

11

Chapter

CHAPTER 11

KELLY'S THEORY OF
PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS

11

Chapter

Constructive Alternativism

- **Constructs:** ways of representing our experiences; they are abstractions that are defined in terms of the similarities and contrasts of their poles
- **Constructive alternativism:** fundamental assumption that human beings are capable of changing their interpretations of events
- **Superordinate constructs:** construct that controls many other constructs
- **Subordinate constructs:** construct that is controlled by other constructs

11

Chapter

Additional Characteristics of Constructs

- **Core constructs:** important beliefs that are part of the individual's personal identity
- **Peripheral constructs:** beliefs that are relatively unimportant to the person and that can be changed rather easily
- **Range of convenience:** the number of other constructs to which they are related
- **Permeability:** degree to which new elements will be admitted within the boundaries of a construct

11

Chapter

Additional Characteristics of Constructs (cont'd.)

- **Preemptive construct:** includes only its own elements and maintains that these elements cannot apply to other constructs
- **Constellatory construct:** allows its elements to belong to other constructs concurrently; however, once identified in a particular way, these elements are fixed
- **Propositional construct:** leaves all of its elements open to modification

11

Chapter

The Fundamental Postulate and Its Corollaries

- Fundamental postulate are people's beliefs or constructs that guide their behavior
- Corollaries are propositions associated with the fundamental postulate
 - **Individuality corollary:** people differ in their constructions of reality
 - **Organization corollary:** individual's constructs are arranged in particular ways within his or her personal belief system
 - **Choice corollary:** people select between alternatives in dichotomized constructs in making their judgments about reality

11

Chapter

The Fundamental Postulate and Its Corollaries (cont'd.)

- **Fragmentation corollary:** individuals personal construct subsystems may be disjointed and mutually incompatible and person is often unaware of the inconsistency
- **Commonality corollary:** similar construct systems in different individuals lead to similarities in their behavior
- **Sociality corollary:** constructive interpersonal relationships depend on mutual understanding of each other's construct systems
 - **Core role constructs:** set of beliefs associated with important role relationships that constitute the person's social identity

11

Chapter

Personality Development

- Development revolves about the person's attempts to maximize understanding of the world through the continuing definition and elaboration of his or her construct system

11

Chapter

Assessment Techniques

- **Role Construct Repertory Test (Rep Test):** test designed to measure the personal construct systems of individuals

11

Chapter

Theory's Implications for Therapy

- **Controlled elaboration:** clients clarify and think through their problems in consultation with the therapist; enables them to revise or discard old constructs and to formulate new and more effective ones
- **Fixed-role therapy:** constructs roles for clients that help them overcome their weaknesses and enable them to reconstrue themselves and their life situations
 - **Self-characterization sketch:** initial step in fixed-role therapy in which clients are asked to write a brief character outline of themselves as it might be written by an intimate and sympathetic friend
 - **Enactment sketch:** client is asked to play a role designed to contrast sharply with the client's current self-perception, as revealed in the self-characterization sketch

11

Chapter

Evaluative Comments

- **Comprehensiveness:** limited in scope
- **Precision and testability:** precise and testable
- **Parsimony:** fails to meet the parsimony criterion; too simplistic
- **Empirical validity:** empirical support is strong for some aspects of the theory
- **Heuristic value:** theory is proving to be stimulating to researchers in Great Britain
- **Applied value:** considerable influence on business managers and occupational counselors; applied value of the theory is steadily increasing