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Editorial

Advances in personal construct technology

Work in the area of personal construct theory and the associated repertory grid technique originated in clinical psychology but has diversified into many other areas. In particular, this technique has been used to extract subjective data in situations where before it had not been possible: in industrial training, quality control, management development, self-organized learning and self-counselling. Recently, personal construct techniques have been recognized as a basis for building an expert system on a computer.

One reason for an issue dedicated to personal construct technology is to bring to the notice of non-psychologists the wide variety of uses for the techniques, and the range of developments which are taking place. Central to personal construct psychology is the view of man acting as a *personal scientist*: that is, forming hypotheses about the world, testing them against his experience, and revising them through using them to anticipate events in the world. Many people who have used interactive repertory grid programs and had this process made explicit to them have experienced surprise or even shock when they realize the basis of some of their assumptions. I hope that the papers in this issue will encourage others to explore the techniques in their own areas of interest.

The papers included here are a selection from recent work in personal construct technology ranging from a survey of current usage to reports of advanced research. Easterby-Smith gives a comprehensive introduction to the elicitation and analysis of a repertory grid; Keen & Bell describe a technique for eliciting constructs which avoids some of the difficulties of the more commonly used "triad" method. Phillips' paper gives a fascinating example of the use of grids in the area of the subjective judgement of the research skills of Ph.D. students.

The papers by Slater, and Shaw & McKnight are concerned with the reconciliation of differing perspectives: Slater looks at conflict situations and suggests a technique for resolving the difficulty often encountered of people who have to work together refusing to see the point of view of the other side; and Shaw & McKnight look at the individual's construing of other points of view. Glanville's paper describes a technique which is related to the grid in that it extracts from a person his construct structure and model of the topic.

The last four papers by Gaines & Shaw, Eshragh, Bell & Keen, and Leach are more technical in nature. Gaines & Shaw examine the foundations of the repertory grid in personal construct theory and suggest an alternative basis for its analysis based on logical foundations. Eshragh takes the technique into the area of subjective decision-making and describes a program for doing this. Bell & Keen use statistical techniques to derive a new measure of cognitive complexity, and Leach describes a new cluster analytic method of processing grids.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the contributors and Simon Hasleton who is at present visiting Patrick Slater, not only for their contributions but also for their

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comments on all the papers. Some of them even went so far as to elicit grids on this issue using the individual papers as elements, at my request, and this indeed made my job much easier.

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