individual may “slot rattle,” switching to a totally negative view of, and committing extreme violence toward, the source of the invalidation.

Serial Killing

In the 1960s, Ian Brady and his partner, Myra Hindley, killed five children and young people, whose ages ranged from 10 to 17 years. Their usual modus operandi was that Hindley lured the victim into her car, and he or she was eventually killed, sometimes after being raped or sexually assaulted by Brady, and the body buried in moorland in Derbyshire in England, earning Brady and Hindley the title of the “Moors Murderers.”

Kelly regarded all behavior as an experiment. For the killer, this would apply to the act of homicide, and while this is a rather uncontrolled experiment in most one-off killers, in the serial killer it becomes a research program. Some insight into such a program is provided by the book that Ian Brady (2001) wrote on his specialist subject of serial killing.

Since a book, as with any piece of text, generally essentially consists of descriptions of aspects of the book’s subject area (often people), it is possible to construct a repertory grid from these aspects (or elements) and the descriptors (or construct poles) applied to them. Such a textual grid was created from Brady’s book, which was then subjected to methods of grid analysis (Winter et al., 2007). This indicated that, although Brady had a more elaborated view of serial killers than of people in general, he tended to dissociate himself from other serial killers. He construed himself as most similar to Stavrogin, the central character in Dostoevsky’s *The Possessed*, who “turns life into a cartoon where everything is possible.”

Brady’s (2001) analysis of serial killing, reminiscent of Kelly’s views concerning some suicidal acts, is that this may be an attempt to introduce some design into an apparently chaotic world. As he put it, the “serial killer *has* confronted the chaos or absurdity of existence . . . and is trying to impose on it some meaning or order of his own” (p. 102, italics in original). This is apparent in the case of Dennis Nilsen, who invited young, mostly homeless, men back to his flat, killed 15 of them, and carefully washed and applied talc to their bodies, creating something which he regarded as being as beautiful as a Michelangelo sculpture in contrast to these men’s formerly

chaotic lives. A similar pattern of asserting power and control over life and death is displayed by many “medical killers,” doctors and other health professionals who deliberately kill their patients (Winter, 2007).

For Brady (2001, p. 82), the choice made by the serial killer is not “to exist as a grey daub on a grey canvas” but rather “as an existential riot of every colour in the spectrum.” Having made this choice, in committing the first murder it is, in Brady’s view, not only the victim but the killer’s “long-accepted self” that is killed as his or her “umbilical connection” to “ordinary mankind” is cut. As the murders continue, a new self, and a “career,” as a serial killer are increasingly elaborated.

Mass Murder

On July 22, 2011, Anders Behring Breivik emailed a compendium entitled “2083: A Declaration of European Independence,” on which he had worked for some nine years, to over 1,000 addresses. He then drove from his home to bomb government buildings in Oslo before attacking a Labor Party youth camp on Utøya Island, killing in total 77 people.

Breivik’s compendium is even longer than the two volumes of Kelly’s (1955) *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*. However, in attempting to make sense of his actions, the most (indeed, perhaps the only) revealing section consists of 63 pages entitled “An Interview with a Justiciar Knight Commander of the PCCTS,¹ Knights Templar.” In it, Breivik is clearly both interviewer and interviewee, and the section is therefore similar to a self-characterization (Winter & Tschudi, 2015).

The “interview” includes a description of incidents throughout the course of Breivik’s life, thus providing an insight into his validational fortunes. For example, he describes various seemingly potentially invalidating events from his childhood, including his parents’ divorce, his father and stepmother’s failed attempt to obtain custody of him, their own subsequent divorce, and his father breaking off contact with him. He nevertheless writes that he did not have any negative experiences in his childhood, and indeed that he “had a privileged upbringing with responsible and intelligent people around” him (Berwick, 2011, p. 1387). Any criticism of this upbringing, for example that it was too liberal, is directed not at his family members but at the sociopolitical influences to which they were subject. In personal construct terms, it may be that he “suspended” some less tolerable constructions of his childhood (“putting them on a shelf,” like Paul in the previous example).

His account of his adolescence includes descriptions of how, as a gang member, he formed alliances with Muslim gangs, the members of which he admired because of their pride, self-respect, and readiness to use violence if necessary. However, he then recounts numerous experiences of assaults, threats, and abuse by Muslims, leading him to experience yet further invalidation. His increasingly anti-Muslim views led him to join a political party with a similar ideology, but the party's youth organization rejected his candidature for Oslo City Council. Forays into business proved no more successful, and resulted in him going bankrupt.

However, far from construing himself as a failure, Breivik "re-established" himself as "A perfect example which should be copied, applauded and celebrated. The Perfect Knight I have always strived to be. A Justiciar Knight is a destroyer of multiculturalism, and as such; a destroyer of evil and a bringer of light" (Berwick, 2011, p. 1435). His willingness to use violence in his mission of "armed resistance," advocating the deaths of 45,000 and the wounding of a million "cultural Marxists and multiculturalists," contrasted with his self-description as "someone who wouldn't be willing to hurt a fly" (p. 1395). However, he appeared to reconcile this fragmentation in his self-construing by stating that "In many ways, morality has lost its meaning in our struggle. The question of good and evil is reduced to one simple choice . . . Survive or perish" (p. 846). Indeed, at his subsequent trial, he asserted that he "acted out of goodness, not evil."

Breivik's view of the world clearly seemed to be characterized by a profound sense of threat, in which he anticipated the core structures of Western values being submerged by multiculturalism and "Islamization." As he described it, "fighting for your people's survival, when threatened, is the most logical thing to do to" (p. 1383). It was also clear that when his anticipations, for example of Muslims being dangerous, did not materialize, he was not averse to being hostile, extorting evidence for his predictions. Thus, he urged that if Muslims were not showing their "true face" of being violent jihadists they should be provoked into becoming radicalized. For Breivik, the surest way of achieving this was to attack Muslim women at mosques during Ramadan. The violent reactions of the Muslim community would then lead to a spiral involving polarization of the constructions of non-Muslim Europeans.

Anders Breivik's story, although with a particularly terrible outcome, exemplifies those of many who have embarked on courses of mass murder. Common features are the invalidation of a construction of the self, perhaps by experiences of rejection or humiliation; the threat of major change; identification of perceived sources of invalidation and threat, perhaps

drawing upon prevalent social constructions and discourses; and attempted elimination of these, together with reconstruction of a view of the self as stronger and more powerful, even as a hero.

Genocide

Rudolf Hoess served as commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp from May 1, 1940, for three and a half years. During this time, he oversaw the murder of over a million, and perhaps as many as four million, people.

Rudolf Hoess, like Anders Breivik, wrote an autobiographical account, but in his case at the urging of his Polish captors while he was awaiting the trial that eventuated in his death penalty. This book (Hoess, 2000) was subjected to analysis from a personal construct perspective in an attempt to understand how a family man, previously a farmer, could come to orchestrate murder on an industrial scale (Reed et al., 2014).

Textual grid analysis of his autobiography indicated that Hoess construed himself as very different from others, although he saw himself as a young man as most similar to Jews. In terms of Landfield's (1954) exemplification hypothesis, Jews may therefore have been threatening to him in representing aspects of himself that he had outgrown or rejected. A content analysis of the construct poles that he applied to himself, or imagined that others applied to him, indicated conflict in his self-construing. Thus, he construed himself as "never cruel," and as someone who "had a heart" and was "not indifferent to human suffering," whereas he considered it necessary to adopt a "cold" and "stony" façade, and he thought it likely that he was viewed by others as a "cruel sadist" and "bloodthirsty beast."

Not unrelated to this conflict, the autobiography also highlighted a dilemma that Hoess had faced regarding the choice between remaining in the concentration camp service and returning to a "normal" SS unit or even to his former life as a farmer. Drawing upon the ABC model (see above), the positive and negative implications of each pole of this choice were delineated. While leaving the service, in his view, would have allowed him to show his real character and feelings, and avoid witnessing cruelty toward prisoners, its negative implications included not only showing signs of weakness but also perceived betrayal of the Führer and National Socialism.

This dilemma highlighted the extent to which guilt, in Kelly's sense of dislodgement from one's core role, played a role in Hoess's decisions and actions. It was apparent that his core role was of someone who did their

duty by showing obedience to the Führer. Thus, if the Führer were perceived to have ordered the final solution to the Jewish question, Hoess's assiduous organization of the extermination of Jews and other prisoners would have caused him no guilt; indeed, quite the opposite. However, what did cause him guilt, as he admitted in his autobiography, was his awareness of the ill treatment, as opposed to the murder, of prisoners, as this was contrary to orders.

Over 30 years later, in a very different cultural setting, the commandant of another infamous establishment also did his murderous duty, resulting in the deaths of all but seven of the 14,000 or so individuals in his custody. This was Comrade Duch, who was charged with extracting confessions under torture in S-21, the interrogation center of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and then executing the people concerned. The "confessions" were refined until they told the required story as part of a mission "to manufacture a new conception of the world" (Panh, 2013, p. 259). Similarly to Hoess, Duch was proud that "I applied myself. I never violated discipline." The operation that he commanded was a successful one but, like Hoess, it was violation of orders that troubled him the most, for example the use of a form of torture that (unlike such methods as electrocution of the genitals, eating excrement, or even vivisection) was not codified. Dutiful, orderly, and prescribed application of torture and death, in contrast, was, for Duch, a situation in which "Malice and cruelty formed no part of our ideology" (2013, p. 118) and therefore was no cause for guilt. What continued to "hurt his feelings" many years later, as he admitted, was not the suffering inflicted at S-21 but the fact that the number of his center had one less digit, and correspondingly a lower perceived status, than those of other centers of the Khmer Rouge regime, such as the Office of Propaganda (prestigiously numbered 366)!

Conclusions

We all attempt to give meaning to our worlds. A few do so by serial killing or mass murder; a few by trying to make sense of such horrors. Are the processes involved any different? Are the meaning-makers any different?

Some people do their duty by exterminating others, but their actions are construed as "war crimes"; some do so by engaging in legitimated killing during warfare. The latter included Lieutenant Colonel Fred Swann, the American weapons officer who reduced to rubble a Baghdad restaurant together with an adjoining building. As he said,

I did not know who was there. I really didn't care. We've got to get the bombs on target. We've got 10 minutes to do it. We've got to make a lot of things happen to make that happen. So you just fall totally into execute mode and kill the target . . . (Borger & Millar, 2003, p. 3).

It transpired that Swann's "target" (Saddam Hussein) was not in the restaurant, but that the attack killed at least 14 people who were not its original targets. Did Colonel Swann care? Perhaps referring to a human being as a target renders him or her outside one's sphere of sociality and therefore of capacity to induce guilt, similarly to Duch's view that "Comrades under arrest were enemies, not men" (Panh, 2013, p. 251); to Nazi propaganda that the Jews were vermin; or to radio announcers' exhortations, directed at the Hutu perpetrators of another genocide, in Rwanda, that their Tutsi victims were "cockroaches."

Missions such as Colonel Swann's bring to mind George Kelly's words concerning hostility:

Bombs must be dropped: to be sure, children will die, but who can say it was we who put them in the target area? From our point of view, it is a precious way of life that we defend—Cadillacs and all. But what the hostile man does not know is that it is he who is the eventual victim of his own extortion. (1969, p. 287)

In view of the extensive media coverage of acts of killing such as those described in this chapter, it may be surprising that the level of violence in the world has declined considerably over the years. Amongst the factors to which Pinker (2011) attributes this are an "expanding circle" of empathy with our fellow humans; and an increasing view of our own interests and those of others as equivalent so that, as in Kelly's remarks about hostility, we appreciate that in cycles of violence we are the eventual victims. Empathy, or sociality in Kellyan jargon, may indeed be in short supply in those who commit extreme violence or murder (although arguably it is an essential qualification for an effective torturer). However, it is all too easy for us to show a comparable lack of sociality toward such individuals, for the alternative is the threat of acknowledging our common humanity and that their construction processes are essentially similar to our own. As Chandler (2000) remarked, "To find the source of the evil that was enacted at S-21 on a daily basis, we need look no further than ourselves" (p. 155). While attempting to understand the perspectives of those who commit homicide (and perhaps, as indicated in Chapter 38 in this volume, encouraging mutual understanding between them and survivors of their acts)

may do little to prevent further such actions, it is surely more likely to do so than to view such people as fundamentally different from ourselves, and only comprehensible in terms of evil or insanity.

Note

- 1 Pauperes commilitones Christi Templique Solomonici (the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon).

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Too Much of a Bad Thing

Commonality and the Construction of Sexual “Experience”

Carmen Dell’Aversano

All our present perceptions are open to question and reconsideration, and . . . even the most obvious occurrences of everyday life might appear utterly transformed if we were inventive enough to construe them differently.

(Kelly 1970, p. 1)

[I]t is precisely this idea of sex in itself that we cannot accept without examination.

(Foucault, 1976, p. 152)

The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures.

(Foucault, 1976, p. 157)

As anyone familiar with personal construct psychology (PCP) knows, part of the originality of Kelly’s work lies in his redefinition of a number of core concepts of psychology. It may thus come as a surprise that Kelly had nothing specific to say about a topic that, from Freud onward, has attracted considerable attention in psychological theorizing, explanation, and research: sex.¹ In this peculiar lack of interest PCP sets itself at odds not only with the discipline of psychology but with the social context from which this discipline arose and in which it is practiced, where sex is, in PCP terms, a core construct. This definition, however brief and rough,² is meant to introduce the method I intend to follow in this chapter: I will use the theoretical tools of PCP to describe, account for, and explain not sex in the abstract and in general,³ but

the social construction of sex that inevitably forms the foundation, the background, and the substance of our personal constructions, and experiences. In my descriptions, accounts, and explanations I will make use of constructs from a number of theories, from discourse analysis to Rosch's prototype theory to Harvey Sacks's conversation analysis to Foucault's history of sexuality. Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is twofold: to present an interpretation of the present social construction of sex in PCP terms, and to offer an example of a dialogue between PCP and various other disciplines which, despite their diversity, all share the fundamental constructivist/constructionist axiom of a relational ontology.⁴

As the first step of my argument, and of this dialogue, I will elaborate the definition I proposed above of sex as a core construct through reference to the way the social construction of sex prevalent in present-day Western societies can be modeled in several other theories.

One is discourse analysis, supplemented with a historicist perspective which may integrate and, in part, correct Foucault (1976). Foucault's authoritative account of the discursive construction of sexuality neglects a fundamental historical discontinuity: for most of the period he investigates, the proliferation of discourses he analyzes concerns (as his very definition of *scientia sexualis* [p. 67] makes clear) texts addressed by specialists to specialist audiences, which were not meant to—and did not—enter social discourse at large, but were communicated to lay people only in the context and in the form of (normally highly confidential) professional advice. This changed in most Western countries around and after World War I with the massive popularization of psychoanalysis, which inevitably marked the entrance of what was seen as Freud's pansexualism in lay social discourse. When the basic tenets and assumptions of Freudian psychoanalysis began to percolate from specialist parlance into social discourse at large, sex in our culture acquired an unprecedented status as the main content of the psyche and the most reliable measure of mental health; this theoretical centrality of sex led to, and justified, its discursive primacy; conversely—and even more importantly—an absence of interest in sex, of sexual activity, or of discursive references to sex became noticeable, and was invariably stigmatized as "repression." And from Freud onwards, all major representatives of what Foucault calls *scientia sexualis* have made headlines in a lay social discourse which had become saturated with sex.

Another peculiarity of the social construction of sex can be accounted for by examining the consequences of the discursive centrality of sex in the light of Rosch's prototype theory (Rosch, 1973).⁵ Social discourse is interminably loquacious about sexual pleasure, and remarkably silent about

other forms of pleasure, which are not necessarily less intense, less widespread, or less important: we know everything about the exhilaration that is experienced when the sexual organs fill with blood as a consequence of sexual arousal; we hardly ever talk about the exhilaration that is experienced when a receptive and eager mind fills with new ideas as a consequence of learning, or when a heart fills with joy as the consequence of a good deed. We have access to eloquent descriptions of the pleasures of the most diverse kinds of sexual activity; we would be at a loss for words if we tried to describe the pleasures of listening to different kinds of music, of reading different authors, of different kinds of non-sexual physical activity (dance, yoga, trekking, swimming, sleep, hot baths. . .). As a consequence of this discursive asymmetry, the pleasure that is assumed to derive from sexual activity has come to be defined and regarded as the prototype of pleasure, and people who, for any reason, do not have access to this pleasure (either because they enjoy sex but are not sexually active, or because they do not enjoy sex) are regarded, and are led to regard themselves, not as lacking *one* form of enjoyment (as would be the case for someone who did not have the opportunity to enjoy, or did not enjoy, music or food or reading) but as leading defective, diminished, and deformed lives.⁶

The third peculiarity of the social construction of sex that contributes to enshrining it as a core construct can be described using Harvey Sacks's concept of "category-bound activity" (Sacks, 1992, vol. 1, p. 241).⁷ Sacks observes that social knowledge is stored largely in terms of activities that are considered typical of given categories, which are used to distinguish category members from non-members, and which, consequently, members are expected to perform, while they are not accessible to non-members. We all know that the phrase "adult material" does not designate election ballots or tax returns (even though only adults can vote or pay taxes): "adult" in social discourse is invariably synonymous with "sexual." Much more than smoking, drinking, driving, or working (and of course than voting or paying taxes), sex is, in present-day social discourse, *the* category-bound activity that defines adulthood. This is, of course, a major determinant in the hysteria that surrounds any suggestion (however implausible and far-fetched) of an association between sex and children,⁸ but the most interesting consequence of this definition⁹ has been teased out by Sacks himself.

Sacks starts by remarking that, in ordinary conversation, "second stories," that is, stories told in response to another story, must fit the first story in such a way that the teller of the second story is the same character in the story he or she tells that the teller of the first story was in the one he or she told: "Suppose, for example, your buddy tells you a story about how he

went out last night and got laid. Then it's apparently not a sufficient return to tell about how some other friend of yours did the same" (Sacks 1992, vol. 1, p. 781). Like most of Sacks's observations, this one turns out to have momentous social consequences, since, as Sacks (1992, vol. 1, p. 781) puts it, "requirements to have certain sorts of tellables operate as sources of looking for experiences": when some people in a social group talk about experiences which others do not have, those others will notice that they are unable to contribute to the conversation, and will start seeking out those experiences not necessarily because they are interested in the experiences themselves, but in order not to fail as conversationalists. The conversational requirement about second stories thus orients people to see their lives as incomplete if they do not have experiences which others have. Sacks himself spells out the relevance of his observations to sex:

it seems fair to suppose that there's a time when kids do "kissing and telling," that they're doing the kissing in order to have something to tell, and not that they happen to do kissing and happen to do telling, or that they want to do kissing and happen to do telling, etc., but that a way to get them to like the kissing is via the fact that they like the telling. (Sacks, 1992, vol. 2, p. 218)

These three disciplinary perspectives—discourse analysis, prototype theory, and conversation analysis—motivate, substantiate, and explain the claim that sex is, in PCP terms, a core construct. That all three explanations refer to the role of social discourse in establishing this primacy is by no means a coincidence: on an abstract and theoretical level one of my aims in this chapter is to demonstrate the fruitfulness of a dialogue between PCP and a number of methodologies and fields of inquiry which can, in the broadest and most abstract sense, be subsumed under the heading of social constructionism; more to the point, on the concrete level of the issue at hand, I believe that social discourse plays not merely a major, but a unique role in the construction of sex, one that any attempt to account for sex in PCP terms must take into serious consideration.

This uniqueness is grounded in a state of affairs that we perceive as so "natural" that we are almost unable to notice its paradoxical nature. On the one hand, sex is ubiquitous, pervasive, compulsory, and statistically prevalent as a topic of social *discourse*; on the other hand, sexual *activity* is (with very few exceptions) absolutely private. This experiential paradox is paralleled by a communicative asymmetry: while we are constantly bombarded by the media with how-to instructions, images, movies, scientific findings, statistics, and stories about what sex is *supposed* to be like, we hardly ever

get a chance to talk back and say what sex *is* like for *us*; and—what is even more important—even the accounts we sometimes exchange in the context of close friendships or intimate relationships (as well as the events from which these accounts originated) have been structured—indeed, have come into existence, as Sacks so elegantly shows—by constant reference to social discourse. What is at issue here is not simply the way knowledge about sex is constructed, but the absence of any dissenting viewpoint which might correct, integrate, contradict, or at least healthily ridicule the mediatic-sexologic-hedonistic-pornographic discursive hegemony, where every voice (of the columnist, of the expert, of the preacher, of the movie character, of the interview subject. . .) seems credible only because each of them repeats what everyone has already heard.

But the most serious problem arising from the present structure of social discourse about sex is that a situation where a pervasive and normative social discourse—for instance about politics—assumes and prescribes that everybody *must* be interested in politics and politically active, and where, *at the same time*, practically nobody talks about politics outside the context of extremely close and intimate relationships, and information about everyone's political experiences, opinions, and preferences is considered highly confidential and potentially embarrassing, is the definition of fascism.

We live in sexual fascism.

In the rest of this chapter I will try to describe some consequences of sexual fascism in PCP terms, starting with the Fundamental Postulate, ending with the Experience Cycle, and touching, in passing, on most of the corollaries.

It is obvious from everything that has been observed so far that sex plays a major role in the socially shared anticipation of events, and thus in how our “processes are psychologically channelized” (Kelly, 1955, p. 46). In order to fully appreciate the extent and the nature of this role, however, three basic traits of the social discourse about sex are worth singling out: its invasiveness, its obsessiveness, and its prescriptiveness.

First of all, social discourse about sex is invasive, not only because of its ubiquitousness,¹⁰ but because of its uncanny ability to encroach on, and colonize, not only any social space but the most diverse—and, apparently, the most distant—fields of experience, in an uncontrolled and irresistible expansion of its range of convenience which flies in the face of the sober caveat of the Range Corollary: political life is rife with sexual scandals, advertisements routinely feature sexual allusions in the most unlikely contexts, organized religions are obsessively preoccupied with sexual purity, people identify themselves and categorize others according to their sexual

preferences, and so on. Far from being "convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only" (Kelly, 1955, p. 103), sex seems able to subsume an astonishingly broad and diverse range of events; so much so, indeed, as to escape most of the constraints and limitations that PCP places on constructs, among them the Dichotomy Corollary. I have often shared with friends the joke that in PCP all constructs are dichotomous, with the sole exception of the construct itself, which does not have an opposite.¹¹ Sex in social discourse is like the construct in PCP: it is so fundamental, so pervasive, and so absolute that no opposite principle to it can be expressed or, indeed, conceptualized.¹² The reason for sex's ubiquitousness and unipolarity can be explained by referring to Foucault:

In the space of a few centuries, a certain inclination has led us to direct the question of what we are, to sex. . . . the West has managed . . . to bring us almost entirely—our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history—under the sway of a logic of concupiscence and desire. Whenever it is a question of knowing who we are, it is this logic that henceforth serves as our master key. . . . Sex, the explanation for everything. (Foucault, 1976, p. 78; see also pp. 155 and 69–70)

An even more worrisome aspect of the invasiveness of sex is, however, the perceptual salience that accrues to it in all social situations in which its presence is felt, preempting all alternative constructions and all consideration of other elements: this perceptual salience is of course the motive behind the massive, and often grotesque, presence of sexual themes in advertising, but its effect is widespread and pervasive. As soon as a politician is involved in a sexual scandal, it becomes impossible to discuss their merits (or lack thereof); religious education is often little more than a training in sexophobia (whose only lasting effect, which after a couple of thousand years should have become thoroughly predictable, is that of arousing in most of its victims an obsessive interest in sex); and sexual preferences marginalize and obscure potentially more interesting and more productive descriptors of identity, such as social class or personal values and aspirations. This is painfully obvious, for instance, in the self-representation of sexual minorities, where an offensive and dehumanizing constellatory construction by a bigoted and oppressive society¹³ has been replaced by a simplistic and monolithic preemptive construction *by the minorities themselves* (or at least by the relevant community and those who purport to speak in its name): vast differences exist, for example, among gay men in terms of social class, income, opportunities, looks, or ability, but one would search in vain for an

acknowledgment of these differences, and of their potentially very problematic consequences,¹⁴ in the discourse of the “homosexual community,” which does not acknowledge any identity descriptors beyond those having to do with sex.

As well as being invasive, both in its ubiquitousness and in its perceptual salience, social discourse about sex is obsessive, reaching a level of detail that would be unthinkable for any other topic. This obsessiveness is obvious, for instance, when leafing through popular magazines, which normally deal with a variety of issues at the relatively superficial level suitable to a general public. Sex is the exception to this rule: positions and techniques are spelled out with such precision as to blur the distinction between lay and specialist discourse, and to effectively convey the socially shared anticipation that we all are, or should aspire to be, specialists in sex.

This obsessive focus on minute descriptive detail is a necessary prerequisite of a pervasive and inescapable prescriptive control. From supposedly progressive columnists who state that, while fellatio is compulsory, “swallowing is not a requirement: it is extra credit” (Savage, 2012) to Christian teen sites conducting and publishing extensive surveys about which details of female dress, deportment, and demeanor can prove to be “stumbling blocks” to men in the community (that is, elicit sexual thoughts or impulses),¹⁵ social discourse aims, attempts (and, to a considerable extent, manages) to regulate every aspect, every facet, every nuance of individual constructions, anticipations, and behaviors having to do with sex, to a level of detail that would be unthinkable¹⁶ in any other domain of experience.

If we connect this analysis of the invasiveness, obsessiveness, and prescriptiveness of the social discourse on sex to our previous observations about sex as a core construct (see above), we cannot but conclude that in present-day discourse sex has been enshrined not simply as a core construct, but as *the* main superordinate construct that can account not only for existential contentment, personal identity, and interpersonal relationships, but also for myriad other bewilderingly diverse events. In the collective construct system of society at large¹⁷ as well as in those of individuals, this drastically reduces fragmentation, and thus elasticity and adaptability. This is particularly striking—and particularly grotesque—in the construction of personal identity. In our episteme the construct of identity has been radically questioned, and all attempts at essentializing, especially those founded on biological considerations (such as sex, race, or ability) are met (at least by the socially progressive and epistemologically sophisticated) with either ferocious criticism or ruthless ridicule. However, an exception is invariably made (for the reasons explained by Foucault [1976], see above) for all traits

and considerations pertaining to *sexual* identity: any attempt to suggest that homosexuality (or heterosexuality, for that matter) is not "hard-wired" but contingent, flexible, and negotiable is construed as an attack on the deepest and most sacred core of a person's being.¹⁸

The superordinate role of sex in present-day social discourse is nowhere more apparent than in the field of queer studies and activism. Theoretically, queer studies are about the deconstruction of performances and the questioning of essentialist identities: in the abstract this highly promising research program can—and should—be applied to *any* performances or identities; what has actually happened is that queer studies as they have developed so far are a blend of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) and gender studies with a fascinating but thin veneer of queer theory, and that queer activism has been confined to LGBT issues.¹⁹

However, this superordinate position of sex is not, as the Organization Corollary would have it, the result of the elaborative choices of "each person," but a mechanical consequence of a purely *social* construction. In PCP terms, both the experiential paradox and the communicative asymmetry that determine sexual fascism, and the invasiveness, obsessiveness, and prescriptiveness of social discourse about sex create a situation where individual engagement with sex is overwhelmingly mediated by shared social constructions which direct, mold, and define anticipations, and consequently lead to an unparalleled maximization of commonality and, conversely, to an almost complete erasure of individuality.

Ubiquitousness and perceptual salience in particular work together to extend and deepen commonality. How exactly this happens can be made explicit through reference to the Modulation Corollary. On the one hand, the range of convenience of the construct "sex" (also because of its unipolarity) is so broad as to make it applicable to practically any event: for example, practically *any* physical contact can be construed as sexual, sexual images can be used to advertise *any* product, *everyone* must have a sexual identity, and so on. On the other hand, the pervasiveness and uniformity of social discourse on sex nips any individual variation in the bud. Not only is it compulsory to have a sexual identity; it is also compulsory to select it from among a narrow range of pre-packaged options. As though this were not enough, the components of sexual identity are believed to be fixed, unyielding, and non-negotiable, further restricting the already rather claustrophobic scope for individuality in construction.²⁰

And in experience. For the area in which the consequences of sexual fascism are most visible—and most damaging—is the Experience Cycle. For all humans, all phases of the Experience Cycle—like all processes

described by PCP—take place in a culture, and are thus influenced by a number of social discourses which give rise to shared constructions.²¹ But, because of the experiential paradox and the communicative asymmetry which define sexual fascism, social discourse, and the commonality it engenders, feature in our sexual “experiences” in a way that has no parallels in other domains.

When discussing the Fundamental Postulate I described in some detail several ways in which social discourse about sex influences our anticipations; Sacks’s observation about “requirements to have certain sorts of tellables operat[ing] as sources of looking for experiences” (Sacks, 1992, vol. 1, p. 781) shows the role of social discourse in the investment phase. But it is crucial to note that in most cases an “encounter” with sex is not concrete or direct: it is an encounter not with a person or an event but with a *text*: from sex education in school to articles in magazines, to pornography, this “sensual” experience is vastly more extensive than sexual experience proper. In order to explain what he meant by experience, Kelly referred to the amusing and alarming case of the veteran school administrator who had “had only one year of experience—repeated thirteen times” (Kelly 1955, p. 171); the role of commonality in shaping, limiting and policing sexual “experience” might be assessed by considering the fact—hardly less amusing or alarming—that, on average, each of us, from the ages of about 10 to 101, probably has sexual experiences at least three times a day—about 3% of these in person. This means that, on the one hand, many of our constructive revisions happen on the basis of “encounters” with purely textual social constructions,²² and on the other hand, that our direct personal encounters, should they disconfirm social discourse, may not in and of themselves possess sufficient strength to lead to constructive revision.

The mechanics of this disturbing process can be explained by referring to Foucault’s categories of *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* (Foucault, 1976). From articles in popular magazines to specialist findings, all aspects of social discourse on sex are a development of the discursive matrix that Foucault defines as *scientia sexualis*; this explains both their invariably prescriptive thrust and the structural absence of any space for a reply which defines the communicative paradox. However, their normative weight is heightened by a fairly recent development, which Foucault’s account does not mention: the fusion between *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica*. The popularization of scientific knowledge about sex invariably heightens the significance of all discoveries bearing the stamp of “science” (for example, the exploration of female sexuality by Masters and Johnson or of female anatomy by Ernst

Gräfenberg) for sexual pleasure; the inevitable mirror image of this deployment is the scientific verification of pleasure. It is not enough for a woman to have an orgasm: she must be capable of—depending on the theorist—clitoral orgasm, vaginal orgasm, multiple orgasms, ejaculation. . . This leads to a depersonalization and dispossession in which individual experience must either conform to "objective" expectations sanctioned by science (and be rewarded with pleasures not listed by Foucault [1976, p. 71] in his description of "the specific pleasure of the true discourse on pleasure": the relief of having one's normalcy confirmed and affirmed, the pride of finding oneself at the center of the universe—that is, of the Gaussian curve) or disappear, leaving behind it only a feeling of personal inadequacy and existential unfulfillment, the perception of a fundamental lack, what Sacks would call an "orientation to what one is missing," which, as the ever-increasing demand for therapeutic interventions of any description (from "talking cures" to Viagra) shows, is such a widespread and inescapable feature of our engagement with "sex."

Notes

- 1 After Kelly a number of writers have explored a wealth of diverse sex-related issues in a PCP perspective; see for example Butt (2005) and Winter (2005).
- 2 I will flesh it out over the next few paragraphs.
- 3 If indeed such a thing exists: for a comprehensive critique see Foucault (1976).
- 4 See Stojnov and Butt (2002).
- 5 According to Rosch our minds categorize objects not in an all-or-nothing way but through a graded system, where some objects are more central members of a category than others. A prototype is the most central member of a category.
- 6 Quite bewilderingly, this also applies to people who do not *desire* sex. Recently Boehringer Ingelheim tried to gain approval for a drug for the treatment of low sexual desire in women (flibranserin). That the drug was not approved is not the point; the point is that, evidently, a market for it was assumed to exist, while no market could ever be created for a drug for the treatment of people with a low desire for reading, listening to music, enjoying food, or dancing. This is, of course, only the last (predictably pharmacological) step in the pathologizing of lack of interest in sex, already evident in the existence in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) IV of Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder. That, for a diagnosis of HSDD to be reached, the "disturbance" must "cause marked distress or interpersonal difficulty" does not reassure me in the least: it would be very hard to imagine someone who can face her own lack of conformity to society's core constructs

- and anticipations without “marked distress,” or to whom this does not at least cause “interpersonal difficulty.” Just as obviously, one would look in vain in DSM for any mention of a “Hyperactive Sexual Desire Disorder.”
- 7 Sacks’s work is full of cosmogonic insights of evident relevance to PCP; it changed my life, and I cannot recommend it highly enough.
 - 8 Some of the more grotesque excesses are discussed in Levine (2002).
 - 9 Curiously the definition itself is not in Sacks, even though it is implicit in his discussion, as will be apparent in what follows.
 - 10 Right now travelers exiting Rome central station are greeted by a huge, obelisk-like structure displaying an ad about premature ejaculation; similar ads are being broadcast on Italian national television just after the evening news; I must admit I cannot help wondering about the conversations they trigger among groups of colleagues traveling together and dining families.
 - 11 Harry Procter has explored this issue with characteristic openness in Procter (2009).
 - 12 This is glaringly clear from the example of asexuality, which (despite the fact that asexual people are clearly not “differently sexual” but simply do not have a sexual identity) is conceptualized and labeled (as is evident, for instance, from the acronym LGBTQA) as a sexual orientation, since the idea that *anyone*, whether a single individual or a group of people, might lie outside the range of convenience of the construct “sex” is absolutely inconceivable.
 - 13 “This new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an incorporation of perversions and a new *specification of individuals* The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality” (Foucault, 1976, p. 44, italics in original).
 - 14 It is, for example, at least statistically certain that some gay men are personally and directly responsible for the economic exploitation or political oppression of some other gay men.
 - 15 <https://web.archive.org/web/20080702033426/http://www.therebellion.com/modestysurvey/browse>. The survey should be savored in its entirety, but here are some (quite representative) examples, which demonstrate the pervasiveness of the sexual construction of even the most mundane objects or situations: “A purse with the strap diagonally across the chest draws too much attention to the bust.” (agree 35.2, strongly agree 12.3); “Shoes with straps that lace all the way up to mid/upper-calf are a stumbling block.” (agree 30.7, strongly agree 9.9); “Jeans with worn marks across the bottom, on the thighs, etc. are a stumbling block.” (agree 33.2, strongly agree 14.4).
 - 16 And probably also unenforceable, since its effect depends on the communicative asymmetry and the experiential paradox which define sexual fascism, and which do not apply to any other area.

- 17 Kelly (1962) expanded the range of convenience of the construct system to encompass countries, subcultures, and social classes; Harry Procter has made it his life’s work to investigate construct systems beyond the individual. This chapter owes much to his insights—and to our friendship.
- 18 This leads, among other things, to the systematic—and far from benevolent—questioning of the experiences, values, and relationships of bisexual persons, with predictably adverse consequences for their mental—and physical—health; see for example the San Francisco Human Rights Commission LGBT Advisory Committee’s *Bisexual Invisibility* (2011).
- 19 I have tried questioning this state of affairs with a paper about humans who (like me) identify primarily not with other humans but with nonhuman animals (Dell’Aversano, 2010); not surprisingly, most of the leading queer scholars who came in contact with my work reacted with barely concealed disgust, and made a point of remarking that what I was doing “had nothing to do with queer.”
- 20 Lisa Diamond’s work about sexual fluidity in women (Diamond, 2009) continues to be stubbornly ignored in the self-representation of the LGBT community; I am still waiting for a study of the same phenomenon in men (about which over the course of my life I have amassed abundant anecdotal evidence); my impression is that I will have to wait for a long time . . .
- 21 The social origin of personal constructs is explored in Procter and Parry (1978).
- 22 For example, the wide availability of pornography has shaped expectations and anticipations not only about interpersonal sex but also about what human bodies should look like: “For the first time in human history, the images’ power and allure have supplanted that of real naked women. Today, real naked women are just bad porn” (Wolf, 2003).

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Personal Construct Psychology and Buddhism

Spencer A. McWilliams

Recent interest in Buddhist psychology and Buddhist-inspired mindfulness methods in psychotherapy raises the question of their potential relevance and utility for personal construct psychotherapy. Kelly viewed this therapy as technically eclectic, and his followers have appropriated techniques from approaches that share personal construct psychology (PCP)'s metatheoretical assumptions. The similarity of the assumptions of Buddhism and PCP provides an intriguing basis for exploring such integration. This chapter (1) describes PCP and Buddhist assumptions regarding ontology, epistemology, the self, and human dysfunction; (2) demonstrates the compatibility of these assumptions; (3) discusses Buddhist mindfulness concepts and their relationship to human wellbeing; (4) describes therapeutic methods that incorporate mindfulness; and (5) discusses how Buddhist psychology and PCP might mutually inform and benefit each other.

Introducing Buddhist Psychology

Demystifying Buddhism

Many people regard Buddhism as a religion with metaphysical characteristics similar to Western religions, and, indeed, indigenous Asian Buddhist practices have merged Buddhism with traditional religions and treat Buddha as a deity. However, religious characteristics do not appear in traditional Buddhist teachings. Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha, a fallible, ordinary human being, rejected ideas of theism and claimed no divinity. Buddhist teachings include no creator, Supreme Being, dogma, creed, or

beliefs that must be taken on faith; nor do they include anyone to worship, magic, miracles, savior, or an immortal self. Buddha did not claim omniscience, stating the impossibility of knowing everything. Buddha avoided irresolvable metaphysical concepts, speculation, dogmatism, and topics that have no definitive answer (e.g., the innate nature of the universe), seeing them as irrelevant to eliminating human suffering, his primary goal.

He addressed “this world here and now” rather than “other-worldly” issues or concerns about life after death, proposing a way of living focused on direct personal experience and awakening through one’s own effort, rather than through belief, faith, authority, or revelation. He employed a non-authoritarian approach to teaching, directing students not to believe what he taught, but rather to freely examine the utility of the teachings for themselves.

Focus on human dysfunction

Buddhist teachings propose that humans create suffering and include practical methods to overcome it. People find life unsatisfactory and frustrating because it does not correspond to what they want or expect. Suffering occurs as a human problem rooted in sensory and mental experience. The source of the problem lies in thirst for pleasure, desire to be “something,” craving for sensory gratification and self-preservation, attachment to perceptions, beliefs, views, expectations, opinions, self-images, and the wish to exist forever. Attachments occur as greed, passion, or lust (what one “must” have), anger, hatred, or malice (what one “must” destroy or avoid), and ignorance, delusion, or false belief (not understanding the nature of mind).

Liberation from dysfunction

Buddhist processes help eliminate attachment to viewpoints, obsessions, constructions, and preferences. Mindful awareness of the rising and falling away of phenomena facilitates perceiving their interdependent and impermanent nature. Liberation consists of freedom from grasping, clinging, and attachment to self, developing a comfortable, smooth, flowing life of stability and peace of mind.

Relinquishing dogmatic, reified constructions leads to open-mindedness and a direct experience of life, reducing distortion resulting from emotional reactions and reification of thoughts. *Nirvana* refers to cessation of greed, hatred, confusion, and the end of suffering, a positive psychological state of mind achieved in this life consisting of joy, equanimity, tranquility, oneness

of mind, imperturbability, awareness, mindfulness, and serenity, rather than a mystical or metaphysical state. Transcendence of socially constructed conventions, however, does not require devaluing their utility for daily living.

Buddhist and PCP Metatheory

A process view of universe

Kelly viewed the universe as integral, interconnected, and interrelated; in continuous change or flux; and lacking inherent nature or essence. This view corresponds to the Buddhist perspective, which describes reality as “an assemblage of interlocking physical and mental processes that spring up and pass away subject to multifarious causes and conditions and that are always mediated by the cognitive apparatus embodied in the operation of the perceiving person” (Ronkin, 2009, p. 14). Phenomenal reality consists of events arising in the context of a continuously changing process rather than as a container of fixed, stable substances. Buddhist theory describes this experience in terms of three characteristics: interdependence, impermanence, and emptiness.

Interdependence proposes that perception of “things” depends on other events or “things.” Composites consist of parts, gain identity as an assembly of parts, and lose that identity when taken apart. Identifying a “thing” entails human perception and labeling. Impermanence means that no phenomenon has always existed in its current state or will always exist in that state or with those qualities. Phenomena come into existence when conditions supporting their existence occur; when those conditions no longer transpire the phenomena cease to exist. We cannot distinguish phenomena from the conditions that lead to their temporary existence nor identify a permanent fundamental nature that defines their identity. Emptiness means that since phenomena exist only in interdependence on other phenomena and constantly change, we cannot isolate an essence or identity that exists inherently and independently and that constitutes the entity itself; we cannot find something to point to as the thing itself (McWilliams, 2009).

From this perspective, no *thing* exists on its own. We may regard the world and the phenomena we experience as indeed existing. However, since entities do not possess their own independent, permanent, identity, suggesting that we can know “ultimate truth” proves incoherent. We might, alternatively, view phenomena as real but created afresh in each instant as a function of ever-changing conditions.

A pragmatic epistemology

PCP proposes that humans, collectively and personally, impose structure and assign meaning to phenomenal experience based on human goals and anticipations. Ideas, explanations, and beliefs evolve within a social and historical context, and reflect changing perspectives and conventions rather than “the way the world is.” Humans use language to convey experience, make meaning, and cope with life. Since we cannot know reality directly, we describe experience in a variety of ways based on our attempts to anticipate future events, but no objective way can justify beliefs as ultimately true. Rather than concerning ourselves about the absolute “truth” of beliefs, we judge them by pragmatic truth criteria: their usefulness in predicting events, their coherence, and their fit with subsequent experience.

PCP has its roots in pragmatism, which, rather than attempting to know things “as they are” in themselves, focuses on the utility of ideas. Similarly, Buddhist psychology states that we cannot make assertions about ultimate reality but we can agree on conventional and relative terms and create “truth” within ordinary human assertions and social conventions. Based on experience of phenomena and customary ways of understanding and speaking about them, we may regard “things” relatively, and view “thing” as a description rather than an independently existing entity.

Conventional truth consists of ideas and beliefs that humans have developed by identifying recurrent patterns and themes in phenomenal experience and using them to anticipate future events. PCP and Buddhism describe perception as noting similarities and differences, repeated themes and patterns, and inventing word labels to describe the contrasting poles of dimensions. Contrasting poles arise together and depend on each other for conventional knowing, but refer to “empty” phenomena that do not possess an inherent nature and depend on human assessment for their existence.

PCP and Buddhism also describe how we cannot create just any reality we wish; environmental, biological, psychological, and social realities as well as customs and language constrain constructs that effectively enable people to anticipate events. Within these constraints, we can agree on facts regarding what words mean and empirical observations, but cannot identify an independent basis for justifying these views as absolute.

Buddhism distinguishes between conventional (provisional) and ultimate (inherent) reality in describing how we view common sense objects. Construing comprises a relationship among physical stimuli, sensations, cognition, affect, action, and awareness. Response to this process includes attraction and aversion, leading to emotional agitation and automatic and

reflexive responses. Perception leads to thoughts, which proliferate, distorting experience. This proliferating cognitive tendency leads perceivers to construct sensory experiences and socially constructed ideas and beliefs about reality. Sensory contact begins a process that fabricates biased inferences, leading to concepts and views of objects. The construction of self (I, myself, mine) arises from this process of conceptual proliferation. Viewing thoughts as “mine,” we treat them as real. Social and personal constructions prove useful to understanding phenomenal experience, as instruments with pragmatic value for prediction and communication. However, proliferation and reification make them absolute, rigid, and regarded as representing a permanent world. Theories reflect human urges and projections and remove the perceiver from the actual situation. Buddhist psychology proposes using these empty conventions without clinging to them, and challenges thinking at its source by distinguishing between mental content and mental processes. It emphasizes how the mind selects content and constructs interpretations; it does not stress falsity of beliefs, but instead how the mind gives rise to and sustains beliefs.

A constructed self

PCP views the concept of “self” as a social and personal construction, arising in a particular cultural and historical context, rather than an independently existing entity. Buddhist psychology, similarly, applies interdependence, impermanence, and emptiness to the concepts of “person” and “self.” It views a person as a composite of five attributes: physical body, sensations, perceptions and cognitions, predispositions and volitions, and consciousness. No one of these elements corresponds to an “I,” “me,” or “myself,” and no entity exists independently of the modalities. Each of these components arises in interdependent relationship with other phenomena. They evolve and change from moment to moment, over the course of a human life, and we can only identify a present organization of body, views, perception, etc.

Buddhist psychology thus views the person, the self, and all phenomena as an intersection of multiple relationships, interconnected and interdependent nodes in a web, rather than as fixed or independently existing entities. It sees “self” as an arbitrary construct superimposed on dependently arising psycho-physical elements, a coordinate of various impermanent factors, rather than a solid, static entity possessing reality over time, with an identity created by narratives. We need not regard self as an actual entity, because we cannot identify anything to point to as the “person” or

a “self” independent of the constantly changing body, sensations, and thoughts. We can use the term “person” or “self” for practical purposes as long as we do not imagine that it corresponds to a real, substantial entity (McWilliams, 2000).

Human dysfunction and wellbeing

From a PCP perspective, psychological dysfunction occurs when the construct system a person creates for organizing and understanding experience fails in meeting goals and considering alternative ways of thinking, behaving, and meaning-making. Psychological wellbeing occurs when a person’s constructs lead to effective anticipation of events, as defined by the person, who revises them in light of their effectiveness.

Buddhist psychology views phenomena as dependent, impermanent, and empty and speaks about conventional reality. Psychological problems arise by confusing relative, dependent, impermanent, and empty conventional reality with inherent truth and ultimate reality, and treating conventional beliefs and concepts as ultimately true. Reified constructed concepts like self, objects of perception, and values and beliefs lead to delusion. Suffering and dissatisfaction stem from attempts to impose permanence and independence on the flow of experience. The Buddha articulated human dysfunction and dissatisfaction by enumerating four liberating propositions: (1) life involves unease, unsteadiness, turmoil, suffering, frustration, anxiety, fear, and dissatisfaction; (2) this unease results from craving, attachment, or clinging to desire that life match expectations and attempts to force the universe to conform to desires; (3) relief of suffering results from relinquishing clinging, desire, and attachment to beliefs about phenomena; (4) understanding the impermanent nature of phenomena combined with mindfulness discipline and methods promotes reduced clinging to beliefs (Kwee, 2010).

Ameliorating dysfunction

When meanings that people create fail to function effectively, personal construct psychotherapy assists clients in examining and reconsidering these understandings. Therapists challenge existing constructions and assist clients in reconstructing their “life story,” inventing new self-identities, and experimenting with alternative, more effective ways of meaning-making, with a focus on the primacy of personal experience, the importance of novel enactments, and the role of language in creating personal meaning.

PCP therapy strategies characteristically explore clients' personal narratives and life metaphors, promote personal development and meaning-making rather than correction, accept negative emotions as a normal component of change, emphasize the individual's sense of self and core structures, empathically engage the client's outlook, and see resistance as reasonable protection of the client's meaning-making system. Clinical strategies in constructivist psychotherapy include encouraging clients to adopt new behaviors, bring preverbal constructs into awareness, retell personal stories and connect them with behavior, and view problems in terms of language and social and cultural factors.

Buddhist methods attempt to deconstruct views of the world and the self in the world, and to nurture a view incorporating interdependence, impermanence, and emptiness by contextualizing entities and avoiding reification. Cultivating awareness of the present moment, and the process of creating self and identity, helps overcome dissatisfaction and achieve well-being. For example, loosening identification with social roles enables seeing them as a "game" with rules based on social convention rather than as an inherent reality. Understanding emptiness and the conventional nature of reality requires present moment awareness of how constructs arise and become reified, and the process by which impermanent, empty phenomena come to be treated as ultimately, rather than conventionally, real.

This process integrates understanding, experience, practice, and reflection, not simply the use of particular techniques, beginning with recognizing a problem, comprehending the absence of permanence, grasping the possibility of attaining freedom, and employing meditation. Meditation cultivates observation of mental activity by observing sensory, emotional, and mental events that originate and perpetuate intentional action. This enables recognizing the "spark" of emotion before the "flame" of reaction occurs, observing the process of an emotional reaction in its first few seconds and experiencing how a germinal state of emotion (pleasure, pain, neutral) arising in response to a sensory stimulus leads to thought, appraisal, desire, attachment, and aversion (Kwee, 2010). Emotions (anger, fear, etc.) become empty products of the mind, without essence, social constructions lacking independent reality.

Buddhist psychotherapy places mindfulness within this broader context. Clients develop awareness of their unsatisfactory condition, cultivate desire to relieve their suffering, investigate conditions that create suffering, and engage in therapeutic steps to end their suffering. Meditation-based therapeutic interventions help clients actively maximize awareness of mental processes, and more effectively handle negative feelings, thoughts, and

desires, leading to greater awareness and acceptance of immediate experience and more effective choice and action.

Meditation practices emphasize awareness and attention to bring mental activity under intentional control and cultivate awareness of thoughts and experiencing the emptiness of phenomena, with the goal of liberation from dogmatic clinging to reified concepts, including self. In contrast to methods that focus on fabricating more effective worldviews, meditation focuses on *processes* that create worldviews out of immediate sensations, observing how beliefs and opinions interfere with experiencing the present moment, and create a sense of an independent self. The sense of a separate self falls away through observing thoughts and bodily sensations. From a “no self” perspective, meaning emerges from immediate physical experience and awareness rather than from constructed narratives.

Mindfulness in Psychotherapy

Buddhist psychology views mindfulness as intentional focus on evident, sensory experience, consisting of momentary physical sensations and arising thoughts, combined with willingness to experience these phenomena as they appear, with acceptance and curiosity. Buddhist psychotherapy emphasizes awareness of the *process* of thinking and feeling, rather than their *content*. Clients develop the ability to observe thoughts and mental processes, accept experiences without clinging to or trying to change them, and experience the delusion of a fixed self. Techniques include awareness of breath and sensations, observing feelings, encouraging clients to acknowledge, label, experience, and let go, cultivating an attitude of direct experience and bare attention to thoughts and sensations as they arise, and emphasizing a difference between modifying mental content and gaining awareness of the mind’s processes (Khong, 2006).

The following section explicates components of awareness and acceptance from a PCP perspective, along with examples of psychotherapy techniques that employ them. Further illustration of the therapeutic perspectives discussed below appears in McWilliams (2010, 2012a, 2012b).

Awareness of thoughts

Many psychotherapies focus on mental processes that clients use to give meaning to their experience, and recurrent patterns of thoughts and beliefs, helping clients develop more useful beliefs and attend to their

consequences. Mindfulness-oriented approaches focus instead on identifying the context in which thoughts arise. By identifying psychological *contexts*, presuppositions that normally operate without awareness, clients experience how thoughts arise and dissolve away. Distinguishing between *metacognitive knowledge*, which focuses on inaccurate cognitions, and *metacognitive insight*, which views thoughts as events in awareness rather than reflecting external reality, encourages viewing thoughts and feelings as ever-changing events to experience as they appear.

Awareness of sensations

Conscious experience consists of sensations and thoughts. Without awareness of sensations, thoughts come to dominate conscious experience. Mindfulness helps gain awareness of, and detachment from, that process. Sensations provide the primary access to phenomenal experience, the only direct connection with the environment (internal or external). Attention to sensations helps gather information effectively and respond appropriately. Because of the tendency toward automatic responses and attaching to thoughts, paying clear and careful attention to sensations requires skill and discipline. Awareness practices direct attention to physical sensations, sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch, as they arise and fall away. They provide the raw “information” necessary to attend to the environment, and its relevance to survival and to meeting goals. Responding effectively to the world depends on awareness of emotional, bodily reactions to phenomenal events by attending to the “data,” the outcomes of our experiments, which often entail emotional experiences. Awareness of the present moment includes the experience of thoughts and beliefs as well as bodily experiences and awareness of sensations. Personal meanings impact bodily systems; meaning-making manifests in physiological experience of bodily sensations and events.

Core construing develops prior to language, and trust of bodily experiences evolves along with preverbal constructs. Exercises that develop greater bodily awareness, and explorations about how clients prevent experiencing the bodily connection, can assist therapeutic growth. As clients attend to bodily communications about their core constructs, they gain greater clarity and understanding regarding how meanings facilitate and hinder effective living. Techniques that enhance awareness of bodily experiences, such as relaxation training and mindfulness training, may have psychotherapeutic power to the extent that therapy draws a connection between bodily processes and meaning-making.

Acceptance of experience

Acceptance does not mean resignation to the situation; it acknowledges the reality of events as a basis for effective action. “Acceptance means seeing the facts for what they are now and looking forward from there—‘what needs to be done now?’” (Magid, 2008, p. 110). Helping clients to accept life as it is and to initiate appropriate change emphasizes openness to experience without distortion or judgment. Assisting clients to notice, acknowledge, and accept operations of the mind, rather than trying to change or combat them, does not endeavor directly to eliminate problematic thoughts or terminate unwanted actions, a process that usually proves futile in any case.

Interventions that aim to increase acceptance of experience can help clients make choices and take appropriate action by reducing the tendency to fuse thoughts with experience, by weakening experiential avoidance, accepting troublesome sensations, feelings, and thoughts willingly, and continuously attending to, acknowledging, and accepting thoughts and feelings. Rather than attempting to implement change, the client accepts and allows thoughts and feelings to pass through awareness. By tolerating the discomfort that normally leads clients to “do something” to fix it, clients experience freshness and freedom. Such “radical acceptance,” observing and participating in the moment without judgment, and effective new action help develop a more accurate worldview and more effective behaviors.

Extending Personal Construct Psychotherapy Integration

Integrating Buddhist and personal construct psychotherapy could benefit from an explication of the relevance of these Buddhist-inspired techniques to the goals of personal construct psychotherapy, as well as the value of PCP methods for enhancing a contemporary Buddhist psychology. PCP’s emphasis on meaning-making as a way to anticipate future events, enhance survival, and meet human goals provides a context for considering the relevance of Buddhist psychology. People develop meaning-based theories or beliefs based on perception of recurrent patterns of experience, testing beliefs and interpretations by identifying goals and establishing hypotheses for anticipating future events, attending to the actual outcome of predicted events, and revising understanding based on the extent to which current events validate their anticipations. PCP defines psychological wellbeing as the extent to which interpretations lead to validated anticipations and revision in light of their predictive effectiveness.

A Buddhist view of psychological wellbeing can support the PCP perspective by emphasizing how acknowledging the ever-changing essenceless nature of phenomenal experience, and distinguishing disruptive thoughts and emotions from useful ones, can foster more effective anticipation. Wallace and Shapiro (2006) describe a Buddhist view of psychological wellbeing in terms of mental balance among four components—conative (intention, volition, and goals); attentional (sustained, mindful, voluntary, attention); cognitive (engaging with experience as it arises moment by moment without preconception); and affective (emotional regulation such as equanimity and lack of vacillation, apathy, or inappropriate emotion)—providing clear examples of mindsets useful to the effective anticipation of events and revision of understanding. Effective personal functioning includes creating meaningful hypotheses, which requires clear articulation of personally relevant goals. Conative balance emphasizes establishing realistic desires and goals that will lead to fulfillment for the self and others. Generating theories and testing hypotheses effectively require focusing sustained attention on relevant events and the observation process itself. Mindful awareness practice enhances attentional balance and the ability to monitor mental states and interpretations of experience as they occur. Effective development of meaning-based understanding, testing hypotheses, and revising understanding require openness to perceiving and experiencing events clearly and considering alternative perspectives.

Cognitive balance “entails engaging with the world of experience without imposing conceptual assumptions or ideas on events and thereby misapprehending or distorting them” (Wallace & Shapiro 2006, p. 696), including attending to present-moment experiences of sensations, perceptions, emotions, and mental processes. PCP methods that help to identify and articulate core constructs and strategies, including such techniques as repertory grids, laddering, and self-characterizations, can enhance awareness of these mental processes. Finally, wellbeing and effective meaning-making may benefit from emotional equilibrium, avoiding extremes of hyperactivity or apathy, by cultivating affective balance through equanimity, empathy, compassion, and caring.

Buddhist-inspired methods that foster greater mindful awareness of thoughts, beliefs, and feelings, attention to immediate events, and acceptance of actual experience may thus enhance human effectiveness from a PCP perspective, and augment personal construct psychotherapy. Awareness of the *processes* underlying the use of thoughts and language, rather than attachment to their *content*, may help liberate clients from clinging to rigid dysfunctional thoughts and actions, promoting more effective construing and clearer perception of events.

These skills support a larger sense of meaning, freedom from automatic responses and rigid identifications, and more flexible ways of addressing ever-changing events. Contemporary psychotherapists have effectively applied mindfulness methods to a variety of approaches with a variety of client populations. These methods may assist in further strengthening the effectiveness, relevance, and utility of constructivist psychotherapy, and contributing to its theoretically progressive integration and ongoing elaboration.

Kelly described the focus of convenience of personal construct psychotherapy as the psychological reconstruction of life; Buddhist psychology would describe its focus of convenience more broadly as diminishing human suffering. Thus, personal construct psychotherapy tends to focus on helping clients to develop more effective ways of construing, whereas Buddhism tends to focus on helping people to see the empty nature of constructs. While personal construct psychotherapy and Buddhist psychology share substantial overlap in their ranges of convenience, this contrast in their foci of convenience provides a fertile stimulation for further development of both approaches that has the potential to yield powerful benefits.

We can also apply progressive integration of PCP and constructivist psychology to the ongoing evolution of Buddhist psychology in the West. As Kwee (2010) proposed, the compatible and synergistic relationship between Buddhist and constructivist-oriented psychologies provides a basis for elaborating the role of constructivist, social constructionist, and post-modern psychologies in facilitating the development of a thoroughly comprehensive and authentic Western Buddhist psychology that extends beyond the adoption of specific techniques for symptom relief to embrace a broader goal of human liberation from suffering. Development of the psychological research, theory, and practice within the context of this shared PCP/Buddhist metatheory may provide a valuable way of elaborating contemporary, postmodern psychology, demonstrating a synergy that can further the development of both perspectives and their shared values and commitments.

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Personal Construct Psychology and the Arts

Jörn W. Scheer and Viv Burr

The Arts in Our Lives

The arts form an important part of many people's lives. We read novels and poems, watch plays and dance performances, listen to music of all kinds, enjoy paintings, are amazed, entertained, amused. But some people also write novels and poems, engage in acting and dancing, sing and play music, draw, paint, or take photographs with an ambition that transcends the level of mere leisure activity. They are *artists*—they *create* works of art. It is sometimes thought that the creation of works of art in prehistoric times (as in cave paintings) marks the beginning of the rise of humankind as a reflecting species: that is, a species whose members not only exist but can reflect on their being, express these reflections and communicate about them. Of course, creativity not only occurs in the realm of the arts. Creativity seems to be at the core of the development of something new in many fields of life. In personal construct psychology (PCP) terms it involves a process of construing that moves from loose construing to tight construing and back and forth until a person feels something new has been created that can be tested out: the Creativity Cycle.

Creativity has been a subject of study and of conceptualization in many disciplines, such as psychology, cognitive science, philosophy, theology, and sociology, and has implications for, among others, education, technology and economics. An overview of such work is beyond the remit of this chapter. Our aim is to show that the range of convenience of PCP extends beyond the preeminent fields of psychotherapy, education, and organizational development, and that a PCP approach can shed new light on the understanding of artistic creativity. However, we are not dealing with the

use or creation of works of art (such as pictures or photographs) in the context of psychotherapy, which would merit separate treatment.

PCP and the Arts

Personal construct theorists who have been dealing with the arts have often been creative as artists themselves. They share the belief that what they do as artists is not fundamentally different from what they do as human beings, and that the theoretical tools they use in their professional work also apply to the understanding of their (and others') artistic endeavors. One PCP scholar has even linked psychology, psychotherapy, autobiography, and poetry inextricably in a major work that in itself can be considered a work of art (Mair, 1989). The majority of contributions to the arts from a PCP perspective have been published during the last decade in three collections of papers (Scheer & Burr, 2008, 2009; Scheer & Sewell, 2006), and some of the articles quoted in this chapter are included in these collections. But we begin our exploration of PCP and the arts with a much earlier contribution which we believe was the first example of the application of PCP to an understanding of the creative process.

The Creativity Cycle: Don Bannister's contribution

Don Bannister's work bringing PCP to bear on the processes of fiction writing and reading forms the earliest contribution to the field of PCP and the arts. He drew on key PCP concepts such as anticipation, superordination, and validation/invalidation to theorize these activities within the overarching concept of the Creativity Cycle.

In 1985, at the International Congress on PCP in Cambridge, he spoke about novel writing and reading. Himself an accomplished novelist, he used a number of PCP concepts to describe the process of creative writing (Bannister, 1988/2006). "Novel reading is an exercise in continuous *anticipation*," he says. The reader is "constantly subject to *validation* or *invalidation*" and may "experience the unfolding events as being outside the *range of convenience* of his or her construing" (p. 12, our italics). So, according to Bannister, the reader is a construer and everything we have learnt about construing applies to the human activity of reading. As readers we crave confirmation of our expectations, i.e., validation—but not too much because we do not want to feel bored. We want the range of convenience of our constructs to be widened—but not in too daring a way.

Invalidation is around the corner, but we may also welcome the chance of revising our initial construing.

With regard to novel writing, Bannister says, “novel writing is an exercise in the controlled elaboration of an author’s construct system . . . A novel stems from some personal intersect of elements and constructs” (p. 13). He describes two types of novel writing. One works more “pre-emptively,” fulfilling a plan, working in a “top-down” fashion from pre-planned structure to more concrete detail. The author has an idea of where he or she is going, a kind of “superordinate construction,” and elaborates the subordinate details. Others, and Bannister includes himself in this category, may have a general idea but see the writing experience as a kind of journey into uncharted territory; they are sometimes surprised at where their characters are moving and where they are literally taking the author, as if in search of a superordinate construction. Bannister here identifies varying forms of the Creativity Cycle, with its succession of “loosening” and “tightening” processes. At the heart of novel writing, he believes, is “exactly this deriving, working out, of the subordinate (the detail and content of a novel) from the superordinate (the theme of the novel).” This is not to say that the superordinate construction remains unchanged from the beginning: the theme of his novel *Sam Chard* was originally conceived as the nature of an English pit village community, but it turned out to be an “alternative autobiography.”

Most writers do not write for themselves. But Bannister warns of imagining the “typical” reader—she or he is only one out of many. As readers we often share with other readers what a text produced within us. Did it make us curious? How did it affect or influence our constructions? Did it “extend” our constructions or did we arrive at a higher degree of “definition”? In other words, did we engage in some form of Creativity Cycle? The processes described here may be regarded as precisely the work of the “critic.” In this case, the critics are laypersons. The professional critic may command a more complex, more differentiated way of comparing constructions and assessing the potential gain for the reader from a specific text, but they are both arguably engaging in the same Creativity Cycle, although they are unlikely to frame their activities in such terms.

Themes in the PCP Approach to the Arts

Among the artistic and creative issues addressed in the more recent publications referred to above, four major themes can be identified: constructivist criticism, reflexivity, artistic identity, and co-construction. These are not

exclusive categories and certainly overlap in the wide range of published articles on PCP and the arts, but they are helpful for the present purposes of structuring our discussion of these various contributions.

Constructivist criticism

Several PCP scholars have looked at Shakespeare's plays through a PCP lens. Kelly (1955) himself did this, suggesting that Hamlet's *elaborative choice* of suicide provided his only immediate certainty; Whitehead (1991) analyzed Hamlet's construct system in detail, making suggestions to directors and actors based on a constructivist reading of the play; and Bannister and Fransella (1971) include a brief discussion of a scene from Richard II as an illustration of bipolarity and preemptive construing.

Literary critics, critics who analyze works of art, or those who are involved in the "appreciation" of art, use a variety of concepts, depending on their orientation and their intentions (e.g. psychological, sociological, "pure" literary). When those with a PCP background analyze creative works they use concepts or tools derived from PCP. Procter and Procter (2008), for instance, used the "perceiver element grid" to identify family patterns with regard to the construct "good-evil" in a play by Byron, an innovative approach to the analysis of relationships between a novel's or play's characters.

Some PCP scholars have drawn close comparisons between PCP and the nature and method of particular creative forms, arguing that these may themselves be regarded as exemplars of the theory. Dell'Aversano (2008) proposed close relationships between classical surrealist writing and constructivism, especially with respect to the treatment of "reality." She claims that surrealism "originates in a reconstruction of one of the most superordinate constructs in both Western aesthetics and Western ontology—the construct *real-unreal*—and aims at a similar reconstruction in the viewer" (p. 328). Echoing constructivism's stance on the constructed nature of our experiential world as opposed to its objective reality, she emphasizes the "constructedness" of art in preference to "mimetic" realism. In similar vein, Bell (2006) regards poetry as an example of PCP. Summarizing his analysis of several poems, he argues that "poetry . . . can be seen as a personal construct activity," (p. 72) employing key PCP concepts such as core constructs, subordinacy, metaphor, contrasting, and reflexivity.

Others have used a PCP approach in order to gain insight into a writer's own construing. Farrar (2006) examined Bannister's own novels in order

to reveal his guiding constructs. He argues that Bannister's works reveal a number of "ideological" constructs (regarding, e.g., sex, race, and politics) that Bannister possibly used provocatively. Fransella (2006) studied Kelly's writings, including his poems, and claims that this enabled a better understanding of Kelly as a person and how he located himself in life.

Reflexivity: Analyzing the process of artistic creation and performance

Using a PCP approach to either critically analyze a work or illuminate the psychological life of its creator are both views "from the outside," but other PCP scholars have drawn on the theory as a process of reflexively examining their own artistic involvement, combining artistic endeavors with the PCP perspectives they embrace in their professional lives.

Work of this kind has been done in a surprising variety of fields: literature (novels, stories, poetry), music (singing, drumming), acting (musical theater), and visual arts (figure drawing, photography, collage). Within these fields, PCP scholars have addressed the issues involved in both their creation or invention of artistic artifacts (including the tension between "finding" and "making") and in performing, including the "embodiment" of the creative processes.

Reflecting on creating Kelly wrote:

the brilliant scientist and the brilliant writer are pretty likely to end up saying the same thing—given, of course, a lot of time to converge upon one another. The poor scientist and the poor writer, moreover, fail in much the same way—neither of them is able to transcend the obvious. Both fail in their make-believe. (Kelly, 1964/1969, p. 151)

Neimeyer (2008) follows this dictum and maintains that his academic writing does not differ in principle from his poetry writing but that (his) poetry adopts more of an "invitational mode," including surprises for the writer himself when it is more about "finding" meaning than "making" it, and inviting the reader to "unpack" the poetry's possible messages. Similarly, Sewell (2008, 2009) sees his writing of short stories and poems as part of an overarching, very personal "project" that includes professional and private, as well as artistic, facets. He compares identifying the construct dimensions involved in this project to "successfully subsuming a client's construct system" (2008, p. 298). Brophy (2006) uses his poetry writing as an escape from the constriction he sees as imposed by challenging life events. King (2008) shares his experience of writing a poem by describing

meticulously the shaping of images and thoughts that come up, and he stresses the social context of creative writing: the author does not (necessarily) write for his own sake but in (at least expected or imagined) communication with others (see the *Co-construction* section below). In his view, the constructivist interpretation of the creative process is concerned with the central Kellyan concept of anticipation, with the Sociality Corollary also being highly pertinent. Stevens (2006) interviewed professional writers (not aligned to PCP) and found that writing can be an important way of experiencing (or discovering) other personas in our “communities of self,” making use of Miller Mair’s (1977/2014) metaphor, and he stresses the importance of “suspension” in the successive “loosening” and “tightening” phases of the Creativity Cycle.

While it may seem relatively easy to discover “themes” in the creation of literature, it may be less obvious in other fields of creativity. Burr (2008), writing about her own experience of life drawing, makes an important distinction between “what you know” and “what you see.” The artist should forget what he or she “knows” and engage in a process of “loosening.” “What you see” does not mean that the drawing has to be “representationally accurate”—rather, it is “psychologically accurate.” McWilliams (2009) differentiates between “taking pictures” and “making art” by introducing the act of editing a photograph to create an image that depends for its meaning on the viewer’s response rather than representing reality or having inherent significance (again, see *Co-construction*). He contrasts a constructivist view with a “foundationalist” one that sees meaning as inherent rather than created. Dell’Aversano (2009) gives a personal account of herself as a practicing artist, mapping the construct system which forms the foundation of her aesthetic world and linking it to her personal construct system in general.

Performance and its reception Performing arts, such as stage acting, drumming, or dancing, constitute a special case as their creativity involves, arguably more so than other art forms, the *embodiment* of constructs. As many of the processes are nonverbal it is often difficult to use PCP terms to describe and understand them. However, using repertory grids can be helpful in articulating the relevant constructs, as Ohme (2009) did to differentiate the experience of listening to different types of music. Performing arts are also likely to occur in a social context. This social context includes the complexities of working as part of a group (as in a stage performance or in a choir) but is also fundamental because musical and other creativity constructs develop biographically in a social context, sometimes very early in life. Another issue is that arts of this kind (music, acting) happen *in time*.

This takes us back to Kelly's claim that all construing happens in time: anticipation and replication occur along a timeline. With regard to music, the relationship between the known and the new seems crucial: if we hear only what we know we get bored, if we hear only new, previously unheard sounds we are irritated or confused, or even threatened. But if we opt for a moderate challenge to our constructs in preference to an all too "easy" validation our "tastes" may change—this too being an occurrence over time. As this is similar to Bannister's reflections about validation and invalidation in reading literature, it may point to a crucial element in all (or many) forms of art. Likewise, time, anticipation, and embodiment are the elements that Botella (2008) uses to organize his experience of drumming from a personal construct perspective, referring to Kelly's use of the idea of replications in the Construction Corollary (Kelly, 1955, p. 52).

Artistic identity

The individuals writing about PCP and the arts are not professional artists in the usual sense of the term; they do not make a living out of producing works of art. This leads some of them to doubt whether they are "really" artists. This raises the question: what, then, *is* an artist? Bridges (2006) quotes non-professional dancers who do not easily regard themselves as "dancers" because "they are not being paid for it," "only teach it," and are "not good enough." Similar experiences have been reported with respect to singing. Apparently, validation by others (listeners or viewers) is an important issue here, as is a personal history of validation or invalidation ("being told as a child that I can't sing") (Frances, 2006). While writers or painters do not have to face the public's response in the first instance, performers (actors, singers, dancers) risk embarrassment and, in PCP terms, a shift in core construing which is potentially threatening (Burr, 2006), since others (the audience) must legitimate their identity "as an artist." The often reported performance anxiety that even successful artists seem to suffer from regularly thus appears in a new light under the lens of PCP.

For some, artistic endeavors seem to be part of their life project, and hence their identity. Often "coming out" as an artist, or accepting that one *is* an artist, is the result of a process of validation (or productive invalidation). This is probably a question of *choice* at the end of a process, but the process may take time and encouragement by others. Still, many well-known artists are forced to earn a living from a mundane occupation and some (such as Kafka) never publish a work in their lifetime. We think that ultimately the question is not whether a person is an artist or not. It may be

a question of who in a person's "community of self" (Mair, 1977/2014) is accepted by the individual as a fully entitled member—and possibly a distinguished one.

Co-construction

As mentioned above, both Bannister (1988/2006) and King (2008) (with respect to writing), and McWilliams (2009) (on photographic art) discuss the relationship between creator and recipient. Writers often tend to imagine a fantasized reader. Therefore *sociality* is required of the writer: will the reader be able to construe my constructions? Am I able to construe the readers' constructions so they are able to construe my constructions? Bannister seems to consider the literary work of art explicitly as something that writer and reader create jointly: "It is the reading of a novel that ultimately gives it life" (Bannister, 1988/2006, p. 15). A writer writes and a single reader reads, and ultimately this results in a specific construction: *this reader's version of the novel*. Notwithstanding that, the writer is still the author of a work of art—which determines his or her side of the coin. So a constructivist view of art would not only look at the work of art, be it a novel, a painting, or a musical performance, but would look also at what the reader or viewer does with it: the *co-construction*—in fact many possible co-constructions. Probably not all of them are different; there are probably only a limited number of "superordinate" ones, the predominant ways of reading a certain novel or watching a play. Again, *choice* is involved. The recipient chooses a certain way of approaching (and possibly accepting or dismissing) a work of art—according to its potential of *extending* or *defining* his or her own construct system. So the aficionado (or aficionada) construes his or her own novel/painting/piece of music, practicing "constructive alternativism."

Beyond the idea of using PCP concepts as tools in literary criticism mentioned above the (professional) critic may also benefit from the view that her or his reading of a work of art is an act of co-construction between author/performer and audience. Literary critics may be too influenced by the notion of the "death of the author" (Barthes, 1967/1977), which disqualifies an author's biography and intentions as information relevant to an interpretation of his or her work. The idea of co-construction can be taken a step further if the reader not only "co-constructs" in her or his mind but creates "fan fiction" as a very intentional way of producing and sharing alternative constructions of existing texts (see Scheer [2008] on HTML fiction).

Potential Implications of a PCP Approach to the Arts

- *Criticism.* The idea of identifying constructs in a work of art (especially in literature) as opposed to motives or themes may enable a fresh look at the protagonists but also at the worldview of the artist. Students of literary criticism may find PCP thinking and, especially, tools engaging additions to their existing methods.
- *Reflexivity.* How artists see themselves, their intentions, and their ways of creating art is normally, at best, gathered from interviews, diaries, or other declarations directed at an audience, or they may enigmatically say, “all there is, is in the work” without disclosing what this means. The dual roles of creator and reflector in the PCP artist may open the way to a better understanding of creative processes. Even artists not versed in PCP could benefit from explicitly reflecting on the idea that they deal in alternative constructions when creating works of art; and it is conceivable that, for example, creative writing classes could use PCP ways of thinking to approach the core of creative activity they want to develop.
- *Artistic identity.* In the human community of self (or selves) the artistic self is only one of many: “the artist” is also a father, mother, breadwinner, boss, best friend, loner, etc. It might be that the professional artist’s self-construal as an artist is part of her or his core role structure, while for the retiree doing watercolor painting or creative writing classes it is not. It can feel as though this is not under our control, but it can be a matter of choice. Future research could address the question of what it means to construe oneself as a “real” artist, whether such differentiations are distinctive or fuzzy, and how the Choice Corollary may be involved: what do extension and definition mean with respect to self-construal as an artist?
- *Co-construction.* We think that the issue of co-construction goes beyond the truism that “beauty lies in the eye of the beholder” and “everybody has a different view.” It may be fruitful to look at the “art appreciation” process as a process of co-construction that creator and recipient jointly engage in. For example, is commonality of construing important? When students of the arts become inducted into the processes of criticism and appreciation, is this a matter of coming to see the (artistic) world through a shared system of constructs? There is also the issue of time: music that was dreadful to the ears of one generation is often valued highly later when constructs or construct systems—not just “tastes”—have changed. In the history of the arts, creative artists have often been

at odds with the aesthetic preferences of their contemporaries, exploring the limits of sociality and commonality. Ultimately, the development of the arts has to rely on the ability of creators and recipients to construe jointly. Research could involve creators and performers, as well as recipients, in joint projects aimed at identifying the possibilities and the limits of commonality.

Concluding Remarks

The foremost aim of PCP is to understand the individual's ways of making sense of the world. The ubiquitous encounter with works of art, for creators and recipients alike, makes it worthwhile to use the tools provided by PCP for exploring this realm. The themes we have identified—constructivist criticism, reflexivity, artistic identity, and co-construction—warrant further research, given that this domain has emerged as a focus of research only recently. The findings from such research would be of theoretical interest, for example in extending our understanding of artistic creativity, but may also be of practical importance within arts education.

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Personal Construct Psychology and Law

Nick Reed

In his magnum opus *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (1955), Kelly makes reference to the “lawfulness” of an individual’s system of personal constructs. For example:

If a man’s private domain, within which his behavior aligns itself within its own lawful system, is ignored, it becomes necessary to explain him as an inert object wafted about in a public domain by external forces. (p. 39)

Clearly, Kelly had a view on lawfulness/law and seems to have regarded them as important from the point of view of understanding a person’s system of personal constructs. Also, rather in the manner of the articles of a legal convention (e.g., the European Convention on Human Rights), the “skeleton” of the structural theory underlying personal construct psychology (PCP) is set out in the form of a Fundamental Postulate and 11 corollaries. This chapter will consider how that postulate and its corollaries (and some other features of personal construct theory) might illuminate aspects of English law, particularly English criminal law. Whilst the chapter focuses on English law, many of the issues raised will apply to the legal systems of other countries. Readers may also wish to refer to Chapter 5 of this volume, where issues relating to PCP and law are also discussed.

The Fundamental Postulate and law

Kelly states his Fundamental Postulate thus: “A person’s processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events” (1955, p. 46). In his postulate Kelly is saying that a person is in the business of *predicting*—trying to work out what is likely to happen before he or she acts and thereby tests out his or her predictions. An individual’s “processes” of anticipation are based on his or her “channels”—the bipolar personal constructs in his or her construct system, for example, moral–immoral. This idea of anticipation/prediction resonates with one of the key aims of a system of laws, namely, *certainty* (in the sense of “predictability”). Certainty is a basic requirement of a good legal system because it ensures that those who are subject to its laws can predict whether they will or will not be complying with the law in a given situation. Similarly, when a person’s construct system does not allow him or her to predict things accurately, the system will tend not to serve its creator well. It is remarkable how much overlap there is between a person’s optimal anticipatory system and a good legal system. As Hart (1961/1994) says:

In fact all [legal] systems, in different ways, compromise between two social needs: the need for certain rules which can, over great areas of conduct, safely be applied by private individuals to themselves without official guidance or weighing up of social issues, and the need to leave open, for later settlement by an informed, official choice, issues that can only be properly appreciated and settled when they arise in a concrete case. In some legal systems at some periods it may be that too much is sacrificed to certainty . . . In other systems . . . it may seem that too much is treated by the courts as perennially open or revisable. (p. 130)

Kelly’s Fundamental Postulate also indicates that a person’s construct system changes as new events are construed and his or her anticipations are tested and either validated or invalidated by the behavioral experiments he or she undertakes. A legal system also needs to change to meet new demands that are made on it and, just as with a person, change is often not easy—a legal system may be defective for a long time before necessary changes are made to it. Also, as with people, legal systems (which are, of course, composed and operated by construing people) are not infrequently hostile in the Kellyan sense.¹ An example might be the way the judiciary continued to follow the law on the mental intention required for murder as set out by Chief Justice Coke, even though they knew it was wrong—they “persuaded”

themselves that they should not contradict Coke's decision, rather than admit that they had put him on too high a judicial pedestal (for more on this, see the *Commonality Corollary* section later in this chapter).

When the criminal law is put in the position of saying that fundamental change is required, an implication can be that those who were convicted of a particular offense under the old law could, under the new law, be innocent of any wrongdoing. That can be as guilt-provoking (in the Kellyan sense of a person being dislodged from their core role) for those administering a legal system as it might be for an individual. A case in point is the law as it used to be in England in regard to homosexual acts performed by consenting male adults. Such acts used to be serious criminal offenses under English law, but following the Wolfenden Report and after lengthy public campaigns they (or rather, some of them) eventually ceased to be crimes by virtue of the passing of the Sexual Offences Act 1967. But what of those convicted under the law as it was before 1967? In 1952 the renowned mathematician Dr. Alan Turing was convicted of a homosexual act. It was that conviction which largely denied him the recognition he deserved for being the brilliant mind behind the work needed to break the ciphers created by the Nazi Enigma coding machines during World War II. After he was convicted, Turing was given a choice of sentence by the court: imprisonment or hormonal treatment—the latter presumably aimed at “curing” his homosexuality. He chose hormonal treatment, which rendered him impotent, and the conviction itself also meant that he lost his government security clearance—another form of impotence for someone with Turing's expertise (Eldridge, 2013). It was only in 2013, nearly 60 years after his death, that Turing was finally pardoned by the British government. Others who were convicted of similar sexual offenses will probably remain unpardoned and continue to have criminal records. Given cases such as Turing's, it is perhaps not surprising that, despite evidence supporting the need for change, legal systems are, unfortunately, often reluctant to repeal or amend the law.

The Corollaries and Law

The Construction Corollary

The Construction Corollary states that: “A person anticipates events by construing their replications” (Kelly, 1955, p. 50). Kelly elaborates this corollary by saying:

Since events never repeat themselves, else they would lose their identity, one can look forward to them only by devising some construction which permits him to perceive two of them in a similar manner. (2003, p. 9)

So, by a process of categorization, a person creates constructs that enable him or her to differentiate between events. Whilst this is undoubtedly so, we have also to accept that many of the constructs we have in our system are “acquired” through our social interactions and living in a society (see also Chapter 12 of this volume). Similarly, historically, much law came from custom—i.e., replications of certain behaviors. Lord Lloyd of Hampstead (1972) comments: “In its medieval origins much of the common law [law that has not been created by statute] was undoubtedly customary” (p. 572). However, he also notes:

As law develops and becomes more complex the creative role of custom may be expected to diminish. Hence, though many basic institutions of a legal system may have a customary origin this is more a matter of historical perspective than of current creative force. (p. 571)

If most laws do not these days arise out of custom but through legislation then, equally, for most of us our constructs are “franchised” to us by the culture in which we live and work. However, that is not to say that legislation and culture are above being construed by us as individuals, each of us with our own agency. The public pressure that brought about the Sexual Offences Act 1967, referred to above, was as a result of new “customs”—new ways of living and construing, and new constructs and laws came out of replications of those events—in effect, society reconstrued.

The Individuality Corollary

In his Individuality Corollary Kelly states that: “Persons differ from each other in their constructions of events” (1955, p. 55). In this corollary Kelly elaborates the underlying philosophical stance that underpins personal construct psychology (PCP)—constructive alternativism—which says that the same person can construe the same event in different ways. In his Individuality Corollary, Kelly is going further and saying that *different* people will often construe the *same* event in different ways. However, as we shall see, there can also be commonality—different people construing the same event in the same ways. Not surprisingly, when judges sit as a group to hear a particular case (e.g., an appeal from a lower court) they will value

commonality over individuality. A decision by the majority of the judges sitting together (or, indeed, a majority decision by a jury) is never going to be as convincing as one reached unanimously by the judges (or all of the jurors) in the court. In *Liversidge v. Anderson* (1942) AC 206, the sole dissenting judgment out of the five judgments delivered by the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords was given by Lord Atkin, and it sent a shock wave through the legal establishment. Lord Atkin held that the Home Secretary, even in time of war, could not be left to decide by himself whether he had reasonable cause to imprison someone under the Defence (General Regulations) 1939, and so the Home Secretary's decision in *Liversidge's* case should be subject to consideration by the courts. So potent was this single dissenting judgment that Lord Atkin (one of the country's most respected judges) was publicly criticized by other judges (Lewis, 1983). The individuality shown by Lord Atkin in the *Liversidge* case is now seen as a milestone in legal history, but demonstrations of such significant individuality by senior members of the judiciary are noteworthy by reason of their rarity.

Under English criminal law people are generally treated in line with the Individuality Corollary, i.e., as individuals who might construe things in different ways. The legal construct of *mens rea* concerns the mental element required for an accused person to be found guilty of committing an offense. Generally speaking, that means the court will need to be satisfied that the individual defendant intended to do what he or she did—and the test is subjective rather than objective. So, for instance, if the mind of the defendant is so seriously disordered that he or she cannot be said to have intended to carry out his or her wrongful act, he or she will not be convicted.

The Organization Corollary

Kelly says that personal constructs do not exist as individual mini-theories but are part of an integrated system and are related to each other. The Organization Corollary states that: "Each person characteristically evolves for their convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs" (Kelly, 1955, p. 56). Kelly divides constructs into two broad hierarchical levels, *superordinate* constructs and *subordinate* constructs. That approach is reflected in the English legal system by its hierarchical system of courts, ranging from the "lower" courts (e.g., magistrates' courts, district courts) up to the "higher" courts (e.g., Crown Courts, the Supreme

Court). A person's superordinate constructs will ultimately determine the decisions they make and the way in which they behave. Similarly, the Supreme Court will ultimately determine what the law is in a particular case and so will govern similar cases in the future. However, rather in the way that the total reconstruction of a person's "self" can probably only be accomplished with the assistance of a psychotherapist, it is only Parliament that can change the law once the Supreme Court has pronounced on what it thinks the law should be.

Conflicts between the superordinate constructs in a person's construct system can cause him or her great discomfort. For example, a woman may have to decide whether she should report her partner for his criminal activities and thus perhaps *protect society* or whether she should be *loyal* to him. The legal system also has battles in regard to decisions made by its "superordinate courts." An example of this has been the process of defining the mental intention required to constitute the crime of murder. In *Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) v. Smith (1960) 3 All ER 161*, the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords (as the Supreme Court was then known) decided that the test of mental intention in cases of murder should be largely objective (and, therefore, more easily proven), i.e., "what the ordinary reasonable man or woman would in all the circumstances of the case have contemplated as the natural and probable result" (Ormerod, 2011, p. 498) of the actions of the accused. Subsequent cases decided over the years by the House of Lords were at odds with this decision and later the same court decided that "for all practical purposes . . . *Smith* is overruled" (Ormerod, 2011, p. 498) and that, in essence, a subjective test of the accused's intention should be applied. Bearing in mind that when *Smith's* case was decided in 1960, Mr. *Smith* could have been hanged for his crime, it can be appreciated how difficult this *volte face* must have been.

The Dichotomy Corollary

The fundamental "unit" of PCP is the bipolar "personal construct," e.g. good–evil. In his Dichotomy Corollary, Kelly (1955) defines this essential characteristic of personal constructs. He says: "A person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs" (p. 59). Constructs describe both what a person, situation, or thing is and what it is not. They are also pathways of potential movement. When a person describes another as being *good*, he or she is saying that he or she also construes the person as not being *evil* (if *evil* is the opposite in meaning of *good*

for that person). He or she is also saying that those who are not good are *evil*, not just bad or unkind—descriptions which other people might have as their opposites in meaning to “good.” English law is littered with important constructs. Here are a few pertinent ones:

illegal—legal
 guilty—not guilty
 civil law—criminal law
 custodial sentence—non-custodial sentence
 murder—manslaughter

All of these constructs are very important in a legal system and the contrast poles of these constructs both elaborate and at the same time set a clear alternative—and that alternative can have far-reaching implications.

The Choice Corollary

In perhaps his most important corollary, Kelly sets out *why* a person chooses to “sit” on one pole of a construct, rather than on the other. His Choice Corollary says: “Persons choose for themselves that alternative in a dichotomous construct through which they anticipate the greater possibility for the elaboration of their system” (Kelly, 1955, p. 64). This corollary implies that people are responsible for the choices they make and that they choose the pole on which they are going to “rest” because it makes more sense to them to be on that pole rather than its opposite in meaning. Like Kelly, English criminal law usually sits on the “subjective test,” as opposed to the “objective test,” pole to determine whether a person has the necessary legal intention to justify a conviction. It is interesting to ponder what the situation might have been if Kelly had applied an “objective test” in his Choice Corollary (as did the court in *DPP v. Smith*—see above). Had he done so, that corollary might be reworded to read something like: “Certain persons choose for another person that alternative in a dichotomous construct which they anticipate gives that other person the greater possibility for the elaboration of their system.” Restated in that way, the corollary sounds as peculiar from a PCP viewpoint as the objective test for murder seems to have sounded to the judges who effectively reversed the decision in *DPP v. Smith*. That said, some psychological approaches to understanding people (and perhaps most educational ones) do seem to lean toward an objective standard.

The Range Corollary

In his Range Corollary, Kelly says that: “A construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only” (1955, p. 68). Similarly, in the criminal law, behaviors that are not full square within the ambit of a particular offense are not considered as crimes—in legal language, there is no *actus reus*. As Ormerod (2011) puts it:

if the *actus reus* of a particular crime does not exist or occur, that crime is not committed. Although D [the accused] believes that he is appropriating V's [the victim's] property he cannot in any circumstances be guilty of theft if the property belongs to no-one. D has the *mens rea* but the *actus reus*, the other fundamental element of crime, is lacking. D may penetrate V with intent to have intercourse with her without her consent but, if in fact she consents, his act cannot amount to rape. (p. 54)

This is rather like the case of a person confronted with a situation that is outside the range of convenience of his or her construct system. Such an event cannot be construed by him or her because he or she effectively has nothing with which to construe the event in question. The event has occurred but it has not been construed. Just as a person might vainly try to construe what is for him or her unconstruable, in the above examples D could be convicted of attempting to commit the acts in question, even though the acts themselves are not crimes (Criminal Attempts Act 1981).

The Experience Corollary

The Experience Corollary says: “A person's construction system varies as they successively construe the replication of events” (Kelly, 1955, p. 72). This equates to the construct theory take on “learning.” The law is also liable to learn/change at any time by virtue of a decision of a court (especially one of the higher courts) or by way of legislation. Often, such changes occur without the majority of citizens being aware of them. As with changes in a person's system of personal constructs (which also are often made at a very low level of awareness), these changes are the result of how the courts and the legislature have (re)construed certain events. Laws against smoking in certain public places, and the compulsory wearing of seat belts whilst driving a car are examples of events (i.e., smoking and not wearing seat belts) that were once construed as being perfectly legal later being reconstrued as constituting offenses. The legislature has reconstrued and decided

that the potential harm caused by such acts is a greater threat than denying people the freedom to commit them.

The Modulation Corollary

The Modulation Corollary says: “The variation in a person’s construction system is limited by the permeability of the constructs within whose range of convenience the variants lie” (Kelly, 1955, p. 77). Kelly emphasizes that a person’s construct system has to operate within a “legal” system. He says:

If we are to see a person’s psychological processes operating lawfully within a system which he constructs, we need also to account similarly for the evolution of the system itself in a lawful manner. (p. 77)

A legal system too has its own notion of “permeability”—the readiness with which its constructs will admit more behaviors. For instance, English criminal law rarely chooses to create offenses relating to omissions as opposed to acts, so it is relatively impermeable in that respect. Kelly (1955) goes on to say:

Just as in governmental circles instructions can be changed only within the framework of fixed directives, and directives can be changed only within the framework of fixed statutes, and statutes can be changed only within the framework of fixed constitutions, so can one’s personal constructs be changed only within subsystems of constructs and subsystems changed only within more comprehensive systems. (p. 78)

It is interesting to note the extent to which Kelly has introduced concepts relating to legal systems into his theory. He seems to be suggesting that, just like societies, people have a specific type of structure within which psychological change takes place. Without such a structure (however flawed it may be) a society, just like a person’s construing, would become chaotic and its citizens subject to uncertainty and anxiety, as would an individual whose construct system is in disarray.

The Fragmentation Corollary

The Fragmentation Corollary states that: “A person may successively employ a variety of construction systems which are inferentially incompatible with each other” (Kelly, 1955, p. 83). Fragmentation enables a person to deal

with complex situations where the straightforward application of a construct or constructs to a given event would not “fit” into the person’s system of values. Legal systems also have to deal with a range of conflicting needs and pressures. Examples in the English legal system include: freedom of the press—protecting privacy; rights of citizens to use self-defense—protecting people from excessive violence; and, more prosaically, individual freedom—laws requiring motor cyclists to wear crash helmets. In all these cases the legal system has had to make complex choices and decide which is the lesser of two evils, just as parents who consider themselves to be *kind* may have to decide to be *cruel* when they smack their child because they think that is the only way in which they can *protect their child from serious harm*. When there are competing “rights” a legal system also has to choose which of those competing “rights” will ultimately prevail. Of course, in so doing, those creating the law will similarly be governed by *their* superordinate constructs.

The Commonality Corollary

The Commonality Corollary says: “To the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, their processes are psychologically similar to those of the other person” (Kelly, 1955, p. 90). One of the most common examples of commonality at work is in the area of group membership, which often results in a person feeling under pressure to construe things in the way that the group (especially the leaders of the group) construes them. The potency of commonality in the legal system can be illustrated by the statement made by Chief Justice Coke (perhaps the greatest jurist of his time) about the constituents of the crime of murder under English law. Coke said that if a person killed another person he or she should be convicted of murder if “malice aforethought” was shown. In its consultation paper *A New Homicide Act for England and Wales*, the Law Commission (2005) referred to Lord Coke’s definition thus:

Although they knew that this assertion [about malice aforethought] was wrong, such was later judges’ high regard for Lord Coke that they did not use their powers to correct the error. Lord Coke’s words subsequently became law in the criminal codes of most states in the United States of America (USA), where it remains in a modified form to the present day. It was not finally erased from English law until 1957 when Parliament intervened. Over the centuries, the error must have led to the execution of hundreds of people in England and Wales and across the USA who should really have been convicted of manslaughter. (p. 9)

There could hardly be a more telling example of the power that the culture of a particular group can exert. As Kelly (1955) says:

Personal-construct theory would then understand cultural similarity, not only in terms of personal outlook rather than in terms of the impingement of social stimuli, but also in terms of what the individual anticipates others will do and, in turn, what he thinks they are expecting him to do. (p. 94)

The Sociality Corollary

The Sociality Corollary says: “To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, they may play a role in a social process involving the other person” (Kelly, 1955, p. 95). To achieve sociality (and thereby gain a deeper understanding of another human being) means that a person has to try and stand in the psychological shoes of another person. A good example would be the case of the personal construct psychotherapist subsuming the construing of his or her client. In the legal context, a similar level of sociality may be required of jury members in, for example, a case of rape. In such circumstances jury members are often charged with deciding whether the alleged victim consented to sexual intercourse. In order to do that, the members of the jury are, in effect, asked to put themselves in the shoes of, respectively, both the accused and the alleged victim to decide whether, from the subjective points of view of both, the victim consented to intercourse. That would seem to be a formidable task even for those trained in personal construct methods. For those without such training, we can only wonder how they approach the need for sociality in such a demanding context.

Conclusion

The above narrative has woven its way through both personal construct and legal theory. Hopefully, it has shed a little light on both and may even have indicated some areas where the two might usefully collaborate. Certainly, it seems that notions of “law” and “legal systems” were important to Kelly and he clearly thought them relevant to his theory. Perhaps Kelly’s interest in law might be founded on what he says here:

It is inappropriate for a clinician to assume that the client is not expressing anything at all or that his behavior is lawless. If we take the view that all nature, including human nature, can eventually be interpreted lawfully, we

should not abdicate our position at the outset by deciding arbitrarily that some human behavior is lawful and other human behavior is not. (Kelly, 1955, pp. 197–198)

Note

- 1 Kelly defines hostility as “the continued effort to extort validation evidence in favour of a type of social prediction which has already been recognised as a failure” (1955, p. 510).

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Personal Construct Psychology and Restorative Justice

Finn Tschudi

What Is Restorative Justice, and What Is Its Background?

A major point in this chapter is that basic ideas in restorative justice (RJ) are congruent with Kelly's theory, personal construct psychology (PCP). However, (as far as I know) no one in the RJ literature has referred to PCP or Kelly, neither has anyone in the PCP literature referred to RJ. This also refers to my own main writings on RJ (Neimeyer & Tschudi, 2003; Tschudi & Reichelt, 2004; Tschudi, 2007, 2008), and I am thus grateful for the present invitation to explore similarities and differences between PCP and RJ. I hope this presentation will lead to further exploration of possible relations between RJ and PCP and provide inspiration for both.

RJ is usually contrasted with retributive justice (the usual Western criminal system for dealing with offenses). One major background context for the current interest in RJ is the native Maori custom in New Zealand of treating problems with young persons in the extended family. This provided a model for the 1989 Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act. John McDonald (principal advisor on youth and juvenile justice to the New South Wales Police Commissioner) led a study group to New Zealand in 1990 to study the consequences of this policy, and with David Moore and others in 1995 formed the first institute for RJ in Australia (Moore & McDonald, 2000). I was fortunate to spend some time with them in Australia in 1998, and they have since then twice given seminars in Norway. Furthermore, they inspired the criminologist John Braithwaite (2002) to

take an interest in RJ, and he is today a leading scholar in this area, and has traveled widely to promote RJ. Other perspectives on RJ may be found in, for example, Zehr and Toews (2010).

Braithwaite (2003, p. 35) provides the following definition:

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE . . . is a process in which all the stakeholders affected by an injustice have the opportunity to discuss the consequences of the injustice and what might be done to put them right.

The key value is that because injustice hurts, justice should heal. Responding to pain with “another spoonful of pain” is seen as a less satisfactory response than responding with healing or repair.

Christie (2004, pp. 96–97) tells us that “Restore is an Old Norse term. It means, literally to raise once more the wooden stocks, *staur*, that have fallen down . . . to rebuild the house.” This implies a clear contrast to the usual “retributive justice” which is practiced in the West, where the customary emphasis usually is on how and how much an offender should suffer.

What Is “Restored” in Restorative Justice?

“Rebuilding,” however, leads to the further question: What is it that especially needs “rebuilding”? Put otherwise: What is it that has been (more or less) harmed? Occasionally the issue may simply be loss of property (and the ensuing anger) after a theft. There may, however, be deeper issues involved, especially violation of *dignity*, a central concept in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (para. 1), which states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” A prominent antonym is humiliation, which Lindner (2006) defines as “the enforced lowering of any person or group by a process of subjugation that damages their dignity.”

It is worth mentioning that from his extensive European travels Kelly (1962/1996, pp. 52–53) sketches a pronounced similarity of views in all the Scandinavian countries regarding the U.S.A.:

A sickening image of the less privileged fourth of our population . . . where there is little relation to the restoration of self-respect . . . the sick and the helpless being stripped of their *dignity* the moment they are driven to seek aid. (my italics)

The contrast:

A grand contemporary example of extremes of wealth . . . three fourths self-righteously successful against a one-fourth contemptibly derelict.

This expresses a concern for dignity in line with RJ values. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) paint a distressing image of the U.S.A. similar to the Scandinavian view above. The U.S.A. tops the list of 20 economically prosperous countries on major problems such as ill health, criminality, and alcoholism. Here the underlying pathogenic factor is strongly argued as inequality (basically economic), and this leads to humiliation and lack of dignity. The subtitle is *Why Equality Is Better for Everyone*. Since the Scandinavian countries generally are very strong on equality it is not surprising that they were the most attuned to the ill effects of pronounced inequality! Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) give us a broader perspective on RJ since the dominant theme emerges as “restoring dignity,” and this should be a major theme in contemporary society.

Conferencing: An Approach to Restoring Dignity

Background

Christie’s (1977) epochal article “Conflict as Property” launched the major point that “conflict” is something which can be “stolen.” Quite often criminal offenses (e.g., theft, violence) lead to conflicts between transgressor and victim. Christie explores the possibility that instead of leaving further treatment of the conflict to state-licensed lawyers and other officials, the local community can themselves arrange a meeting to deal with what should be done about the conflict.

This is in accord with RJ, where such a meeting usually is referred to as conferencing, a major practice in RJ. A facilitator will be responsible for convening a meeting with the major involved parties: transgressors, victims, people supporting each of the major conflicting parties, and locally involved persons (e.g., teachers if some pupils have been involved in more or less serious conflicts). Providing the structure for such conferences may be a strenuous task, extensively discussed in Abramson and Moore (2001). Usually a variety of organizations and people are involved: schools, places of work, concerned citizens, etc. In Norway most communities have organized conflict councils, largely inspired by Christie’s work. A facilitator

need not have any specific academic background; usually a three-day intensive course is sufficient. What is of basic importance is that the person can maintain a stance of “empathic impartiality” during difficult and emotional processes (Abramson & Moore, p. 332). It should be emphasized that the facilitator in no way functions as a therapist; rather, his or her task is to arrange conditions so that the involved parties themselves have the responsibility for dealing with the conflict. Each participant is informed beforehand about exactly what is to happen in the conference and the aim, which is to understand what has happened and participate in what might be done to reduce the harm and (if possible) prevent further harm. This contrasts sharply with much group work done from a Kellyan perspective. Frances (2003) takes as a point of departure Kelly’s work on “disorders of transition,” and provides a large set of questions which appear highly useful in understanding and also transcending phenomena such as anxiety, threat, guilt, and hostility. Trygve Myhren (a Norwegian friend trained by Moore and McDonald) has extensive experience in training facilitators. He says that one of his major tasks is the need to prevent trainees from thinking of themselves as therapists, assigned the role of solving concrete therapeutic problems. Abramson and Moore (2001) write that such persons cannot function as facilitators.

In Christie’s terminology the conflict is “handed back” to the involved parties, and this touches on the major similarity between PCP and RJ. For Kelly there is no basic difference between a “scientist” and the ordinary person: the “personal scientist” (earlier “man the scientist”) has the same epistemological status as the conventional “scientist.” Similarly the participants in a conference have no less responsibility than lawyers in conventional legal proceedings.

Stages in a typical conference

It is convenient to think in terms of three major stages in a conference. The first stage is dominated by negative emotions. This stage (Tschudi & Reichelt, 2004) is characterized by I-it relations as described by Buber (1923/1958). In Kellyan terminology this is equivalent to non-social relations where a person treats others as “behaving mechanisms” or objects, and not as persons. Furthermore, everyone gets to describe—often in great detail—what has happened and what the emotional reactions have been. At the end of the first stage there is often a turning point. This marks the second stage; mutual recognition of the quandary of the group, “feelings of shame, experienced as individual deflation and expressed as collective

vulnerability” (Moore & McDonald, 2000, p. 50). I like to think about this as a feeling that “we are all in the same boat,” togetherness, there are no antagonistic differences between the parties.

In the third stage, positive emotions, interest and excitement flourish, and ideas for reducing harm and preventing further harm dominate.

I shall now give some examples, emphasizing the second stage, “collective vulnerability.” This is a pivotal phenomenon in conferencing, and also has great theoretical interest from a PCP point of view.

Example 1. Aussie–Leb fighting

From Neimeyer and Tschudi (2003, pp. 181–182); Tschudi was present as an observer

In a school in Sydney fighting occurred between “Lebs” (immigrants with a Lebanese background) and “Aussies” (people with an Australian background). When parents were summoned to a conference and asked to describe how they had been affected, an Aussie father expounded a remarkable theory: “The problem with you Lebanese,” he declared, “is that you fight like a whole pack on one boy.” In spite of angry interruptions he continued: “A necessary condition for improvement is for the Lebanese to fight the proper way.” An older sister of one of the Lebanese boys got especially upset and addressed the facilitator both verbally and nonverbally with the message: “You cannot let this go on.” The facilitator restrained himself, nodding back to signal to her: “It is up to you to say what you feel must be said.” Her basic message was: “Where are we now? We have come here to prevent further fighting. But now we are no better than the boys were when they were fighting. We must concentrate on what can be done to improve conditions at the school.” Many felt shame (cf. “collective vulnerability”), and lots of constructive suggestions followed; support for the teacher who was present when fighting started, using older boys to prevent younger ones from fighting, etc.

Example 2. Road fatality

From Neimeyer and Tschudi (2003, pp. 177–181)

Jack was the father of Pat, who lost her life in a car accident when Jill was driving in a drunken state. Jill was imprisoned but bent on saying “sorry” to Jack, while he was consumed by anger and hatred and wanted Jill to suffer even more. Jack placed a picture of Pat opposite to where Jill was sitting—as if this somehow magically could serve to punish Jill. Jill, however, turned to the picture and said she wished Pat could be there and wished that it had been she (Jill) who had died. This seemed to dissolve some of Jack’s anger. An even more salient episode, however, was when Jack passed around a

graphic picture of the scene. A reverential silence fell over the group, only punctuated by occasional sobs from the participants. This marked the emergence of collective vulnerability, a shared physical deflation, a poignant recognition of the frailty and brevity of life. John McDonald later told me that he was very curious to see the picture but deliberately refrained from looking at it. The picture was the property of the group, and he did not belong to the group (and could thus not claim any ownership of what was basically the group's property). The cementing of the sense of coherence led to a remarkable agreement: Jack and Jill should together travel around to talk about the dangers of drunk driving.

Example 3. Teenager fighting explodes

From Abramson and Moore (2001, pp. 326–327)

In a representative example from several hundred conferences in the Baltimore area in the U.S.A., what started as two teenagers fighting escalated into incidents involving knives and guns while parents unsuccessfully tried to intervene. After extremely heated exchanges in the ensuing conference, one mother burst into tears and said: “You know my cousin was killed two months ago over something as stupid as what we are arguing about. If we don’t do something about this tonight somebody in this room is going to be killed.” There was a heavy and long silence in the room—the moment of “collective vulnerability.” What followed was remarkable. Within 15 minutes the families came up with eight points of agreement as to how they would treat each other in the future. In the 12 months following the conference there were no calls for police service to any of the residences.

Example 4. “How restorative justice turned my life around”

From *The Sunday Times* (Woolf, 2008)

Peter, at 45, was a long-time criminal who one day picked a random house, managed to get in, and started collecting items which he could sell. When Will, the owner, suddenly returned a fight started, where Will was hit by a griddle and a big flower pot. On the same day, Peter stole a laptop computer from a doctor in another break-in. In prison Peter was visited by Kim Smith, a policeman who worked with RJ. Kim had arranged for Will and the doctor to attend a conference with the offender. When Peter started to say to Will “When we met . . .” Will turned red with fury, and described the anger he felt, and his shame at his failure to protect his wife, who had also been present at the break-in. The doctor said that the laptop represented his life’s work. What had meant a lot to him had been treated as worthless. When Peter was asked to comment, tears filled his eyes, and he somehow managed to say “I’m sorry.”

Peter was asked to write the doctor and Will every six months to tell them how he was putting his life in order. Will commented that you do not leave anyone in the sad state Peter was in unless you are a shit, and he told Peter that if he went back to his old life he would be shitting on their goodwill. That they seemed to care about him made Peter really want them to be proud of him.

What is especially touching about this story is that the good relations created between “victim and offender” also turned into joint actions. Together with his wife Peter was invited to Kim’s retirement dinner, where Will was also present with his wife. Peter is now working with the Metropolitan Police, in work connected with RJ, and often together with Will, who is not a policeman but is sometimes interested in working with RJ!

As illustrated in the examples above, the last stage is dominated by positive emotions and constructive suggestions of what may be done to deal with the conflict effectively, and also what may be done to prevent future conflicts. Here sociality reigns! The facilitator then writes out the agreement, what should be done when, and who is responsible, and the main participants sign the agreement. While the facilitator is writing this, there is usually an informal gathering with light snacks. This is a great occasion for people to get better acquainted, and there may be “hugs and tears, which is always nice to see,” as John McDonald once put it.

Conferencing and Ubuntu: Illustrating the importance of extending the Sociality Corollary

Harry Procter has been involved for years in extending Kelly’s (1955) Sociality Corollary, which states “To the extent that one person construes *the construction processes of another*, he may play a role in a social process involving *the other*” (p. 95, my italics). Procter (2014) points to the major limitations of this corollary: it neither acknowledges the construction processes of *several others* (dyads, triads, or groups) nor gives room for the role of the construction processes of *another*. He thus proposes a Relationality Corollary: “To the extent that a person can construe *the relationships between the members of a group* he or she may take part in a *group process with them*” (p. 245, my italics). This captures “the further implication that this involves not only construing others’ positions but construing *their* constructions of the array of positions, and the interactions between these” (Procter, 2014, p. 258).

Confronted with a range of interactional phenomena one may then need special types of constructs. Procter has made major suggestions about how grid work can be extended by focusing on several qualitative levels of construing, for example elucidating differences between monadic, dyadic, and triadic construing, involving one, two, or three terms. Each “term” may denote any number of persons such that even the whole “group” may just be “one term.”

From the point of view of understanding conferencing, however, Procter’s view of the group as just another monadic term seems limited. He “retains from Kelly the importance of the person as a site of an individually selected and evolved construct system” (2014, p. 259), and goes into great detail about monadic and triadic construing. However, a whole group may sometimes *transcend* the constructions of any single person—in moments of collective vulnerability and a further collective solidarity—and then independently contribute to construction for each of the participants. The verbal descriptions in Example 1—“Where are we now?”—and Example 3—“If *we* don’t do something . . .”—highlight this, and the sobbing and ensuing silence in Example 2 illustrate a non-verbal analogue of “we.”

Inspired by Procter’s research, I would suggest having participants give constructions not only of typical monadic, dyadic, and triadic terms but also of special “group moments.” A reasonable suggestion is that moments of collective vulnerability would be far more salient than any, say, triadic construction, and also more salient than any other group moment.

In Western conceptual frameworks we do not have readily available concepts for such group processes. This has led me to seek inspiration from the African concept Ubuntu, which was a guiding image for Nelson Mandela and Bishop Tutu during the South African revolution. My favorite translation runs “I am because you are,” for Bishop Tutu; “our humanities are inextricably related” (Tschudi, 2008, p. 49). For Barack Obama, Ubuntu was a major theme in his November 2013 memorial speech honoring Nelson Mandela.

Restorative, Transformative, and Retributive Justice

A basic premise for conferencing is that participation should be voluntary. This implies that RJ can never replace conventional legal procedures. Christie (2004) agrees with this, but forcefully argues that punishment (the deliberate infliction of pain) should be kept to a minimum, even though it is necessary clearly to mark boundaries concerning acceptable behavior.

It is, however, important to emphasize that restorative vs. retributive justice is not an either/or question. Quite often retributive justice leaves questions concerning the victim's situation unanswered. This is illustrated in Example 1 and Example 4 above.

Kelly's (1955, pp. 506–507) view of punishment may, however, be taken to illustrate pronounced differences between conventional retributive justice and RJ. He points out that we may all have tendencies to commit crimes. When dealing with criminals there might be a “looming shadow” telling us that we may also have tendencies to commit similar crimes. This can then lead to emphasizing punishment as a way of *distancing* us from the criminal, and this may influence the conventional treatment of criminals. Conferencing, however, leads us to recognize the *contrast* to distancing, i.e., bringing offenders and victims closer to each other, and thus enabling an exploration of our joint humanity.

We have emphasized restoring dignity, and may add that this implies encouraging empowerment, everyone in the process coming to believe that their story is worth telling. A further important aspect is that new relationships may be forged. Example 4 illustrated this, and in Example 2 Jack felt that Jill might serve to restore the lost relationship with his daughter. More generally sociality and equal, non-hierarchical relationships are strengthened, and persons thus come to have more respect for each other. I have noticed that, in Norwegian cases where groups have been fighting, agreements emphasize the importance of people recognizing each other by greetings when they meet, thus increasing “social capital” (Putnam, 2000).

Systematic research on RJ vs. retributive justice seems promising. Latimer, Dowden, and Muise (2005) present a meta-analysis of 22 studies which indicates that both victim and offender satisfaction is greater and, furthermore, recidivism is less in RJ. Sherman, Strang, Angel, and Woods (2005) avoid a possible self-selection bias here by using four randomized controlled studies (in London and Canberra). They present data showing greater psychological benefits from RJ for victims, and emphasize the importance of achieving group solidarity. Future research, however, may benefit from combining quantitative and qualitative data (see the comments above on Procter's research, and Tschudi, 1989).

A suggested alternative to “restorative justice” is “transformative justice.” There is, however, no conflict here. “Restoration” in conferences refers to a primary concern with the immediate consequences of harm, while “transformative justice” implies a major emphasis on promoting values such as respect and humility and a gentle and peaceful way of life, leading to wider

societal transformations (cf. Tschudi, 2008). This was the case in Example 3, where further work led to a wider range of possibilities for young people. Dale (2006) has written about strategies for supplementing RJ with “conflict workshops.”

Concluding Comments

While the aim of RJ, to restore dignity, is in line with PCP thinking, transitional constructs (such as threat, anxiety, anger, and guilt—cf. Frances, 2003) may have limited applicability in conferencing. As discussed in detail by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010, pp. 235–272), to the extent that we have symmetrical (non-hierarchical) relationships people are well equipped to solve ongoing problems themselves. A conference facilitator takes this for granted and does not offer any solutions. This, however, illustrates the power of the basic PCP stance: to see others as personal scientists, and thus to treat any conflict as a property belonging to the ones primarily involved, as Christie (1977) argued.

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Changing Behavior to Being More Environmentally Friendly

A PCP Perspective

Nick Reed and Nadine Page

Introduction

This chapter is organized in the following way. First, we briefly present the case for pro-environmental behavior change. Next, we introduce the main non-personal construct psychology (PCP) approaches that have been used to understand and explain how people relate to climate change and their engagement or otherwise with pro-environmental behavior change (Vining & Ebreo, 2002). To begin with, we look at some of the psychological approaches that are based on individual agency and then we discuss psychological theories that place greater emphasis on the influence of the social and physical environment. We then introduce PCP as an alternative approach and consider some of the differences between PCP and non-PCP psychological approaches. To illustrate the PCP approach, we present an empirical study which explores the ways that people construe climate change and (reducing) energy consumption.

The scientific evidence surrounding climate change has grown considerably over the past three decades following the UN Conference on the Changing Atmosphere in 1988, and there is now little doubt about the connection between human behavior, carbon emissions, and changes to the world's climate. A recent report compiled by an international consortium of scientists suggests that the majority of climate researchers agree that human activity is contributing to global warming (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2013, AR5). However, despite the

growing scientific evidence, there is a perception that a significant part of society does not recognize the problems relating to climate change and/or that it is the result of human activity. There also seems to be an undercurrent of feeling that getting people to change their behavior to reduce their impact on the environment is going to be a formidable task. For example, in the U.K., energy consumption relating to transportation and households has continued to rise in recent years (DEFRA, 2006), and it has been reported that only a minority of people are taking action to reduce their energy consumption in these areas (Whitmarsh, 2009). Finding out why this behavior change is not taking place is a critical, timely, and overdue challenge, and one that we argue PCP is particularly well placed to address.

Broadly speaking, non-PCP psychological theories can be categorized into two main types. The first type emphasizes the role of individual agency and the individual as the locus of behavior. From this perspective, behavior is seen as an outcome of competing influences that are decided upon by the individual in a balanced and rational way. From this point of view, behavior is seen as being largely determined by personal characteristics and intentions. The second approach is focused more on the social and physical context in which behavior occurs, and thus places greater emphasis on factors that are, to a greater extent, outside of individual control. Additionally, there are theories that sit between these two approaches and emphasize the interplay of personal characteristics and contextual forces. Within these theories, three main types of pro-environmental action determinants have been identified. These could be categorized as attitudinal factors such as personal norms, beliefs, and values which can influence an individual's general predisposition to act with pro-environmental intent; contextual factors external to the individual that exist in his or her social and physical environment and might facilitate or inhibit action; and the resources available to an individual that are needed to adopt certain pro-environmental behaviors, e.g., money, time, and knowledge.

Psychological Approaches Focused on Personal Characteristics

There are several psychological theories that seek to explain pro-environmental behavior change from the perspective of individual agency. These identify a range of different attitudinal factors as potential determinants of pro-environmental action. For example, in the norm activation theory

(Schwartz, 1977) the determinant of action is considered to be the activation of a personal norm, which is triggered when there is an awareness of the need for behavioral control. Similarly, the value-belief-norm theory (Stern, 2000) identifies personal values, beliefs, and norms as the attitudinal factors that combine to influence an individual's overall predisposition to act with pro-environmental intent. These connect with contextual forces in the built and social environment and personal capabilities (such as knowledge, skills, and competencies) to determine action. These attitudinal factors are seen as being the foundation of a causal chain and are the starting point for pro-environmental intent and action. Similarly, the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) specifies three antecedents of action, each of which has an indirect effect on behavior through its influence on behavior intention. The antecedents are: attitudes toward the behavior; subjective norms; and perceived behavioral control. Favorable attitudes and subjective norms coupled with perceptions of behavioral control are said to lead to strong behavioral intentions and, in turn, actually behaving.

The main difference between the psychological theories that focus on individual agency and behavioral control is the specific determinant of action. However, their commonality is that they all identify a personal attitudinal characteristic as the basis of the causal action chain and this either directly or indirectly connects to the outcome behavior.

Psychological Approaches Focused on Context Characteristics

In contrast to theories that focus on variables of individual agency and behavioral control, there are also those that emphasize the effect of factors in the social and physical environment. These theories promote the idea that social practices, habits and routines, and technology/innovation are possible determinants of pro-environmental behavior.

Social practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Hargreaves, 2011; Shove, 2010) considers how behaviors such as cooking, driving, washing, and shopping are embedded in the social practices of everyday life. From this perspective, pro- or anti-environmental behaviors are seen as being "normal ways of life" (Shove, 2004). They are not determined by an individual's cognitions, beliefs, and behavioral competencies, but by him or her becoming the "carrier" (Reckwitz, 2002) of social practices and the "performer" of the behaviors that are required by the relevant social practices.

Similarly, diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003) connects behavior to the stability of everyday life and suggests that new behaviors will only be considered and adopted through a process of innovation—“an idea, practice or object perceived as new” (Rogers, 2003, p. 12). Accordingly, stability in daily practices, as opposed to personal characteristics, is seen as the main determinant of behavior, and developments in technology and infrastructure have the potential to shift behavior.

Whilst there are fewer theories that explain behavior according to contextual factors, there is a large degree of similarity between these theories. Overall, they tend to be more nomothetic, as opposed to idiographic, in their approach and are less flexible in their ability to tailor interventions to change the behavior of specific individuals. These approaches focus more on identifying behaviors and the extent to which they are pro-environmental, rather than trying to understand what underpins action and how individuals can be encouraged to behave more pro-environmentally.

Despite there being some obvious differences between the personal characteristics and the context characteristics approaches, they have a similarity in that they both seem to be essentially reductionist and attempt to find specific factors or “forces” that will influence environmental behavior, i.e., to make it more or less “friendly.”

The PCP Approach

The PCP approach is demonstrably different to those described above. From the point of view of PCP, human decision-making is accepted as being complex and the PCP approach explores the intricate interaction of events and how a person construes them, and thereby makes his or her decisions (usually at a very low level of awareness) about how he or she will behave. The PCP approach sees people (including PCP practitioners and researchers) as construing events and then making elaborative choices that make sense to them (though not necessarily to others), rather than the person being “pushed” by external events or “pulled” by internal forces.

As PCP is already based on a complex, integrated theory (personal construct theory—PCT) it does not need to create new psychological theories to understand why people are behaving in different ways in different contexts. The personal construct psychologist can apply PCT to understanding why people are or are not behaving in environmentally friendly ways, just as he or she can apply it to understanding a multitude of other areas of human behavior (see, e.g., Fransella, 2003, and other chapters in this volume).

PCP also has an extensive armory of methods, based on its underlying theory, which can be used to research behavior—or, more accurately, to research the construing that determines different behaviors. In the empirical study that is presented here, we describe the way in which we explored how a sample of people construed climate change, global warming, and home energy consumption, using personal construct methods.

At its heart, the PCP approach reflects Kelly's advice that: "If you do not know what is wrong with a person, ask him; he may tell you" (1955, pp. 322–323). In the context of exploring pro/anti-environmental behavior, that advice could be reworded to say: "If you want to know why someone isn't behaving in an environmentally friendly way, ask him or her and he or she might tell you." Such an approach is based on the PCP notion of "credulous listening" (Kelly, 1955). This approach indicates that rather than prejudging a person's behavior as being, for example, "bad" or "irrational" or caused by internal or external "forces," we should listen to what that person has to say about the behavior in question and, in the first instance at least, take his or her reasons for behaving as he or she does at face value. By taking this approach, PCP allows us to cross the boundaries and restrictions of looking at behavior as being due to *internal characteristics* as opposed to *contextual characteristics*, and to focus on identifying the personal constructs that a person (or a group of people) is using in a particular situation and then proceed to explore their construing.

The Study

The aim of the study was to explore how a sample of people construed issues relating to reducing energy consumption and global warming/climate change. The study used repertory grid technique (Kelly, 1955; see Chapter 7, this volume). Whilst this methodology has been used in a very large number of research projects, as far as we have been able to ascertain, no research utilizing this method has been published in the areas covered by the study. A particular attribute of repertory grid technique is that the method combines both qualitative and quantitative data. We believe that this feature is very useful if the complex issues involved in changing behavior to being more environmentally friendly are going to be properly understood. Furthermore, the method does not impose the views of the researcher upon the participants in the way that other instruments may often do.

The resources available for this survey were modest and the total sample size (50 people) is small in terms of a survey of this type. Accordingly, we

cannot say that the sample is representative of any particular population. However, we believe that the results of the study indicate that the methodology used for the survey has given important insights into the complexities of understanding behavior in the context of energy saving and how climate change/global warming is construed.

How the study was undertaken

The study employed the “diagnostic research” method of using repertory grids to conduct surveys (Fransella, 1985; Kington, Reed, & Sammons, 2013; McGettigan et al., 2013). That method will now be described. First, nine one-to-one confidential interviews lasting approximately one hour were conducted with an opportunistically recruited sample. During these interviews, bipolar “personal constructs” (e.g., “believes that global warming/climate change is happening now—doesn’t believe that global warming/climate change is happening now”) were elicited using a range of personal construct interviewing methods: the “triadic method” (Kelly, 1955); “sentence completion” (Grice, Burkley, Burkley, Wright, & Slaby, 2004); “laddering” (Hinkle, 1965); and “pyramiding” (Landfield, 1971). The personal constructs elicited in the individual interviews (approximately 100 personal constructs) were then “pooled” and categorized into bipolar “themes” by us. Eleven such themes were identified, and these were put into a repertory grid in the form of bipolar constructs. Those 11 themes are listed in Table 39.1. The elements (the things construed) used in the repertory grids are set out in Table 39.2.

Fifty survey participants were recruited using opportunistic and snowball sampling. Each participant rated each of the eight elements on all 11 constructs in the grid, using a seven-point rating scale. In order to get a measure of the relative resistance to change of the constructs, interviewees were also asked to rank the 11 constructs in order of personal importance to them, both “Now” and in “Five years’ time.” Equal rankings were not permitted. The data from the repertory grids were analyzed by producing mean ratings for each cell of the grid together with standard errors in respect of each of those mean ratings, both for the whole sample and also for each of the sub-groups of the following four demographic variables:

- 1 Sex (males: $n = 23$; females: $n = 27$)
- 2 Age (18–30: $n = 26$; 31–50: $n = 8$; 51–65: $n = 16$)
- 3 Whether the interviewee had an environmental policy at their place of work (yes: $n = 23$; no: $n = 4$; n/a: $n = 23$)

Table 39.1 Constructs Used in the Repertory Grid.

<i>“Environmentally Friendly” Construct Poles</i>	<i>“Non-Environmentally Friendly” Construct Poles</i>
1. Believing that global warming/ climate change is happening now	Not believing that global warming/ climate change is happening now
2. Being prepared to take steps to reduce energy consumption just to help the environment	Being prepared to take steps to reduce energy consumption only if it saves money
3. Thinking that people who worry a lot about global warming/climate change are right to do so	Thinking that people who worry a lot about global warming/climate change need to get a life!
4. Focusing on protecting the planet for the sake of future generations	Focusing on the economic problems we face at the moment
5. Being a caring sort of person	Being a selfish sort of person
6. Having information about global warming/climate change that is understandable	Having information about global warming/climate change that is not clear
7. Believing that it is more important to look after the planet than to keep on acquiring more possessions	Believing that material possessions are really important
8. Knowing what steps we need to take to reduce the consumption of energy in our homes	Not knowing what steps we need to take to reduce the consumption of energy in our homes
9. Being willing to change our lifestyles to reduce the consumption of energy in our homes	Not being willing to change our lifestyles to reduce the consumption of energy in our homes
10. Believing that our actions will make a difference to reducing global warming/climate change	Not believing that our actions will make a difference to reducing global warming/climate change
11. Being willing to make the extra effort needed to reduce the consumption of energy in our homes	Not being willing to make the extra effort needed to reduce the consumption of energy in our homes

Note. In the repertory grid the wordings of the constructs were slightly varied to suit the elements, and the “environmentally friendly” and “non-environmentally friendly” poles of the constructs were arranged so that one side of the grid form did not just contain one or other type of pole.

Table 39.2 The Elements Used in the Repertory Grid.

-
1. Me now
 2. The sort of person who is *likely* to take steps to reduce consumption of energy in their home
 3. The sort of person who is *unlikely* to take steps to reduce consumption of energy in their home
 4. What someone who knows me well would say about me
 5. 'Me in 3 years' time
 6. The average person
 7. Me as I would like to be
 8. Most of the people in my social circle
-

Mean rankings were also produced in respect of the two ranking tasks both for the whole sample and for the sub-groups of each of the variables. Mean ratings for the sub-groups of the variables were compared using t-tests. Differences in mean ratings are only reported where they are statistically significant ($p < .05$). Except where otherwise stated, differences in mean rankings between sub-groups of variables are only reported if the difference in their respective mean ranks is greater than 4.

Results of the study

Importantly, the survey participants said that they strongly believed that climate change/global warming *is* happening now and they also ranked the issue of believing whether or not climate change is happening as the most important issue of all the 11 issues (constructs) with which they were presented. However, the issue of whether it is right to worry about climate change was ranked as the *least* important issue. By saying they are not worrying about climate change, but at the same time stating that they think it is happening and that it is very important to them, the participants seem to be indicating that, for them, hand-wringing is not a worthwhile option for tackling the environmental crisis with which the world is confronted.

The results show that the relative importance of the issue of "focusing on saving the planet rather than the economy" will greatly increase to participants in five years' time. At the moment, this issue is ranked only fifth equal in importance, whereas participants say that in five years' time it will be the most important issue to them. When asked how they see themselves as being in three years' time, the participants indicated that although they thought they would be "greener" overall, they would be even less likely than now to reduce their energy consumption unless it

would save them money. They said that they believed that the “average person” was considerably more negative (i.e., less “green”) toward climate change and saving energy than they were themselves. That could be an important reason for people *not* to change their behavior. Why should you take the trouble to be more environmentally friendly if you think that others are not going to bother?

The participants said that ideally they *wanted* to be “greener” than they are now in terms of nearly *all* the “environmentally friendly” poles of all the constructs in the grid. That raises the question: “Why is it that they feel that they are not able to be as they say they would like to be?” One reason may be that, as mentioned above, at the moment they think that “focusing on saving the planet” is a relatively unimportant issue—perhaps because of the economic climate. However, as in five years’ time “focusing on saving the planet rather than focusing on the economy” is seen as being the most important issue of all, maybe they will become greener—at least if the economy improves.

Females in the sample thought that the issue of “focusing on protecting the planet—focusing on current economic problems” was considerably less important than did the males. Females in the sample also said that “knowing how to reduce consumption” was the third most important issue to them now, but that it would only be the eighth most important issue to them in five years’ time. That may indicate that they believe such information will be better than it is now. Females said that they thought that in five years’ time the issue of “focusing on protecting the planet rather than on economic problems” would be the second most important issue to them.

Males in the sample said that the issue “willingness to make the extra effort to save energy” was third in importance to them now, but they thought it would only be tenth in importance to them in five years’ time. Perhaps they believe that “willingness” will not be optional in five years’ time because it will be compulsory for everyone to save energy, like it or not. That fits in with the view of males that “reducing consumption just to help the environment rather than also to save money” is only eighth in importance now, but they say it will be the second most important issue to them in five years’ time. Lending even more support to that notion is males saying that though the issue of “believing that climate change is happening now” is the most important issue to them at present, in five years’ time they think it will only be sixth in importance to them. Perhaps they think that in a few years’ time environmental reality will have replaced the need for mere “belief”?

One of the most important issues to younger people in the sample was “knowing how to reduce energy consumption” (second in importance)

but this is one of the least important issues to older people (tenth in importance). This may indicate that younger people have a knowledge gap. “Focusing on saving the planet for the future rather than on current economic problems” was an issue which older individuals thought was considerably more important than younger people. However, younger people think that “reducing energy consumption just to save the planet” is much more important than do older people. The issue of “believing that material possessions are really important—more important to look after the planet” was also seen differently by the two age groups. Younger people (aged 18–30) saw this as being relatively unimportant, whilst older people saw it as being a much more important issue (aged 31–50, fourth; 51–65, equal third).

Participants in the sample who had an environmental policy at work said they thought that “knowing how to reduce energy consumption” was a very important issue, whilst those to whom such a policy did not apply said this issue was much less important to them (equal second and seventh, respectively). There were other large differences in the rank ordering of importance of issues by those who had an environmental policy at work and between the other sub-groups of this variable, which may mean that having such a policy is a relevant factor in shaping the attitudes of people in regard to climate change and energy consumption.

Discussion

This survey has illustrated that the attitudes and beliefs of people about global warming/climate change and reducing energy consumption are complex. Contrary to what may be popular belief, some people are very much aware that climate change is happening now and that it is important. Of particular interest is that the sample in this study actually wanted to be “greener.” That seems quite contrary to much of the non-PCP-based research, which does not seem to address this crucial issue—indeed, we suspect that much of that research is based on the assumption that people do *not* want to be more environmentally friendly. We think that the survey also illustrates that the complex attitudes that people have toward the issues considered in the survey *can* be unraveled and understood—though, of course, much more work needs to follow on from a survey such as the one that we conducted.

The survey also indicates that people are not very interested in sitting around worrying about climate change, but are more concerned with practical matters, such as knowing that their actions will actually make a

difference and understanding what steps they need to take to save energy. Some of the results of the survey suggest that participants might be thinking that the environmental crisis we face has to be put on hold until everybody is singing from the same hymn sheet, both from the point of view of acknowledging the problem and being committed to doing something about it.

Finally, it is worth saying that conducting a PCP-based repertory grid survey to understand the construing of a group of people does not merely provide general information about the “attitudes” of the sample. It can supply a concrete platform for designing a strategy for changing behavior because of the very detailed information it gives about how people construe things, based on issues that actually come from the population under examination. For instance, on the issue of “understanding climate change information,” on average (mean rating = 4.22; standard error = .23), the sample is saying that the information being provided is not very understandable. However, when asked about this issue in regard to the element “the sort of person who is likely to take steps to reduce consumption of energy in their home,” the sample said that such a person would think that the information about climate change would be very understandable (mean rating = 6.00; standard error = .16). This issue was ranked as being seventh in importance by the sample. Armed with such detailed information, it is possible to say that information about climate change needs to be made clearer if people are likely to change their behavior, but it is not the most important issue that needs to be considered. However, as it might well be one of the easier issues to address, it could be high up on a program for change. That sort of level of detail, backed up with quantitative data, could provide a sensible and pragmatic foundation for strategic planning in the context of changing behavior to being more environmentally friendly.

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George Kelly's Psychology of Understanding

Questioning Our Understanding, Understanding our Questioning

Miller Mair

Introduction

"I just don't understand myself any longer."

"My husband doesn't seem to understand me at all and doesn't seem to make any effort to understand."

"I don't understand what makes me feel the way I do. I really frighten myself at times."

Many people make statements like these when they come for psychological help. They are often anguished questions concerning whether you can help them to understand whether they are abnormal or going out of control.

I'm sure you also know what it's like to be struggling to understand something and just not managing to get into it, not managing to get beyond your own incomprehension.

It is difficult enough when what you are trying to understand is quite limited, like why your friend sounded so upset when you spoke to him on the phone recently. It's much more difficult when you are not quite sure what it is that you are struggling to give some form to, to grasp and express.

This is what I've been feeling as I've tried to think, grope, and sniff my way into the topic of this chapter. What I'm trying to understand is not something neatly bounded and limited; what I've been trying to understand is "understanding" itself!

In a sense, much of the theory and practice of psychological therapies, and much in other areas of psychology, could be considered as aspects of “understanding.” I still feel that something more is required. My impression is that psychologists generally pay a lot of attention to how they can acquire “knowledge” or “information,” but say much less about the more pervasive and fluid activities of “understanding” and “misunderstanding.”

“Understanding” is a complex word, with many different uses and meanings. Much of our attention has been focused on intellectual aspects of understanding. In this sense, “understanding” can mean being able to “give an adequate or correct account of something,” how it works, or how it could apply in a new situation.

My concern is with a wider and less clear-cut sense of “understanding.” I’m wanting to draw your attention to how we come to “have fellow feeling for,” to know by living personal experience of something, to know personally through direct involvement in some situation, rather than knowing in a more distant, academic, impersonal way.

Much of mainstream psychology in the West is concerned with the accumulation of impersonal knowledge and the later “application” of that knowledge to practical problems. Other than in the psychotherapeutic realm, there is little attention paid to trying to understand the kind of understanding involved in coming to know *personally*, such that you are changed as a person in the very act of coming to know. Knowing *personally* is another way of speaking of the sort of “understanding” I’m concerned with here. This is very different from the impersonal activities of manufacturing formal knowledge through scientific, experimental means.

In the impersonal pursuit of “transferable knowledge,” the intention is to avoid “contaminating” the data with the attitudes or concerns of those who manufacture the data. In the context of “understanding,” however, there is no way of separating the understanding from the person. Understanding is necessarily personal. Understanding has to be understood by *someone* of something.

My concern, then, is to try to speak about understanding. I want to try to reach into the darkness of my own confusion to try to say a few things which begin to become apparent to me. This is, therefore, a personal undertaking for me and what I emphasize speaks of some of my concerns. In this whole struggle, I keep finding it difficult to know whether I’m only saying things which are obvious to everyone, or sometimes beginning to slide a thin knife of discrimination behind the facade of the taken-for-granted, to begin to touch a psychological theme of some considerable importance.

Although I've been involved with George Kelly's personal construct psychology (PCP) for 35 years now, it's only very recently that I've begun to realize that one aspect of its originality is that (as I see it, at least) it is *a psychology of understanding* rather than *a psychology of impersonal knowledge production*. I think I've seen more fully into this idea and this has come as a considerable surprise. It also helps me to begin to understand what attracted me to his writings in such a powerful and inarticulate way all those years ago.

What I want to do is to sketch for you some of this perspective on personal construct psychology, to begin to justify my claim. For those of you who are already familiar with PCP, I want to offer this developing view, in the hope that it will be of interest to some of you and that you may be able to help me see further than I can myself. For those of you who know little or nothing of PCP, I'd like to give you this "slant" or "angle" on what Kelly may have been up to, because it may help you to have something to agree or disagree with as you begin to read for yourself.

From there I will draw your attention to some of the dangers and threats facing us in developing greater understanding or being understood more fully by others; and to point toward some ways in which a more focused attention to issues concerning understanding and misunderstanding may move our attention out of the psychotherapy consulting room and into the classroom, and many other contexts in the wider world.

Understanding and Questioning

Before going on to speak about personal construct psychology as *a psychology of understanding*, I want to say a little more about the sense of "understanding" which I'm most concerned with here. I also want to say something about "questioning," since that is closely related to understanding.

First, I'll try to give you a flavor of what I'm referring to in speaking of "understanding" by quoting something, rather like a poem, which I wrote some time ago (Mair, 1989, p. 157):

Understanding requires
 putting yourself in a position
 to be taught by
 to learn from
 to experience
 to be affected and changed
 to be humble
 to stand under

Not to be aloof
 different
 superior
 separate
 high up
 out of reach
 remote
 professionally untouchable

To understand
 is to be drenched
 and washed and
 flowed over by
 It is to take the form
 of the other
 to give your form away
 and in yourself to assume
 the form of the other
 so that you can be
 informed thereby
 It is to become
 a pupil
 It is to care enough
 to give the other
 power

One of the older meanings of the word “understand” in the English language is “to stand under” or “step under.” This makes it clear that “understanding” is *a form of action* through which you place yourself bodily or metaphorically “under” what you seek to come to know personally. In stepping or standing under, you are going to the place which is relevant and then bodily engaging yourself with the events in question, such that you become subject to their influences in direct, felt ways. If you seek to understand a waterfall in this way, you go and stand under the waterfall so that you are drenched, beaten, pounded, chilled, refreshed, excited, made breathless by the rush of the water. You can feel the aching coldness in your head and shoulders and back. Your breath is expelled from your lungs as you gasp in the initial and continuing shock. All of this is to come to “understand” the waterfall in a different way from what would be involved if you looked at a picture in a book or knew of it only from a description by someone else.

What is being emphasized here is “understanding” as a course of action, the undertaking of a personal engagement with the events in question, a willingness to get involved and to commit yourself to finding out for

yourself, to experiencing the matter bodily, emotionally, intellectually, and in other ways. All of this is very different from *knowing* about waterfalls in a detached, unaffected, academic way.

The distinction here is rather like that between learning a language in a classroom or from a tape recording and going to live among the people and absorbing the language as a daily and lived part of the practicalities of the culture and whole way of life involved. In this second kind of “understanding” of the language, you are likely to come to know by living, personal experiencing a great deal about the people, their way of life and culture which is rooted in inarticulate, tacit, experiencing. Much of what you now “know” will be inarticulate, unspoken but available for you so that you will be able to have fellow feeling for much that you would not know at all if you had done all your learning in some faraway place.

Just as in “understanding,” “questioning” is a course of action which has implications for the questioner. It derives from the notion of “quest” or “search.” If you went on a quest, it was often a prolonged journey, often involving danger to oneself and perhaps with a religious purpose. To undertake a quest is to undertake the difficulties of the journey and undergo its dangers and trials.

In questing or questioning, you are refusing to let things be as they are, but are taking steps to stand in the way of the ongoing, taken-for-granted way of things. You are placing yourself in the pathway of some social exchange, for instance, in order to deflect it from the course it would otherwise have taken. In this you are seeking to understand what otherwise might have been hidden from you.

Both understanding and questioning are here recognized as courses of action in which you place yourself in the way of what would otherwise be separate from you or unaffected by your presence. You are stepping into the path of the events in question. You are seeking to stand under and go in search of, in order that you may come to know, feel, see, and sense for yourself. In your quest for understanding you may not arrive at the answers you expected, but you will have been involved, engaged, tested, and developed beyond anything which could have been achieved if you had just stood on the sidelines, or otherwise dealt with the issues at second hand.

When you seek to understand something through direct involvement in the world in question, you may not be able to articulate well or fully what you now sense and feel. When we go in search of something and step into the path of events, we may not be able to give a good account of what we encounter or are encountered by. In all this we have to take recourse to the imaginative telling of stories of what we have experienced and seek to clarify.

Telling stories of many kinds, and revising the stories we tell in the light of personal experience, is the human way of trying to articulate our understanding. In storytelling we are trying to conjure into coherent forms (whether in words or dance or pictures or physical constructions) what we seek to express.

Understanding thus needs to be seen as “two-faced.” It involves both the whole undertaking of standing under and experiencing in a personal way. It also, and at the same time, involves the stories we tell to articulate something of what has been experienced. In this way we make story-maps of what we have understood, and by standing under we come to know in ways which make it necessary to give new form to what we sense and begin to comprehend.

Questioning is also “two-faced.” It is to do with the acts of going in search, and all that these entail for us, in affecting who we are and what we have to undergo. Questioning is also in the telling of what we find, giving versions of what we make of our experience along the way.

This story I am now telling is a mixture of all of this. It is the outcome of my attempts to stand under some of what is involved in understanding and it is a series of questions to myself and you couched in the form of statements. Every statement I make here is open and inquiring, seeking to listen to and hear what the act of saying is itself opening to questioning and further understanding.

Kelly’s Psychology of Understanding

Turning now to Kelly’s psychology of personal constructs, how can this be seen as a psychology of understanding?

I think Kelly’s ideas are complex and open to many more interpretations than those I will offer here. What I am trying to spell out is part of my own attempt to understand what excited me so much when I first read his work many years ago, and what continues to touch me, especially as I re-read some of his later essays (Maher, 1969).

Kelly takes both a *long* view, through the centuries, and *stands well back* from our immediate concerns, to put in question almost everything which makes our everyday lives familiar. His psychology is an attempt to spell out a framework within which the diversity of individuals’ ways of making sense of their worlds can be made more available to us. In this he is not trying to describe what people of different sorts are like, nor to identify the main concerns of individuals or groups. Rather, is he offering a set of templates

through which we may make sense of the *sense-making* of others. His concern is to take us into their world, not to tell us what is there in any particular case, but to offer us pathways through psychological space, such that we can have more chance of attending to the world of the other.

Everything as open to question

Kelly begins by stepping away from our everyday experience of things. He starts, not with any facts, but with a basic assumption—a bet or hunch—about the world, of which we are tiny parts. He assumes that there is a “real” world for us to come to know, but that our only access to knowledge and understanding is through the acts of meaning-making we have available in our personal and cultural repertoires of what he calls “personal constructs.”

He assumes that we know nothing for sure and that we have not yet been able to pin down reality in sure and certain ways at all. All we have are interpretations which seem to work more or less usefully for us in relation to the purposes we have yet imagined. How things really are lies always over the horizon of what we can yet imagine. Because of this, all our present understandings are also misunderstandings whose limitations will be shown up in the course of time.

Basically, therefore, he is suggesting that we live in mystery, in a vast sea of the unknown. In this he reflects a somewhat similar attitude to that expressed by the psychologist William James (1896/2010) when he said, “Our science is a drop, our ignorance a sea” (p. 45); or the biologist T. H. Huxley (1887/2004), who said, “The known is finite, the unknown infinite; intellectually we stand on an islet in the midst of an illimitable ocean of inexplicability. Our business in every generation is to reclaim a little more land.”

Kelly (1970) is even more radical than these in that he assumes that even what we think we know for sure is always open to the probability of being understood differently in times yet to come. His basic assumption here is that “whatever nature may be, or howsoever the quest for truth will turn out in the end, the events we face today are subject to as great a variety of constructions as our wits will enable us to contrive” (p. 1). This is not to say that all our ways of understanding are equally true or useful, but reminds us that “all our present perceptions are open to question and reconsideration” (p. 1) and that “even the most obvious occurrences of everyday life might appear utterly transformed if we were inventive enough to construe them differently” (p. 1).

What he is saying here is that, beyond the familiarity of our everyday lives, it is important to remember that everything is in question. This view of everything being open to question is an essential aspect of his attitude of open inquiry and willingness to look afresh, and this openness is essential to understanding.

Our ways of questioning

In relation to each of us as individuals, Kelly starts from another assumption. He is not interested in a one-sided view of how well we can make sense of the world or ourselves, or how much we can know or how fully we can understand. He is equally concerned with the many ways in which we turn away from making sense of ourselves or the world, how we choose to ignore rather than come to know, with how little we may stand under or seek to understand.

He starts with a Fundamental Postulate, or basic assumption, which proposes that “A person’s processes are psychologically channelized *by the ways in which he anticipates events*” (1955, p. 46). His emphasis here is on our ways of making sense and nonsense, how each of us differs, to some degree, in our ways of making sense. It is our ways of constructing meaning and meaninglessness which give form to everything we are and do.

He emphasizes our different *ways of anticipating events*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* includes among the definitions of “anticipation,” how we “prepare for, preclude and prevent” events. Kelly tends to focus on “anticipation” as being our ways of *preparing for* oncoming events in our lives, but the dictionary meaning opens this up more fully. It makes it much clearer that we can *prepare* for oncoming events in many different ways, positively by being open and attentive, or in more negative ways. We can thus be involved in *preventing* events from impinging on us (“No I don’t want to think about that or look at it”) or even *precluding* the possibility of our having to confront them at all (by ruling out ever going in certain directions or engaging with certain kinds of issues, like death or sex or feelings).

In this, Kelly is setting the basic frame within which we can attend to ourselves and others, recognizing that we can start from a preference for blindness and avoidance, just as readily as a turning toward more honest openness.

He then outlines what he regards as our basic tool for questioning the world, and by means of which we construct our webs of understanding, our story-maps of everything within and around us. He refers to this activity of

discrimination as “construing” and to each act of discrimination as a “personal construct.”

A construct is, within the view I’m developing here, a way of asking questions of events by dividing and ordering them in various ways. Thus, as we organize our discriminations of the world we can be seen as living by means of a fluttering array of questions by which we probe and give order to our circumstances.

Questioning as involving standing under

Kelly’s whole approach indicates a bias toward questions rather than the firm security of answers. Through the centuries of human endeavor, as well as in the briefer span of our individual lives, we are always facing and creating what has never been experienced in quite these ways before.

All our acts of construing, our making up of ways to “anticipate events,” can be taken as personal conclusions, but Kelly emphasizes their questioning qualities. Every claim I make here is also a question. If I claim that Kelly is offering us “a psychology of understanding,” then I am also *asking* “What will follow from that?”, “What can we usefully do with that idea?”, “Where can we go from there?”, “How will you respond and question, develop or undermine, what I now propose?”

Our asking is not just in terms of an abstract “mapping” of discriminations, but in terms of all our *behavior*. Thus for Kelly, our behavior is the most powerful means we have of questioning. He draws our attention to the questioning which is implicit or explicit in all that we *do*.

It seems to me that Kelly proposes a very different method of personal inquiry from that which is familiar in more conventional, scientific psychology. Rather than keeping separate from and untouched by the inquiry, by “standing above” and controlling others, Kelly suggests that our major way of coming to know ourselves or any aspect of our world is by “stepping under,” coming close to, getting involved in what we seek to know. These acts of “stepping under” are our major means of coming to experience for ourselves so that we can make and revise our own story-maps of what may be going on.

Kelly (1977) speaks dramatically of this method of involvement, commitment, and renewed sense-making in his essay, “The Psychology of the Unknown.” He writes as follows, using the masculine gender throughout:

If a man, say a psychologist, remains aloof from the human enterprise he sees only what is visible from the outside. But if he engages himself he will be caught up in the realities of human existence in ways that would never have

occurred to him. He will breast the onrush of events. He will see, he will feel, he will be frightened, he will be exhilarated, and he will find himself feared, hated, and loved. Every resource at his disposal, not merely his cognitive and professional talents, will be challenged. So involved will he be that, in order to survive, he will have to cope with his circumstances inarticulately as well as verbally, primitively as well as intellectually, and he will have to pull himself together physically, socially, biologically and spiritually. (p. 11)

What he is saying is that, rather than remain distant and untouched (in order not to contaminate our findings), we have to *change ourselves first*, in some ways, if we are to come to know personally. If I am to come to an understanding of what my feared enemy is concerned with, I have to change myself in ways which will allow me to approach him or her with a willingness to listen. In this, I am going to have to attempt to make peace, not by the continuation of fighting till one of us destroys the other, but by making peace in myself. I have to become someone who is willing to dare to be peaceful and to approach my enemy in a different way, to listen and to struggle to respect what he has to say.

In all this I am having to *act in faith as a means of coming to know* what would not otherwise be open for me to know at all. I am having to imagine a possible alternative way in which things could be and then act in relation to what I imagine, in the hope of making what is now only a dim possibility into something which could become real.

One of the ways in which Kelly illustrates this kind of personal, imaginative, and involving mode of inquiry is in the method of fixed-role therapy. In this, the client is asked to write a short story about themselves first. This "self-characterization" is then changed in various ways by the therapist and another story is created, outlining a person who differs in some significant ways from the client. This new, imaginary person is given a different name from the client. The client is now asked to read the character sketch of this new person and to say if this person feels real and imaginable. If so, the client is asked to begin to step into the other person, to try to dwell imaginatively within this hypothetical person so as to begin to feel and think, walk and act as this other person might.

This continues for some weeks, with the client trying to let go of their usual ways of being and acting, feeling and fearing, to undertake as full a sense of this other person as possible. In this, the client is being asked to change themselves imaginatively and practically, for a limited time, in order to explore what may now become possible for them, to understand what was previously beyond what they could feel or do.

The long-term intention in this sort of role play is not to have the client adopt the views and actions appropriate to the character sketch, but to give him or her an experience of what can become possible if you step imaginatively into the shoes of another and experience life from within their frame of reference; what may open up if you can change yourself first and then act in faith that something helpful may grow from your new way of being.

Kelly's view is that personal knowing or understanding is developed through our actively, imaginatively, and practically engaging in "cycles of experience" which require us to change ourselves first, to act in faith, to involve ourselves in ways which touch and affect us, and to commit ourselves to undertaking some actions by which we engage with the issues in constructive ways. We do not achieve personal experience just by repeating the same cycles of activity again and again, but by an open involvement in and commitment to opening ourselves to new possibilities.

Kelly is most intimately concerned with our ways of coming to know other human beings who are also creating for themselves and living within their own webs of sense-making. Here again, his invitation is for us to step into and try to make sense of the sense-making system of the other, rather than to pigeonhole them in terms of our own categories or insist that they be judged by how closely they adhere to some social norm. This is what his whole psychology is leading toward, the delicate undertaking of entering and coming to know personally the world of other people. Others are all recognized as makers of worlds of meaning, just as we are ourselves, though each will be different from us in many ways.

Being put in question

Not surprisingly, this kind of involvement, this standing under and personal commitment in questioning, can readily undermine our present ways of being. We can find ourselves, and much that we have taken to be safely settled, to be put in question.

If I begin to listen a little more to my enemy, I am in danger of finding that some of what he says makes sense. What then of all that I have believed and acted on in the past? What of me and my way of living which has been based on opposition to, and rejection of, this other person? Now I am in doubt myself! Now I begin to feel threatened, anxious, fearful, or guiltily aware that I'm betraying myself and those like me!

Kelly recognizes that, as we undertake more personal inquiries within our lives, however rewarding this may often be, we will sometimes feel filled

with alarm. So painful can these feelings be that many attempts to understand a little more quickly founder as the old defenses are reinstated and the old conclusions reinforced.

Kelly pays considerable attention to a range of ways in which we can venture a little more safely in these dangerous waters of understanding. He speaks of using “make believe” and very limited “experiments” in order to move forward in ways which can be tolerated and do not become pervasively distressing. He also outlines ways of recognizing what may be going on if we do begin to feel anxious, afraid, threatened, or guilty. Just to have a story to give form to what you are experiencing, in terms which relate to what you are undertaking and seeking to edge toward can be very reassuring.

Any psychology of understanding would have to take serious note of how dangerous such moves can so often feel. Unless we have ways of recognizing, minimizing, and transforming these terrors into something more domestic, we will not progress far in stepping into what is beyond what we presently dare. I’ll say more about the dangers of understanding later.

Questioning our questioning

Since Kelly assumes that nothing is “given” and known for sure and certain, and that our understanding is achieved through our ongoing acts of questioning, then our acts of questioning have also to be understood and put in question. Kelly indicates a variety of ways in which our questioning can also be questioned, so that we can choose, at some level of awareness, whether to come to know personally or keep new awarenesses at arm’s length.

In this context he speaks of ways in which we can recognize our manner of questioning, since how we ask affects what we ask and what sorts of answers may then be available. He speaks of our ways of “cooking the books” by hostile questioning or being more openly eager to elaborate our understanding; of ways in which we “tighten” and “loosen” our questioning; “dilate” or “constrict” how much we are willing to attend to; how we can emphasize different aspects of various “cycles of inquiry” to avoid some phases or extend others beyond what may be useful; asking our questions in “nothing but,” closed ways, or being more willing to open ourselves, propositionally, to many other possibilities.

In all this, it seems to me that Kelly is encouraging us to question our understanding and to seek to understand our questioning, since understanding and questioning are seen as essential aspects of coming to know personally. He is concerned with “responsible knowing,” coming to know in ways which involve us personally. His concern is that we begin to be able

to acknowledge and take responsibility for how we know and seek not to know, as well as for the implications of our ways of attending toward or away from certain kinds of events.

His concern in this is a moral one, in that understandings and misunderstandings are to do with our ways of being in the world, realizing or refusing to realize what is possible in how we live together. He is attending “upstream” to what we are up to, individually and by implication, in our culture. He is concerned to draw us toward recognizing what we are undertaking and refusing to undertake, rather than blaming the “world” or the “other” for what may be our own doing.

It is not that understanding the other ties us to agreeing with them, but that it draws us into a more intimate relationship with others in the world, showing respect and recognition for what is different from ourselves.

The Challenges of Understanding

What I’m trying to do in this chapter is to begin to raise awareness (especially my own) concerning the invisibility of “understanding” in psychology. I also want to begin to make a wider case for a psychology of understanding and to place George Kelly as one significant voice in the vanguard of such a project.

A questioning of understanding

Perhaps it would be useful to draw together a few notions of what is involved in “understanding.” I’ll do this in a series of brief statements (each of which should be imagined with a question mark beside it).

- Understanding will involve you personally; it requires that, to some extent, you undertake what you seek to understand; you have to act in faith, stepping into the darkness, not knowing fully how you will be affected and changed.
- Understanding is more fluid, uncertain, ongoing, and changing than lumps of impersonal knowledge; it is always seeking, open to alternative possibilities; it inevitably involves continuing misunderstandings of many kinds.
- Understanding puts you “on the line”; it is a test of commitment and seriousness; it puts in question your interests and concerns; it is inevitably a moral undertaking since it requires you, to a greater or lesser degree, to put something of your own life in question.

- Understanding requires that you “learn a language” and, to varying degrees, seek to respect and undertake the “language,” “culture,” and “way of life” of those you seek to know personally; it involves you with other people in quite a different way from the more external tactics of manipulation and control by prescribed, formal methods.
- Understanding involves you in coming to know and be known personally (by yourself and/or others); your own values and concerns may be unsettled, deepened, or even destroyed.
- Understanding is about learning to be careful with others; it is about learning to love.
- In understanding, there is no place of ending since you are, again and again, at the beginning; it is about being present, in the moment, so that you can be available to what is happening here and now.
- Understanding has the potential to be very subversive and to give other kinds of powers into the hands of those who undertake its disciplines.
- Understanding requires that you take responsibility for what you understand; it is about developing a fuller and more continuing involvement and engagement in human affairs.
- Understanding can be relatively more “calculating” and “intellectual” or more “existential” or “personal” (what Stephen Batchelor [1990] distinguishes as “calculative” vs. “meditative,” when he speaks of “questioning”); in its most personal aspects you have to be available to “unknowing,” to being open, listening, waiting without expectations which could close down the “valves” of new awareness.
- Understanding is “two-faced,” in that it involves the actions of “standing under” and the creation of “understandings” or “story-maps” derived from that experiencing; our stories of understanding are like the running accounts given by sporting commentators, giving transient form to what may seem, to those who cannot “see” and do not know by personal involvement, chaotic or confusingly complex.
- Understanding is lighter, less solid, more concerned with the moving and changing nature of things, more open and questioning, more willing to live in ambiguity than the search for facts, conclusions, and firm outcomes.
- Understanding is demanding; it requires that you make yourself available; it means allowing the “other” to enter you, take you over, change you to a greater or lesser degree; it requires that you give away your protectedness, some of your defenses and impersonality, so that you get close up, feel and know intimately.
- Understanding involves and changes the inquirer; it is a behaviorism of being.

- Understanding is much more important in psychology and life than most formal psychology recognizes. It is more challenging, frightening, demanding, adventurous, radically unsettling than we tend to recognize.
- Understanding involves you in becoming able to develop better story-maps so that you and others can come to know more fully what you are engaged within.
- Understanding is about conversation, living in conversation rather than by external control.

Our reluctance to understand

Much that I've been saying might imply that "understanding" is a good thing and we should have more of it in our lives. You will have noticed, though, that Kelly also draws attention to the risks involved. These need to be explored further.

My impression is that we mostly avoid the disciplines of understanding, unless we have virtually no other option. My guess is that, for most of us, it is too demanding and unsettling to seek to "stand under" and give away our "right" to control and dominate.

I'd go further to suggest that, by and large, those with powers of various kinds (physical strength, money, intellectual ability, social standing, etc.) are likely to be less interested in trying to understand others than in getting what they want by other means. Thus, for instance, men may be generally less interested in, or willing to undertake, understanding than many women. Perhaps the converse is the case also, that those in "underdog" positions have to reach for more understanding in order to try to anticipate what others will do to them and to try to achieve their ends by means other than direct confrontation.

For myself, when I consider giving time and effort to try to understand others, I quickly become weary, I can't be bothered, I often find that I don't care enough about them to put myself to such effort for long. I become aware that I may lose my "position" and prejudices if I begin to see things from the other's point of view. It is so much simpler to maintain my "rightness," distance, safety.

To begin to undertake understanding is to put in question one's own present defensive structures, your means of avoiding hurt and fear. You begin to find that you, yourself, are in question again and again. If you were to pursue this some way, I suspect that you would often come to wish you could return to the easy "security" of your previous stance. "Compassion

fatigue” is likely to be felt strongly. There might then, however, begin to be no easy way back.

And yet, greater understanding seems to be something we need to develop for the survival of our species. A positive commitment to the development of understanding and misunderstanding could contribute to personal and social development (I’m reminded here of I. A. Richards’s [1936] redefinition of the ancient discipline of rhetoric as “the study of misunderstanding and its remedies”). It could influence human affairs in ways which could have intimate and wide-ranging relevance.

It would also begin to open a different “agenda” for psychological work and life. Rather than being so often focused on the impersonal gathering of information (largely leaving ourselves out of account), we might begin to develop something different in the public world. Rather than keeping “understanding” in the hidden backwater of “counseling” and “psychotherapy,” we might begin to devise experiments in understanding in the wider world.

My point here is that while greater understanding is often liberating, exciting, and wonderful, it can also be challenging, frightening, personally threatening, making us vulnerable and subject to the powers and presence of “the other.” It is very different from the “controlling” and “standing over” kinds of activities we often prefer.

This brings me an awareness that I’m frightened of confrontations, of being hurt, of being exposed and shown up, of being vulnerable and made to feel my own limitations, and faults. If I am to move toward greater openness in understanding, then I have to come to value something other than the seeming safety of hiddenness and control.

When I don’t like and fear those who are opposing and criticizing me, I hate the thought that they might defeat me. In this situation the idea of them having greater understanding of me, or of me trying to understand them, seems most unacceptable. A different basic attitude is needed if I am to try to pursue understanding in this situation. I would need to re-order my values, such that “standing on my dignity” and “saving face” or “asserting my authority” are replaced by a willingness to stand under and come to know more fully.

In all this, I want procedures or social structures which allow people to go at their own pace, which do not intrude on people. I want an approach to understanding which recognizes the deep terrors of being abused, invaded, destroyed, humiliated, exposed.

Maybe the approach I’m seeking should be born from the depths of my/our own timidity and terrors of opening myself/ourselves to understanding

and being in the world. Maybe a timid and gentle way of working could grow from recognizing and respecting what I/we feel and fear. Perhaps a serious approach to understanding needs to be a psychology of the really timid, the really fearful, the slow, the uncertain, the shy, the cowardly, of those who dare not be present. Perhaps we have to acknowledge much more fully and honestly than is usually the case our fragility and fearfulness, and then seek to make something useful out of that.

By and large I have the impression that people (psychologists and psychiatrists are to the fore here) are often frightened of psychological matters, as these affect their own lives. Many of us seem to want to avoid facing and dealing with psychological issues, especially if it means admitting that we suffer and have “weaknesses,” making ourselves vulnerable to attack, rejection, stigma, mockery.

A psychology of understanding will have to address this “shame” and “terror.” We may have to ask how we instill such shame and terror in our children and young people. How do we create, convey, and sustain the shames of being “found out” and recognized as “weak”? What purposes does it serve in society?

A psychology of understanding would have to recognize that, for many people, there is an amorphous, anxiously sickening sense of being in the wrong, unacceptable, on the verge of being publicly shown up, made to feel a fool and a failure, made to feel inadequate and despising of themselves. This sense of shame is associated with some pervasive feeling that my inadequacies are uniquely my own, not part of what is widely shared and experienced by those who are treated with scorn and made to feel that failure to achieve is equivalent to being bad, unworthy, stupid, a nonbeing, unacceptable, ridiculous, slighted (in the original sense of having the timbering which supports the structure of your life broken and removed, so that the structure collapses).

Many in our society have been made ashamed of their psychological being, having learned, by various means, that they are likely to be in danger of being undermined as viable people if they acknowledge their psychological life. Shame is experienced when we feel ourselves to be put in question in ways which feel frighteningly, sickeningly, undermining and disturbing to us. Being put in question as a viable or lovable person may be what we most fear and avoid, if we haven't been helped to know that we can be questioned and still survive and even prosper because of the invigorating refreshment of such a process when it is undertaken with care.

A psychology of understanding would have to pay serious attention to issues such as these.

From consulting room to classroom?

Finally, a brief comment on the theme of “Forming relationships, transforming relationships; the role of teachers and psychotherapists in the development of personality.”

In line with all that I’ve been proposing so far, I want to suggest that the most fundamental change of relationship we may need, in living in relation to ourselves, others and our world, is not to do with something called “personality” but our ways of knowing and not knowing. We have so much favored an impersonal, often irresponsible, in-the-head, controlling, standing-over relationship with knowing, developing thereby such huge arsenals of information and the powers which information brings. In doing this, our society has done much less to develop personal knowing or understanding which requires that we change and develop in ourselves and in our relationships to others and the world.

I’d go further and say that, over the centuries and still today, we often preclude and prevent closer relationships between ourselves and the forms of knowing which need personal involvement and commitment on our part, requiring that we learn how to face our fears and become more capable of defusing the fears of others.

I believe that a psychology of understanding needs to be developed in the public and social context of schools and workplaces, in contexts of negotiation and conflict resolution, places where we have to come to “know personally” as well as “in the head.” If we are to develop a wider and deeper understanding of understanding and misunderstanding, it seems obvious that much needs to be done in schools (and other educational settings), rather than only in the still often shameful, secret, and limited contexts of psychotherapeutic meeting.

In this venture there should be many opportunities for psychologists, psychotherapists, and teachers to cooperate in questioning their present modes of understanding and come to undertake new ways of questioning themselves and each other.

Note

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Appendix

Personal Construct Theory

*A Summary*¹

Theory

George Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory is based upon the philosophical assumption of *constructive alternativism*, which states that "all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement" (p. 15). In other words, not only do we construct our worlds but we can reconstruct them.

Fundamental Postulate

Kelly presented his theory formally in terms of a "Fundamental Postulate" and 11 corollaries. The Fundamental Postulate states that "A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events" (Kelly, 1955, p. 47). This emphasis on anticipation was further emphasized in Kelly's metaphor of the person as a scientist, formulating hypotheses about his or her world, testing these out, and if necessary revising them.

The corollaries are as follows:

Construction Corollary

"A person anticipates events by construing their replications" (Kelly, 1955, p. 50). We search for repeated themes in our experiences of our world, identifying similarities and differences between events.

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Individuality Corollary

“Persons differ from each other in their constructions of events” (Kelly, 1955, p. 55). No two people are ever likely to construe an event in exactly the same way.

Organization Corollary

“Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs” (Kelly, 1955, p. 39). *Constructs* may be viewed as “transparent patterns or templets which” the person “creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed” (Kelly, 1955, pp. 8–9). They are organized in a hierarchical system in which some are *superordinate* to others, which are therefore *subordinate*.

Dichotomy Corollary

“A person’s construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs” (Kelly, 1955, p. 59). Constructs are bipolar (e.g., “good–bad”), and we therefore construe events in terms of the contrasts between them, although these do not necessarily carry verbal labels.

Choice Corollary

“A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for the extension and definition of his system” (Kelly, 1955, p. 64). Our choices are essentially elaborative rather than hedonistic, being directed toward maximizing our capacity to anticipate our world rather than maximizing our level of pleasure.

Range Corollary

“A construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only” (Kelly, 1955, p. 68). Each construct has a *focus of convenience*, the area of its maximum usefulness, and a *range of convenience*, an area in which it can still be applied but less well.

Experience Corollary

“A person’s construction system varies as he successively construes the replications of events” (Kelly, 1955, p. 72). Our predictions of events may be *validated* or *invalidated*, and this will generally result in either the strengthening or the modification of the constructions concerned.

Modulation Corollary

“The variation in a person’s construction system is limited by the permeability of the constructs within whose ranges of convenience the variants lie” (Kelly, 1955, p. 77). A *permeable* construct is one that may be readily applied to new elements of the person’s experience: “good–bad,” for example, is likely to be a more permeable construct for most people than is “Theravada Buddhist–Zen Buddhist.”

Fragmentation Corollary

“A person may successively employ a variety of construction subsystems which are inferentially incompatible with each other” (Kelly, 1955, p. 58). Construct systems do not have to be entirely logically organized, and inconsistent *subsystems* may be tolerated if the person’s superordinate constructs are sufficiently permeable to subsume these.

Commonality Corollary

“To the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his processes are psychologically similar to those of the other person” (Kelly, 1955, p. 90). Especially within a particular cultural group, there may be similarities within aspects of people’s construing and therefore of their “behavior.”

Sociality Corollary

“To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person” (Kelly, 1955, p. 95). The essence of social relationships, including the

therapeutic relationship, is the attempt to see the world through the other person's eyes.

Dimensions of Diagnosis and Transition

Kelly provided a set of "professional constructs" as an aid to clinicians in construing their clients' construction processes (although these constructs are just as applicable to people who are not clients in clinical settings). Some concern *covert construction*, namely that which is at a low level of *cognitive awareness*. They include *preverbal* constructs, which have no consistent verbal symbols; *submergence*, where one pole of a construct is relatively inaccessible; and *suspension*, where a particular construction is held in abeyance.

Kelly's "dimensions of transition" are particularly associated with emotions, the experience of which essentially reflects the awareness of a transition in construing. Thus, *threat* is the awareness of an imminent comprehensive change in core structures, those which govern the person's maintenance processes and are central to his or her identity. One aspect of core structure is the person's *core role*, those constructions of others' construing which determine the person's characteristic ways of interacting with others. *Guilt* is the experience of an apparent dislodgement from one's core role. *Anxiety* occurs when we find our world largely unconstruable, events being outside the range of convenience of our construct system. *Aggressiveness* was associated by Kelly with the "active elaboration of one's perceptual field" (1955, p. 508), whereas *hostility* was defined as "the continued effort to extort validation evidence in favour of a type of social prediction which has already proved itself a failure" (Kelly, 1955, p. 510). The hostile person tries to make the world fit in with his or her constructions rather than vice versa.

Kelly viewed the process of transition in construing as generally being cyclical in nature, and he delineated various cycles of construction. The *Experience Cycle* (1970) is the essence of construing, and consists of the anticipation of an event, investment of the person in this anticipation, encounter with the event, confirmation or disconfirmation of the anticipation, and constructive revision if reconstruing is deemed necessary. The *Circumspection-Preemption-Control (C-P-C) Cycle* is concerned with decision-making. Its circumspection phase involves *propositional* construing, in which a particular construction of an event does not determine how else the event is construed. This type of construing is in contrast with *constellatory* construing, as occurs in stereotypes, and *preemptive* construing, in which the application of a particular construct pole to an event prevents

the event from being construed in any other way. In the circumspection phase of the C–P–C Cycle, the issues concerning a particular decision are surveyed, in the preemption phase a particular issue, or construct, is focused upon, and in the control phase one particular pole of this construct is applied to an event. The *Creativity Cycle*, which is concerned with the development of new constructs, consists of the contrasting processes of *loose* and *tight* construing. In the former, the assignment of events to construct poles shifts constantly, while in the latter this assignment is fixed and the person's predictions are unvarying. Another pair of contrasting processes, or strategies, that the person may use, in this case to deal with apparent incompatibilities in construing, are *dilation* and *constriction*. In the former, the perceptual field is extended with a view to reorganizing it on a more comprehensive level. Referring to the psychotherapy client who uses dilation, Kelly (1955, p. 477) stated that “he tends to see everything that happens to him as potentially related to his problem.” In *constriction*, by contrast, the outer boundaries of the perceptual field are drawn in, and the client “insists that the therapist stick to a sharply delimited version of his problem” (p. 477).

Assessment of Construing

Various methods are used by personal construct theorists to assess construing (Caputi, Viney, Walker, & Crittenden, 2012). In the *self-characterization* (Kelly, 1955), the person is asked to write a character sketch of himself or herself as if it were written by an intimate and sympathetic friend. Kelly's other major assessment method was *repertory grid technique* (Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004), in which a set of elements of the person's experience (usually other people and/or aspects of the self) are compared and contrasted in order to elicit a set of the person's constructs. The elements are then sorted in terms of the constructs, usually by rating each of them on each construct. Analysis of the grid, usually by computer, can provide a range of measures, including those concerning the similarities and differences between elements, relationships between constructs, and aspects of the structure (e.g., tightness or looseness) of construing.

Post-Kellyan personal construct theorists have developed several other assessment methods. *Laddering* (Hinkle, 1965) was developed to elicit superordinate constructs by successively asking which pole of a construct the person would like to be assigned to and why. A contrasting procedure, *pyramiding* (Landfield, 1971), provides access to subordinate constructs

by asking what type of people or things are described by particular construct poles. The *implications grid* (Fransella, 1972; Hinkle, 1965) involves direct questioning concerning the implications of each of a person's constructs in terms of the other constructs in his or her system. Tschudi's (1977) *ABC technique* identifies the positive and negative implications of particular constructs, for example those relating to a person's symptoms.

Interviews may also be used to identify processes of construing and Kellyan emotions, as in the use of content analysis scales by Viney and her colleagues (e.g., Viney & Caputi, 2012).

In assessment and in interventions, the practitioner who works from a personal construct theory perspective will adopt a *credulous attitude* to the client's construing, "taking what he sees and hears at face value" (Kelly, 1955, p. 173).

Note

- 1 Adapted from D. A. Winter and L. L. Viney (Eds.) (2005). *Personal construct psychotherapy: Advances in theory, practice and research*. London, U.K.: Whurr.

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