

Linda L. Viney

1942 – 2014

Linda Viney is one of the individuals responsible for the introduction of Personal Construct Theory (PCT) to Australia and central to its promotion and application, especially in clinical and counseling settings. She was an initiator, always developing new projects for herself, her students and colleagues.

Linda was born in Launceston, Tasmania. She received scholarships and bursaries throughout her education and graduated in 1963 with a B.A. Hons. (Psychology) at the University of Tasmania in Hobart. In 1966 she completed an M.A. at the Australian National University in Canberra before receiving a scholarship to undertake her Ph.D. (Clinical Psychology) at the University of Cincinnati in the USA. Linda remembered her mother, with a broken arm in a sling, mournfully farewelling her only child at the airport as she left for the states. (Linda's father had died in 1960 from the same disease as Linda eventually did.)

Her period at Cincinnati influenced her future direction. Linda had absorbed quite a bit of Freudian psychology during her undergraduate studies, especially from the theoretician Professor Cardno. Thesis supervision at Cincinnati was undertaken partly by Goldine Gleser who, together with Gottschalk, had developed a number of scales to score text elicited from interviews. The scales, including types of anxiety and guilt, were based on Freudian themes and definitions. Linda began to publish, including, arguably even today, one of the best overviews of the notion of self in the literature (Viney, 1969).

On her graduation in 1969 Linda returned to Australia and obtained a lectureship at Macquarie University in Sydney. It was there in 1973 that I met Linda. I had been assigned to tutor in her Personality course. Her first conversation with me began with an intimidating question about 'what theory of personality did I prefer?' She was disappointed with my answer of 'psychoanalysis', indicating she had hoped I would say

'humanistic' as she found Rogers' views on 'freedom to learn' influenced her approach to teaching. It was participating in this subject that I recognized the need to appreciate a wider range of personality theories than my narrow training had prepared me for. However I left to take up a lectureship a month later, selected by the newly appointed Professor of Psychology at the evolving university in Wollongong. The Professor was Alex Clarke, soon to become Linda's husband.

At this period the Macquarie department had a strong social and community orientation. Linda was involved in the establishment and teaching of Masters programs in counseling, including school counseling. She was developing her research orientation in broad areas of counseling, health and community psychology. In tandem she was building on the Gottschalk-Gleser scales to develop further scales as well as ways of using them, applying multivariate techniques suggested by Murray Aitken and others. This was also when she first started to explore PCT. Casting around for something to include in a graduate seminar she had been given to teach she opened the 1970 edition of the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, edited by Miller Mair, finding that it 'contained some mind-boggling, challenging, creative and, ultimately extremely useful, ideas from George Kelly' (Viney, 2006). Given the big impact this publication had on Linda's and her students' lives, she came to value the influence of publishing. It became an activity she embraced wholeheartedly for herself.

Linda involved her students in her enthusiasm both for Kellian ideas and publishing. Mary Westbrook completed her PhD on childbearing years, including the development of what was termed a 'Cognitive Anxiety' scale based on Kelly's definition of anxiety to complement the more psychodynamic scales of Gottschalk-Gleser (Viney & Westbrook, 1976). Other students followed. Linda was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1973.

In 1980 Linda moved to the University of Wollongong as an Associate Professor and departmental head, replacing her husband, Alex, who had taken a senior administrative position within the university. Wollongong, and surrounding areas, had few clinical or counseling professionals at that time. She was instrumental in setting up and implementing the M.A. Honours (Clinical Psychology) and the Ph.D. (Clinical Psychology), the latter being the first of its type offered in Australia. In 1981 she became the founding coordinator of the Psychological Services Unit (now known as Northfields Clinic) and chair of its Management Committee. The courses and clinic became recognized for providing a broader clinical perspective than a narrow focus on behavioural or cognitive approaches commonly offered elsewhere in Australia.

A crucial development was the setting up by Linda of a Personal Construct Research group within the department in 1981. This group met regularly (mostly weekly during term) for over 30 years with Linda as its convenor. This group became very important for the antipodean contribution to PCP, though independently there were others experimenting with the approach elsewhere in Australia¹. It provided the basis for the organization of conferences, the production of a newsletter and the furthering of research for both staff and students. Crucial to its success was the presentation of work in progress, rather than polished finished papers. Staff presentations

¹ From the early 1970's Charles Langley, who had completed his PhD with one of George Kelly's former students, Bieri, had been teaching PCP at Melbourne University (Costigan, 2000) and used self-characterisation as part of the selection procedure for the clinical course up until the 1990's (Bell, personal communication, January 6, 2015). The first Australian PCP thesis was by Peter Salmon, an agricultural scientist, in 1978. In Perth a study group was established in the Department of Community Services by Janet Bayliss and Petrice Judge. Others worked in isolation. Langley encouraged Jacqui Costigan to attend the second international congress on PCP at Oxford University in 1977. Jacqui, Bill Warren, Phillip Candy and Peter Burgoyne attended the third congress held in Nijenrode, the Netherlands.

of issues they were wrestling with provided models for junior researchers and the confidence for exposing what was not clearly understood. Participants ranged from staff to undergraduates.

Linda reported that her first published paper in the personal construct therapy area was in the journal *Psychotherapy* in 1981 (Viney, 2006). But the range of her publications is outstanding. Books written or edited by Linda and colleagues, invited book chapters and a couple of hundred articles in refereed journals ranged in their content across measurement and assessment, lifespan development, clinical, counseling as well as health and illness.

She became involved with the international personal construct community at the fourth international congress, held at Brock University. At the subsequent Cambridge conference in 1983, supported by Richard Bell, she made the case for holding a conference in Australia, but the vote for another location was announced by Don Bannister. We waited until 1993 when the congress was held in Townsville, with Linda involved in the organization. Meanwhile she was instrumental in setting up a biennial Australasian Personal Construct conference, the first one being in Wollongong.

Linda's commitment to ethical and caring practice led her to involvement in the its furthering in the profession as a whole. She sat on and chaired numbers of committees that led to mandating and furthering such practice within the Australian Psychological Society, the NSW State Registration Board as well as local mental health committees. Community involvement was central to her understanding of her role.

Linda's life was not only that of a committed academic. She delighted in classical music, literature and art. Like many committed to PCP, she was an avid fan of detective stories and reveled in TV programs such as *The Sopranos*. She had chosen not to have children but was committed to those of Alex from his previous marriage.

Linda died from Huntington's chorea, a cruel disease inherited from her father. She had seen his dying and lived with the knowledge of what awaited her. This affected many decisions she made and the relationships she did, and did not, engage in. Huntington's is disproportionately

represented in the Tasmanian population where it can be traced to a bounty immigrant who arrived in Launceston, Tasmania, from Somerset in England in 1842 with her husband and seven children. This woman had 14 children in total, of whom nine developed Huntington's disease (Pridmore, 1990). Linda was descended from this family and lived a decade more than the average for those descendants with this disease. She died on July 8th, 2014. Her much loved husband had preceded her by some 13 months.

Above all Linda was brave. Brave in that she knew what she would face when the disease took over her life. She refused to allow it to dominate her life – and succeeded for the most part. But striking too is the bravery in the way she chose 'the path less traveled' in psychology, advocating an approach that was critical of mainstream psychology and hence threatening to others. This made the route to recognition, publication and promotion much more difficult – and this at a time when sexism was rife in academia. Despite her ambition, she stood up for what she saw as 'right', even when it was costly for her professionally and personally.

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