

INTRODUCING YOU TO DENNIS N. HINKLE

Fay Fransella

Centre for Personal Construct Psychology, University of Hertfordshire, UK

I forget exactly when it was that I first met Dennis. It was certainly after the formation of the *Kelly Club* which met in London. It was also after I had finished my PhD which was totally influenced by his dissertation on “The change of personal constructs from the viewpoint of a theory of construct implications”. My scanning of that dissertation is one way I feel I have been able to repay him for the insight he gave me into why people may continue to stutter when it is simply not how they want to communicate. People often think his great contribution was describing the procedure of *laddering* and a few also know about his *implications grid*. Even fewer know of his *resistance-to-change grid*. What hardly anyone is aware of is the extraordinary originality of his theorising. He posed the question: “if a construct can be loose or tight, permeable or impermeable, propositional or constellatory from time to time, what then defines a construct? This constitutes the essential point of departure for this dissertation”. His answer was the theory of construct implications. To me it is his theory that makes it so important that his dissertation be made widely available. First of all he re-defined all Kelly’s corollaries in terms of implications. For me, the most important re-definition was that of the *Choice Corollary*. His theory states that this Corollary says “A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for increasing the total number of implications of his system. That is to say, a person always chooses so as to avoid the anxiety of chaos and the despair of absolute certainty”. Were that to be so, then those who stutter ‘choose’ to remain like that because that is the way each person can increase the total number of implications of his or her construing system. To ‘choose’ to be a fluent speaker would be

like asking the person to walk the plank into a sea of nothingness. Being a fluent person has little or no meaning compared with being someone who stutters. Similarly he redefines the constructs of transitions. For example, *Threat can be seen as the awareness (e.g., a super-ordinate construction and anticipation about the construct system) of an imminent comprehensive reduction of the total number of predictive implications of the personal construct system*. For me, all his redefinitions brought Kelly’s theory to life. There are also ideas about change that I have found very useful. For instance, change is more likely to occur on those constructs that have a similar number of implications for each pole and also on constructs that have few polar implications. *Indexing the implications of each pole of constructs will facilitate differential predictions with respect to the direction and ease of psychological reconstruction*. I took up his suggestion about using both poles of the constructs and I designed a ‘bi-polar implications grid’ in my research with those who stutter (1972). I wanted to have an idea of how easy it would be for a person to change. Early on Don Bannister and I played around with the Impgrid and resistance to change grid. I learned something important about myself. I had – perhaps still have – an important construct to do with *reliability*. What I found was that that construct was indeed the most resistant to change. But it had only 2 implications! It looked ridiculous and we thought perhaps the procedure was at fault. Blaming one’s tools is always an easy way out. But after a bit of introspection I could see that the construct came from my childhood. My father was quite an old man and an ex-army officer. He felt strongly that one should always be punctual. So whenever he took his two children out to see friends we would always arrive a few minutes early and

then wait outside so we went in at the “right” time. That was a construct I had failed to update into my middle age. There are some very novel ideas Denny mentions. For instance he says: “The trans-contextual identity of a construct can perhaps be defined as the points of identical subordinate and superordinate implications. For example, if in context X, A, B, and C imply honesty, and honesty implies 1,2, and 3 while in context Y, A, D, and E imply honesty, and honesty implies 1, 4 and 5, then the trans-contextual identity of honesty consists of A and 1. This definition is definitely a tentative one.” Tentative indeed, but an intriguing one. Last, but by no means least, Denny Hinkle provides 27 suggestions for further research on his theory of construct implications.

REFERENCE

Fransella, F. (1972) *Personal change and reconstruction*. London: Academic Press

EDITORS' NOTE

This text was first published in *Constructive Interventionist*, Vol. 42, February 2010, the newsletter of the Centre for Personal Construct Psychology at the School of Psychology, University of Hertfordshire, UK.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fay Fransella, PhD FBPsS, is a Visiting Professor in Personal Construct Psychology at the University of Hertfordshire, UK, Emeritus Reader in Clinical Psychology at the University of London and a Personal Construct Psychotherapist (retired). Her first publication describing work with PCP was in 1966. Since then she has written and edited 14 books describing personal construct

theory and its methods and over 100 papers. In 1968 she gave an early description of the use of ‘laddering’, a technique first described by Hinkle in 1965. Her work applying personal construct theory and its methods to help people overcome stuttering and to test out the theoretical assumption that behaviour and construing are intimately related, was published in 1972. That work also influenced the practice of speech and language therapy and was also a deliberate attempt to test a major tenet of personal construct theory – the Choice Corollary. In 1980 she founded the Centre for Personal Construct Psychology in London. That is now part of the University of Hertfordshire, UK, and has Nick Reed as its Director. She is now semi-retired but still very much involved in personal construct psychology activities, especially working with Nick Reed on the Centre's distance learning course on “Personal Construct Psychology and its Methods of Inquiry”, details of which can be found on the Centre's website: www.centrepccp.co.uk.

Email: ffransella@lambslane.eclipse.co.uk

Correspondence address:

Prof Fay Fransella, Centre for Personal Construct Psychology, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 9AB, UK.

REFERENCE

Fransella, F. (2010). Introducing you to Dennis H. Hinkle.

Personal Construct Theory & Practice, 7, Supplement No 1, iii-iv, 2010

(Retrieved from

<http://www.pcp-net.org/journal/pctp10/fransella10.pdf>)

Received: 10 August 2010 - Accepted: 12 August 2010 – Published 31 August 2010