

CONSTRUCTIVISM – THE WAY FORWARD!

8th European Conference on Personal Construct Psychology
Bäckaskog Slott, Kristianstad, Sweden, April 8th to 11th, 2006

Welcome to Constructivism – The Way Forward



Photo – Jörn Scheer

The VIIIth European Conference
on
Personal Construct Psychology

Bäckaskog Slott, Kristianstad, Sweden
April 8th – 11th 2006

The support of Kristianstad University is gratefully acknowledged

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The conference is organised by Marie-Louise Österlind, University of Kristianstad, on behalf of the European Personal Construct Association (EPCA)

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About the conference

George Kelly (1955) said that Personal Construct Psychology *should be fertile in producing new ideas, in generating hypotheses, in provoking experimentation, in encouraging inventions*. He encouraged us to *strive to make our theoretical position provocative and hence fertile*. In the call for contributions to the 8th EPCA conference we welcomed contributions exploring the theme **Constructivism – The Way Forward**. The conference will seek to highlight the strong potential of PCP for addressing issues that are of contemporary concern and give examples of how Kelly's work can be applied across a wide range of disciplines.

The **social and creative dimension of the conference** is considered of vital interest. Therefore it is a pleasure to note the large number of interactive contributions such as workshops, symposia and round table discussions that embrace the conference theme. In the spirit of sociality and creativity we have arranged the following social activities:

Opportunities to participate in social activities

Friday April 7th – At the informal *get-together* you get a chance to catch up with old friends and to make new acquaintances.

Saturday April 8th – At the **wine reception** you will meet our University vice chancellor Malin Irhammar. After dinner you will get a chance to get to know "our" castle by participating in the *guided tour through the Castle*. We will embark upon a journey through time and space, starting in the year 1250, where you will meet monks, kings, fair maidens and maybe even the castle ghost.

Sunday April 9th - The recently started network *arts & personal construct psychology* have arranged "**An Evening of Creative Construing**" in which conference delegates will contribute in various ways.

Monday 10th - On our *sightseeing tour along the coast*, we will be enjoying *lunch at a fish restaurant* overlooking the sea and harbour in the small and picturesque village of *Kivik*. Thereafter we will be going north to the medieval town of *Åhus* where we will visit the famous *Absolut Company* and the glass workshop *Studio Glashyttan* where unique crystal with very personal design and exquisite quality is produced.

Back at *Bäckaskog Slott* we will enjoy the *conference dinner*. We will start our evening with an *Absolut Taste*, thereafter we will be enjoying a *delicious meal* and listen to a *troubadour* performing songs from Sweden's great poet *Carl Michael Bellman* (1740-1795).

We hope that you will find **the 8th Conference of the European Personal Construct Association (EPCA)** a positive and memorable experience which in all aspects reflects its theme.

Warm welcome to the conference and to Bäckaskog!

Marie-Louise Österlind
Conference organiser

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About PCP and EPCA

Personal construct psychology was inaugurated by the American psychologist George A. Kelly in 1955.

People develop an interest in personal construct psychology for many reasons. Some have encountered the theory and techniques while training as academics or professionals in such disciplines as psychology or personnel management while others have encountered them as practitioners in fields such as management, nursing, training, or counselling in its many forms. Unless they were members of organisations where research using PCP was conducted or training provided, the opportunity to make contact with people who share their interest was rather infrequent, and took the form of a series of interdisciplinary, international conferences held every two years, occasional national conferences in the intervening years, and some fairly active, but less formal, networking activities arising from the PCP Network organised from the USA.

EPCA came into being in 1990, when the participants in that year's European-based Conference on Personal Construct Psychology recognised the need for some more permanent professional association which could:

- provide a focus for PCP in its own right as distinct from the academic, professional, and practitioner disciplines which originally gave rise to PCP,
- provide a forum on a pan-European basis, to provide a service to members based in countries which do not have a national association while supplementing activity in the countries (e.g. Germany) which do
- provide opportunities for development and support for people who would otherwise have no access to framing or professional membership.

The aim of EPCA is therefore to actively promote the spirit and values of Personal Construct Psychology as defined in the following mission statement:

“To raise awareness of Personal Construct Psychology and its applications among Europeans and to promote the exchange of ideas, innovation and training.”

The present EPCA Guidance Panel

Convenor: *Martin Fromm*, Germany; Information Officer: *Mary Frances*, UK; Treasurer: *Alessandra Iantaffi*, UK; Conference Organiser: *Marie-Louise Österlind*, Sweden; *Dorota Dobosz-Bourne*, UK; *Massimo Giliberto*, Italy; *Derek Purdy*, UK.

EPCA business meeting

The EPCA business meeting is held at 17.00 on Sunday April 9th

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About the University of Kristianstad

Kristianstad University was founded in 1977, but in this region we can trace our roots way back for teacher's training (1835), nurses (1893) and engineers (1912).

The purpose of Kristianstad University is to carry on university education on a scientific basis, do research, cooperate with the surrounding society and inform of its activities. Programmes and courses are offered in the humanities, in social, natural, behavioural and health sciences, business administration and engineering.

Kristianstad University carries out research closely connected to its educational programs that covers areas in the humanities/social science, natural science and mathematics, technology, care and health, economy, and behavioural science.

In co-operation with KRINOVA Science Park the University run on two development arenas: Human Resources Investment and Food and Environment in which approximately 50 organisations take part together with researchers, teachers and students at the university.

Our campus is created from the idea that our students shall have access to modern information technology, inspiring meeting places and good services. We offer a highly qualified faculty in a friendly atmosphere.

Internationalisation is an issue of importance at Kristianstad University, whether it involves Swedish students going abroad or international students studying here. We also provide all students with an international working perspective at Campus. Our university is linked with partner universities all over the world.

The University vice chancellor **Malin Irhammar** will attend the wine reception on Saturday 8th



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About the conference venue

The conference venue is the beautifully located medieval *Castle of Bäckaskog* (Bäckaskog Slott) near *Kristianstad* in the very south of Sweden, in the province of Skåne. The name of the castle is derived from the two Swedish words *bäck rivulet*) and *skog*(forest).



Photo Jörn Scheer

The conference venue is chosen for its potential to facilitate the social and creative aspect of the conference. *Bäckaskog Slott* being a very well-reputed conference venue with which the University of Kristianstad has had a long co-operation. Among their recurrent guests are several Swedish Universities and the Nobel committee. The management and staff have been looking forward to our conference and they will be doing their very best to make our stay pleasant and enjoyable.

We are convinced that you will find that Bäckaskog Slott provides the right setting and atmosphere for researchers and practitioners to share their mutual interest in PCP and in developing ideas on constructivism.

¹ Kristianstad (pop. 30.000) was founded in 1614 by the Danish King Christian IV and became Swedish when Skåne was handed over to Sweden after the treaty of Roskilde in 1658.

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Abstracts

In the following pages abstracts are listed in alphabetical order (by name of first author).

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Britt-Marie Apelgren

Methodological issues in research on language teachers' experiences of assessment

This paper presents the outline of a new Swedish Research Council project (2006). The project concerns foreign language teachers' acquaintance with different assessment practices and the important task of assessing students' development and learning. Recent research and governmental reviews suggest that teachers and teacher trainees are in great need of support in the area of assessment. The aim of the research is to describe and investigate teachers' experiences and opinions about new alternative approaches to assessment in particular those that promote autonomous learning and student self-assessment.

In this paper I will focus on the theoretical framework and the methodological concerns in planning and designing the project. The overall theoretical framework is personal and social constructivism, which implies that the student construes knowledge in cooperation with others (peers and teachers) and that the teacher must be able to map and understand the pupil's development. The teachers' earlier experiences and personal theories (implicit or explicit) will affect their attitudes and how they as individuals anticipate new approaches to teaching.

The main purpose in this paper is to discuss and share experiences of the use of different constructivist methods in the data collections; questionnaire surveys, teacher interviews using repertory grids and classroom observations.

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Maria Armezzani, Massimo Giliberto, Matteo Paduanello

A journey between Constructivism and Phenomenology concerning Ethics: going beyond Relativism avoiding the temptation of Truth

The three authors discuss some of the most difficult dilemmas in Ethics, particularly trying to go beyond the dilemma 'truth vs. relativism', proposing an idea of Ethics based on the phenomenological 'sense of humanity'.

Could this factor be the 'resistant', common factor through different 'moral systems'?

Could a common 'Ethic of feeling' that leaves the diversity of individual and cultural perspectives be elaborated?

Could this 'sense of humanity' be the pilaster of an Ethics of a second order, coherent with the constructivist view of the world?

This is the challenge running across this dialogue.

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Marianne Behrends, Herbert K. Matthies, Volkhard Fischer

Using the Repertory Grid Technique to research the individual learning experience and preferences of medical students

One of our goals in the Institute of Medical Informatics is to do research into the development and implementation of web-based e-learning applications for medical education. Our experiences in this field of activity confirm how important the user acceptance is.

But which way do students want to learn and what are their needs for learning situations and e-learning? The answers to this question could be helpful for adopting e-learning in way that is useful for learners. In contrast to a survey with given questions we choose the repertory grid technique to receive an unbiased view on learners needs. To allow a survey independent of time and place we developed a web-based Repertory Grid Survey tool. The tool is realized in PHP and saves the data in a MYSQL database. The tool leads the interviewee from step to step. We invited 460 medical students to fill out the Repertory Grid Survey with 18 elements and 16 constructs. As element we choose different situation of learning in the life of the students. Until now 8 medical students have complete the survey.

Often the interviewees tell little stories about their experiences. If the description of the learning situation is very detailed the constructs tend to be imprecise. The first interpretation of the survey data already shows that the Rep Grid Technique is applicable to assess individual attitudes towards learning situations and evaluate individual learning experience.

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Sean Brophy, Tom Kellely

Implementing corporate values: A PCP approach

This presentation outlines an Organisation Development process in a Government Business Development agency. A set of values were selected, during a strategic planning process with organisation wide participation, to guide the transition from an agency focussed on financial grant administration to one focussed on knowledge transfer and capability building. The values implementation process, still underway, is described in three phases: 'Values clarification', 'Values Communication', and 'Systemic Support for the Values' on an ongoing basis.

PCP was used in facilitated workshops to assist the members of the organisation to construe values in general and the organisations values in particular.

Repertory grids were used to assess the perceptions of staff of the degree to which the various values were being lived at a point in time. Data will be presented that enables comparisons of the perceptions of different divisions and departments within the organisation and between Executives, Managers and various staff groups. These data offer a benchmark for evaluating progress as perceived by the different groups over time.

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Viv Burr, Nigel King

Artistic creativity and constructivism: two linked papers drawing on personal experience

Virtually every major branch of psychology has attempted to explain the phenomenon of human creativity. Accounts are offered by trait theorists in terms of dispositions of the creative individual; by psychoanalysts in terms of sublimation; by humanists in terms of the drive to self-actualisation. Cognitive approaches have focussed on thinking styles and problem-solving ability, while social psychologists have stressed the impact of perceived or anticipated evaluation by others (mediated through motivational state). Other traditions as diverse as behaviourism, evolutionary psychology and transpersonal psychology have added to the picture.

This large and diverse literature does give some useful insights into processes of creativity, especially at the more general level. However, when it comes to providing an understanding of what it is like to personally engage in artistic creative activity, it is our contention that there remains much to be achieved. For example, Kelly (1955) puts forward the 'creativity cycle', a process involving both loosening and tightening of constructs. There are some similarities between this and features of the mainstream creativity literature, for example the idea of 'divergent' thinking. While it may be argued that the 'creativity cycle' provides a more detailed account of the psychology of personal change and innovation, it nevertheless seems to have greater application in the field of cognitive and behavioural change than that of artistic activity.

Using examples from our own engagement in different areas of artistic activity, in the following papers we will explore the extent to which constructivist theory can make a valuable contribution to this goal. We will give a joint introduction, reviewing some of the key past literature and outlining the main characteristics of a constructivist approach. We will then present our separate papers, Nigel King's focusing on poetry and Viv Burr's on life drawing. Separate abstracts for these follow.

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Nigel King - 'What will hatch?' A constructivist autobiographical account of writing poetry

When we look at what poets themselves have to say about the experience of writing, two main themes stand out. The first of these is inspiration; the notion that the creative act requires a moment (or moments) of illumination, originating outside the conscious mind. The second theme is that of craft. Here the emphasis is on the acquisition and development of technical skills; it involves (conscious) effort and dedication over a long period of time. Of course, these two themes are not necessarily contradictory – it is a common view that creativity of all kinds involves a mixture of inspiration and craft. However, different writers, and different eras, tend to stress one or the other. In contemporary poetry I would argue that the notion of craft is dominant.

The two themes noted above have strong parallels with major theoretical approaches within psychology. Inspiration is associated with the unconscious and thus with psychodynamic approaches, as well as Wallas' famous 'incubation-illumination' model. Craft is associated with cognitive psychological accounts that view creativity as problem-solving, and with cognitively-oriented biographical approaches that are concerned with the development of habits of thinking over the creative lifespan.

In this paper I will use personal experience of writing poetry to examine whether constructivist approaches can offer a more adequate understanding than those provided by better-known psychodynamic and cognitive theories. I will assess the strengths and limitations of Kelly's 'creativity cycle', and move on to consider what might be gained from an existential-phenomenological reading of construct theory. The main part of the analysis will be based on an account of the writing of one poem, looking at how my ideas transformed over successive drafts, and at the context in which this took place.

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Viv Burr - 'Bunches of grapes and bananas': un-construing the human body in life-drawing.

In a sense, PCT could be said to be centrally concerned with innovation and creativity. For example, although Kelly argued that we make choices that produce either greater definition or greater extension of our construct system, he clearly felt that we should ultimately favour extension; we should never remain content with our current ways of seeing the world. Both the model of the person as scientist and the claim that 'man [sic] is a form of motion' emphasise the inventiveness of human beings. Kelly put forward the 'creativity cycle' as a model of this innovative process. The creativity cycle involves a movement between the 'loosening' and 'tightening' of constructs in order to allow the emergence of new ways of thinking. Kelly saw this cycle at work as clients in therapy struggled to construe themselves and their lives in a more facilitative way. Some aspects of later work within the mainstream creativity literature can be seen to involve similar ideas to the creativity cycle. For example, work within the trait theory tradition emphasises the tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, the work of De Bono and Hudson focus on 'divergent' thinking, and the humanistic approach calls for an 'openness to experience' and the 'ability to toy with elements and concepts'.

However, although our everyday understanding of the term 'creativity' would seem to include artistic creations as almost axiomatic, all these theoretical approaches, including PCT, appear to focus principally or wholly upon the creation of new ways of thinking. Psychoanalysis does attempt to understand artistic creativity, but does so only in terms of the sublimation of neurotic needs. Furthermore, most approaches to creativity appear to see the creative process as taking place within the enclosed psychological space of the individual. In this paper, I will use the subjective experience of life drawing to explore the usefulness and limitations of PCT in understanding this creative activity. In particular, I will examine the extent to which the creativity cycle can be used to understand this activity, and then draw upon a wider constructivist/constructionist literature to locate the creative process within a wider social context.

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Nazareno Galieni, Federica Rigoni

MARTIAN CHRONICLES - How to survive as constructivist trainees in psychiatric institutions

The Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research requires a practical training within public or private social-health structures to obtain the professional title of psychotherapist. However, the resident interns do not always receive appropriate guidance by the instructors of these institutions. Therefore, like naive anthropologists in front of foreign cultures, they must on their own find the best strategies to learn and to survive in these contexts without having the support of a cultural mediator.

In the present research, we analyzed the training experiences of the students of the School of Constructivist Psychology of Padova by using the constructivist and narrative approaches.

The aim of the research is to favour a broader comprehension of the training experience, which is often puzzling, giving the students conceptual and operative instruments to constructively face this important opportunity of personal and professional development.

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Peter Cummins, Dina Pekkala

The confused process of becoming' – what is the role of the group in this process? A discussion

PCP literature on group process is relatively small. In our experience the most enjoyable and thought provoking aspects of conferences are the discussions that arise. Having outlined our theory as to why in our experience groups work, after that it's up to you.

In our presentation we explore the process of change as described by participants within our anger treatment programmes. Starting with an assumption of anger as invalidation, it became clear to us that successful groups are about providing an environment that facilitates validation. The similarity of the group to the functional family is an idea we continue to look at. As invalidation invariably occurs in childhood, the origins of this invalidation are explored in relation to Leitner's theory of structural arrest; the consequences of structural arrest and peoples' strategies to accommodate this lack of psychological development. This process is extrapolated to other clinical populations, eg. adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

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Carmen Dell'Aversano

Constructing arguments: PCP and academic writing

For the last ten years I have been exploring how PCP can provide the foundation of an innovative, comprehensive and effective pedagogy of academic writing. My work has been inspired by a desire to apply Kelly's construct of "man-as-scientist" to its most immediate focus of convenience: scholarly research. This has led me to adopt PCP as my guide in formulating hypotheses about the way ideas are generated in research and about the way the different construct systems of various audiences influence their understanding of, and response to, academic papers.

In my experience, PCP has proved to be a reliable and flexible tool for the modeling of written communication in the academic world. The resulting method for the teaching of academic writing has been successfully applied in numerous undergraduate seminars, master's and Ph.D programs, and shorter workshops addressed to academics and professionals both in Italy and abroad; more recently, it has been systematically laid out in a textbook (Carmen Dell'Aversano – Alessandro Grilli, *La scrittura argomentativa. Dal saggio breve alla tesi di dottorato*, Le Monnier, Firenze, 2005).

My workshop will present the theoretical rationale and practical outcomes of the application of PCP to the field of academic writing through a series of group exercises focused on extending the convenience range of some fundamental constructs of PCP. This will demonstrate the relevance the PCP paradigm both to scholarly research in fields outside PCP and to the related enterprise of presenting the results of that research to specialist and lay audiences alike.

The purpose of the workshop is threefold:

1. to demonstrate that PCP has the potential to generate and sustain innovation in fields which are not normally associated with its application;
2. to provide the participants with an example of how such innovation may be brought about and systematically cultivated; and
3. to introduce them to concepts and techniques which may prove useful to them in their everyday work as researchers and writers.

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Carmen Dell'Aversano

Exploring aesthetic constructs: how likes and dislikes define a style

In my experience, art is definitely one of the "small things" which can hugely benefit from an involvement with PCP. I am a practicing artist (my work can be viewed at <http://www.shadowsoftheworld.com>), and I was inspired by Kelly's work to design workshops in the poetics and technique of collage, both analogue and digital.

In this workshop we will explore the different construct systems through which each of us approaches art and the sensory world in general, and which define his or her idea of an aesthetically satisfactory product. Like any construct system, this one too influences and limits perception and action. The personal construct system of each artist, and the expressive and formal choices it makes possible – or impossible – defines what art theory and criticism refer to as the individual style of that artist.

The main tool we will use is a very much simplified version of the Repertory Grid Test, which we will apply together to several examples from the work of each of us. The aim of the workshop is

- to make each participant aware of some key components of their style;
- to point out to each some potentially fruitful directions for stylistic experimentation;
- to show how our enjoyment of beauty, both in the work of other artists and in the world in general, can become a source of sustained inspiration in our own artwork;
- to demonstrate the potential of PCP to raise theoretical awareness and stimulate practical innovation in the artistic field; to get to know and appreciate one another's work, and one another, and have a great time together.

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Pamela Denicolo and Michael Kompf

A continued dialogue and inquiry about Kelly's interdisciplinary influence

The authors, long time proponents of PCP in educational contexts, will use a question and answer format to review their experiences of using PCP in research, practice and life and to analyse that experience.

The analysis will identify common and idiosyncratic (sociality and personal constructs) in relation to what they have found valuable and challenging, what they perceive as liberating and as constraining, trends they have noticed and ways forward they would suggest.

Thus the paper will provide a historical record, a digest of survival tips and reflections from experience on possible adventures to come. Participants will be invited to challenge memories, add other viewpoints, raise questions and thoroughly debate what is considered mainstream, peripheral and contradictory in PCP practice and theory and to suggest some alternative perceptions on the future of PCP.

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Pamela Denicolo, Michael Kompf

From couch to classroom: common threads of inquiry from theory to practice

Kelly's work has several connections with education through examining how teachers think about teaching and learning. The scientist-like aspect of how teachers anticipate, practice and reformulate what they do in the classroom is constructivism in action.

The International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching (ISATT) has long been the unacknowledged educational arm of PCP broadening its focus as diversity and challenge increasingly characterise teachers' lives and careers. ISATT has collegial and critical interactions every two years producing a significant amount of research and writing about all aspects of education.

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Pamela Denicolo, Maureen Pope

Demonstration of Rep IV (RepGrid, SocioGrids, WebGrid & RepNet)

In this session we demonstrate *Rep IV* - a suite of tools supporting research into, and applications of, a range of conversational constructivist methodologies based on George Kelly's *Personal Construct Psychology* (PCP). In its various versions, it aims to provide personal, professional and research support for promoting understanding of individual and communal psychological and social processes.

The *RepGrid* tool is the most recent in a series of grid tools originating in 1975 on the PDP12 as part of Mildred Shaw's research on repertory grid elicitation and analysis through conversational interaction with personal computers.

The *RepNet* tool is the most recent in a series of programs for drawing the nodes and arcs of networks originating in 1965 on the PDP7 as part of Brian Gaines' research on interactive automata simulation and its application to modelling and emulating human skills.

There are two programs implementing the Research version of Rep IV, one running on the Macintosh OS X version 10.3 (and 10.2, but not OS9), and the other under Windows XP (and to a large extent under 2000, NT and 98, but not 95). Rep IV data files are compatible across operating systems, and RepGrid files or WebGrid downloads can be read under either operating system.

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Miroslav Filip, Tomáš Urbánek

Measuring preverbal constructs through the Semantic Selection Test and its use in a clinical setting

It is possible to differentiate between verbal labeled constructs and preverbal constructs. The latter ones often play a crucial role in one's construct system, but they are hardly expressible in words. From the clinical point of view the important task of a psychotherapeutic process is to identify the preverbal constructs, become conscious of them and communicate them.

We propose a new method identifying the preverbal constructs, the so called Semantic Selection Test. This method shares similar approach to measurement as the Repertory Grid Technique. It consists of elements (like self, ideal self, friend, partner etc.) and items/attributes which have no clear structure and meaning (colors, symbols, icons, abstract paintings etc.).

In the first step concrete sets of elements and attributes are specified in cooperation with a subject.

Then the subject evaluates objects with attributes and subsequent item analysis based on the Rasch model uncovers which personal constructs are specified by various groups of attributes and estimates their structure.

Finally the test's results are interpreted again in cooperation with the subject and conclusions about another progress in psychotherapy are drawn.

We also present a concrete example of the test's application demonstrating all described steps.

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Massimo Giliberto, Dusan Stojnov

Construing integrations in therapy education: European Constructivist Therapy Network (EUCONTNET)

Contemporary education in constructivist psychotherapy in Europe seems to be too fragmented at the moment. Groups in which therapy is being taught do not know much about each other, and organize their education process without sufficient communication and collaboration. Such a condition of intellectual isolation presents a risk and a potential danger for a social "fade-out" of such groups. Therefore, it seems that a time is right for an open dialogue about possibility of promoting European integration in psychotherapy education.

European Constructivist Therapy Network (EUCONTNET) represents a first step in a process of connecting together different European groups interested in constructivist psychotherapy education. All colleagues engaged with constructivist psychotherapy practice and education, as well as all of those who are concerned with constructivist psychotherapy future are warmly encouraged to take part in the discussion about possibilities and potentials of closer integrations in constructivist psychotherapy.

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David Green, Gary Latchford

Someone's suffering: The development of a PCP-inspired interview organised around a series of cartoons of hospital scenes designed to elicit and explore the constructs that young people employ to make sense of their experience of healthcare

It is surprisingly unusual for young people suffering from childhood diseases to have their views consulted on any aspect of their experience of illness. For example family interviews with paediatricians often end up as conversations between adults that rarely tap the patient's perspective. In the world of paediatric healthcare Kelly's advocacy of taking a credulous approach to the opinions of young people remains a radical alternative to the prevailing "adults know best" culture.

Challenging this pattern of inter-generational communication is not a straightforward matter. Direct invitations to children to "explain themselves" may well prove counter-productive as young patients, unlike young doctors, are not used to articulating their theories about illness and its treatment. They will likely know much more than they can easily say.

Tom Ravenette produced a set of drawings which he entitled "Trouble in School" to help pupils articulate their ideas about how and why pupils could struggle with the education system. We have borrowed that format to develop a series of minimally detailed illustrations of treatment-related scenes to help us understand young people's experience of hospital life.

The material has been designed specifically to explore aspects of healthcare that patients find difficult – hence the title "Someone's Suffering". The paper describes the research and rationale behind the project before demonstrating the drawings and the loosely organised interview protocol that supports their use. We aim to provide a few clinical examples of this approach in action and offer an opportunity for conference delegates to experiment with the materials themselves.

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Thom Hecht

Beyond Ballet Technique: The Emotional Voice' - Personality Typographies of Student Ballet Dancers at Elite Dance Conservatoires

This paper traces the emotional experience of six student ballet dancers over one academic term (twelve weeks) at an elite dance conservatoires in the UK. The primary aim is to establish personality and character typographies of student dancers and the study highlights the importance of giving consideration to personality traits as a tool to improve ballet training at elite dance conservatoires. This paper is a work-in-progress of my doctoral research in dance education at London Contemporary Dance School at The Place.

Using the lenses of psychoanalysis and personality theory (Kelly), themes and issues of occupational stress emerge and build up on my previous research conducted in this field. Research data was collected over a period of twelve weeks; during this inquiry, I acted as a practice-as-research (PaR) researcher who does not only collect data but is also part of the research process itself, i.e. I joint the ballet classes with the participating student dancers on a regular basis. This critical research approach of observatory as well as participatory nature was used to maximise the perspective of an 'insider doctrine with an outside eye'. Research data was collated in form of (a) individual interviews at two different points (week 1 and week 10) during the term (b) video-recording of ballet classes at two different points (week 1 and week 10) during the term and (c) the analysis of an 'emotion journal' that students kept for the duration of the study. Research data has been transcribed to a large extent.

The establishment of character and personality typographies shall demonstrate the imbalance between the teaching of purely technical skills and the lack of emotional learning (Emotional Intelligence) in ballet class. This paper will conclude with issues of validity and implications for teaching ballet will be discussed in the conclusion.

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Bäckaskog Slott, Kristianstad, Sweden, April 8th to 11th, 2006

Jeannette Hemmecke

Repertory Grids in Organizational Practice: How to Choose Elements

In organizational practice, the repertory grid technique is a means to elicit one or more viewpoints of organizational members, customers, suppliers or partners. It can serve as an instrument to clarify and solve organizational problems or to explore possible action pathways for the future.

Unfortunately, there is no general systematic way to translate such organizational problems into suitable sets of elements for the actual repertory grids. In academic literature, one can only find a range of examples and hints about a variety of business applications (e.g. in Jankowicz, 2004; Stewart & Stewart, 1981), but it remains unclear how to exactly choose elements for a unique problem. Furthermore, since the element choice is a particularly crucial, but difficult phase in applying the repertory grid technique according to Fromm (1995) and our own experience, the following research question arises:

How can one arrive at a suitable choice of elements for a repertory grid that eventually leads to results that are relevant to the initial problem of the organisation?

As a first step to answer this question, we conduct expert interviews with experienced repertory grid users. The expert interviews focus on the expert's explicit and implicit ways of "translating" a given problem into a repertory grid form, on critical situations, and on personal success factors in preparing and conducting repertory grids. The interview data is analyzed in a qualitative manner by comparing and categorizing the transcribed and paraphrased text passages.

In this talk, we describe our study, focus on its main outcome and its relevance for further research activities.

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Devi Jankoiwcz

Assessing strategic competence: what makes an effective member of a Board of Directors?

Much has been written in recent years about the need for probity and due diligence at Board level in the wake of a series of financial scandals. Relatively little is known about the personal attributes that make for positive effectiveness, however, which is perhaps surprising given the responsibilities involved in steering the strategic direction of a large public company. A related issue concerns the extent to which the personal characteristics of the effective board member are similar across different cultures. On the one hand, in a global economy predicated on a single broadly capitalist way of doing business, one might expect similarities; on the other hand, one might argue that the specificities of local legislation, ownership patterns, and cultures may make a difference.

A series of repertory grid interviews was held with UK board members of private companies in the UK and in Hong Kong, to see how the members themselves construed effective performance. A content analysis, including a careful reliability check, identified 13 categories, two of which showed a significant difference between UK and HK respondents: an emphasis on teamwork and social skills among UK respondents, and an emphasis on independence and outspokenness (which one might interpret as freedom from political interference) among HK respondents.

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Devorah Kalekin-Fishman

How Carefully Do We Have To Be Taught? Constructing and Construing Differences

Although it was probably far from the mind of George Kelly when he developed his theory, I want to suggest that the much maligned axiomization of bipolar constructs is a significant cue to the potential of PCP for social analysis.

The idea that constructs are usually dichotomous turns out to reflect an important quality of the construction of difference. People are taught the nature of the social world through taken for granted constructs of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, age, as well as of work and class.

In reference to these central themes, the emergent pole is the pole of difference while the submerged pole is always the 'norm'. This is the pole of privilege, the pole that can be overlooked and taken to be 'natural'.

Underlying construals of social reality, these constructs are used deliberately to code behaviours in civil society and to steer political programs that perpetuate inequalities.

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Carin Linander

In times of change - How do managers and staff members construe leadership?

The present study used computerised Repertory Grid interviews to obtain a deeper understanding of managers' and staff members' view of leadership and to capture their constructs about leadership. How do they express their construing? And do managers and staff members differ in their way of construing?

The sample consisted of 10 managers and 30 staff members in a customer-service department within a large company experiencing both geographical and organisational change-processes. The Repertory Grid interviews elicited a large number of personal constructs about leadership. All constructs were analysed with regard to their content using 17 categories for the constructs about leadership. The participants were also asked to rank the five most important constructs for a successful leadership.

The main categories for both managers and staff members were *Social competence* and *Ability to take action*, though staff members put greater importance to constructs within the category *Social competence* than managers did. Managers and staff members differ in their opinions about which are the most important abilities for a successful leader. Staff members' most important construct for a successful leadership was *to be able to listen* while managers' most important construct was *to be goal-oriented*. In accordance with Kelly's Personal Construct Theory the repertory grid interviews indicated that in this organisation there existed to some extent a commonality between managers and staff members way of construing leadership,

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Angela McGrane

An Investigation of Students' Expectations of Higher Education using Repertory Grid Technique

The environment in which Universities in the United Kingdom operate is changing, promoting discussion about the importance of student choice. These changes seem likely to promote the concept of HE as a marketplace, with institutions competing for students and students looking for value for money from their chosen institution.

Issues of service quality in Higher Education are not completely new or restricted to the UK, but it is felt that much previous research has concentrated on applying existing models of quality management without considering the more fundamental question of what it is that students actually expect from their time at University. The paper will describe the initial stages of a research project which attempts to answer this question. Repertory grid technique has been used as an interview tool to gather expectations from 6th form and college students in the North East of England who are currently in the process of applying to University.

The technique is selected for a number of reasons: firstly, the author acknowledges that, as a lecturer in HE, she brings her own experiences and perceptions of student expectations to the research situation and it is felt that allowing students to speak in their own words, minimising the influence of the interviewer, is important. Secondly, one of the main aims of the research is to explore students' underlying beliefs and feelings and again it is felt that working on discovering their personal constructs related to their learning environment will allow this to happen.

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Philip Murphy

Self, Group, and Country: Searching for a Middle Ground among Macedonia's Emerging Political Identities

This research is about perception. In the Republic of Macedonia, there is a reductionist tendency to perceive politics as little more than ethnic conflict. A more inductive investigation into how the people of this country perceive themselves and those around them is desirable for its value in illustrating more of the complexity that actually characterizes the situation. To do this, this research has employed constructivist models of individual and collective identity.

Constructivists such as Niklas Luhmann (1985) saw identity as a shared frame of reference that help the members of identity groups to interpret the world around them and make decisions based on those interpretations. In order to better investigate this sort of collectivist perception and decision-making, it is first necessary to investigate how decisions are defined at the level of the individual actor and then extrapolate upward, to the society level. To do this, Luhmann (1995, p. 242) recommended employing George R. Kelly's (1955) repertory grid methodology as being well suited to eliciting the constructs that comprise an individual's interpretive framework.

The frameworks-in-use for various groups in this population have therefore been elicited using Rep IV software in order to conduct standardized repertory grid interviews in a diverse population. Resulting frameworks have been analyzed for overlap, relative complexity, qualitative makeup and other factors that aid in revealing patterns that belie simplistic models that rely on ethnicity to explain political behaviour, and begin to distinguish emergent cognitive middle ground(s).

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Roar Pedersen, Pam Denicolo

Researching Problem Based Learning using a PCP Approach: a Review of the Congruence of Philosophy and Methods

A preliminary review has been conducted of the literature reviewed in relation to a study on Problem Based Learning (PBL) employing a PCP approach. This paper explores the commonalities and differences between the philosophies of the two approaches to learning and teaching discovered in that review and presents an outline of a research project design that incorporates an Action Research Approach employing a PCP framework.

The focus and context of the research is the implementation of PBL in an undergraduate degree (MPharm) for pharmacists but draws on literature that suggests that a study of such a process would be valuable to learning and teaching in many professional contexts.

The literature review indicates that implementation of PBL is often conducted with radical changes to the ideological, philosophical and theoretical bases of the approach. This makes existing studies hard to compare but it also provided one of the foci of the research which is to discover strategies to improve gains from the method.

To gain a deeper understanding of the value of PBL we will attempt to study the teachers' and learners' constructs of PBL before the approach is implemented and further on in the process. PCP theory suggests that it is when current constructs are challenged that learning occurs; while this presentation seeks ways to use PCP methods to challenge effectively the constructs of the teachers and learners, it also seeks challenge to the constructs of the researchers.

Thus, suggestions and constructive feedback from participants will be highly valued.

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Harry Procter

Meditation Workshop

The workshop will look at PCP and approaches to meditation, mentioning writings by Vincent Kenny and Spence McWilliams.

We will start by sitting for quarter of an hour.

We will then look at philosophical issues, looking at relationships between PCP and Buddhist theory.

We will then get the chance to sit for a further quarter of an hour.

After that we can have a free discussion about personal experiences and the questions arising from the session. If possible please bring a suitable cushion so you can sit comfortably.

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Matthias Rosenberger

Do we need compatible visions in working teams?

Outgoing from the assumption that humans, who want to work with one another should understand themselves among themselves; respectively we can say: We need diversity in teams, we need participation in teams, but what we also need is a similar vision (mission) about what or how we work together in a team. In the overall system of a working team a similar cultural background should lead the communication, because difficulties and disturb development processes are lastingly barriers for an effective Outcome (see Weinkauff/Woywode 2004: 408. Orlikowski et al. 2004: 43). Impressively SAUNDERS, SLYKE and BIRD (2004) show for example the different time perception and/or the different cultural time horizons in "global virtual teams" the Synchronization of common acting and the success of an entire project can obstruct the working chain. Do humans have to fit to each other, in order to be able to work successfully together?

In opposite Fried and Knoll (2005: 85) show the dilemma of the "cognitive including ness" over divided values and attitudes, which are on the one hand "important ", but the "field of vision" are also limit the substance-receiving for innovations. VAN of the VEGT and BUNDERSON come to the conclusion that: "Specifically, thesis results underscore the need to move beyond the simple diversity affects performance model in order ton think into more complex ways about how and more under what conditions a diversity of expert's assessment into groups might promote or inhibit group effectiveness." (Van of the Vegt/Bunderson 2005: 542). A substantial part of the theoretical and methodologischen considerations and the empirical research substance for the relationship of group members among themselves is treated in the psychology under the references attraction and coherency. Here particularly within the field of the social psychology.

There are representatives, who postulate in this research field: "conflicts must be avoided at any price, which conflicts would mean that we are not for each other certain finally" (brook/German 1972: 23, zit. n. Sader 1991: 92). It is neglected with the fact however that attractiveness is not a personality characteristic absolutely, but a

Beatrix Rütten

Genesis of recipient requirements on television newscasters for assuring the quality of broadcasting corporations

Quality is the foremost success factor for corporations within a competitive environment.¹ Quality has therefore acquired central significance for the success of broadcasting corporations ever since termination of the monopoly held by public sector broadcasting corporations. Despite this fact, we can perceive that total quality management at broadcasting companies is being implemented, if at all, more in terms of rudimentary attempts.

There is an absence of quality criteria at broadcasting corporations both generally² and specifically for televisions newscasters.³ Assuring quality is the essential task of total quality management. Lack of quality criteria means that quality assurance cannot be implemented because it assumes that quality requirements are present.

It can be highlighted that requirements are to be elicited in the form of data and in accordance with the philosophy of total quality management on the market, i.e., from the perspective of customers or recipients respectively.

Customer orientation for media products as so-called “taste products” is perceived as a special challenge, and quality criteria are difficult to define.⁴ Nonetheless, research work is able to illustrate that this difficulty can be surmounted via the repertory grid technique.

Using the repertory grid method evokes the ability to attain a quality catalog with quality criteria and associated operationalizations for television newscasters. Consequently, a quality catalog is available that can be applied as an effective benchmark for successful newscasters and used as the base for assuring quality at broadcasting corporations.

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David J Savage

Mapping Mental Toughness

This paper is concerned with exploring mental toughness, what it is and how it can be mapped?

A multi-method approach is adopted so as to enable both a rich mapping of the meaning of mental toughness and to create an opportunity to compare the mappings produced by the alternative procedures. The former is important as it provides the basis for psychological coaching in areas where mental toughness is relevant. The latter is important as it gives insight into the consequences of the methods used and the combination of procedures that might be most parsimonious and effective when collecting mapping information.

The investigation takes the form of an in depth case study in which both P.C.T. and interview procedures are used. The former consists of construct elicitations and self characterisations, the latter uses two separately recommended interview formats.

The mapping of mental toughness generated is presented and comparisons made between the information collected by the alternative procedures. Preliminary conclusions are drawn to the effect that there can be but is not necessarily considerable overlap in the information collected by oft used P.C.T procedures and the alternative interview procedures.

Furthermore it is emphasised that no one procedure gives 'all the meaning' available so it is efficacious to use more than one procedure to explore a focal issue and do select them from an informed position.

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Jörn W. Scheer

HTML - Highway To (Post-) Modern Literature

Since the arrival of the Internet, hundreds of thousands of books have been stored on countless web sites all over the world. The existence of this gigantic library has, and will continue to have, an enormous impact on the availability and accessibility of literature. However, this is not the only consequence of the electronic revolution. Technological advances have always influenced the ways how thoughts have been fixed and preserved and transmitted: think of cuneiform writings, hieroglyphs on papyrus or the invention of printing. Now, hypertext mark-up language, also known as html, has the potential of changing the ways how literature, especially novels and stories, is composed.

It will be argued that the html code is particularly suited to further a constructivist understanding of literature. While some would speak of a post-modern approach I would say that modern literature has always been in accord with the main tenets of a time – hence the title.

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Christos Sermpezis, David Winter

HICLAS analysis and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

This presentation will compare two newly developed versions of the HICLAS software programme and explore their application in analysing repertory grid data derived from patients who have diagnosed with PTSD.

Previous research (Sewell, 1996) has encountered a number of problems using an older version of HICLAS. This presentation seeks to provide solutions to these problems and propose additional ways of analysing grid data.

Reference

Sewell, K., W., Cromwell, R.L., Farrell-Higgins, J., Palmer, R., Ohlde, C., Patterson, T.W. (1996). Hierarchical elaboration in the conceptual structure of Vietnam veterans. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 9: 79-96.

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Pontus Sjöström

Internalization of Norms and their Regularization in the Swedish Penal Code - A Repertory Grid Study on Men Convicted for Sexual Crimes

The failing internalization of norms in men sentenced for sexual crimes is the issue under consideration in this paper. According to George Kelly's Personal construct Theory, norms can be regarded as constructions built on previous experience. Such constructs are the means that enables the individual to anticipate future events and makes the person act in accordance with the societal norm system. This constructivist perspective on thinking underpins the research undertaken.

The method approach used encompassed interviews, where personal constructs with regard to important people in the participants' lives were elicited. The method provided tools to find channels to the thoughts that may explain their criminal behaviour.

This paper presents the constructs elicited from the different grid responses. The interpretations of the constructs are being analyzed and discussed.

The need for psychological treatment among sexual offenders is much more extensive than the treatment currently provided by the Swedish Prison and Probation Administration. For obvious reasons, research has mainly focused on the victims. The situation and the problems of the perpetrators are known, but they have not been thoroughly discussed, and not in the light of Kelly's Personal construct Theory. A constructivist treatment programme, in order to change the thoughts and attitudes of these offenders, could form part of the rehabilitation treatment offered. In addition, the focusing on the importance of early internalization of societal norms and on the implications of different forms of neglect in childhood may help to prevent crimes.

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Dusan Stojnov, Vladimir Dzinovic, Jelena Pavlovic

Kelly Meets Foucault: Choosing School Underachievement as a Resistance to Power

Poor success in school is seen as a failure in traditional theories of education. An alternative construction of school underachievement, from the point of view of Foucauldian approach to power and Kelly's principle of elaborative choice, is offered as the subject matter of this paper.

Instead of being construed exclusively as a measure of good education, school success can be seen as the effect of normalization based on the power of discourses domineering in a society. By the same token, underachievement can be seen as a form of resistance to dominant discourse, as well as the way of defining identity in accordance with marginalized discourses whose significance is not recognized and respected from the point of school authorities. Thus prevailing tradition of European rationality treats poor achievement as a case of a norm deviation and discards the reasons for sustaining it as irrational and disordered behaviour that should be treated on the basis of its irrationality.

Not for Kelly, who asserts claims for irrationality are mere exclamations of poor understanding of individual perspectives. If certain persons resist the dominant discourse and make a poor success despite their abilities, they are making an active choice which should be understood from their point of view. And the choice someone makes is always an elaborative choice.

Thus underachievement may be construed as a resistance to power being based on the principle of elaborative choice. Kelly's idea of reconstruction offers an emancipator approach with huge transformative potentials in deal with this problem.

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Uwe Tänzer

Recommend of action from a subjective view of expert – a diagnostic method to explore personal constructs

Based on the theory of Kelly and repertory grid I want to present a diagnostic method to explore personal constructs of children. Constitutive thought is 'man the scientist'. The four elements of science and also subjective theory are description, explanation, prognosis and technology (Prim & Tilmann 2000) in relation to a subject, in this case 'aggression'. This elements should be inquired with the diagnostic method, created from the author.

For the realization it is helpful, to ask the children for aspects of the subject (oriented to the corollary of community). For example the children would be asked, if 'destruction of objects' is part of their own aggression (element description), if refusal of the parents' is a reason for the aggression (element explanation), if 'conservation with parents and a adviser' could be a solution for the problems (element prognosis) and how the conservation is realizable (element technology).

For all aspects exist material in form of drawings.

The result of the exploration can be a concrete 'recommend for action from the subjective view' of the children.

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Tomáš Urbánek

Approaches to textual analysis

In this presentation I try to compare several approaches to analysis of texts in psychology from the beginning of the 20th century to this time. I focus mainly on research applications of these approaches.

The presentation begins with some linguistic views (e.g. Sapir's one) and with early attempts to construct some personality-relevant indices based for instance on ratios of frequencies of occurrence of different word classes, continues with Allport's work, with Kreitlers' theory of meaning, and with several approaches to thematic content analysis based on Gottschalk-Gleser method or on the tradition of work with the Thematic Apperception Test, and then it discusses Kelly's approach to analysis of the self-characterization sketch. It is compared with semiotic approaches to textual analysis from the point of view of the terminologies of both constructivist psychology and semiotics.

In my opinion there are many similarities and convergences in many of these lines of thought.

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Bill Warren

Revisiting Fromm's *Sane Society* at the Present Time: Some Implications for Mental Health and Mental Health Education When Seen With a PCP Eye

Erich Fromm was one of a number of psychologists and philosophers who around the end of World War II attempted to capitalise on the deep insights of two theorists whose ideas at first sight seem diametrically opposed to one another: Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. These two thinkers provided, together, a most challenging account of the predicament of modern personkind, stressing, respectively – though each not without reference to the other dimension – the social and the individual.

Fromm's earlier works discussed how and why men so easily gave up the freedom that had been so hard won in the Enlightenment against the superstitions imposed by religion. In his *The Sane Society* he shifts his focus to consider how a particular form of social organisation provides a system-level escape from freedom, highlighting the experience through the concept of alienation. Together, Fromm's works focus the interaction between psychological and social factors of life and arguably have an interest to Personal Construct Theory.

This is a theoretical, speculative paper which having outlined Fromm's more socially focused argument in the last mentioned work considers its resonance with an understanding of 'mental health' as it can be developed out of Personal Construct Theory. In turn, the ideas of mental health education and education for mental health are argued from this development to take on quite a qualitatively different significance, with some radical implications for PCT adherents.

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David Winter, Richard Bell, Sue Watson

Midpoint ratings on personal constructs: constriction or the middle way? Or Would you rather be domineering or domineered?

Midpoint ratings of repertory grid elements on constructs have been variously interpreted as indicating meaninglessness of the elements concerned, constriction, and conflict.

Previous research will be reviewed and midpoint ratings of two self elements, the actual and the ideal self, will be explored in repertory grids collected from psychotherapy clients in a comparative study of the outcome of personal construct, cognitive-behavioural, and psychodynamic therapies.

The paper will consider the frequency of such ratings, changes in this frequency over the course of therapy, the relationship between midpoint ratings of these self elements and measures of psychological distress, and the content and structural properties of the constructs on which such ratings occur.

The implications of the findings for personal construct theory and for therapeutic practice will be discussed. Clinical examples will be presented, with a particular focus on clients who have engaged in deliberate self-harm.

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Marie-Louise Österlind, Pamela Denicolo

So much to do and so little time – Municipal managers explore their tasks and roles

This paper reports from an action oriented project in municipal care for older in a Swedish municipality (for an overview see Österlind, Denicolo, Johansson, in press). In this part project managers explored and reflected on their tasks and roles.

Repertory grid interviews were used to explore the managers' experiences of their leadership role during their daily work. The theme for these interviews was “my tasks and responsibilities as a team manager”. The results show that the managers had a complex work situation: a new organisational structure, quality system and way of working; some personnel not dedicated to the new “order”; lack of job description; many different tasks; little or no “organised” personal development. The results indicated that the managers' leadership roles to a great extent were developed through their construal of their tasks.

The interviews were followed by a focus group session where the managers further explored aspects and dilemmas related to the role as such and to their work situation. These difficulties included delegating tasks; quality demands vs. inadequate resources; and role conflicts. Among the things considered missing was systematic collegial support.

The repertory grid interviews acknowledged the individuality of each participant, while the focus group sharing of generalised results allowed for the identification of commonality and the development of sociality. In all, the participating managers found the interviews and the focus group process very useful in their own right. The latter led to the development of the diary-in-group project in which the managers continued to develop their group con construal and re-construal of their professional roles (Österlind and Denicolo, in manuscript).