CHAPTER THIRTEEN

KELLY: PERSONAL CONSTRUCT THEORY

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

- ILLUSTRATIVE BIOGRAPHY: RICHARD NIXON
- CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVISM
- THE FUNDAMENTAL POSTULATE
- THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUING
- THE CONSTRUCTION, EXPERIENCE, CHOICE, AND MODULATION COROLLARY
- THE STRUCTURE OF CONSTRUCT SYSTEMS
- THE DICHTOMY, ORGANIZATION, FRAGMENTATION, AND RANGE COROLLARY
- THE SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF CONSTRUING EFFORTS
- THE INDIVIDUALITY, COMMONALITY, AND SOCIALITY COROLLARY
- THE ROLE CONSTRUCT REPERTORY (REP) TEST
- COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY
**CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

- **Personality Change**
- **Emotions Related to Change**
- **Effective Action: The C-P-C Cycle**
- **Loosening and Tightening Constructs: The Creativity Cycle**
- **Therapy**
- **Understanding the Client's Constructs**
- **Exploring and Changing Constructs**
- **Fixed-Role Therapy**
- **Constructs in Context: Personal Stories**
- **Research Findings**
- **Clinical Populations**
- **Business Applications and Vocational Choice**
- **Other Research**

**ILLUSTRATIVE BIOGRAPHY: Richard Nixon**

- **Development**
- **Description**
- **Cognition**
- **Adjustment**
- **Society**
- **Biology**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxXbJyG0Y18

http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1968/childs-face

**PREVIEW OF KELLY'S THEORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 13.1</th>
<th>Parame of Kelly's Theory</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Differences</td>
<td>Individuals differ in the personal constructs (cognitions) they apply to experience. Other difference situations, behaviors follow from this.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adaptation and Adjustment</td>
<td>The person experiences his/her environment as a meaningful whole, and is competent to adapt to it. He is not merely a passive responder to experience, experience actually alters adaptions from experience that people only linear experience. Many therapeutic techniques are presented, including fixated therapy.</td>
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<td>Cognitive Processes</td>
<td>Cognitive processes are central to personality. Cognitive processes are elaborated specified in Kelly's theory.</td>
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<td>Society</td>
<td>Social relationships acquire that one person can understand the other's personal constructs. Kelly does not consider broader social institutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biological Influences</td>
<td>Kelly does not consider biological factors explicitly. However, his concepts of &quot;preserved constructs&quot; and change about the relatively permanent constructs are relevant for health and disease.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Although Kelly does not focus on childhood, childhood development continues for making sense of their experience, especially their experience with people. The individual's personal constructs are developed early, changing them when they do not mediate adequately.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
George Kelly

Born in Kansas in 1905
Undergraduate at the University of Edinburgh
Doctorate at the University of Iowa
Practiced school psychology in Kansas
Professorships at University of Maryland and Ohio State University
Died in 1967

George Kelly

In order to emphasize that his theory was concerned with the "nature of the animal" rather than with environmental forces, Kelly called his theory a "Jackass Theory"

Constructive Alternativism

- Personal construct
- Man-the-scientist
- Constructive Alternativism
- The Fundamental Postulate
constructive alternativism

Definition: The assumption that people can interpret the world in a variety of ways.

Examples:
- I believe in the power of hard work (so far, but maybe I'll change my mind later).
- The teacher is (A) a tyrant, or (B) a professional with high standards.

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Personal Construct

Definition: A person's concept for predicting events. Cognitive structures we use to interpret and predict events.

Examples:
- Personal constructs are bipolar.
- We classify relevant objects in an either/or fashion with each construct.
- E.g., friendly-unfriendly, tall-short, intelligent-stupid, masculine-feminine.
- After applying the original black-and-white construct we can use other bipolar constructs to determine the extent of blackness or whiteness.
- E.g., If you think a person is intelligent, you may then apply the construct, “academically intelligent or commonsense intelligent.” —Provides a clearer picture!

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Fundamental Postulate

"A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which (s)he anticipates events."

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The Process of Construing

- The Construction Corollary
  - "A person anticipates events by construing their replications."
  - Preverbal constructs can produce psychosomatic disorders
  - Example: If you ask John to explain how he feels about his father, he has little to say. Yet every time his father is mentioned he becomes tense.

The Process of Construing

- The Experience Corollary
  - "A person's construction system varies as he successively construes the replications of events."
The Process of Construing

The Choice Corollary

“A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system.”

The “elaborative choice”

Definition:
A construct that is open to adding new elements

Examples:
- People I like
- Movies I enjoy
  (assuming that I’m open to liking new people and enjoying new movies)
The Process of Construing

- The Modulation Corollary
  - "The variation in a person’s construction system is limited by the permeability of the constructs within whose ranges of convenience the variant’s lie."

The Structure of Construct Systems

- The Dichotomy Corollary
- The Organization Corollary
- The Fragmentation Corollary
- The Range Corollary

concrete construct

Definition: A construct that is not open to new elements

Examples:
- Miracles [by one who doesn’t believe they happen now]
- Honest politicians [by one who believes they are all crooked]
**Dichotomy Corollary:**

- “A person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous (2-sided) constructs.”
- Ex: “good-bad”; “difficult-easy”; “fair-unfair”
- One pole of the construct system seems more desirable than the other.
- The contrast pole might not be what you expect.
- Success — Failure
- Success — Learning Experiences

**Within one person, we expect one or the other pole to be active at a given time.**

**Because constructs are personal, we can’t assume that the same objective reality will be recognized by everyone.**

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**slot movement**

**Definition:** Abrupt change from one pole of a construct to its opposite, often precipitated by stress

**Examples:**
- An honest cop who turns to crime
- A former drug addict who recovers and becomes a counselor
**Organization Corollary:**

“Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs.”

*Superordinate constructs: apply broadly; generally abstract.*

*Core constructs: central to identity.*

*Peripheral constructs: narrower and more readily changed.*

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**A Subordinate Construct May Be Subsumed Within One Side of the Superordinate Construct, Like This:**

Friendly-Unfriendly

/          \
|           |
Outgoing-Quiet

*Here, people are judged as either friendly or unfriendly.*

*If judged as friendly, they are then judged as either outgoing or quiet.*

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**You Might, However Organize Your Constructs This Way:**

Friendly-Unfriendly

/          \
|           |
Outgoing-Quiet  Outgoing-Quiet

*Here, whether you judge people as friendly or unfriendly, you can further judge them as either outgoing or quiet.*
Fragmentation Corollary:

- “A person may successively employ a variety of construction subsystems which are inferentially incompatible with each other.”
- A tyrant at work; a pussycat at home

Range Corollary:

- “A construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only.”
- “Range of convenience”

Whoever heard of a philosophy field trip?

The Social Embeddedness of Construing Efforts

- The Individuality Corollary
  “Persons differ from each other in their constructions of events.”
- The Commonality Corollary
  “To the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his (or her) psychological processes are similar to those of the other person.”
- The 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.”
**CPC Cycle**

- **Circumspection (i.e., Review)**
- **Pre-emption (i.e., Plan)**
- **Control (i.e., Do)**

**The Role Construct Repertory (REP) Test**

**Table 13.2** Role Specifications for One Version of the REP Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Column 1</th>
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<th>Column 3</th>
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</table>

- 1. mother
- 2. father
- 3. brother
- 4. sister
- 5. spouse (or girlfriend/boyfriend)
- 6. same-sex friend
- 7. work partner who disliked you
- 8. person you feel uncomfortable with
- 9. someone you would like to know better
- 10. teacher whose viewpoint you accepted
- 11. teacher whose viewpoint was objectionable
- 12. unsuccessful person
- 13. successful person
- 14. happy person
- 15. unhappy person

(Adapted from Landfield & Spring, 1967, p. 39, who give more detailed descriptions of these roles.)

**Figure 13.2** Example of One Client's Personal Constructs

**Response Sheet**

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<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
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<th>Column 3</th>
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</table>

- 1. Compare/then
- 2. Judgement
- 3. Committed to family
- 4. Understanding
- 5. Inflexible
- 6. Very tardy
- 7. Childlike smile
- 8. Does not communicate
- 9. Easy going
- 10. Unpredictable

<table>
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Repertory Grids

1. Select elements (e.g., roles, self-elements)
2. Select or elicit bipolar constructs (e.g., original triad method)
3. Rate each element on each construct (e.g., 1-7)
4. Analyse ratings

Cognitive complexity

Evidence: different ratings of the target people with Construct 1, Construct 2, Construct 3, etc.
**Personality Change**

**Emotions Related to Change**
- Threat: “the awareness of imminent comprehensive change in one’s core constructs”
- Hostility: “the continued effort to extort validational evidence in favor of a type of social prediction which has already proved itself a failure”

**Effective Action: The C-P-C Cycle**
- C: Circumspection: trying out several constructs for a situation
- P: Preemption: selecting one construct
- C: Control: acting on the construct

**Loosening and Tightening Constructs: The Creativity Cycle**
- Brainstorming to loosen constructs

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**Therapy**

- Understanding the Client’s Constructs
- Exploring and Changing Constructs
- Fixed-Role Therapy
- Constructs in Context: Personal Stories

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**Research Findings**

- Clinical Populations
- Business Applications and Vocational Choice
- Other Research
Constructivism is compatible with post-modernism. (The context must be taken into account; there is no universal, objective reality.)

Chapter Summary

- Constructive Alternativism
- The Process of Construing
- The Structure of Construct Systems
- The Social Embeddedness of Construing Efforts
- The Role Construct Repertory (REP) Test
  - Cognitive Complexity
  - Personality Change
  - Therapy
- Research Findings
- Constructivism, Social Constructionism, and Postmodernism