BACK TO BASICS IN PERSONALITY STUDY –
THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON'S OWN
ORGANIZATION OF EXPERIENCE:
THE INDIVIDUALITY COROLLARY

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The Individuality Corollary: Persons differ from each other in their construction of events.

From the standpoint of personal construct psychology, the individual's own organization of experience is the most fertile starting point for the process of understanding his or her conduct. There are alternative starting points, to be sure. Currently available personality theories, for one, provide several frameworks for the comprehension of an individual's conduct and "knowings." However, the distinctive images of the human condition offered by any given personality theorist can be shown to be bound up in that theorist's own personal reality (see Stolorow and Atwood, 1979, for current work on this old idea). Nonetheless, constructs offered by personality theorists (for example, locus of control, self-efficacy) are often used in personality research as universally applicable scientific constructs, convenient for anticipating the conduct of individuals. Personal construct psychology invites us to remain skeptical of the utility of these so-called scientific constructs.

Using personal construct theory reflexively would, of course, invite skepticism about the constructs offered by the theory itself. Kelly's (1955) two-volume work on personal construct theory is replete with his own personal

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constructs, the ways by which he made sense out of the behavior of the clients and the students whom he had encountered in his dual role as professor/therapist. He also organized his constructs for us when he wrote the theory, just as he claimed that everyone organizes his personal constructs in some fashion (Organizational Corollary). By the way Kelly organized his theory, it is readily apparent that “constructive alternativism” is a superordinate construct in the theory; the other constructs (corollaries) in the theory imply constructive alternativism: one is always free to revise one's construction of an event. A construct is only a convenient device for anticipating events; if need be, the construct can be revised or abandoned. On constructive alternativism, Kelly (1955, p. 15) wrote: “No one needs to paint himself into a corner; no one needs to be completely hemmed in by circumstances; no one needs to be a victim of his biography.”

A would-be Kellyan personologist would become an unknowing victim of Kelly’s own biography if he did not first recognize that constructive alternativism, superordinate in the theory, was also superordinate in Kelly’s personal system. Once the personologist recognizes the personal origins of Kelly’s idea, he is, of course, free to share the conception—make it an integral part of his own system for the construing persons. The fact that constructive alternativism permeates Kelly’s writing suggests that he had invented the rudiments of constructive alternativism (the philosophical position) in his own personal context and that his personal construct (something like painted into a corner-free to be anything) had become superordinate in his own personal system, thus enabling him to embrace the philosophical position as superordinate in his theory without reservation.

We are given insights into the fundamental position the construct painted into a corner-free to be anything held in Kelly’s own personal context by Holland’s (1970) essay: “George Kelly: Constructive Innocent and Reluctant Existentialist.” Kelly simply refused to allow his theory to be labeled as phenomenological, or one of its subcategories—existentialism. Assuming Kelly owned his theory and, in some sense, was his theory, we might infer from this “protection” of the theory that Kelly had a personal concern that he should not be labeled. Thus he grew a personal distaste for preemptive labeling per se. “Unlike those people who are tormented by the ambiguities and uncertainties of life he finds himself in trouble over the very opposite—those things he once thought he knew with certainty” (Holland, 1970, p. 114). Holland then goes on to quote Kelly: “a world jam-packed with lead pipe certainties, dictionary definitives, and doomsday finalities strikes me as a pretty gloomy place.”

RECAPITULATION AND FOREWORD

No theory of personality is complete. A given author, being human, faces issues in experience that some persons may share, but other persons do not. Often a theorist will give his issue ontological status (Stolorow and Atwood, 1979) as if all persons must somehow face and resolve that issue in the course of becoming a person. Kelly himself had certain issues in his experience, which I abstracted in terms of the construct painted into a corner-free. Some of his conduct, especially with regard to how his theory was received by the academic community, could be construed as an attempt to maintain his view of his theory (himself) as free from labeling. No replica of his theory (himself) has ever been devised. From his own experience, Kelly makes a statement concerning the meaning of being human: No one needs to paint himself into a corner. Interestingly enough, Kelly saw everyone as having his own particular issues in experience, although he never played down his belief that each person could always revise the way he looked at his world. Maybe he can. However, to understand the conduct of a person, Kelly maintained, we must try to understand how that person organizes his experience. Focus on the individual’s own organization of experience is, I think, the major thrust of personal construct theory and the essence of the Individuality Corollary. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the utility of examining own organization in the context of psychological research. That context includes something of what is believed about “scientific” research.

A THEORY IN SEARCH OF ITS ZEITGEIST

Can there be a nomothetic science of personality study, if we are to take the Individuality Corollary seriously? The answer depends on what one means by nomothetic. If nomothetic means the finding of general laws of behavior, we would need to ask whether or not we were following the most useful course for psychology, or at least for personality-social psychology (Gergen, 1973; Sarbin, 1977). However, the process of coming to know the individual’s own organization, which we believe is the most useful course for personality psychology, requires a series of assumptions about what to look for and where to look for it. There is no a priori reason for rejecting the belief that the methods and ideas that guide us in our search cannot be developed so that they are substantially the same (nomothetic) regardless of the individual in question. Likewise for the historian: “the historian, in contrast to the chronicler, also derives general laws and principles which run through the mass of events that have happened. If he did not, he would be hopelessly bogged down in his newspaper files” (Kelly, 1955, p. 42).

The latter view of nomothetic is at odds with the prevailing way of talking about a nomothetic science of personality—the zeitgeist—which is to invent and measure personality variables and state laws that interrelate these variables to others (often traits). A study (Rosenberg and Gara, 1980, n. 1) of the perceptions that social and personality psychologists (members of APA Division 8) use to survey the history of their discipline(s) suggests that we have reached
the end of a dominant cycle in our short history: social psychology has become experimental and personality psychology has turned into testing and measurement.

Personal construct researchers themselves can be seen as slipping into this prevailing view of what constitutes nomothetic personology. Kelly advanced the Rep Grid as a series of techniques to start the personologist on the venture of studying an individual's own organization. Judging from Adams-Webber's recent review (1979a) of personal construct research, the Rep Grid appears to be the sine qua non of personal construct theory. Actually, I think, the Rep Grid is peripheral to the theory. Nonetheless, investigators are already scoring the Rep Grids for determining the degree of organization (Landfield, 1977) of a construct system, degree of organization clearly being a personality variable. It will not be long before the personologists' vocabulary of "traits" will include "loose organization" and "tight organization," complete with a compendium of tests to measure these. These events may come to pass probably because Kellian theory is a theory in "search of its Zeitgeist" (Rosenberg, 1980).

**SOME POINTS TO CONSIDER IN STUDYING OWN ORGANIZATION**

In moving toward a nomothetic science of personality study that begins and ends with the Individuality Corollary, it is essential that we develop a systematic approach for ascertaining an individual's own organization of experience. In this section we will work toward some points to consider in developing such an approach for the experience of persons. To do so, we will draw on some work by social psychologists on person perception -- especially implicit personality theory -- since that work shares many of the substantive interests and methods of personal construct psychology.

Implicit personality theory (IPT) refers to a person's everyday beliefs about personality. This belief system includes the traits that they perceive as characteristic of themselves and others -- traits having to do with intelligence, integrity, sociability, attractiveness, maturity, and so on -- and their beliefs about the interrelations among these traits (Bruner and Tagiuri, 1954; Cronbach, 1955; Rosenberg and Sedlak, 1972b; Wegner and Vallacher, 1977). The theory is "implicit" because it is inferred from the individual's characterizations of people rather than being stated by the individual in any explicit way.

A large portion of the research on IPT has focused on "culturally shared" dimensions for perceiving persons. This research is important since individuals, while ultimately possessing their own organization of perceptions about people, can have components or features in their own systems that other individuals may share. The fact that the belief systems of several individuals may share certain components may be, but often is not, accidental. In order to establish some degree of communal process, human beings may need to share a system of construing experience, including the experience of persons (see Chapter 12 on the Commononality Corollary). The semantic structure of the language may afford this "shared system" to some extent, but not exclusively (Gara and Rosenberg, in press; Shwedler, 1977). Ultimately, however, at least in the case of belief systems, what is truly shared by an individual is also owned by him or her.

A prototypical study in this large corpus of IPT research involves the selection by the investigator of a set of trait terms and then obtaining a matrix of trait similarities (or dissimilarities) based on the aggregated judgments of a sample of subjects. The judgments made on the trait terms can take several forms, for example, sorting (see Rosenberg and Sedlak, 1972b). A multivariate technique such as factor analysis or multidimensional scaling is then used to determine the multidimensional structure of the trait terms. Once the trait terms have been plotted in a multidimensional space, it is the task of the investigator to determine what the dimensions of the space mean psychologically. For example, the semantic differential model, originally proposed as an affective theory of meaning (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, 1957) and later applied as a multidimensional scheme for person perception (Osgood, 1962), construes the "shared" dimensions of person perception to be evaluation, potency and activity (EPA).

Social psychologists have also begun to study implicit personality theory in a way that is directly relevant to the Individuality Corollary (Gara and Rosenberg, 1979; Kim and Rosenberg, 1980; Rosenberg, 1977; Rosenberg and Sedlak, 1972a; Shikib, Fishbein, and Wiggins, 1974; Wiggins and Fishbein, 1969). The Kim and Rosenberg study is especially noteworthy because it assumes that an individual has his own way of organizing beliefs about persons, and sets out to determine what components (dimensions) of individual belief systems are truly shared by the comparison of individual belief systems. In contrast, studies that support the semantic differential model of implicit personality theory essentially assume that individuals share a common system for perceiving persons and thus aggregate individual data. Research on the semantic differential also relies on trait scales and trait lists provided to the subjects by the investigator, rather than a vocabulary that the subject freely generates, thus reflecting the trait-sampling biases of the investigator to an unknown extent. Kim and Rosenberg examined whether these two factors (aggregation of individual data; trait vocabulary provided by the investigator) had any effect on what conclusions an investigator would reach about what is shared in person perception.

We will review here some relevant aspects of the Kim and Rosenberg study. In that study, ten subjects (the F group) described persons in their lives with their own trait vocabulary, while another ten (the C group) described persons using a vocabulary provided by the experimenter. All subjects rated each of their trait terms on nine marker scales, of which three scales (for example, good-bad) constituted evaluative markers, three constituted potency markers (strong-weak) and three constituted activity markers (active-passive). Two separate factor
analyses were performed on the nine marker scales, one for the F group and one for the C group. For both the F and C groups, the first factor was clearly evaluation, although it accounted for more variance in the F group. For the F group, the second factor was activity and the third factor potency, while for the C group, the third factor was activity and the second factor was potency. These results support the semantic differential model, especially the variant where potency and activity are considered “fused” to turn a “dynamism” dimension (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, 1957).

The relations among E, P, and A were also examined on the individual level. For each subject three ratings (one each for E, P, and A) were calculated to describe each trait; that is, each dimension (EPA) rating was the average of the three scales used to mark that dimension. The correlations among E, P, and A for each subject were then calculated.

The average correlation for subjects in the C group (experimenter’s traits) was .08 between E and P and .06 between E and A. On the basis of that result, one would be led to conclude that E and dynamism were orthogonal, as proposed by the semantic differential model. However, for the F group (own traits), the average correlation between E and P was .20, and the average correlation between E and A was .32. Further, all average correlations were significantly larger for the F group than for the C group. Orthogonality between E and dynamism, then, is more likely to emerge with an experimenter-selected vocabulary.

Additional analyses reported in Kim and Rosenberg show that the average correlations among E, P, and A are misleading in representing the correlations at the individual level. The individual correlations between E and P vary from -3.4 to +.60 for the F group and -3.3 to +.59 for the C group. The correlations between E and A vary from .08 to .73 for the F group and from -.21 to +.37 for the C group. Further, tests for homogeneity of correlations show that individual correlations are heterogeneous in both the F and C groups.

The nine marker scales also were used by the subjects to rate their people and all of the above analyses were also performed on these ratings. The picture is the same. The semantic differential model holds up when subjects’ ratings are aggregated; it fares less well at the individual level. Further, the EPA model is more adequately supported when subjects use an experimenter-selected vocabulary than when they use their own.

Thus, in accordance with the Individuality Corollary, subjects are using their own organization of the constructs by which they perceive people, especially when they are given the opportunity to describe people in their own words. If given an experimenter-selected vocabulary, not necessarily their own, a subject’s organization might better approximate the “shared” organization posited by the semantic differential model. However, even in this case, the emergence of EPA as a shared system is partly artifactual; that is, it is due to aggregation of individual ratings.

However, one would look for some “shared” organization, if we are to take the Commonality Corollary seriously. Kim and Rosenberg’s multidimensional evaluative model suggests that the only dimension that is common to all individuals is an evaluative dimension. The proposed model is multidimensional, however, in that it assumes additional dimensionality resulting from a set of content areas not independent of evaluation, such as attractiveness, integrity, intelligence, maturity, sociability, and so on. The particular content areas that compose this evaluative structure have been shown, by Kim and Rosenberg, to vary among individuals.

Certain groups of individuals could, of course, share a particular content area in their perceptions of persons. The subjects in the Kim and Rosenberg study, all college students, in general share a concern with intelligence and maturity in their perceptions of others. The concern with maturity, however, may not be present in older adults and younger children. The concern with intelligence may reflect a particularization of a ubiquitous concern among human beings about competence or success (Rosenberg, 1977); “competence in certain other occupations may be reflected in traits other than (or in addition to) intelligence, such as agility, strength, political savvy, and so on” (Kim and Rosenberg, 1980, p. 388).

Although the evaluative model shares with the EPA model the assumption of a general evaluative dimension, it is not a special case of the EPA system. In fact, the reverse is true if potency and activity are not assumed to be orthogonal to evaluation. In this case, potency and activity may be viewed as two content dimensions that are assumed to be present in the implicit personality theory of all individuals. Moreover, as a special case of the evaluative model, the poles of these two hypothesized “universals” need not be oriented the same way for all individuals; for example, some individuals may perceive certain active traits as good, whereas other individuals may perceive certain passive traits as good (Kim and Rosenberg, 1980, p. 377).

Returning now from the preceding discussion of research on person perception to what was promised at the beginning of this section, what points should be considered in ascertaining how an individual uniquely organizes the experience of persons — more specifically, beliefs about persons?

- People often try to figure out how other human beings view the world (see Chapter 13 on the Sociality Corollary). The person may not share in (ultimately own) the other’s construction, but he can “get it.” In Gara and Rosenberg (in press), subjects were asked to make fine distinctions among 20 trait terms in terms of a provided list of “features” of traits. (Saves old things is an example of a “feature” of the trait sentimental; cries at weddings is another.) However, another group of subjects, when describing people with the 20 trait terms, clearly did not use all those fine distinctions among the traits in the way they ascribed the traits to different people. While there is little evidence, in general, that persons share making such fine distinctions in their trait descriptions, they “get” that they can be made. Similarly, subjects can “get” all of the distinctions an investigator makes in the vocabulary that the investigator
provides to them for the purpose of describing persons and yet use only a minority of those distinctions in their everyday perception of people. In fact, people are usually more timid (in terms of extremity of ratings) about using constructs provided by the investigator than they are when using their own constructs (H. Bonarius, 1977). Taking the Sociality Corollary seriously, it makes little sense to pursue own organization of beliefs about persons using anything but the individual's own vocabulary. Taking the Sociality Corollary seriously is not just a good idea for research on own organization in person perception; it has immediate application in the real world exchange between client and professional in the clinical setting, as we shall see later.

- For those of us interested in what people share in their perception of persons, we take the Individuality Corollary very seriously. Kim and Rosenberg's (1980) study amply demonstrates the pitfalls of aggregating person descriptions across individuals in order to determine what is truly shared in person perception.

Own Organization and Conduct: Two Case Illustrations

If one paints a picture of an individual's own organization of his beliefs about persons, using, for example, Rep Grid methodologies (Bannister and Mair, 1968; Fransella and Bannister, 1977) or related techniques (Rosenberg, 1977), and their associated methods for data analysis, what kind of insight does one gain into the person's conduct, if any? Do we have just a pretty picture?

To explore these issues, two case studies will be examined. The first case is Theodore Dreiser, because his life has been extremely well documented. The second involves a male who was a student at Rutgers University at the time of the study and who completed a person description task (see Rosenberg, 1977, for a description of the task) as part of an independent study project. This subject provided extensive descriptions of various significant events, problems, and choices that he was confronting in his life, and he has agreed to allow a piece of his story to be told.

The Case of Dreiser

Theodore Dreiser never completed a Rep Grid. However, his writing was rich in characterization of persons, and since much was known about his life, the characterization that he made in A Gallery of Women were analyzed by Rosenberg and Jones (1972). The procedures involved in this analysis are too technical to report here; interested readers can refer to the published study.

Two dimensions are seen to underlie Dreiser's characterizations of persons: male-female and conforms-does not conform. The presence of sex as a significant dimension in Dreiser's characterizations appears to be explicable in terms of his deep involvement with women, which was often scandalous. "He often carried on affairs with several women at a time. One such affair, with a 17-year-old girl, was instrumental in his loss of the lucrative editorship of Butterick Publications" (Rosenberg and Jones, 1972, p. 384).

The theme of conformity, which showed up Dreiser's characterizations in A Gallery of Women, appears, by several accounts, to be a major theme in his life. Dreiser viewed himself as "nonconformist" and sought out nonconformists of all sorts as companions. Consider "Dreiser's Law": "Beliefs held by the multitude, the bourgeois and their leaders, are likely to be wrong per se. . . . Beliefs held by unconventionalists which fly in the face of orthodoxy are in all probability right," (W. Swanberg, quoted in Rosenberg and Jones, 1972, pp. 384-85).

Demonic Possession and Other Matters

A strong evaluative dimension was found in the person descriptions of our second case study. Moreover, a potency dimension was found to be highly related to this good-bad dimension; that is, traits that were perceived as belonging to strong people were good; traits that were perceived as belonging to weak people were bad. This close correspondence of potency and evaluation is particularly instructive for understanding various problems that this individual faced in his life.

This particular individual reported that he gravitated toward powerful and/or dynamic people in both his informal and work-related social relations and avoided those whom he perceived to be weak or dependent. This report would seem to be a restatement of his belief that powerful people were desirable. On the other hand, his intimate relations were with people he considered to be dependent and not self-directed. He himself felt powerful in relation to these dependent persons. However, he felt inadequate in the presence of figures perceived to be powerful, although, as stated above, he gravitated toward such figures. I observed that the subject described his ideal self as powerful-good, his negative self as weak-bad, and his present self as both powerful and weak; everyone else was described as either one or the other. I queried the subject with regard to this quality of his self and other descriptions: Did he see himself as simultaneously powerful and weak? His answer was "no": He vacillated in his perception of himself as either very powerful — almost grandiose — and extremely inadequate, depending on whom he was with.

As I interpret it, the subject's reliance on a potency-evaluative dimension in his perception of self and other created some deleterious effects in his life experience, in addition to a vacillating self-in-relation-to-other image. One troubled experience occurred three years before this individual had become a subject in this study. After seeing the film The Exorcist, he experienced a period of extreme anxiety, coupled with fears of being possessed. This experience was intense and debilitating for a period of about six months and continued, albeit with less intensity, for a period of another year. Basically I was able to relate this troubled period to his inability to integrate the concept of Satan (very
powerful yet very bad) into his overall conceptual framework. It seems conceivable that he saw the possibility of a future self in the demon; that is, if he became too powerful he might become evil; he might destroy the others around him. His conceptual framework had never before allowed for the co-occurrence of badness and power. It could be that the possibility of a powerful-bad self, heretofore never allowed by his conceptual framework, was symbolized in the fear of being possessed, that is, becoming the demon.

During this troubled period, he underwent no formal "therapy"; instead he seemed to develop a new pathway for experience and conduct. Actually, as I see it, he disentangled the construct school-play from his superordinate dimension and immersed himself in both academic affairs and recreational activity (mostly gambling). He kept his academic friends and gambling friends physically and conceptually apart, and moved back and forth between the two domains with increasing regularity. The shifting back and forth on this dimension had no implications for a shift back and forth on the superordinate evaluation-potency dimension, and gradually the intensity of the experience evoked by The Exorcist diminished.

Gradually the school-play dimension became again superordinated by his good-bad dimension: He started to view academic concerns as positive and his gambling as negative, probably because he began losing large sums of money. One year before this individual became our subject his gambling decreased noticeably, although to this day he flirts with it occasionally. He views gambling as bad, but views the enterprise of prediction involved (for him) in gambling as implying that he is powerful. Thus his flirtations with gambling can be seen as an attempt to explore the personal meanings of being bad but powerful, although on a less threatening scale than the experience that was thrust upon him when confronted with the concept demon. It still seems as if he has failed to integrate bad-yet-powerful into his overall framework: To this day he has a sense of discontinuity when returning from gambling activity to other, say academic, activities. It could be said that he experiences fragmentation (see Chapter 11 on the Fragmentation Corollary) upon starting or ending gambling activity.

Another notable aspect of this subject's implicit personality theory is seen in his use of a dimension that Kim and Rosenberg would call a "content dimension" — large-small. This dimension was strongly related to his overall evaluative-potency dimension. Being large was viewed as having an impact on someone or something, that is, being powerful and good. Being small was bad. Since preadolescence, up to and including the point in his life where he completed the Rosenberg (1977) "version" of the Rep Grid, this subject was large (300 pounds, 6 feet, 2 inches tall); in fact, he was obese.

The subject had made several attempts to lose weight. Prior to seeing The Exorcist, he had lost 40 pounds. However, after seeing The Exorcist, he regained the weight. (Did becoming small and thin, like the little girl in the movie, imply that he would be possessed — become powerless?) Two years later he lost another substantial amount of weight, started to feel "weird," and regained it. It seems that if he reconstrued his body along the large-small dimension, somehow he would become small, weak, and powerless. Yet he would also become "good" (he did not like being fat) — but good and weak constituted for him an experience that could not be integrated into his overall conceptual system, just as bad and strong (symbolized by the demon) could not be integrated.

He perceived that people treated him differently whenever he lost weight. He thought that they were treating him as if he had less impact, even though they also praised his efforts. In my interpretation, every time he regained weight, he was literally moving his "body" along the large-small dimension so as to again see himself as having impact.

Actually, for the subject, the relationships of the constructs about body size with other superordinate constructs were implicit: He could not spell out these relationships. He had attempted to construe other explicit constructions of his weight problem (and there are many, "scientific" and otherwise). For example, he thought about the idea that fat people were simply lazy. This made no sense to him because when he lost weight he felt lethargic; he felt energetic when he was fat.

When he completed Rosenberg's (1977) person description tasks and examined the various (see Rosenberg, 1977) representations of his implicit personality theory, he was struck by the fact that large was equated with powerful and small was equated with weak. By making the implicit connections between body size and having impact explicit to the subject, the subject could suddenly explain his feeling of "weirdness" in previous attempts to lose weight. Certainly other factors were involved in what then ensued, but following his "insight" the subject successfully lost weight; moreover, he has maintained his weight at 175 pounds for four years. Interestingly enough, making the implicit explicit is the essential feature of cognitive therapy (Beck et al., 1979) that has compared favorably with treatment by means of antidepressants.

Notes on Implications for Therapy Based on the Second Case

In Kellian theory, the Individuality Corollary emphasizes the importance of own organization. In the above case we have a cogent illustration of how the implicit parts of a person's own organization have to be understood and made explicit to that person in order for that person to make a significant change in his life, or at least understand some of the chaotic experiences confronting him. Borrowing the constructions of others, which this subject could do, just as subjects in the common-vocabulary group in Kim and Rosenberg's study (1980) could do, did not necessarily make his experiences more meaningful to him (give him "insight") or allow him to make any significant changes, such as losing weight.
Although each of us has the ability to share momentarily another's (that is, a reference group's) organization of experience, it would seem that own organization, essentially the interrelations among personal constructs, is what really matters in an individual's day-to-day psychological processes.

If it is own organization that really matters, then it is a clinician's role, first of all, to construe the personal construct system of his client. A reader familiar with Kelly's approach to psychotherapy will readily recognize this idea as central to his approach. Second, the clinician opens to the client the possibility of generating alternative ways of construing self and other.

However, any effort to provide the client with alternatives will fall on deaf ears if those alternatives have little or no (implied) relationship to the client's own organization. For example, if a clinician were to have suggested to the subject discussed in this chapter that his overeating was an attempt to recover a lost love object, the client would have been side-tracked. Guided by the therapist, the client would have been engaged in efforts to recover "memories" of that loss. Moreover, although "loss" was not an integral thread in this subject's personal experience, the client (presumably because he had been trained to make sense out of another's constructions) might find himself trying to reconstruct his past in terms of what he understands to be loss. An interesting spectacle might be understood in terms of loss, and the clinician's construction would be confirmed. For this particular case, I doubt that any harm would have been done, unless, of course, the client had well-elaborated constructs revolving around the notion of "wasting time."

Of course, it is relatively easy to generate cases in which the alternatives provided by the clinician can be clearly harmful. If the construct I control versus they control is a superordinate construct in the client's system, assembling a behavior modification program for that individual could well result in catastrophe, especially if the client can tell a rather bleak story centering on the notion that he controls. Even if the client does not kill himself, we have validated the very same superordinate construct that has given the client his set of adjustment problems. We have frozen his system; we have helped him make himself a victim of his own biography.

The foregoing section should not be viewed as an attempt to sell Kellian therapy, or any therapy for that matter. The point we are making is simple. Since we have claimed that own organization of experience is an important consideration to any psychological process, it follows that own organization is central to understanding and implementing the interpersonal process that is involved in therapy. However, since we are cavalier in stating that own organization is what matters in any psychological process, we will not linger on the topic of therapy. We will now discuss the Individuality Corollary as it is relevant to prototypes in person perception.

THE INDIVIDUALITY COROLLARY AND THE STUDY OF PROTOTYPES

Many personologists have sought to establish that there are "types" of personalities. A reader with only a passing familiarity with personality theory and research will easily recognize these personality types: the anal personality; the extrovert; the authoritarian personality. The discussion thus far, which centers on the utility of examining own organization for understanding an individual's conduct, would suggest that we focus not so much on how an individual fits into an existing typology, but rather on what typologies individuals employ in their perceptions of persons.

If we are to focus on the categories or types of personalities that an individual believes to exist, then important matters to consider are the configurations of attributes that are believed to be prototypical (ideal examples) of a given personality category (Cantor and Mischel, 1979), and the persons in an individual's life who best fit a given prototype.

The notion of a prototype has appeared in the cognitive literature as a way of understanding memory phenomenon (Bartlett, 1932; Posner and Keele, 1968, 1970). When subjects are shown a series of patterns, even random dot patterns, they seem to abstract — build a schema for — a prototypical visual pattern and use it as a standard for subsequent memory tasks. They indicate in the memory phase that they "had seen" patterns that resembled their standard, even though such patterns were never shown (Posner and Keele, 1970).

Cantor and Mischel (1977) argue that individuals also organize — build a schema for — trait descriptions (for example, bold, outgoing, energetic) by subsuming them under a "more abstract superordinate trait that functions as a unifying category label" (p. 45). Such superordinate schema have properties similar to prototypes in memory tasks. Cantor and Mischel (1977) have shown that when subjects are shown a series of statements that represent an introvert, they misidentify, in a later recognition task, some introvert statements that were never previously seen as having been original introvert statements.

Rogers, Kuiper, and Kirker (1977) argue that the construct self-not self acts as a prototype, a standard against which incoming data about persons are interpreted or coded (see also Carver, 1979; Mancuso and Ceely, 1980; Markus, 1977 for further discussion of self-standards). They report a study (Rogers, Rogers, and Kuiper, 1977, n. 2) in which subjects filled out self ratings on 84 adjectives. Two and a half months later the same subjects participated in a recognition task. First they saw a set of 42 adjectives randomly selected from the 84 originally presented items. Then subjects were required to recognize these 42 within the total set of 84. Subjects made more false alarms (reported that the adjectives were in the set of 42 when they had not been) for adjectives that were self-descriptive than for adjectives that were not. The superordinate schema self appears to serve as a prototype, just as the schema introvert had been used as
a prototype in Cantor and Mischel (1977) and as the abstracted visual pattern had served as a prototype in Posner and Keele (1970).

The special utility of Rogers, Kuiper, and Kirker's (1977) notion of the self as a prototype is that self may be a widely used personal prototype: It seems to reflect any individual's own organization of person perceptions. Cantor and Mischel (1977) suggested that the superordinate category introvert is a prototype; however, we would expect that the category introvert only acts as a prototype when it is in fact used by subjects in organizing their perceptions of people. Self seems a more likely candidate for a "universally used" personal prototype.

From the extant discussions of prototypes it seems that prototypes must be superordinate schemata. In fact, the ideas of superordinate schemata and prototypes are often used interchangeably. The idea of superordination, as Kelly (1955) used it, can be conceived in terms of asymmetric implication. For example, assume that good is superordinate to other constructs in an individual's personal construct system. That means that when the perceiver detects one quality (say intelligent) in another person, that quality implies that that person is a "good" person. However, it does not mean that the perceiver views all good people as intelligent. In other words, intelligent implies good "more" than good implies intelligent: asymmetric implication!

Gara and Rosenberg (1979) have developed a methodology for determining which persons (not descriptors) in a subject's life show asymmetric implications. Subjects chose persons in their lives who fit certain roles (parents, siblings, close and distant relatives, close and casual friends, lovers, public figures, mythical figures, and disliked people) and described those people using their own vocabulary. If Persons A and B were described such that everything A had, B had, but not vice-versa, then A > B more than B > A. B was thus a subset of A, and A was a subset of B. Further, from the above discussion, B was superordinate to A.

Using this line of reasoning, they identified the persons that were supersets (superordinate) to many other persons that the individual described. The self and mother were identified as supersets in 8 of 14 cases. Therefore the idea that self is a widely used superordinate schema is not a bad one; however, it is not universally used. Consistent with the Individuality Corollary, different supersets emerged from the person descriptions of different subjects. Some subjects had only parental figures as supersets, whereas other subjects had nonparental figures (lover, best friend) as supersets. A third group of subjects had both parental figures and nonparental figures as supersets. For all subjects, mythical, public, or disliked role figures were never found to be supersets.

Gara and Rosenberg (1979) suggest that supersets act as standards to which other persons that an individual might know or meet are compared; that is, the individual sees other persons as partial replications of his supersets. In other words, supersets are prototypes, albeit personal prototypes.

The idea that supersets serve as prototypes can be illustrated in the clinical phenomenon of transference. Transference refers to the situation in psychotherapy where the therapist is seen as a partial replication (subset) of a significant person (say mother) in the patient's life, and the patient acts and reacts with the therapist on the basis of his perceptions of mother. Something about the therapy context may call to mind dependency constructs, which may very well instantiate the construction mother for the patient, whereupon the patient subsequently makes attributions to the therapist consistent with his perceptions of mother, even though such attributions are inappropriate. Transference, then, is a naturally occurring analog of the use of prototypes in laboratory settings: In laboratory settings subjects retrieve from memory items that are consistent with their prototypes, even though such items are inappropriate; that is, they were never presented in the memory task.

The idea that transference involves the use of prototypical persons, coupled with the fact that two such persons discussed in classical accounts of transference (self and mother) are often identified as supersets in Gara and Rosenberg (1979), is consistent with the idea that supersets are prototypes. The validity of the idea is further strengthened by the fact that self was also found to act like a prototype in memory for personality descriptions. The procedures for identifying supersets reported in Gara and Rosenberg (1979) may then be viewed as ways to identify personal prototypes. The study also shows that rating scales can be used as short-cut methods for identifying such personal prototypes or supersets.

Supersets, then, comprise the set of persons that an individual generally uses as standards to which he compares other persons (and new persons) in his life. We emphasize the qualifiers generally because often individuals compare another person to a standard that involves only one content category, and the supersets discussed in Gara and Rosenberg (1979) really span many content categories. However, if a man is looking for a date in a single's bar, and is accustomed to using the content category physical attractiveness to determine the suitability of another for a date, he really does not need to use a superset that spans many content categories. He can and probably does use a person that spans only the content category physically attractive; such a person would be a superset for that category but not an overall superset. From Gara and Rosenberg (1979) we know that such a person (call it a content specific superset) would probably not be a significant person in the individual's life; it may even be a public figure. Yet, in this context, the content specific superset is used as a prototype.

To summarize this section, the Individuality Corollary offers an important consideration for the growing numbers of researchers interested in prototypes. It invites them to look at personal prototypes. Although research on personal prototypes is sparse to date, it is promising enough to warrant further investigation, especially when the focus is on individuals and their day-to-day psychological processes.
THE INDIVIDUALITY COROLLARY IN MEMORY RESEARCH

We have been maintaining throughout that an individual’s own organization of experience is a fundamental consideration in the study of any psychological process. However, the psychological processes that have been discussed so far essentially have to do with the perception of persons. There is some evidence, however, that research in the area of memory process is beginning to consider own organization as an important thread in the context of memory phenomena.

Studies of memory completed by Jacoby (1978), Sliemecka and Graf (1978), and Graf (1980) have clearly shown the working of a “generation effect.” This term refers to the finding that retention for verbal material is consistently worse when subjects simply read the material than when they generate the same material according to some rule. Such an effect could be simply due to the fact that generating verbal material requires more effortful and elaborative processing than simply reading it. McFarland, Frey, and Rhodes (1980), however, maintain that effortful versus effortless processing is not the entire story. The greater memorability of subject-over-experimenter-generated words (to fit a specified context, for example, what word means the same as care?) also has to do with the “personal reference attribute of generation operation per se” (p. 210). That is, when subjects generate a word to fit a semantic context (what means the same as care?) they are using their own semantic network (see Collins and Loftus, 1975; Collins and Quillian, 1972, for discussion of semantic networks) in storage, and they are likely to retrace that network in recall. When they read experimenter-generated words that fit a semantic context, they may not share the experimenter’s semantic network and thus will not have that particular semantic network available to them in the retrieval phase. In other words, because subjects are more likely to use the same semantic network (their own) in both the encoding and retrieval phases of memory when they generate the to-be-remembered material, than when they read experimenter-generated material, memory performance is enhanced. Again, McFarland et al. (1980) have shown that the generation effect is not simply due to the fact that generating verbal material requires more effortful processing than simply reading it. Own organization is an important consideration in memory process.

SUMMARY

The Individuality Corollary invites a close examination of an individual’s own organization of experience for an understanding of his conduct. This chapter has focused on methods for assessing own organization of beliefs about persons, how determinations of shared organization of beliefs about persons are better served by examining own organization first, and how an individual’s conduct can make sense to an observer if we allow ourselves glimpses into his experiential world. This chapter has also touched briefly upon the possibilities that a focus on own organization of experience would offer to ongoing inquiry into psychological processes such as memory and psychological representation (prototypes). The point that we arrive at is probably less modest than Kelly’s statement that persons differ in their construction of events: Own organization of experience is an important matter to consider in the understanding of any psychological process. I wonder what a personality theory would look like if it made the Individuality Corollary the Fundamental Postulate?